

*Arts of Asia Lecture Series Spring 2012*  
*The Arts of South Asia & the Himalayas: The Sacred & the Secular*  
*Sponsored by The Society for Asian Art*  
**The Road to the Four Mansions: An Introduction to Theravada Buddhist  
Teachings in Southeast Asia**

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This lecture is divided into two parts which ambitiously attempt to both provide a general introduction to Theravada Buddhist teachings while questioning the very idea that there is a single school or set of teachings that can fall under the rubric Theravada. Using the four noble truths and the eightfold noble path as the foundation of the Theravada teachings, I provide an alternative interpretation of the categories of sila (monastic and lay precepts), samadhi (meditation and power), and panna (wisdom and empathy).

In the second half of the lecture, I turn more specific by looking at different sources for ethical teaching outside of the four noble truths. These sources include the Pali and vernacular (Burmese, Thai, Lao, Khmer, Khmer, Shan, Leu, Mon) narratives from the collections known as the Dhammapada-Atthakatha, Jataka, Chadok Nok Nibat, Pannasa-Jataka, Pakaranam, Anisong, Avadana, Tamnan, and others. These stories often include themes of love, passion, attachment, and feature characters of not often thought of as “Buddhist” like magicians, hermits, supernatural hybrid forest creatures, and giants. These characters often appear in art throughout the region and are drawn from not only from the Pali tradition but from Mahayana and Tantric texts and practices. It is my hope that exposing these other sources will question the association of the Theravada with Southeast Asian Buddhism.

Part one

- Is there a central teaching for “Theravada” Buddhism?
- Four Noble Truths
- Sila and Vinaya

- Samdhi and Meditation
- Panna and the Brahmaviharas

## Part two

- Systematic versus Narrative Teachings
- Dhammapada-Atthakatha
- Jatakas
- Vernacular Buddhist Texts
- The Theravada Tantra
- Is there such a thing as the Theravada?

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