

Buddhism

William E. Deal

There will be a focus on the dynamics of cultural interaction, especially the importance of religion for immigrant communities in their adjustment to a new cultural environment. Religious values, rituals, and traditions are an important part of cultural identity and community cohesion. The establishment of a people's religious practice in their new national environment helps secure and maintain a sense of identity amidst the challenges and adjustments of a new life. There will also be a focus briefly on how religion changes as a result of its practice in a new cultural setting, especially with the changing ideas that later generations bring to bear on the religion's traditions, rituals, and doctrines. This discussion will touch on the experience of Buddhist immigrants to the United States, and the impact that Buddhism has had on American culture. Buddhism has also moved beyond immigrant communities and impacted communities not traditionally Buddhist. Buddhism has become an American religion through its practice by Americans whose families were traditionally Buddhist, and through its adoption particularly by Americans from traditionally Christian or Jewish families.