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Special Focus: Flows and Counterflows of Buddhism ‘South of the West’: Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaiʻi

Buddhism in Aotearoa New Zealand: Multiple Sources and Diverse Forms

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This article presents a provisional survey of Buddhists and Buddhist organizations in Aotearoa/New Zealand, identifying their key characteristics in terms of national origin, ethnicity, and areas of geographical concentration. We draw on three decades of the New Zealand census (1991–2018) to analyze demographic data about those who identify as Buddhist, and information from the NZ Charities Register to identify general characteristics of the diverse range of Buddhist organizations in the country. Based on this demographic data, we identify three main types of Buddhist institutions: (1) centers/temples serving heritage or “migrant” communities from Asian countries with Buddhist heritage; (2) centers which we refer to as “Pākehā/Multi-ethnic” because they serve newer Buddhists (“converts”) who are primarily but not exclusively Pākehā (NZ European), and (3) “multi-ethnic” organizations that include varying combinations of heritage and non-heritage Buddhists. Within each of the three categories we see diverse organizational forms and streams of distinctive Buddhist traditions, including sectarian, ethnic, and hybrid forms, each of which have contributed to a diverse religious landscape in significant ways. Most Buddhist centers are in urban areas, with 70 percent in or near Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. The main Buddhist traditions are almost equally represented across these institutions with 35 percent identified as Mahayana, 32 percent as Theravada, and 35 percent as Vajrayana (and 0.7% as mixed). The number of Buddhists in New Zealand has increased over the past three decades from 12,705 to 52,779, and approximately 80 percent identify with at least one of the Asian ethnic groups. Buddhists constitute only 1.1 percent of the total population, with at least 134 centers of varying sizes across the country. However, Buddhism may be exerting a cultural influence beyond these numbers, as recent research identified Buddhists as the “most trusted” religious group in contemporary New Zealand. In presenting this preliminary survey, we aim to provide a base for more in-depth investigations.

Keywords: Aotearoa New Zealand; Buddhism in New Zealand; contemporary Buddhists; contemporary Buddhism; immigration from Asia

New Zealand is home to a diverse range of Buddhist temples, centers, associations and groups. This study of contemporary Buddhism in Aotearoa/New Zealand needs to be framed in relation to the patterns of religious change that have been occurring for the past few decades. On the one hand, there is considerable evidence for secularization and the abandonment of organized religions. According to the 2018 Census, 48.2 percent of the resident population[1] claim to have “no religion,” which is a significant increase from 29.6 percent in 2001. While self-identification as “Christian” is still the largest category of those still claiming to be “religious,” most denominations are experiencing steady decline. This is only one side of the story, however. Because of immigration, religion in Aotearoa has become increasingly diverse,

[1] According to Stats NZ (23 September 2019), New Zealand’s usually resident population count at the time of the Census of 2018 was 4,699,755.

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and identification with alternative religions has steadily increased. According to the 2018 Census data, this new diversity includes 121,644 Hindus, 52,779 Buddhists, 52,276 Muslims, and 40,908 Sikhs. While 37 percent of the population still identifies as Christian, just over 5 percent now identifies with one of these religious alternatives. This article focuses on the Buddhist dimension of this growing religious diversity.

The study of the cross-cultural spread of Buddhism beyond Asia has developed considerably in recent years. Prebish and Baumann's (2002) edited volume explores Buddhism in countries around the world; many works have been published that explore Buddhism in specific countries; a new survey volume that is global in scope would be valuable. Rocha and Barker's edited volume (2011) explores the Buddhist experience in Australia, New Zealand's larger neighbor. Ann Gleig's recent book *American Dharma* explores recent transformations within meditation-based convert Buddhist groups, which are also common in New Zealand, and explores "American Buddhism in postmodernity" (2019: 291).[2]

With regard to Australia and New Zealand, Michelle Spuler (2002) surveyed the territory, outlining the history and identifying some of the broad characteristics and, with reference to Census data and online directories, provided comparative figures and proportions of the various forms of Buddhism in both countries. Hugh Kemp discusses the development of Buddhism in New Zealand, including a review of relevant literature (2008: 12–29), setting the scene for his investigation of how his research participants, as Buddhist converts, construct their identities as New Zealand Buddhists. Michelle Barker [[née Spuler] -Barker (2017)] updates the information on Australia and New Zealand, adding a brief discussion of Pacific nations. Barker recommends that researchers consider what is happening in the region in terms of transnational flows, including the role of several key transnational Buddhist organizations in shaping recent developments. She foresees a time when "these nations will shift from viewing themselves as recipients of Buddhism to consciously generated Buddhist hubs" (2017: 375).

Some early studies of the expansion of Buddhism to North America generated initial categories for classifying various forms that appeared in that context. Jan Nattier (1998), for example, discerned three types of Buddhism in the process of diffusion. The first, "import Buddhism," was driven by the demands of educated elites (WASPS, in the case of the United States), who had both the leisure and financial means to allow for religious experimentation. In this category were those particularly attracted to Zen and Tibetan Buddhism. The second category was referred to as "export Buddhism" (also referred to as "evangelical Buddhism"), which was transmitted by dedicated and highly motivated missionaries. Sōka Gakkai, the Nichiren religious movement from Japan, serves as the primary example of this type. Nattier's third category was "baggage" or "ethnic Buddhism," which is the form that accompanies immigrants as they travel to a new land. To refer to Buddhism as "baggage," however, suggests something burdensome. Numerous studies show in fact that transplanted Buddhist institutions and communities serve as a source of empowerment and rich resource for living in a new and unfamiliar environment (Bloom 1998: 33; Kwon 2003: 211, 292–95; Suh 2004). In our study, therefore, we refer to this type as "heritage Buddhists," a term used by Paul Numrich (2003), which acknowledges that the culture and traditions from the old world are a positive resource and support for navigating life in the new one.

As W. S. Hickey (2010: 1) points out with regard to Buddhist forms in the USA, typologies can help us to analyze such matters as styles of practice, degree of institutional stability, mode of transmission, and ethnicity, but "[n]one accounts adequately for hybrids or for long-term changes within categories." Hickey is critical of categories based on ethnicity because of how easily they can lead to essentializing statements. Nonetheless, we are working with census data that uses ethnicity as a primary definition and believe that for the purpose of a survey article, based as it is on information from the census and Charities register, it can be

[2] A full discussion of questions of classification in relation to contemporary forms of Buddhism is beyond the scope of this article.

a useful starting point. For discussion of census data, we take our ethnicity categories from Statistics NZ.[3] For further differentiation, we use "heritage" for those we are inferring to be practicing Buddhism as part of their cultural and religious heritage. We use two terms interchangeably for those who do not have a Buddhist cultural heritage but have adopted Buddhism in some form: "non-heritage" and "convert". These categories are somewhat fraught, however. As Hickey (2010: 7) explains, "Because we cannot link nationality or ethnicity to religion so tidily, we cannot assume that any ethnically Asian person who begins to practice Buddhism in the United States is reverting to a heritage faith." Further, as she rightly points out, the ethnic-convert divide "tends to break down over time."

Thomas Tweed (2002) expanded on Nattier's typology and argued that in addition to "baggage bearers, importers, and exporters," it was necessary to recognize that there are many "sympathizers" or "night-stand Buddhists" who may never join an organized form of the religion, but who read books and magazines about Buddhism, practice meditation, and define themselves as Buddhist. This is a much broader category that takes self-definition as the starting point rather than the traditional indicators of a Buddhist as "one who takes refuge in the Three Jewels: the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha" (which assumes membership or belonging to a religious community). An accurate understanding of the place and role of Buddhism in contemporary Aotearoa requires that we include both the organizational or communal forms of the religion, as well as the lives of Buddhist practitioners who choose to pursue the path on their own. All of these categories are relevant for our consideration of the development of the multiple forms of Buddhism in New Zealand.

In preparing this study, we have drawn on multiple sources, including three decades of census data, a combination of background knowledge of Buddhist groups and organizations in New Zealand, and websites and social media maintained by organizations. We also draw on McAra's experience of visiting, communicating with, and following developments of Buddhist organizations around New Zealand, mostly while volunteering with the New Zealand Buddhist Council (from 2007 to the present).[4]

The article is in three parts. First, we provide a brief history of Buddhism in New Zealand. Second, we highlight major patterns of development gleaned from three decades of census data on religious identification. Third, we present findings from a preliminary inventory of Buddhist institutions and organizations to identify the flourishing of diverse cultural and sectarian traditions in recent decades. We argue that the current state of Buddhism in Aotearoa has been shaped by multiple factors, including the global circulation of Buddhist teachers and local initiatives, the transplantation of Buddhist traditions in Asian diaspora communities, and recent patterns of secularization and disaffiliation from organized religions. We conclude by outlining areas for future research that could advance our understanding of the varieties of Buddhism in Aotearoa.

The beginnings of Buddhism in Aotearoa[5]

The discovery of gold in New Zealand brought Chinese immigrants from the mid-1860s. While we have little information about the religious practices of early Chinese here, we know that they brought with them a mixture of Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian and ancestral traditions.

From the 1850s, antipodeans of British and European descent began to take an interest in Buddhism as a philosophy, influenced mainly by developments in Europe and North America. White Buddhists interpreted Buddhism on their own terms, drawing from translations of selected Buddhist texts and discarding elements

[3] Stats NZ uses six basic ethnic categories and one "residual" category: 1 European; 2 Māori; 3 Pacific Peoples; 4 Asian; 5 MELAA (Middle Eastern / Latin American / African); 6 Other ethnicity; 9 Not elsewhere included. The subsequent three levels allow for more detailed classifications; Level four has 180 categories.

[4] McAra has visited or communicated with over ten affiliate groups and 40–50 organizations, mostly around Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch (between 2007 and 2019).

[5] We base this section on a more detailed history in two articles about Buddhism in both Australia and New Zealand (Barker and McAra 2012; McAra and Halafoff forthcoming).

that they considered cultural accretions and "folk religion." Immigration from Asian countries, first with the arrival of refugees from Southeast Asia from the 1970s, and then through new immigration policy from the late 1980s, has resulted in major growth in the numbers of people identifying as Buddhist in New Zealand. Buddhists of Asian heritage form the majority (over two thirds) of those identifying as Buddhist since then (see below).

A significant factor in the growth of non-heritage Buddhism was the counter-cultural movements that led to a new surge of interest in alternative lifestyles and religions internationally, including in the Antipodes, as the post-World War II "baby-boomer" generation began entering adulthood in the 1960s and 1970s. Travel to Asian countries led to encounters with their religious practitioners, including Buddhist teachers. Some Westerners trained, for example, in monasteries or temples in places like Korea, Japan or Thailand, returning to teach and found Dharma centers and often inviting their teachers to visit their home countries. A further category of western-trained teachers emerged over time.

Groups that operated in the 1970s and 1980s were small, leading to collaboration across different traditions, pooling resources to bring a teacher from overseas to give public talks and lead retreats (2018: 24). Some long-term collaborations gave rise to several of the more lineage-specific organizations that exist today. For instance, in the case of Zen: in 1972, Zen students formed the Denkyo-ji Society, which brought the US-based Zen teacher Jōshū Sasaki to Aotearoa in 1973, and several more times to lead *sesshins* (retreats). It was renamed the Zen Society of New Zealand in 1984, and during the 1980s and 1990s, it operated as an umbrella group for Zen sitting groups in Auckland, Wellington, Nelson and Christchurch, and bringing Zen teachers to Aotearoa to run *sesshins* (McAra and Croucher 2014: 30–31). All of the Japanese-derived Zen organizations present in Aotearoa today trace their roots back to the collaborative Zen Society.

As in other countries, cooperation among Buddhist groups has led to the establishment of inter-Buddhist organizations. In 1984, for example, six Buddhist groups (including the Auckland Theravada Buddhist Association, Dorje Chang Institute, the Zen Society, Karma Choeling Buddhist Monastery, and the Vietnamese Buddhist Association) worked together to hold a Vesak Festival at the Auckland Museum (2018: 27). In the early 1990s, the Pan-Buddhist Association met, but it was short-lived. The New Zealand Buddhist Council (NZBC) launched in 2008, and since then it has operated as an umbrella group for Buddhist organizations around the country to work on areas of common concern, such as immigration issues for monastics and other teachers, and other issues that would benefit from collective action. Their activities have included: engaging in inter-Buddhist and Interfaith activities; facilitating a post-earthquake support network for Buddhist groups in Christchurch; presenting a trilingual edition of the Dhammapada to Parliament; and running training programs for Buddhist chaplains in conjunction with Amitabha Buddhist Hospice (2018: 10).

Immigration Policies, Asian Immigrants, and the Diversification of Buddhism

Changes in the government's policies regarding immigration in the late 1980s has significantly influenced the trajectory of Buddhism in New Zealand over the past three decades. For most of its colonial history, immigrants to New Zealand were largely from the United Kingdom and Ireland. This only began to change in the late 1950s and 1960s, when the demand for workers opened the doors to laborers drawn from the Pacific islands, such as Samoa, Tonga, and the Cook Islands (Spoonley and Butcher 2009: 356).

In the 1970s and 1980s, refugees from political unrest in South and Southeast Asia, including the Vietnam War, contributed to the numbers of migrants settling in the Antipodes. Trung Tran (2005) reports that in 1977, two years after the fall of Saigon, New Zealand approved the acceptance of 412 refugees from Vietnam and another 1,500 arrived between 1979 and 1980. Refugees from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam formed various associations and established temples from the 1980s. One example is Wat Lao Buddharam: the first Laotians arrived in 1979

under the refugee program; they founded their Auckland Wat (temple) in 1987 when they brought a monk here, and by 1989, they had purchased and adapted a suburban bungalow in Ōtāhuhu, Auckland.

The government passed new legislation on immigration policy in 1987, which shifted the criteria from "preferred country of origin" to a point system that prioritized education, work experience, and the potential for capital investment in New Zealand. These new conditions set the stage for a rapid increase in the number of immigrants from a range of Asian countries from the 1990s. As a result, these postwar waves of immigrants from the Pacific islands and Asia, "New Zealand went from being a destination for one of the most homogeneous immigration flows of any settler society, to recipient of one of the most diverse" (Spoonley 2015: 50). The arrival of successive waves of immigrants from South and Northeast Asia, which has been home to Buddhism for many centuries, has meant that many different Buddhist traditions and cultures have been transplanted to New Zealand.

As may be seen in Table 1, the number of residents identifying themselves as Buddhist has increased markedly between 1991 and 2018, from 12,705 to 52,779. In the first decade covered by this census data, the number identified as Buddhists of European ethnic background increased by 10 percent and represented 27.67 percent of the Buddhist population in 2001. Since that time, however, the growth among the Asian immigrant population has been the most significant factor shaping the religious demography. Their growth and a substantial drop in the number of Buddhists with European ethnic background between 2013 and 2018—almost 5,000—means that over 80 percent of Buddhists today identify with one of the Asian groups.

Table 1: Buddhist Population in New Zealand, 1991–2018 (New Zealand Census).[6]

	1991	1996	2001	2006	2013	2018
Total Buddhists	12,705	27,768	41,106	51,897	58,011	52,779
Buddhists of European Ethnic Background	2,214	5,520	11,373	11,103	13,560	8,646
	(17.43%)	(19.88%)	(27.67%)	(21.39%)	(23.37%)	(16.38%)
Total Population	3,345,813	3,466,515	3,586,731	3,860,163	4,011,399	4,699,755
% of Buddhists in Total Population	0.38 %	0.80%	1.15%	1.34%	1.45%	1.12%

We refer to these as "Asian Heritage Buddhists," a category that includes residents from Northeast Asia—Chinese, Korean, Japanese—as well as those from South and Southeast Asia (Sri Lanka, Sinhalese, Indian, Thai, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Burmese, and Laotian). Given the size of the Chinese population in New Zealand today—almost 250,000—which includes Chinese from Hong Kong, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, and Taiwan, it is not surprising that Chinese Buddhists are the largest group among the Asian communities in New Zealand. While the size of the immigrant group significantly shapes the numbers for the representative groups in Table 2, it is important to note that the overall level of religious identification varies widely between the groups (see Table -tbl. 3). In addition to the numbers represented by the Asian Heritage Buddhists, it is interesting to observe that Buddhist identification among Maori has increased from 195 in 1991 to 1,326 in 2018, and for Pacific peoples from 30 to 453 during this same period. Additional research will be required to explain these changes. Respondents may select more than one ethnic identity and we cannot gauge how significant any of these ancestral origins are for the respondents who ticked those options without qualitative information.

[6] The cycle of the National Census every five years was interrupted due to the impact of the major earthquake in Christchurch on 22 February 2011.

Table 2: Heritage Buddhist Population in New Zealand according to representative Ethnic Groups, 1991–2018. [Note: percentages indicate the proportion of Buddhists in New Zealand represented by the ethnic group.]

Asian Heritage Buddhists	1991	1996	2001	2006	2013	2018
Chinese	4,230 (33.3%)	11,445 (41.2%)	13,245 (32.2%)	15,855 (30.5%)	16,422 (28.3%)	11,838 (22.43%)
Sri Lankan	636 (5.01%)	1,473 (5.30%)	2,379 (5.79%)	3,396 (6.54%)	4,938 (8.51%)	7,722 (14.63%)[7]
Thai	618 (4.86%)	1,944 (7.00%)	3,309 (8.05%)	4,572 (8.81%)	5,901 (10.17%)	6,684 (12.66%)
Cambodian	2,553 (20.09%)	3,081 (11.10%)	3,747 (9.11%)	4,932 (9.50%)	5,961 (10.28%)	4,988 (9.45%)
Vietnamese	912 (7.18%)	1,389 (5.00%)	1,563 (3.80%)	2,157 (4.16%)	2,565 (4.42%)	2,397 (4.54%)
Japanese	471 (3.70%)	1,386 (4.99%)	1,578 (3.83%)	2,052 (3.95%)	2,172 (3.74%)	1,488 (2.82%)
Indian	30 (0.24%)	81 (0.29%)	246 (0.60%)	357 (0.69)	552 (0.95%)	798 (1.51%)
Korean	24 (2.76%)	678 (5.67%)	1047 (6.06%)	1,731 (3.33%)	1,239 (2.13%)	771 (1.46%)

The 2018 Census provides a more detailed breakdown for Buddhist identification, which includes the broad category of "Buddhism" (not further defined), which totals 44,355, and those that identify with a specific tradition within Buddhism: Mahayana (1,026), Theravada (4,851), Zen Buddhism (1,401), Nichiren (768), and Vajrayana (327). The three main yāna (Sanskrit and Pāli: "vehicle") of Buddhism are Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. Nichiren is a particular sectarian tradition within Mahayana that was established in thirteenth-century Japan, which inspired Buddhist reform movements in the twentieth century such as Sōka Gakkai. It is reasonable to assume that most of the Nichiren numbers are from this movement, which has established centers in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin. What still needs to be explored is whether these more specific identifications in the Census reflect organizational commitments and belonging to a particular center or temple within New Zealand.

The number of Asian Buddhists needs to be seen in relation to the main competitors in the religious economy. The relative strength or weakness of Buddhist identification among the Asian groups is revealed in the findings of the 2018 Census with regard to those residents claiming to have "no religion." We find that some groups arrive with a relatively secular outlook, which is contributing to the overall 48.2 percent of New Zealand residents who claim to be without religion. As may be seen in fig. 2, this is particularly the case for the northeast Asian groups—especially the Japanese and Chinese—while those from South and Southeast Asia tend to have a much stronger sense of religious identity.

While Buddhist identification remains high among some Asian ethnic groups, it has steadily declined in others. For the Chinese overall, Buddhist identification declined from 9.84 percent in 1991 to 5.9 percent in 2018, but

[7] The Sri Lankan population in New Zealand has grown steadily since the late 1980s civil war, and increased by 30% between 2013 and 2018—from 11,274 to 16,830—which included an increase of those identifying as Sinhalese Buddhists from 747 to 6,207. Without additional research, we are unable to explain this substantial increase or reconcile the figures for Sri Lankans and Sinhalese given that the total percentage of Sri Lankan Buddhists in New Zealand only increased from 44.5% to 45.9% during this period.

[8] Statistics New Zealand https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-ethnic-group-summaries//asian (accessed 12-2-2021).

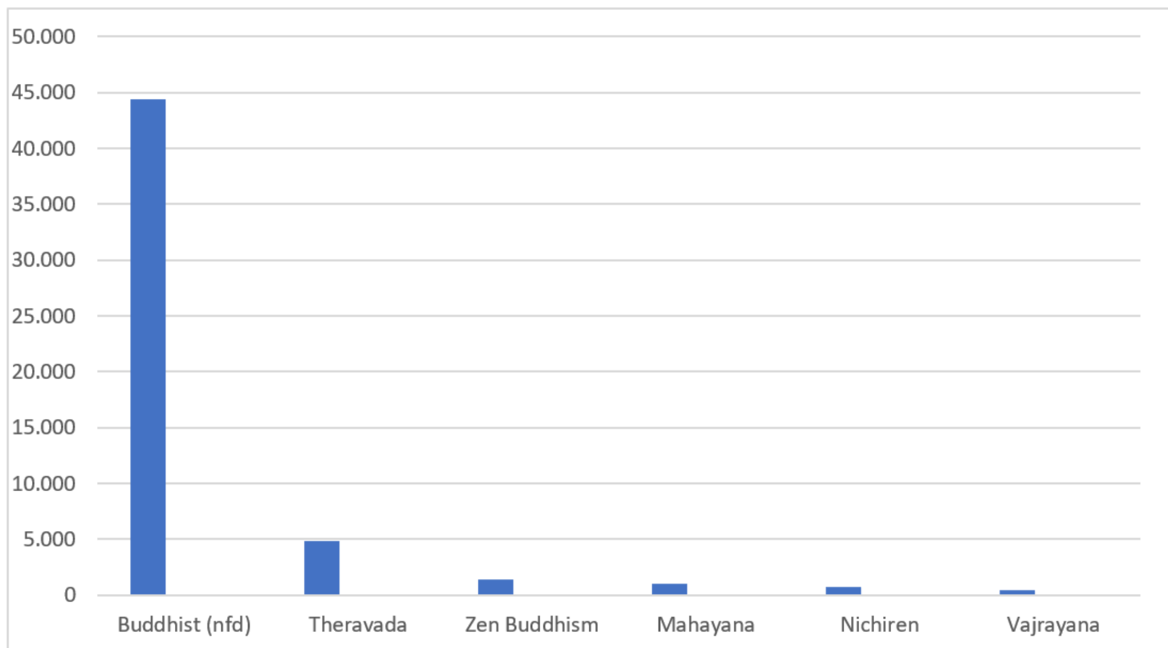

Figure 1: The Varieties of Buddhism in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand 2018).

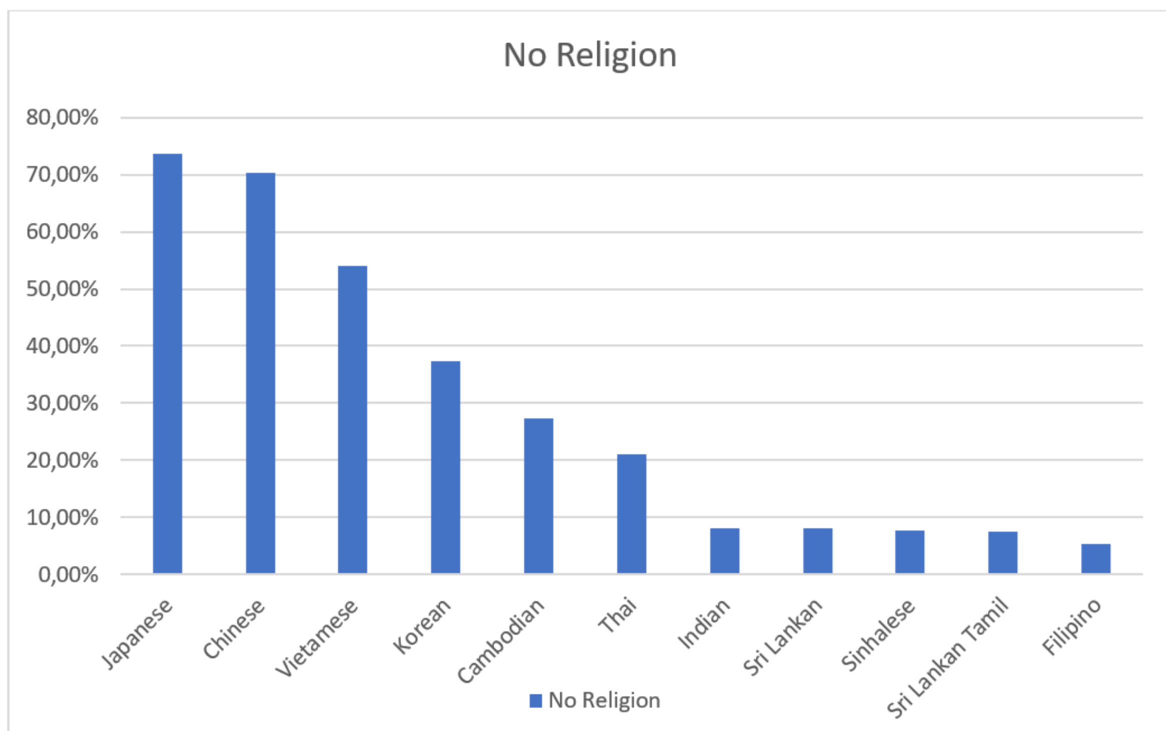

Figure 2: The percentage claiming "No Religion" among representative Asian groups (New Zealand Census, 2018).[8]

this varies considerably across the subcategories of Chinese included in the census. For example, 47.3 percent of Cambodian Chinese identify themselves as Buddhist, 25.1 percent of Vietnamese Chinese, 19.4 percent of Malaysian Chinese, 14.2 percent of Taiwanese, 5.8 percent for Singaporean Chinese, and 5.4 percent for Hong Kong Chinese.[9] Japanese identifying Buddhism as their religion in 1991 represented 17.70 percent of the Japanese subgroup, which declined to 8.2 percent in 2018. This is still higher than the number identifying with the other major Japanese tradition, Shinto, which is only 387 (2.24 percent). For the Korean population, those identifying themselves as Buddhist declined from 2.76 percent in 1991 to 2.2 percent in 2018. A striking feature of groups from Northeast Asia is that Christian identification exceeds Buddhist: Chinese 17.6 percent > 5.9 percent, Japanese 9.9 percent > 8.2 percent, and Korean 57 percent > 2.2 (see Table 3).

Table 3: Religious Identification by Ethnic Group (New Zealand Census 2018).

Ethnic Group	No Religion	Buddhist	Christian
Chinese	70.03	5.9	17.6
Japanese	73.7	8.2	9.9
Korean	37.4	2.2	57
Cambodian	27.3	54.1	8.1
Vietnamese	54.1	23.8	16.5
Thai	21.1	62.9	8.6
Sinhalese	7.7	67.7	21.9

Immigrant carriers of Buddhism from Southeast Asia, by contrast, have tended to arrive with a stronger traditional religious identification. For the Cambodians, Thai, and Sinhalese, Buddhist identification exceeds that claimed by the categories of "no religion" or "Christian." Although their populations are much smaller than the ethnic groups from Northeast Asia, they have clearly maintained a stronger connection with their Buddhist tradition. Some 619 Thai Buddhists in 1991 represented 65.4 percent of the ethnic group, which increased to 5,901 or 77.62 percent in 2018. Some 912 Buddhists from Vietnam represented 34.70 percent of the ethnic group in 1991, which increased to 2565 or 41.79 percent in 2018.

The Census data reviewed above indicates that Buddhist identification in New Zealand is concentrated in immigrant groups from Asia with roughly 80 percent of Buddhists identifying with one of the Buddhist traditions. The number of non-Asian Buddhists peaked at 27.67 percent of the Buddhist population in 2001 but declined to 16.38 percent in 2018. The total number of Buddhists declined from 58,011 in 2013 to 52,779 in 2018 (-5,232), but this is due primarily to the drop in the number of non-Asian Buddhists (-4,914). We can only speculate on the reasons for this decline, but we suggest that a large part of the non-Asian Buddhist cohort is aging; many converts first encountered Buddhist teachings in the 1960s-1970s. At the same time, at least for Pākehā (a Māori term used to designate a white New Zealander of European descent), as we noted in our discussion of Census data, identification with all kinds of organized religion is in decline. Further, trends come and go; in the 1970s Zen was more popular than it is today, while Tibetan Buddhism has seen much growth in the last two decades. Finally, the lower-than-expected rates of participation in the 2018 Census[10] may have influenced the response rate of some Buddhists, especially the older generations.

The 2018 Census provided the option to tick various other major branches of Buddhism, but the majority of respondents simply ticked Buddhist. This could be because they did not recognize the term that scholars

[9] Statistics New Zealand https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-ethnic-group-summaries//asian (accessed 9-8-2021).

[10] Participation in the 2018 Census dropped significantly compared to 2013, in part due to problems associated with the move from paper to online forms. See https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/customer-update-on-data-quality-of-2018-census.

might apply to their form of Buddhism (e.g. would a person newly identified with Sōka Gakkai want to tick "Nichiren Buddhism"? What option would a grandmother with limited English who practices a form of Pure Land Buddhism tick - would she even recognize the term "Mahayana Buddhism"? Would a practitioner in the Triratna Buddhist Community, which derives teachings from Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana, decide the easiest option is simply to tick "Buddhist"? The fact that the vast majority of those responding simply selected "Buddhist," rather than a specific sect or denominations, suggests that the sub-categories are not as meaningful to individuals as they are to the organizations we consider below.

Census statistics give us an indication of the overall numbers, and we can see broad trends such as a steady increase over the period in which immigration from Asian countries increased; we can also track an increase in Buddhists of non-heritage background, until a decrease in the 2018 census. Further analysis of Census data could investigate other attributes (e.g. country of birth, age etc.) of those who ticked a Buddhist option, perhaps revealing more information about the 2018 decrease.

Some Buddhists may be missing from the Census. Firstly, the religion question is not compulsory (6.6% of respondents did not declare their religion in 2018). Secondly, Census figures do not reveal the numbers of individuals who engage in some kind of Buddhist practice but choose not to identify as Buddhist, perhaps instead ticking "No religion." The range of such individuals is great, from Buddhist "sympathizers" (Tweed 2002) to long-term, committed meditators who practice in traditions such as Zen and Insight or Vipassana lineages. We might call such people "tacit" converts (Rahmani 2017).[11] A further creative response to the religion question in the census is, as McAra learned from a small sample of Zen practitioners, to tick both "No religion" and "Zen Buddhism," attempting to make the point that they did not consider Buddhism to be a religion.[12]

The diverse range of Buddhist centers in Aotearoa

Having analyzed census figures on how individuals identify (or not) as Buddhist, we now explore data about the numbers and types of the diverse Buddhist communities in contemporary Aotearoa. Our current count of Buddhist groups, temples, and centers (including affiliates) is 134, and this continues to grow.[13] Creating such a listing is fraught with challenges, not least that information is scarce for some groups, meaning that we have assigned categories to some groups based on inference. We identify the main issues in the discussion below, but we wish to stress that our list is a work in progress.[14]

To compile the provisional list of Buddhist organizations, a New Zealand Buddhist Council spreadsheet listing ninety Buddhist centers or temples that are registered charities provided an invaluable foundation.[15] Besides, this, we consulted two official registers: the Charities register website,[16] and the NZBN (New Zealand Business Number) register. The Charities register helped us to identify organizations registered as charities since the register was established in 2007; charities that already existed moved to this register at that time. The NZBN helped us to identify some historical organizations, and one not (yet) registered as a charity. Some Buddhist organizations (e.g., Diamond Sangha) have elected not to register as charities. We identified these via the internet or via McAra's connections with the New Zealand Buddhist Council, but it is likely we have missed

[11] We are drawing on Rahmani's PhD thesis here, but note that a monograph based on her work has now been published (Rahmani 2022).
[12] We know from anecdotal reports that many who engage in Buddhist practices do not consider their chosen form of Buddhism a religion.
[13] Between 2016 and 2020, fifteen new organizations appeared in the Charities register.
[14] Interested researchers may contact the authors to request a copy of this provisional list.
[15] In 2020, Robert Hunt and Pimmy Takdhada used personal Buddhist contacts, social media and the NZ Charities Register to compile a list of ninety Buddhist charitable organizations. They checked each organization's stated purpose on the register for affiliation to known Buddhist traditions or clear indication that they subscribed to the Three Refuges of Buddhism. They found further information about some groups via Facebook, Google web and map searches, and/or via personal contacts (email from Robert Hunt, 31 March 2021).
[16] Use of the Charities register data is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand License https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/nz/

newer and more informal Buddhist groups that meet in private homes, such as Sōka Gakkai followers gathering in living rooms to chant together. We have not included online-only communities, such as Facebook groups.

Two previous surveys of Buddhists and Buddhist organizations in Australia and New Zealand (Spuler 2002; Barker 2017) counted Buddhist listings (contact people, temples, and centers) in an online directory, BuddhaNet. This directory had sixty listings for New Zealand in 2000 (Spuler 2002:141), 108 in 2014 (Barker 2017: 367), and 117 in 2021 (BuddhaNet). However, a few entries are for local representatives and others are for organizations that do not qualify for our criteria for centers, temples or groups. The directory relies on organizations to enter and update their own listing. Thus many entries are out of date (e.g., many of the regional "Buddhist associations" no longer exist or in some cases have merged into another organization, e.g. to form a temple; others have relocated). Further, many new organizations do not appear in the directory. To focus on one city, the BuddhaNet directory page for Auckland currently lists thirty-three organizations that match the criteria we use for our provisional list,[17] while our list has fifty-four groups, temples or centers (in Auckland).

In identifying the number of organizations, we use a broad definition of Buddhism based on self-identification, which is why we include New Religious Movements with Buddhist roots, despite the view of some more traditional Buddhists that these NRMs do not qualify as Buddhist. We also counted organizations with a well-known connection to a Buddhist lineage even if they did not explicitly identify as Buddhist (e.g., the Vipassana Foundation).

When we say "Buddhism," we refer to the diverse communities of religious practice that explicitly state their primary religious connection to the Buddha, his teachings, and his community. We acknowledge that Buddhism *in practice* often incorporates elements of other religious and spiritual traditions. However, for the purposes of this preliminary research, we have excluded groups that appear to have a secondary relationship to Buddhism. A more comprehensive study would include them, since in many countries, people combine elements of Buddhism with other regionally-specific and local religious practices. In the Charities Register, we identified three religious organizations that combine Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. One of these was in Wellington and the other two in Auckland. For the purpose of our count, we have excluded these three, since their Rules documents on the Charities register appear to place Daoism or Confucianism first, with Buddhism as a secondary focus, while also recognizing that Daoist and Confucianist influences are present in many forms of Northeast Asian Buddhism.

Types of Organizations Included

Establishing consistent criteria for classifying, discussing and analyzing the numbers of organizations and their attributes will always be complicated, due to the varied and inconsistent ways in which they may be structured. Most Buddhist organizations listed in the Charities register are "places of assembly," such as meditation groups, temples and centers (Table 4). We also include groups that are not registered as charities but otherwise operate as community groups. We exclude the registered charities that are not primarily a place of assembly. These include the New Zealand Buddhist Council (an umbrella organization for Buddhist groups around the country); an organization to support *Bhikkhuni* ordination; the Amitabha Hospice; an aid organization (Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation [NZ]); and education (e.g., the Dhammachai International Research Institute).

[17] The directory has forty-two listings for Auckland, but we exclude nine from the count: one is a duplicate entry and the others serve different functions (e.g. education, hospice) so do not qualify for our criteria for centers, temples or groups. Four of the nine organizations listed apparently no longer exist.

Assigning categories that work across the diverse range of entities is difficult. Hugh Kemp (Kemp 2008: 13) notes the issues that arise in counting centers for his research into Buddhism in Aotearoa; different counts result from identifying groups by physical location, versus by lineage or organization name. In our provisional list of Buddhist organizations, we have glossed over some complexities to assign a general category, so Table 4 is an *approximate* indication of how Buddhist groups are organized in New Zealand. So, how do we decide if a group is an "affiliate" or an independent entity? We address this by identifying groups as affiliates if they are listed on the website of a parent organization, demonstrating their connection via the same lineage, organization name, or other common ground. Some affiliate groups are small and transitory, as they tend to rely on a cohort of highly committed individuals to stay active, while others are well-established. In some cases, we consider a group as an affiliate even if it is registered as a separate charity: for example, while Sōka Gakkai NZ has one registered charity and four affiliated groups around the country, the New Kadampa Tradition has four groups in different regions, each registered as a separate charity.[18]

Table 4: Buddhist communities and groups by mode of operation, 2021.

Affiliate groups (of Pākehā/multi-ethnic groups)	28
Affiliate groups (of multi-ethnic groups)	4
Affiliate groups (of migrant communities)	6
Center (various Pākehā/multi-ethnic and multi-ethnic groups)	27
Center (various migrant communities; includes five monasteries)	45
Center/retreat/monastery (various multi-ethnic)	2
Group (including four "convert meditation groups" and six "unknown/activities unclear")	14
Retreat center (non-monastic)	8
Total	**134**

We use three broad designations for our treatment of data that we have gathered about the centers/temples in this study: "migrant," "Pākehā/multi-ethnic" and "multi-ethnic." Migrant temples and centers serve specific migrant groups, maintaining culture and language as well as religious connections. Examples include the Chinese diaspora, Korean, Laotian, and Vietnamese communities. The Sri Lankan Buddhist community has many centers around New Zealand and runs regular meditation retreats as well as mindfulness summer camps for children. Other temples and centers are distinctly "multi-ethnic," with members of Asian Buddhist backgrounds and many other nationalities, and English is the lingua franca. Examples include the Theravada Buddhist Associations in Auckland and Wellington, and Sōka Gakkai International, which has branches in all four main cities. Generally, "Pākehā/multi-ethnic" centers serve primarily people who have encountered Buddhist teachings as adults, and often their immediate relatives are not Buddhist. While the majority of members are of Pākehā/European origins, a variable proportion are from other Asian and non-Asian ethnic backgrounds. Thus, this category overlaps with the "multi-ethnic" one. In Table 4, we separate non-monastic retreat centers from monastic ones, but the reality may be more complex. For instance, ordained monastics may sometimes reside at non-monastic retreat centers.

We use the words "temple" and "center" somewhat interchangeably to refer to Buddhist places of assembly; however, "temple" implies a place of religious ceremonies as well as more community-oriented activities, while "center" has a less religious tone, and is often used to refer to the places where primarily non-heritage

[18] In some cases, our decision to list a group as a separate organization rather than an affiliate was somewhat arbitrary. For instance, we list one entry for the Auckland Theravada Buddhist Association, even though it had two distinct locations (the Auckland Buddhist Vihara in the city and Vimutti Monastery to the south of the city), although further research could help us to develop and improve on our classification system.

Buddhists assemble. In some cases, despite internet and social media searches, we could not always ascertain if a group listed in the register was active as a temple or center, and whether it was an affiliate to another larger organization or not. Further research would involve contacting such groups, with the assistance of interpreters in some cases.

In Table 4, retreat centers and monasteries are subsets of other categories, due to the multi-purpose nature of most communities. Our list includes seven centers that in part function as residences for monastics that also run programs for lay Buddhists, the oldest being Bodhinyanarama near Wellington (established in 1983). Many include small cabins for individual retreats. None of these monasteries are on the large scale of training monasteries in countries with larger lay Buddhist populations, but are nonetheless significant to the development of Buddhism in New Zealand.

Organizational Affiliations According to Yāna

Table 5, showing New Zealand Buddhist organizations by yāna, indicates a fairly even spread. Compare this to Figure 1, where the majority of respondents identified as "Buddhist" without further definition. The even spread does not, however, imply an even spread of Buddhists of each yāna, since we do not have figures on the membership size for each affiliate group or center.

Table 5: Number of Buddhist Organizations (including Affiliates, Groups, and Centers), 2021.[19]

Tradition	Number
Theravada	43
Mahayana	46
Vajrayana	44
Other/mixed	1
Total organizations	**134**

In some cases, the organizations have self-identified as one or another yāna; in other cases, we have designated them for ourselves, based on what we know about the background of the center. We can assume that most if not all Buddhist organizations whose founders originate in Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka, or Thailand are likely to be based on Theravada Buddhism. Of course, it is important to be alert to exceptions. For instance, while most Korean Buddhist organizations can be classified as Mahayana, Satiarama Buddhist Monastery, near Kerikeri in Northland, is an exception. The Satiarama website refers to the Monastery as part of the "Zen-Theravada Tradition," which it considers to be "a balanced combination of Zen Buddhism with Theravada Tradition."[20]

Countries of Origin

In this table listing the source country or ethnic makeup of Buddhist centers around New Zealand, we have contrasted those that specialize in serving a particular immigrant community with others, that is, the six centers that are either multi-ethnic, or the sixty-five that are predominantly Pākehā but with other nationalities and ethnic groups present.

[19] This count is approximate, due to the difficulty of determining the status of some organizations.
[20] https://santipada.co.nz/santipada/, accessed 4 April 2021.

Table 6: Buddhist Organizations according to National Origin, 2021.

Country	Number
Burma/Myanmar	1
Cambodian/Khmer	9
Chinese diaspora (14) and Taiwan/Chinese diaspora (4)	18
Korean	5
Laotian	2
Multi-ethnic	7
Pākehā/multi-ethnic (including 32 affiliate groups)	65
Sri Lankan/Sinhalese	9
Thai	13
Vietnamese	5
Total	**134**

The "Pākehā/multi-ethnic" centers are labeled as such because on the one hand, the majority group appears to be NZ European (Pākehā), but on the other, such centers include people of diverse origins, including a few of Buddhist heritage. Given that non-heritage Buddhists number far fewer than heritage Buddhists in the census, it might seem surprising that sixty-five groups are listed here. However, this figure includes thirty-two affiliate groups, such as those that belong to three long-term Zen groups—the Diamond Sangha, Mountains and Rivers Order, and the Order of Interbeing—which are spread around the country with small numbers of attendees who meet either in a member's private residence or in a rented venue. The majority of these groups resemble Ann Gleig's category of "meditation-based convert American Buddhist groups" (2019), since for most, meditation is the main activity that members engage in; however, other activities may also include Dharma talks, study, ceremonies, and chanting services. Also noticeable in our count of the Pākehā/multi-ethnic group: almost half (including seven of the affiliates) follow some form of Tibetan Buddhism/Vajrayana. In Tibetan Buddhist groups, additional activities related to Vajrayana Buddhism may take place such as attending tantric initiations, and there may be a stronger emphasis on merit-making (McAra 2009: 101–14). Meditation is of course also an important activity in many heritage-based and multi-ethnic groups.

We identify "Taiwan/Chinese diaspora" as a subset of the broader category of "Chinese diaspora". This is because while we were aware of some Taiwanese organizations, we did not have the information about source countries for most Chinese organizations. The Chinese diaspora category includes several organizations with Tibetan Buddhist teachers (e.g., the Drom-Don-Ba Buddhist Society).[21]

Another point to note is that the census question on religion does not provide an option to state whether the respondent had always identified with or has converted to a particular religious identity; so we infer based on country of birth and/or ethnic identity. This inference, once again, has its problems, such as the fact that it may overlook heritage Buddhists answering the census question may have an ethnic identity not often associated with heritage Buddhism and/or been born in a non-Buddhist country. Because our analysis is at the level of broad generalizations rather than fine ethnographic nuance, we continue with such terms, flagging the problems at appropriate points.

[21] Han Chinese in mainland Chinese cities often engage with Tibetan Buddhism (Denton Jones 2021), so it is unsurprising to note this phenomenon in New Zealand.

One striking difference between the recent immigration from Asia to New Zealand and earlier waves to North America and Latin America is that established Buddhist denominations from Japan have been less active in sending Buddhist teachers or missionaries to care for the immigrant communities. Over a century ago, for example, Japanese immigrants to the United States and Canada began to organize Buddhist associations and petitioned Nishi Honganji, the Mother Temple of one of the Jōdo Shinshū (True Pure Land) schools in Kyoto, to send priests to care for their religious needs and establish temples. Over the decades, some 80 temples were established and largely cared for by missionary priests (*kaikyōshi*) sent from Japan (Kashima 1977; Ikuta 1981; Mullins 1988, 2010). Similarly, the Japanese Buddhist missions followed immigrants to Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America from the 1950s to established temples and centers to care for both immigrants and non-Japanese. After almost a half-century of missionary activity in Brazil, a significant institutional presence of Buddhism had been established by multiple denominations, including Nishi Honganji with thirty-seven temples, Higashi Honganji with eighteen, Nichirenshū, Shingonshū, and Sōtōshū with four temples each, and Jōdoshū with three (Rocha 2006: 36–37).

In New Zealand, by contrast, we have seen no evidence of a similar lay initiative among Japanese immigrants or any record of even one missionary being sent by established Buddhist denominations to care for the Japanese community or establish a temple. The meager presence of transplanted Japanese Buddhist traditions is undoubtedly related to the decline in Buddhist self-identification in recent decades as well as a weakening of established Buddhist institutions in Japan. Most established denominations are in serious decline due to aging and the low birth rate, and a shortage of priests, which means that financial resources to support overseas work are limited and there are fewer priests available to send overseas. However, New Zealand's branch of Sōka Gakkai (SGINZ) can trace its origins to Mrs Yuki Johnston, from Hiroshima who married a Kiwi soldier in 1964. From the mid-1960s, she worked to bring Nichiren Buddhism to her new homeland, resulting in the establishment of the first SGI "district" or local chapter in 1975.[22] Today, SGINZ is a very ethnically diverse organization.

Japanese Buddhism had another path into Aotearoa via Zen teachers (rōshi) who traveled to the United States over the decades, transmitting both Sōtō and Rinzai traditions and establishing a number of centers, which their American disciples have carried on. Some US-based Zen teachers visited Aotearoa; the first Zen teacher to visit was the Japanese-born Jōshū Sasaki, as mentioned above.[23] However, the organizations that have grown around these Zen teachers appeal mainly to a non-Japanese audience. Thus, the Buddhist missionary presence from Japan has not been entirely absent, though established denominations have not been directly engaged.

As for other northeast Asian sources, there are five Korean Buddhist temples and a significant Taiwanese Buddhist presence (see Table 6). The main Chinese/Taiwanese examples are all in Auckand: the Tsi Ming temple (established in 1990), Pu Shien temple (established in 2000), and the Fo Guang Shan temple, the largest Buddhist temple in the country, which opened in 2007. Fo Guang Shan is a major international Buddhist network with roots in Taiwan. Located in the suburb of Flat Bush, this grand temple was designed in the Tang Dynasty style, and cost some NZ$20 million. In addition to providing the space for religious services and practices, its facilities are used as a community center and includes space for educational activities, including a Chinese School, an art gallery, and a teahouse. In the South Island, Fo Guang Shan has built a modern temple complex in Christchurch, which similarly offers facilities for both religious and cultural activities for the larger community. The photos below provide some visual examples of the variety of Buddhist centers and temple complexes that have appeared across the country.

[22] Personal communication with Camilla Browne. See also the SGINZ website https://sginz.org/about/

[23] Hogen Daido Yamahata, a Zen teacher who is lives in Japan and has students in Australia, visited in 1995. More recently, Ekai Korematsu Osho from Tokozan Jikishoan, a Soto Zen temple in Melbourne has visited to teach at a Buddhist Summer School hosted by Nyima Tashi, a Tibetan Buddhist center in Auckland).

Figure 3: Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Temple, Auckland, 2018. (Photo by M. Mullins)

Figure 4: A part of the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Temple complex in Auckland, 2018. (Photo by M. Mullins)

Figure 5: Srilankaramaya Buddhist temple, Ōtāhuhu, Auckland, after a blood donation drive in 2018. The temple holds such drives regularly. (Photo courtesy of Srilankaramaya Buddhist temple)

Figure 6: Invited speakers from several traditions at a seminar called "Buddhist Perspectives on Caring for the Dying and Deceased," held at Bodhinyanarama Monastery near Wellington in 2010. (Photo by Euan Krogh)

Figure 7: Pākehā/convert Buddhist communities: Zen priest Ven. Amala Wrightson (in robe) with a family participating in the "Bathing the Baby Buddha" celebration of the Buddha's Birthday (2010). (Photo courtesy of Auckland Zen Centre)

Figure 8: Laotian community in New Zealand: Wat Lao Buddharam, Ōtāhuhu, Auckland. (Photo by Vou Phommahaxay)

Figure 9: Laotian New Year celebrations in 2017: Wat Lao Buddharam, Ōtāhuhu, Auckland. (Photo by Vou Phommahaxay)

Figure 10: Buddhist Peace Walk held in 2018 in Ōtautahi/Christchurch, attended by Buddhist communities of the region, and representatives of the NZ Buddhist Council. (Photo by John Herrett)

In an earlier effort to map the new religious institutions established by immigrants from China, Japan, and Korea, Mullins (2018) identified over 200 ethnic temples, churches, and religious centers established by Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans in recent decades. What is striking is that 90 percent of these ethnic religious organizations are Christian.[24] Koreans have been by far the most entrepreneurial as far as religion is concerned and established 59 percent of all churches and temples. As mentioned above, we have no record of Japanese immigrants organizing a Buddhist temple related to one of the established denominations in Japan, which was the common pattern among immigrants in the Americas over the past century. Only Sōka Gakkai International has had a presence in New Zealand since the 1960s. It has an international, rather than ethnic-Japanese, membership.

Geographic Distribution of Buddhist Organizations

Looking at how the 134 Buddhist communities and groups are distributed around the country, we find that they are concentrated in the greater Auckland region (43 percent of the 134 communities and groups). Auckland is the largest and the most ethnically and religiously diverse city in New Zealand, and had a population of 1.5 million in 2018. The number of individuals identifying with an Asian ethnicity in Auckland has reached 442,671 or 28.2 percent (2018 Census). The five largest Asian-born groups in Auckland are Chinese, Indian, Korean, Filipino and Sri Lankan. Regarding New Zealand-born people of Asian ethnicity, as Wardlow Friesen (2015: 21) notes, "Over 20 percent of the Chinese and Indian populations are New Zealand born. Some of these are descendants of much earlier migrations from the 19th century onwards, while others are the children of more recent migrants."

Regarding the rest of the country, outside of the four main cities, in Table 7 we can see a higher concentration nearer Auckland, and noticeably fewer in the southern South Island. This reflects the distribution of Asian-born people in New Zealand.

Table 7: Geographical Distribution of Buddhist Organizations, 2021.

Cities:	
Auckland	58
Wellington	20
Christchurch/Canterbury	17
Dunedin	5
Other regions:	
Coromandel	4
East Coast North Island	3
Hamilton/Waikato/Rotorua/BOP	9
Manawatū-Whanganui	4
Nelson/Marlborough	9
Northland	2
Otago	1
Southland	2
Total	**134**

Further analysis of publicly available information about the social forms of Buddhism could explore the number of nationwide organizations that bring members of their affiliate groups together (for instance, the

[24] See Butcher and Weiland (2013) for a treatment of the strong Christian presence among Koreans in New Zealand.

Diamond Sangha and the Mountains and Rivers Order each offer their members an annual *sesshin* at a South Island location).

Conclusion

Our study provides a preliminary survey of the state of Buddhism in contemporary Aotearoa and the major patterns of development in recent decades. We recognize that there are serious gaps in our coverage since we have largely relied on census data and publicly available information about organized religions. The study of Buddhism in Aotearoa has barely begun. A more comprehensive survey would entail communication and visits with diverse Buddhist groups around the country. We conclude by suggesting a number of areas that will require further research to deepen our understanding of the processes whereby Buddhists of such diverse traditions are transplanting, adapting, and practicing in this new cultural context.

First, detailed ethnographic studies of the heritage Buddhist communities are needed for us to fully appreciate the multiple roles played by these faith groups in the lives of new immigrants. Some studies already have indicated how important these faith communities are for new immigrants as they adjust to life in New Zealand and seek to preserve links to their countries of origin and pass on the language and culture to successive generations. A recent study of immigrants from Cambodia and Thailand residing in Auckland, for example, highlighted the role of Buddhist temples in these Southeast Asian ethnic communities as sites for socialization and support (Ngin et al. 2020: 307–10). At the same time, the study discovered that generational divisions, personal conflicts, and political differences—particularly among Cambodians due to home-country political affiliations—had caused dissension and schism, which led some to build a new temple to cater to those with the appropriate loyalties in the old country (2020: 310; see also Liev 2008).

Second, the transnational dimension of Buddhist communities is an area that should receive focused attention in future studies, particularly with regard to New Zealand's closest neighbor, Australia. It is apparent in the personal and emotional links with the motherland as well as the dependence in some cases upon the Buddhist headquarters back home to fund and provide priests or monastics to serve in temples in New Zealand. We anticipate that the covid-19 pandemic will have a significant impact on Buddhism in Aotearoa, particularly the heritage Buddhist communities. Due to international travel restrictions and some calls for a reduction in the number of immigrants allowed into the country each year, one can surmise that it will become more difficult to obtain residency visas for foreign religious workers. Also, if immigration numbers are curtailed, it would negatively affect these communities that so often depend upon the steady arrival of new immigrants to replenish and revitalize their communities as some Kiwi-born generations drift away from these affiliations.

The issue of transnationalism is hardly limited to heritage Buddhist groups. Multi-ethnic groups also participate in larger global networks and share teachers and resources for study and training. Buddhist organizations in New Zealand, as Hugh Kemp (2008: 9) notes, are largely "derivative" in that they source much of their teachers, practice and material culture from parent organizations overseas. Hadleigh Tiddy (c. 2015) suggests a modification to existing models of the transplantation of Buddhism into western countries, noting that convert Buddhism in New Zealand is often not imported *directly* from Asian Buddhist monasteries, temples and centers, but rather, *via other countries* in which Buddhism "westernized." Indeed, the primary source countries for non-heritage Buddhist centers in New Zealand are the UK, USA, Canada, and Australia. However, as Kemp (2008) and McAra (2007) show, no Buddhist group in New Zealand is solely derivative; each group develops local adaptations over time, an important area for future investigation. In addition, some New Zealand-born and/or New Zealand-based Buddhist teachers are involved in teaching overseas, so a consideration of outward flows should be part of this exploration (McAra 2014).

Third, it is apparent that much religious practice takes place outside of Buddhist temples and centers, and census data indicates that there are many who identify as Buddhist who are not involved in one of its communities. This means that researchers will need to employ survey research or find other ways to access individuals and households to ascertain how Buddhist practices shape everyday life for those unaffiliated with any of its institutional forms. A study of virtual Buddhism in Aotearoa could explore how the internet, social media and smart phone apps make overseas Buddhist teachings and practices accessible locally, often to individuals in their own homes, and much amplified since the covid-19 pandemic.

Fourth, studies of Buddhism in other non-Asian contexts have observed that hybrid or combinatory approaches often appear among religious seekers who accept various denominational traditions as potential resources to draw upon in developing a Buddhist practice appropriate to their situation (Kemp 2008; McAra 2007; Tiddy c. 2015). How have Buddhist communities in Aotearoa developed a meaningful practice for their local context? To what extent do practitioners embrace an eclectic and non-sectarian approach to Buddhism? How do Buddhist communities differ in terms of denominational loyalty? Are the new Buddhist communities similar to other post-denominational Buddhist movements elsewhere that operate independently of the leadership and authority of sectarian headquarters in Asia?

Fifth, in addition to documenting the distinctive Buddhist traditions that have been transplanted from abroad and newly developed locally, we need to consider the development of collaborative initiatives among a variety of Buddhist groups, and with other faiths.

Finally, we should examine the wider impact or influence of Buddhism in Aotearoa. Some years ago, Wuthnow and Cadge (2004) demonstrated that Buddhism's influence extended beyond the number of actual adherents in the USA. While the permeation of Buddhist ideas into mainstream society is less researched in Aotearoa, Buddhism appears to have a similarly high proportion of sympathizers (McAra 2007: 44–45); indeed, recent surveys suggest that Buddhists are the most trusted religious group in both countries (Chapple and Prickett 2019). A survey conducted shortly after the Christchurch mosque shootings of 19 March 2019, for example, asked respondents "how much they trusted people from different religious groups living in New Zealand." Simon Chapple reports that it was the small minority religious group, Buddhists, which was the "most trusted" religious group: "More people feel positively about Buddhists than not—35 percent of New Zealanders have complete or lots of trust in Buddhists, while 15 percent have little or no trust." Another religious minority in contemporary New Zealand, Evangelical Christians, were identified as "the least trusted religious group" in which only "21 percent have complete or lots of trust, while 38 percent have little or no trust."[25] What is it about the Buddhist presence in New Zealand that garners this degree of relative trust among the largely non-Buddhist population? Buddhist concepts and practices underpin some psychological techniques, such as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). Does the prevalence of MBSR for therapeutic purposes contribute to the generally positive public attitude towards Buddhism? What are other contributing factors?

We suggest it would also be valuable to explore the local extent to which international, "postmodern" Buddhism (Gleig 2019) and "postglobal" Buddhist identity politics (Hickey 2010; Borup 2020) manifest in Aotearoa, and in particular with respect to issues such as the dynamics of white privilege of non-heritage Buddhists in relation to those of Asian and Buddhist heritage. Other areas such as exploring engagement by *tangata whenua* (Māori) and Pasifika peoples with Buddhism could be explored. This is just to name a few facets of identity politics as they pertain to Buddhism in Aotearoa as a settler-colonial society.

[25] Simon Chapple, "Survey reveals which religions New Zealanders trust most–and least–after shootings [https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/news/2019/08/survey-reveals-which-religions-new-zealanders-trust-most-and-least-after-shootings] (accessed 3 April 2021).

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