



Silver Screen Buddha: Buddhism in Asian and Western Film

Sharon A. Suh

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How do contemporary films depict Buddhists and Buddhism? What aspects of the Buddhist tradition are these films keeping from our view? By repeatedly romanticizing the meditating monk, what kinds of Buddhisms and Buddhists are missing in these films and why?

Silver Screen Buddha is the first book to explore the intersecting representations of Buddhism, race, and gender in contemporary films. Sharon A. Suh examines the cinematic encounter with Buddhism that has flourished in Asia and in the West in the past century – from images of Shangri-La in Frank Capra's 1937 *Lost Horizon* to Kim Ki-Duk's 2003 international box office success *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter...and Spring*.

The book helps readers see that representations of Buddhism in Asia and in the West are fraught with political, gendered, and racist undertones. *Silver Screen Buddha* draws significant attention to ordinary lay Buddhism, a form of the tradition given little play in popular film. By uncovering the differences between a fictionalized, commodified, and exoticized Buddhism, *Silver Screen Buddha* brings to light expressions of the tradition that highlight laity and women, on the one hand, and Asian and Asian Americans, on the other. Suh engages in a re-visioning of Buddhism that expands the popular understanding of the tradition, moving from the dominance of meditating monks to the everyday world of raced, gendered, and embodied lay Buddhists.

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