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Tibetan Buddhism in Diaspora: Cultural re-signification in practice and institutions (Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism)

Ana Cristina O. Lopes

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The imperialist ambitions of China – which invaded Tibet in the late 1940s – have sparked the spectacular spread of Tibetan Buddhism worldwide, and especially in western countries. This work is a study on the malleability of a particular Buddhist tradition; on its adaptability in new contexts.

The book analyses the nature of the Tibetan Buddhism in the Diaspora. It examines how the re-signification of Tibetan Buddhist practices and organizational structures in the present refers back to the dismantlement of the Tibetan state headed by the Dalai Lama and the fragmentation of Tibetan Buddhist religious organizations in general. It includes extensive multi-sited fieldwork conducted in the United States, Brazil, Europe, and Asia and a detailed analysis of contemporary documents relating to the global spread of Tibetan Buddhism. The author demonstrates that there is a "de-institutionalized" and "de-territorialized" project of political power and religious organization, which, among several other consequences, engenders the gradual "autonomization" of lamas and lineages inside the religious field of Tibetan Buddhism. Thus, a spectre of these previous institutions continues to exist outside their original contexts, and they are continually activated in ever-new settings.

Using a combination of two different academic traditions – namely, the Brazilian anthropological tradition and the American Buddhist studies tradition – it investigates the "process of cultural re-signification" of Tibetan Buddhism in the context of its Diaspora. Thus, it will be a valuable resource to students and scholars of Asian Religion, Asian Studies and Buddhism.

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