

## STAIRWAY TO NIRVĀNA

A Study of the Twenty *Samghas* Based on the Works of Tsong kha pa  
JAMES B. APPLE

*Discusses an essential Tibetan Buddhist work that shows how Noble Beings progress toward enlightenment.*

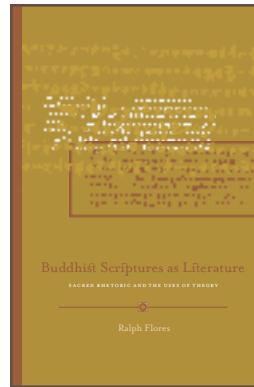
James B. Apple examines one of the formative subjects in traditional Buddhist studies, the Twenty Varieties of the *Samgha*. The *Samgha* (community) is one of the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, *Samgha*) universally revered by all Buddhists. While the *Samgha* is generally understood as the community of Buddhist ordained monks and nuns, along with lay adherents, the Twenty Varieties of the *Samgha* concerns an exemplary community of the twenty types of Noble Beings (*ārya-pudgala*) who embody the Buddha's teachings. Focusing on the interpretation of the *Samgha* given by the fourteenth-century Tibetan scholar Tsong kha pa, Apple provides a comprehensive typology and analysis of the stages through which Noble Beings pass in their progress toward enlightenment through multiple lifetimes in various cosmological realms. He explains the cosmographic formations and complex structures of Buddhist spiritual cultivation, illustrating how Tibetan and Indian Buddhists conceptualize all possible states on the path to enlightenment.

"Dealing with an interesting and understudied topic, Apple displays a thorough mastery of the *Samgha* in the *Abhisamayālamkāra* and its surrounding literature."

— Roger R. Jackson, translator of *Tantric Treasures: Three Collections of Mystical Verse from Buddhist India*

**JAMES B. APPLE** is University Lecturer in the Interdisciplinary Religious Studies Program at the University of Alberta in Canada.

**MARCH** • 252 pp.  
16 tables, 2 figures  
\$75.00 hc 978-0-7914-7375-7



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RALPH FLORES

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**RALPH FLORES** teaches literature at Thammasat University in Thailand and is the author of *A Study of Allegory in Its Historical Context and Relationship to Contemporary Theory*.

**FEBRUARY** • 212 pp.  
\$65.00 hc 978-0-7914-7339-9