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The making of Buddhism in modern Indonesia: South and Southeast Asian networks and agencies, 1900-1959

Yulianti

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THE MAKING OF BUDDHISM IN MODERN INDONESIA

SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN NETWORKS AND AGENCIES,
1900-1959



YULIANTI

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THE MAKING OF BUDDHISM IN MODERN INDONESIA

South and Southeast Asian Networks and Agencies,
1900-1959

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Promotores

Prof. dr. J.J.L. Gommans

Prof. dr. Bambang Purwanto (Universitas Gadjah Mada)

Co-promotor

Dr. C.M. Stolte

Promotiecommissie

Prof. dr. D.E.F. Henley

Prof. dr. M. Bloembergen

Prof. dr. P.J.C.I van der Velde (Radboud Universiteit)

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To my late father Samiran: I love you.

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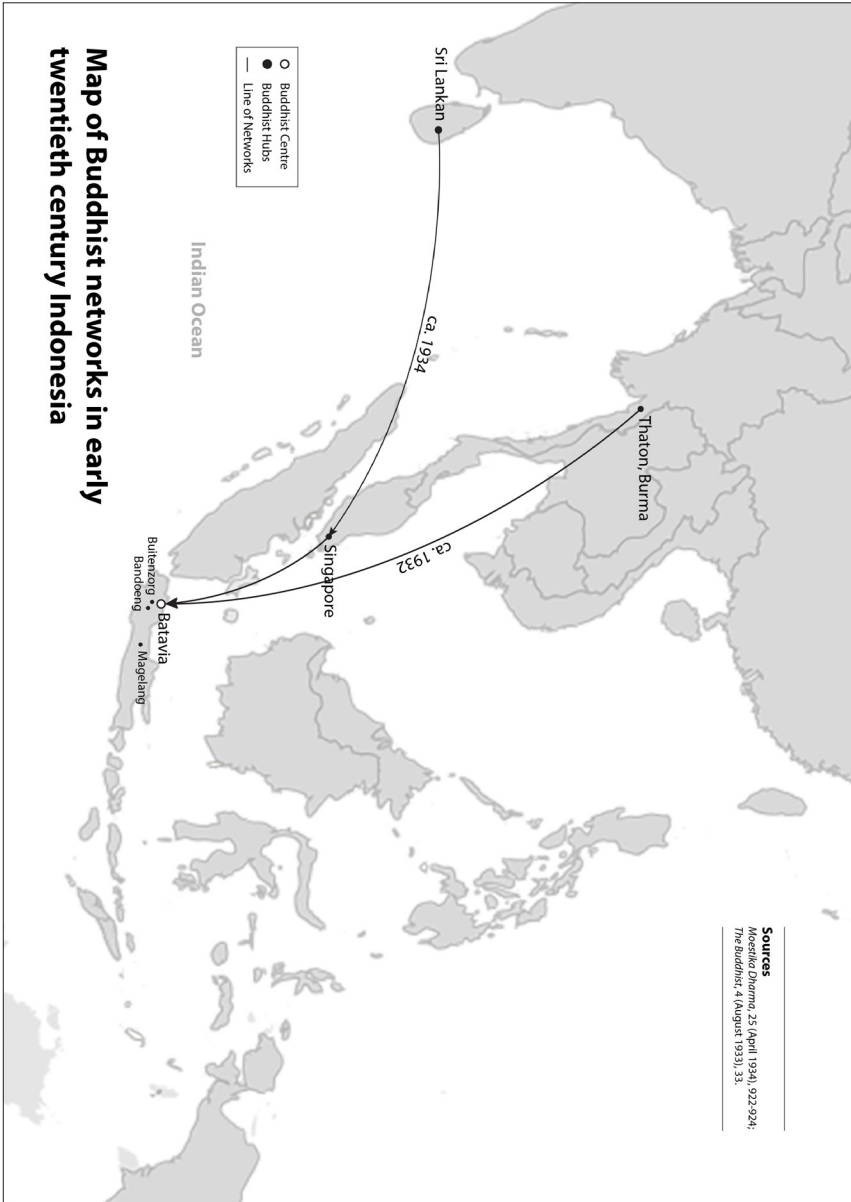
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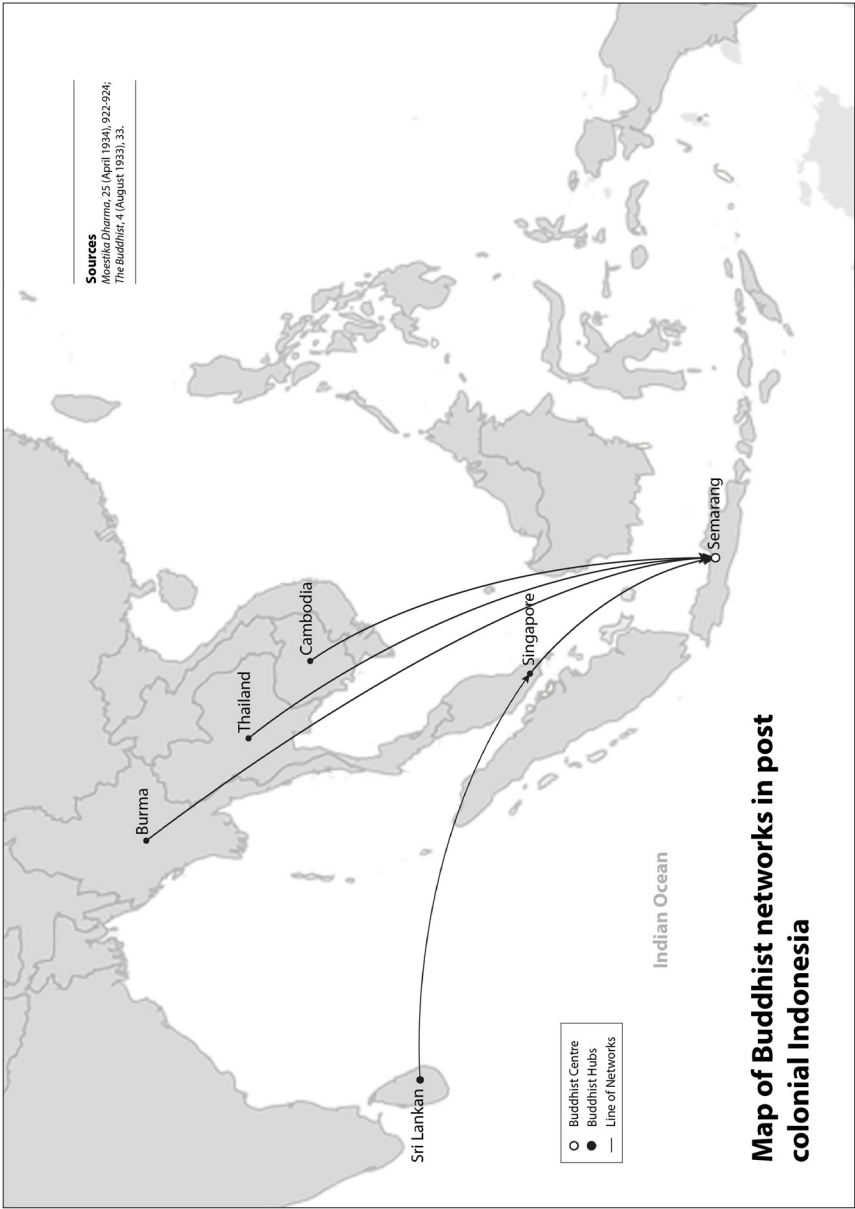
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Maps of Buddhist Networks in Early Twentieth Century Indonesia



Maps of Buddhist Networks in Post-colonial Indonesia



Maps of Buddhist Centre and Hubs in Post-Colonial Indonesia



List of Abbreviations

BBA	: Batavia Buddhist Association
BTS	: Buddhist Theosophical Society
CHH	: Chung Hua Hui
CMH	: Chie Mey Hwee
GSKI	: Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia
HCS	: Hollandsch Chineesche School
IBM	: International Buddhist Mission
INC	: Indian National Congress
JBA	: Java Buddhist Association
KKH	: Khong Kauw Hwee
KOWANI	: Kongres Wanita Indonesia
NITV	: Nederlandsche Indische Theosofische Vereeniging
PAKEM	: Pengawas Aliran-Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat
PBDB	: Persatuan Buddhist Denpasar Bali
PBT	: Persatuan Buddhis Tengger
PERBUDHI	: Perhimpunan Buddhist Indonesia
Perwathin	: Persatuan Warga Theosofi Indonesia
PNI	: Partai Nasional Indonesia
PTI	: Partai Tionghoa Indonesia

PTS	: Pali Text Society
PUUI	: Persaudaraan Upasaka Upasika Indonesia
SBL	: Singapore Buddhist Lodge
SKH	: Sam Kauw Hwee
THHK	: Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan
WES	: Women's Educational Society of Ceylon
WFB	: World Fellowship of the Buddhists
YMBA	: Young Men's Buddhist Association

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Introduction

This dissertation focuses on the making of Buddhism in modern Indonesia, with an emphasis on the transnational networks that mediated the (re) introduction of Buddhism in the Indonesian archipelago. By doing so, this dissertation provides a corrective to several common historiography trends in two ways. First and most importantly, it focuses on Buddhism in modern Indonesia within the framework of religious revivalism. Second, by viewing the late-colonial and early post-colonial period as a continuum in which Buddhism continued to take root, it seeks to connect developments that are often broken up by the demarcation line of independence.

Several scholars have attempted to historicize the presence of Buddhism in Indonesia. By placing Buddhism within the framework of revivalism, Iem Brown an Australian scholar, who also wrote about contemporary Indonesian Buddhism and monotheism, argues that Buddhist resurgence started in the nineteenth century, during which time Buddhism visibly made a return in Indonesia.¹ She further argues that Buddhist revivalism was in many ways influenced by external figures, and especially notes the importance of visiting Buddhist monks from Sri Lanka. Brown also maintains that global religious movements were a broader feature of the era and that in colonial Indonesia,

1 Buddhism was mostly left unrecorded and disappeared after thirteenth century.

Islam underwent a similar revitalization.² She claims that Islam, as the majority religion in Indonesia, played a significant role in the religious renaissance of the region. Within this framework, Brown sees the Buddhist revival as part of a larger (mostly Islamic) revival.³

In a broad historical survey of Buddhism in colonial Indonesia, Yoneo Ishii also views Buddhist history through the lens of revivalism. Ishii divides his study into two parts. The first part covers the period before the Second World War, in which he alludes to the role of the Theosophical Society in the process of Buddhist revivalism. Although he states that this period was not the focus of his research, he does discuss the individuals and groups involved in the process of Buddhist revival on Java. The second part of Ishii's work is devoted to the period from independence to 1952.⁴

Bhikkhu Budi Utomo Ditthisampanno, an Indonesian Buddhist scholar, has also studied Buddhist revival in Indonesia.⁵ By surveying a broad time frame starting from the early historical period of Buddhism, Ditthisampanno recounts how Buddhism first arrived on Javanese soil and describes the golden era of Buddhism during the Syailendra dynasty.⁶ He discusses how Buddhism re-emerged in Java during the colonial times. According to him, Buddhists in the Dutch East Indies consisted of three groups of people, namely the Chinese, the Theosophists and the *boemiputra* or *pribumi* (sons of the soil). The visit of Bhikkhu Narada from colonial Sri Lanka to Indonesia frames his discussion of this era. The latter part of Ditthisampanno's work is dedicated to Buddhist developments in the present time. One of the most interesting points he raises pertains to the revival of Buddhism. According to him, this revival only occurred after the independence of Indonesia. He

2 Iem Brown disclosed that the project was part of her PhD. dissertation research, which was unfortunately never completed.

3 I. Brown, "The Revival of Buddhism in Modern Indonesia," in Martin Ramstedt (ed.), *Hinduism in Modern Indonesia: A Minority Religion between Local, Nationality and Global Interests* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 46.

4 Y. Ishii, "Modern Buddhism in Indonesia," in G. Dhammapala, R. Gombrich and K.R. Norman (eds), *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Hammalava Saddhatissa* (Nugegoda: Buddhist Research Library Trust, 1984), 109-15.

5 B.U. Ditthisampanno, "Buddhism in Indonesia, Past and Present" (A Paper presented to the first International Conference on Buddhism and Australia, 2012), <http://www.buddhismandaustralia.com/index.php/>.

6 He also enlisted the kind of Buddhist literatures produced in early periods such as *Sanghyang Kamahayanikan*, *Sutasoma* and *Kunjarakarna*.

argues that the Vesak celebrations of 1953 at the Borobudur were a particular milestone in this process, and that it signified the “real” form of revivalism of Buddhism in Indonesia.⁷ Unfortunately, Dittisampanno’s work lacks textual evidence, thus making it difficult to evaluate the validity of his statements. His study is primarily a synthesis of other works on the subject. Additionally, his methodology is unclear and the limited discussion of how the various organizations and networks engaged with each other in the revivalism of Buddhism further undermines his work.

Finally, Heinz Bechert’s article titled “The Buddhayana of Indonesia: A Syncretistic Form of Theravada” discusses Buddhist revivalism in modern Indonesia. The article focuses on the post-independence era, and the Buddhist activist named Ashin Jinarakkhita and the Buddhist school which he founded. Bechert states that until 1953, Chinese Buddhist temples largely represented the *Buddha-sasana*⁸ (a Pali term which means the teaching of the Buddha) in Indonesia⁹ and that, in contrast, “native” Buddhists were few in number, comprising mostly educated people who had come into contact with Buddhism through the Theosophical Society. Furthermore, Bechert states that the number of Buddhists grew after independence, particularly after the celebration of Vesak Day in 1953. Furthermore, he argues that the introduction of Theravada Buddhism¹⁰ in Indonesia was largely the result of

7 Vesak is the Buddhist celebration to commemorate the three major events of the life of the Buddha, namely the birth of the Buddha, his attainment of enlightenment, and the death of the Buddha. In colonial times the term was often written as *Wezak* and also *Waicak* in different newspapers and monthly journals (*maandblad*) published mostly in the first half of the twentieth century. However, in this dissertation, the word Vesak will be used throughout the discussion.

8 *Buddha-sasana* or *Sasana* literally means: the teaching of the Buddha in Pali. However, the term has a wider meaning in Sri Lanka and Mainland Southeast Asian countries which not only includes the teachings of Buddhist but also institutional practices regulating how monks and laypeople live their lives as Buddhists and how monks and the laity are related to one another. Alicia Turner uses the term when explaining how the people of Burma framed their challenge to colonial religions and identities associated with these religions as an attempt to reverse the decline of Sasana. See, A.M. Turner, *Saving Buddhism: The Impermanence of Religion in Colonial Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2014), 2

9 H. Bechert, “The Buddhayana of Indonesia: A Syncretistic Form of Theravada,” *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 9 (1981), 12.

10 Ibid, 12. Theravada Buddhism is a school of Pali-oriented Buddhism that

the activities of Ashin Jinarakkhita, who was ordained as a monk in Burma.¹¹ Bechert maintains that several important events happened in the 1950s. A number of Buddhist organizations were established in Indonesia from 1952 onwards. Most importantly, Bhikkhu Narada revisited Java in 1958 and laid the foundation for a Buddhist centre in Semarang. Finally, Bechert discusses how some Chinese temples slowly became Theravada temples in the 1970s.¹²

Most studies on Buddhism in Indonesia have examined the subject through the lens of Buddhist revival. Much of the scholarship focuses on the years after Indonesia gained independence, and particular attention is given to the central figure of Ashin Jinarakkhita, a Peranakan Chinese who became the first Theravada Buddhist monk in the country. In order to contribute to existing scholarship, this dissertation discusses a crucial element that has been mentioned above but has thus far not been investigated thoroughly: the valuable connections that Indonesian Buddhists established with Buddhist networks from abroad during the late colonial period. As will be discussed in the following chapters, the period prior independence was crucial for the foundation of the so-called revival of Buddhism in the 1950s. The transnational networks that existed in colonial Indonesia were highly influential with regard to the kind of Buddhism that was studied by Indonesian Buddhists in the post-independence period. Importantly, this study will also show how Indonesians – both the Peranakan Chinese and native Indonesians – responded to newly-introduced styles of Buddhism and how they consequently became active agents in the reshaping of the Indonesian articulations of this religion.

The larger historiography of Buddhism in Southeast Asia rarely includes a discussion of Indonesia. Scholars studying Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia mostly concentrate on the countries where Buddhism is the majority religion: Burma, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos and Sri Lanka.¹³ Donald K.

mostly developed in the regions of South and Southeast Asia. Some scholars such as Anna Blackburn also refer the school as Southern Buddhism. The term, Theravada, became fairly common from 1930 onward. A.M. Blackburn, "Ceylonese Buddhism in Colonial Singapore: New Ritual Spaces and Specialists, 1895-1930," *Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series* 184 (2012), 1-28.

11 I will retain the use of term, Ashin, which is a religious title used exclusively for monks like Jinarakkhita who were ordained in Burma.

12 Bechert, "The Buddhayana of Indonesia," 15.

13 A.M. Blackburn, *Location of Buddhism: Colonialism & Modernity in Sri Lanka* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010). Also see, J. Schober, *Modern*

Swearer in his book *The Buddhist World in Southeast Asia* primarily focuses on the development of Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia. In other words, Buddhism, particularly Southern or Theravada Buddhism, has not been thoroughly discussed in studies focusing on countries beyond the mainland regions.¹⁴

Nevertheless, there are exceptions to this trend. Of special importance is the work by Anne M. Blackburn, who discusses Ceylonese Buddhism in colonial Singapore as an extension of her work on Buddhism in colonial Sri Lanka.¹⁵ However, while the colonial Sri Lanka-Singapore connection has attracted scholarly attention, Indonesia is rarely discussed within the context of Buddhism in Southeast Asian countries, and studies of Buddhism in Indonesia have been largely viewed as a separate entity. Consequently, the emergence of Buddhism in Indonesia has not been viewed as a part of a global, or even regional, movement.

Unlike the aforementioned studies, this dissertation argues that Buddhism in the Indonesian archipelago developed as a result of global and regional religious transformation, particularly the spread of Theravada Buddhism from South and Southeast Asia. In this process, lay people, religious networks, Buddhist missionaries and intellectuals living in and travelling to colonial Indonesia are shown to have been the most active non-state actors in the founding of Buddhism. It is for this reason that states -- both Indonesian and non-Indonesian -- rarely appear as drivers of change in this dissertation.

Unlike what happened in other countries, the making of Indonesian Buddhism did not result from a single mission to revive the religion itself. Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, Buddhist revival was part of a movement to regain or save a larger communal identity. For instance, in colonial Sri Lanka Buddhist revivalists used their movement to systematically oppose colonial rulers as well as the mushrooming of Christian missions.¹⁶ Another example is

Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar: Cultural Narratives, Colonial Legacies, and Civil Society (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011); R. Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988); G.D. Bond, *The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka: Religious Tradition, Reinterpretation and Response* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988).

14 D.K. Swearer, *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2010).

15 Blackburn, "Ceylonese Buddhism in Colonial Singapore," 3-28.

16 Bond, *The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka*, 46-47.

the case of Buddhist reform in Burma, where the spirit of Buddhist revivalism grew out of what is described as a critical turning point. In the late nineteenth century, Buddha-sasana was considered to be deteriorating and abandoned by its followers. Thus, Burmese Buddhists made a determined and concerted effort to save Buddha-sasana, an effort which grew into a mass movement throughout Burma.¹⁷

In the case of colonial Indonesia, the above sources indicate somewhat counter-intuitively that the Buddhist religion by itself was not the main driving force behind its introduction to Indonesia, particularly in terms of the Peranakan Chinese's role in the process. This is evidenced by a notable lack of references to Indonesia's own Buddhist past. Furthermore, the sources indicate that various individuals, communities and organizations from different backgrounds contributed to a visible Buddhist presence in the archipelago. Very few sources used by these groups refer to the so-called "golden era" of Indonesian Buddhism during the Syailendra dynasty. There are hardly any textual references to that time used as a justification for bringing Buddhism to Indonesia. This suggests that many of the actors involved did not in fact see their actions as part of "reintroducing" or "reviving" Buddhism in Indonesia.

This dissertation argues that the Peranakan Chinese should be central to the discussion on the introduction of Buddhism into Indonesia. Furthermore, the Peranakan Chinese are considered as the primary local actors in this process because their role in it was pivotal from the beginning of the period under consideration until the post-independence years. The Peranakan Chinese community can be seen as a "place" where people from various backgrounds who were interested in Buddhism articulated their ideas about Buddhism and interacted with others. In this study, the Peranakan Chinese are considered a community which is both local and native to Indonesia due to their prolonged presence in the region. This corresponds to the view which the community had of itself as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, when the Peranakan Chinese considered themselves as Indonesian and envisioned their future in Indonesia.

However, many Peranakan Chinese did embrace their Chinese identity to the extent that they expressed the desire to maintain the cultural legacy of their ancestors. This desire intensified in tandem with the Chinese cultural movement in China in the 1890s. Thus, there were attempts to revitalize

17 A. Turner, *Saving Buddhism: The Impermanence of Religion in Colonial Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 2.

Chinese traditions and cultures. On several occasions, the Peranakan Chinese leaders and other prominent individuals criticized those among them who were inclined toward European influence and neglected their Chinese roots and culture. In this context, Chinese repudiation of colonial influence in the cultural sphere was part of the attempt to revitalize forms of “Chineseness.”

However, what place did Buddhism occupy in the Peranakan Chinese identity? As part of their optimism for revitalizing their community culture, Peranakan Chinese began reassessing their cultural legacy, which included religion. In doing so, they rejected the influence of revolutionary mainland China, as this would have resulted in further dominance of the Chinese from China. Instead, the Peranakan Chinese leaders devised a countermovement aimed at restoring the concept of three religions as one entity. Buddhism was one of these religions.

Along with this development, Buddhism began to thrive within the other sectors of colonial society. For example, the Java Buddhist Association (JBA) and the Theosophical Society, which had been founded by European groups, actively sought to establish Buddhism in colonial societies. In particular, the JBA became well-known for its mobilization against imperialism and colonialism. In some regions, the Theosophical Society encouraged Indonesians to adhere to their own religion despite the popularity of Christianity. The members of this Society came from different religious backgrounds. Many Chinese, including all the prominent Peranakan Chinese discussed in this study, were also members and leaders. Encounters between people from different backgrounds, specifically between the Peranakan Chinese and the other members of the Society, led to opportunities for learning about Buddhism and the Buddhist networks. As the Buddhist society gradually became more defined, many prominent Theosophists expressed their support by giving lectures on Buddhism to Peranakan Buddhist organizations. Javanese Theosophists also became involved. Despite their widespread suspicion of Western cultural influence, the Peranakan Chinese remained open to the Theosophical Society. Their close relationship demonstrates an interesting aspect of Javanese interaction with Buddhism. Unfortunately, there is little available information on this topic.

As the Theosophical Society and the JBA were both inclined towards Southern or Theravada Buddhism, the Peranakan Chinese’s sense of religious legacy was impacted by its increasing connection with these two groups. The first Southern Buddhist mission to Indonesia immediately penetrated the heart

of Chinese religious sites, the *klenteng* or Chinese shrine. The first official dialogue took place at a *klenteng* named Kwan Im Tong in Batavia. It was a dialogue between the Southern Buddhist mission and a group of Buddhist monks who represented Northern (Mahayana) Buddhism, and it focused on Buddha's teaching and making the *klenteng* a Buddhist centre. The occasion became a hallmark for the Peranakan Chinese, as the Southern school of Buddhism differed from their own tradition. At this dialogue the Mahayana monks, Peranakan Chinese leaders and the Southern Buddhist missionary exchanged views which launched and decided the future of Buddhism in Indonesia to a certain extent.

The aforementioned dialogue and the subsequent ones resulted in changes to the way Buddhism was performed. One change was that the *klenteng* became increasingly central to Buddhist religious functions. Thus, this study focuses on the religious sites where Buddhists actively performed their religion, particularly the *klenteng* and the Borobudur. These sites underwent changes which amplified their Buddhist religious purpose. Being central to the Chinese cultural heritage, the *klenteng* was a primary concern; it later became a stage for Buddhist performances in the Peranakan Chinese community. In the process of (re)introducing Buddhism, the *klenteng* was transformed into a Buddhist learning centre. The Borobudur in particular became a stage for the performance of Buddhism mainly for European Buddhist Theosophists, on whose initiative the Borobudur was refashioned as a religious site and a marker of Buddhist heritage. In this study, the scrutiny of this aspect has yielded deep insights into the various Peranakan Chinese figures and other Buddhist networks involved in creating Buddhism in Indonesia. Understanding the connections between these various figures are essential to understanding Buddhism in Indonesia.

Finally, this dissertation seeks to address a lacuna in the historiography of Buddhism by addressing the role of women in the making of the religion. The history of Buddhist revivalism is mostly focused on the role of men and monks, and on the influence of laymen and monks. Even in the concept of modern Buddhism, which does highlight the fundamental work done by lay people as one of its characteristics, the participation of women is frequently overlooked. Where does one locate women in the course of Buddhist revivalism? What role did they play? Why have they received no credit in the historiography of Buddhism? Thus, a question most pertinent to this dissertation is: what role do women play in the development of Buddhism

in modern Indonesia? Does their role make the development of Indonesian Buddhism different from the historical narrative dominated by male actors and if so, how?

As noted above, documenting the role of women in the growth of Buddhism in the modern era is quite challenging because there is a dearth of studies that focus on this topic. However, if we look closely into some studies of Buddhist revivalism, it is clear that this lack is mostly due to the failure of these studies to acknowledge the women's roles. For instance, in the case of Buddhist revivalism in colonial Sri Lanka, there is little explanation of the role of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, the Buddhist Theosophical Society president, after whose arrival in Sri Lanka together with Henry Steel Olcott, the Buddhist movement in the country grew. As a cofounder of the Buddhist Theosophical Society which was established in Sri Lanka in 1880, Blavatsky was an essential figure in the consolidation of the Buddhist movement that followed afterwards.¹⁸ Another example is the Women's Educational Society of Ceylon, which was established around 1889 in Colombo. As reported by Tessa J. Bartholomeusz, whose work focuses on gender, religious identity and Buddhism in America, the Women's Educational Society of Ceylon is applauded for its success in establishing Buddhist high schools for girls.¹⁹ However, organizations like the Women's Educational Society of Ceylon are rarely accorded the spotlight.

Given the aforementioned background, this dissertation focuses on the actors and agencies in transnational Buddhist networks in the making of Buddhism in Indonesia between the 1900s and 1959. Using the frame of transnational networks, this dissertation endeavours to understand how Buddhism secured a place in Indonesian society. From the 1920s onwards, non-state actors played a pivotal role in establishing connections between people in colonial Indonesia, in South and Southeast Asia, and beyond. Through this process, "colonial modernity" with respect to advancement of education, technology and mobility became a factor that determined the unique characteristics of Indonesian Buddhism. The focus of this dissertation then shifts to how the religion came to be practiced in Indonesia. This focus on the performativity aspects of Buddhism best explains how it became a

18 R.D.S. Wijeyeratne, *Nation, Constitutionalism, and Buddhism in Sri Lanka* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 91.

19 T.J. Bartholomeusz, *Women under the Bo Tree: Buddhist Nuns in Sri Lanka* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 50.

“lived” religion in twentieth century Indonesia and how in turn it formed new transnational connections after independence in the 1950s. This period also shows new dynamic in term of Buddhist relation with the newly Independent Indonesia. As a result the development of Buddhism in early independent Indonesia showed some state actors in its progress.

By covering the topics mentioned above, this dissertation joins the debate about several aspects of the historiography of Buddhism in late colonial Indonesia. Hopefully, the dissertation will provide a model for research into Buddhist expansion in different regions, especially in those regions where historical records are scarce.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

In the late nineteenth century, several terms were commonly used in the historiography of Buddhism in Asia. Among these were “Buddhist modernism,” “modern Buddhism,” “Protestant Buddhism,” “reformed Buddhism,” and “Buddhist revivalism.” These terms were used to describe the changes and transformation in Buddhism which occurred within the colonial context. They were used by scholars who focused on the historiography of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and later in other regions in Asia. Since then, these terms have been used interchangeably. In the historiography of Buddhism in Indonesia, the terms “Buddhist revival” and “Buddhist revivalism” were used by scholars to explain the emergence of Buddhism in the early twentieth century. An exception was Yoneo Ishii, who was the first scholar to use the term “modern Buddhism” in his article about Buddhist historiography in Indonesia. This dissertation adopts Ishii’s term, “modern Buddhism.”

To start with the definition of the concept, Heinz Bechert was among the first scholars who used the term “Buddhist modernism.” Bechert saw modern Buddhism as consequence of social change. To him, Buddhist modernism first emerged in Sri Lanka, after Buddhists argued with Christian missionaries in public debates in Panadura in 1873.²⁰ Buddhists were against the idea of considering Buddhism as a form of primitive idolatry. They argued that Buddhism was fundamentally rational and in conformity with Western

20 Ibid., 91; M. Teeuwen, “Buddhist Modernities: Modernism and its Limits,” in H. Havnevik (ed.), *Buddhist Modernities: Re-Inventing Tradition in the Globalizing Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 1.

science, and that it was relevant to social and political issues within the colonial context.²¹ Thus, they de-emphasised their rituals and demythologized their doctrine and cosmology. Furthermore, they portrayed Buddhism as the “religion of optimism and activity” because it was concerned with solving the problems of the world, which included connections with nationalist and anti-colonialist movements.²²

In his study, Bechert proposed a threefold distinction of Buddhism that reflects the different stages of its development, namely “canonical,” “traditional” and “modern” Buddhism.²³ “Canonical” Buddhism (*Urbuddhismus*) is the Buddhism found in the canonical scriptures Pali (*Tipitaka*); “traditional” Buddhism is “the totality of beliefs and practices of Buddhists in the periods after the final codification of the canonical scriptures and before the beginning of the modern period”;²⁴ and “modern” Buddhism is all kinds of Buddhism that developed under the impact of changes that have taken place in modern times. Bechert emphasized that in this regard modern Buddhism included “the ‘modernistic’ forms of Buddhism as well as ‘traditionalist’ responses to the challenge of outside influences.”²⁵

The concept of Buddhist modernism in the late nineteenth century continues to be an area of interest for other scholars. Donald L. Lopez in his book, *A Modern Buddhist Bible*, shares similar elements of modern Buddhism with other authors; however, it is also clear that he argues for modern Buddhism to be regarded as a new entity and school of Buddhism:

Modern Buddhism seeks to distance itself from these forms of Buddhism that immediately precede it and even those that are contemporary with it. Its proponents viewed ancient Buddhism, especially the enlightenment of the Buddha 2,500 years ago, as the most authentic moment of the long history of Buddhism. It is also the form of Buddhism, they would argue, that is the most compatible with the ideals of the European Enlightenment, ideals such as reason, empiricism, science, universalism, individualism,

21 H. Bechert, “Sangha, Society, ‘Nation’: Persistence of Traditions in ‘Post-Traditional’ Buddhist Societies,” *Daedalus* 102, no. 1, Post Traditional Society, (1973), 91; Teeuwen, “Buddhist Modernities,” 1.

22 Bechert, “Sangha, Society, ‘Nation,’” 91; J.M. Shields, “The Scope and Limits of Secular Buddhism: Watanabe Kaikyoku and the Japanese New Buddhist Discovery of Society,” in H. Havnevik (ed.), *Buddhist Modernities: Re-inventing Tradition in the Globalizing Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 15.

23 Bechert, “Sangha, Society, ‘Nation,’” 85.

24 Ibid., 85.

25 Ibid., 85.

tolerance, freedom, and the rejection of religious orthodoxy. It stresses equality over hierarchy, the universal over the local, often exalts the individual above the community.²⁶

Other scholars who continue studying the notion of Buddhist modernism have arrived at a slightly different more progressive definition than those proposed in the nineteenth century. For instance, David L. McMahan, author of *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, focuses the notion of Buddhist modernism on the interaction between modernizing Asian Buddhists and Western Buddhist practitioners. According to him, such interaction has resulted in a hybrid Buddhism. He emphasises that modern Buddhism refers to “forms of Buddhism that have emerged out of an engagement with the dominant cultural and intellectual forces of modernity. Buddhist modernism is a dynamic, complex, and plural set of historical processes with loose bonds and fuzzy boundaries.”²⁷ McMahan’s definition of modern Buddhism is refreshing and it supplements the definitions proposed by earlier scholars. Indeed, McMahan’s new insight on Buddhism modernism offers new way of understanding the concept. It provokes other scholars to look into the aspect of connectivity that surrounds the formation of Buddhist modernity. McMahan’s work is aligned with later works which focus on the interaction and networks within the scope of Buddhist modernism in Asia, one of which is the work of Alicia Turner, Laurence Cox and Brian Bocking.

Turner, Cox and Bocking claim that Southeast Asia acted as a dynamic crossroads in the late nineteenth century until the first half of the twentieth century and enabled the emergence of a “global Buddhism.”²⁸ Referring to global Buddhism as “modern Buddhism”, they argue that the Buddhism developed in that period of time was dominated by several elements: the rise of laity as practitioners and organisers; new roles for women, scholars and monks; the development of national *Sangha* (community of Buddhist monks)²⁹ and ethno-nationalist Buddhist discourse; and finally, the association

26 D.S. Lopez, Jr., “Foreword,” in P. Carus (ed.), *The Gospel of Buddha: According to Old Records* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court Publication, 2004), foreword.

27 D.L. McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6.

28 A. Turner, L. Cox and B. Bocking, *A Buddhist Crossroads: Pioneer Western Buddhists and Asian Networks (1860-1960)* (London: Routledge, 2015), 1.

29 *Sangha* is a Pali word which means the assembly of monks.

of Buddhism with a demythologized rationalist and scientific discourse.³⁰ In short, they argue that the late nineteenth century was a determining period for Buddhism across Asia. Central to their argument is that the meeting between the Asian Buddhist network and Western would-be Buddhists configured modern Buddhism. This argument is interesting because the term “modern” here is not limited to a single definition. Modern Buddhism, in these authors’ view, is not only a product of national development but a result of extensive interactions and connections across a wide variety of national, ethnic, cultural and colonial boundaries.³¹ This dissertation adopts Turner, Cox and Bocking’s argument as the foundation of its argument on modern Buddhism.

The framework used by Turner, Cox and Bocking is intriguing. They describe modern Buddhism as not an exclusively “Eastern” product” but one that welcomes global and local agents. This dissertation believes that the participation of local agents has allowed various Buddhism(s) that have developed in different places to acquire distinctive features. This framework contributes significantly to my argument that Buddhism, although it is global, has never been homogeneous or uniform. This concept aids this study’s investigation into new kinds of modernism in the world of Buddhism, particularly the Buddhism in the Indonesian archipelago.

It is worth noting here that because there is no significant record showing closeness between Buddhists and the upper echelons of the colonial state, it is rare to come across state actors involved in the discussions regarding the introduction of Buddhism. However, this does not mean that Buddhism was completely separated from the state. Rather, it means that Buddhism at the time grew out of convoluted religious networks, most of which came from areas outside the colonial state borders, which sometimes included members of the colonial administrative network but were never controlled by it.

In this dissertation, these transnational networks are accorded an important role. In order to appreciate their contribution, a transnational view is taken with the assumption that the development of Indonesian Buddhism cannot be viewed as isolated from wider phenomena. The concept of (Buddhist) networks is also important in understanding the connection between individuals and organizations involved in the process. In this regard, the transnational approach helps in understanding the rather complicated

30 Turner, Cox and Bocking, *A Buddhist Crossroads*, 1-2.

31 Ibid., 2.

locus of Buddhism in non-majority Buddhist regions such as Indonesia. Buddhism took root in the mainly Peranakan Chinese community which had also displayed significant contact with organizations from different backgrounds and geographical origins.

Given the various conditions that surrounded the (re)introduction of Buddhism, the concept of “the transnational” informs fundamental aspects of this research. It follows Akira Iriye, whose work clarifies the difference between the concepts of “the transnational” and “the international.” According to Iriye the transnational approach allows historians to focus on non-state actors, thus enabling them to move past the nation as the key unit of analysis.³² Furthermore, he states that “unlike the international approach, the transnational point of view does not deal with relations among nations as sovereign entities.”³³

Iriye’s approach furthers the present study in several ways. It enables this study to “look beyond national boundaries and seek to explore interconnection across borders.”³⁴ It also helps to widen the focus of the study from one particular region or community to relevant phenomena from outside that location or group. Furthermore, Iriye’s transnational approach is a valuable catalyst when it comes to decentring Europe or the West.³⁵ This is because the emphasis of his approach is “to focus on cross-national connection whether through individuals, non-national identities, and non-state actors, or in terms of objectives shared by people and communities regardless of their nationalities.”³⁶ In this way, Iriye has paved the way for the study of individuals or communities in various contexts including, but not limited to, nation states. According to him, this is what distinguishes the transnational from the global concept, which tends to universalize subjects of study.³⁷

Based on the above discussion, using the transnational concept to understand the making of Buddhism in Indonesia helps recognize the mixture of various networks, individuals and organizations as unique entities. The concept can help recover the agency of Asian Buddhist networks and

32 A. Iriye, *Global and Transnational History: Past, Present and History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 6.

33 Ibid., 6.

34 Ibid., 11.

35 Ibid., 11.

36 Ibid., 15.

37 Ibid., 15.

the variety of actors they contained: sponsors, lay Buddhist organizations, monastic institutions, pioneers, teachers and audiences. These are the key elements that shaped Buddhism in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Conversely, this approach may also ameliorate the awkward position of state actors, who rarely appear in the discussion but are never far removed from it. Despite their fluidity, these networks are not completely separated from, or unrelated to, agents of states.

In post-independence Indonesia, the overtone of Buddhist modernism and transnational Buddhist networks continued to be pertinent. After Indonesia gained her independence, Buddhists continued the presence of Buddhism and its status as a religion in the newly independent Indonesia. Atkinson, a scholar on Indonesian religious minorities, points out that the concept of religion in Indonesia during this period involved “notions of progress, modernization, adherence to nationalist goals. Populations regarded as ignorant, backward, or indifferent to the nationalist vision are people who de facto lack a religion.”³⁸ As this dissertation shows, Buddhists continued to work for recognition from the government by making Buddhism relevant to the concept of religion in Indonesia.

Finally, bringing the notion of transnational Buddhist networks fully into view serves to counter the exclusion of Buddhism in the Southeast Asian archipelago. As this dissertation shows, the development of Buddhism in Indonesia cannot be separated from the development of Buddhism elsewhere.

SOURCES

Sources on Buddhism related to both the Peranakan Chinese and other local Buddhist communities, particularly in Java, form the backbone of this study. Born and raised in Indonesia, the Peranakan Chinese used Malay, particularly Melayu Rendah, as their lingua franca. Kwee Tek Hoay's works, which are used extensively here, were written in this language, as were many of the community's magazines, newspapers, and other periodicals.³⁹ In general, sources written by Peranakan Chinese in Melayu Rendah are occasionally mixed with Dutch and English words, but few or none are written completely

38 J.M. Atkinson. “Religion in Dialogue: The Construction of an Indonesian Minority Religion,” *American Ethnologist* 10, no. 4 (1984), 688.

39 The list of these primary sources is mentioned in the sources section (section D).

in Chinese characters.⁴⁰ Other sources, such as those written by Willem Josias van Dienst, are written in Dutch, but many of his lectures given in the Chinese klenteng were translated to Melayu Rendah by other Peranakan Chinese.⁴¹

Periodicals included in this study consist of editions of *Moestika Dharma*, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*, *Soeara Sam Kauw*, *Khong Kauw Gwat Po* and *Sin Po* as well as local newspapers such as *Pewarta Soerabaja* that published articles on issues related to Buddhism. There are also various Dutch-language newspapers, such as *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, *De Sumatra Post* and *De Indische Courant*, and Dutch-language missionary publications, such as *Nama Buddhaya* and *De Dharma in Nederlandsch-Indië*. Some newspapers published in Singapore also provide valuable information on Buddhist networks, particularly for the 1930s. Housed in the National Library of Singapore, these are *The Straits Times*, *The Singapore Free Press* and *Mercantile Adviser* (1884-1942).⁴²

Sources published by the Theosophical Society have been used to find Peranakan Chinese and indigenous people who were attracted to Buddhism through their membership in the Theosophical Society. These include *Theosofie in Nederlandsch-Indië*, *Koemandang Theosofie*, *Pewarta Theosofie*, *Persatoean Hidoep* and the *Diary of Henry Steel Olcott*.

Finally, this research is informed by sources in which written material is complemented by oral information. Over the course of this study, several people from the Tri Dharma organization (the current name of Sam Kauw Hwee) shared new literature from their own private collections of Buddhist

40 Only translated Chinese terms are occasionally accompanied with the original Chinese characters. With regard to this discussion see T.G. Hoogervorst, "What Kind of Language was 'Chinese Malay' in Late Colonial Java?" *Indonesia and the Malay World* 45 (2017), 294-314.

41 Among these sources, I found "Ada Atawa Tida Adanya Allah" which was translated by Kwee Tek Hoay and was published in *Moestika Dharma*, 1934. Another Van Dienst lecture, given during the Vesak festival held at Klenteng Kwan Im Tong on 28 May 1934, was translated by Toean Jo Oe Liong. Kwee's daughter, Visakha Gunadharma, also mentioned that lectures delivered by other foreigners were also translated into *Melayu Rendah*, for example: a lecture by Nona Noer (a Dutch woman) was translated by Nona Sie Giok Hoa; a lecture by Toean Chakrabuty (an Englishman) was translated by Visakha Gunadharma, etc. Most of these lectures, mentioned by Gunadharma, were published in *Moestika Dharma* 1934.

42 Accessible via eresources.nlb.gov.sg/index.aspx.

literature published during colonial times. Among them, Marga Singgih, one of the most influential figures in Tri Dharma Indonesia, provided an introduction to the family of Visakha Gunadharma, which, as shown below, yielded much new information.

ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

The first chapter of this dissertation focuses on the historiography of Buddhism in the Indonesian archipelago. It opens with background on the globalisation of Buddhism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This background is particularly important in order to see how Buddhism developed in different regions throughout the world, particularly in South Asia, mainland Southeast Asia and archipelagic Southeast Asia.

The second chapter discusses how Southern Buddhism made its way to colonial Indonesia through transnational networks and organizations such as the Theosophical Society and the Java Buddhist Association. The chapter also describes Indonesian Buddhists' non-institutional connections with individuals who introduced them to new ways of understanding Buddhism -- for example, Bhikkhu Narada, the Sri Lankan monk who was instrumental in bringing Southern Buddhism to Indonesia.

Chapter Three explores the special role of the Peranakan Chinese in spreading Southern Buddhism in Indonesia during the early twentieth century. The main question addressed by this chapter is how Buddhism, particularly Southern Buddhism, gradually took root in the Peranakan community. The chapter argues that the reformulation of Chinese religion to include Buddhism as an integral component was a leading factor in the growth of Buddhism in Indonesia. The chapter then discusses the Peranakan Chinese's relationships with various Buddhist networks in Batavia with a focus on the roles of several Peranakan Chinese individuals in the establishment of the first Buddhist organization established by Chinese Buddhists. Additionally, special attention is given to the role of women, particularly the first Chinese Buddhist laywoman, Visakha Gunadharma. This dissertation argues that she represents the notion that studies of modern Buddhism have not fully explored the contributions of women.

Chapter Four addresses the central role of the Chinese *klenteng* and Borobudur as Buddhist religious sites which helped the growth of Buddhism

in Indonesia. The chapter argues that the circumstances leading to the Chinese *klenteng* and the Borobudur becoming Buddhist religious sites were very different. In the wake of reorientations in Chinese nationalism, the *klenteng* became pivotal sites for holding Chinese religious rituals. In the awakening of Buddhism in Indonesia, several Chinese *klenteng* became Buddhist centres, in which Buddhist rituals were regularly performed. Sources have also mentioned that some *klenteng* were used for other activities such as gambling, social gatherings and even shelters for homeless people. The second site is the Borobudur complex. This temple complex is another place that was infused with new meaning, but in this case the Buddhist reorientation of the site was spearheaded by transnational figures.

Chapter Five continues to argue that new religious practices, rituals and festivities resulted from Indonesian Buddhists' close connections to transnational Buddhism. The chapter focuses on how Indonesian Buddhists' acceptance of modern Buddhism led to Vesak being instituted as a Buddhist holiday.

Chapter Six examines inter-Asian *Dhammic* (missionary work that involved the teaching of Buddhism by Buddhist monks) networks with a focus on the activities of Bhikkhu Narada, the Southern Buddhist monk whose missionary activities were central to the spread of Buddhism in Indonesia. Special attention is given to his continuous involvement in the development of Indonesian Buddhism as well as his written works which influenced the direction of this development.

Chapter Seven discusses Buddhism in the 1950s. Indonesian independence helped foster new relationships in the region, often with the rhetorical underpinnings of shared historical and spiritual trajectories, which opened up new spaces for Buddhist contacts to flourish. However, there was also a continuity of developments that had long been put in motion by individuals and networks before the 1950s. This chapter highlights both the continuity and change as Indonesian Buddhism continued to grow through the 1950s. Two developments which characterized continuity and change are highlighted: (1) the "localization" of Buddhism -- a long process through which Buddhism progressively took on specific Indonesian characteristics and which culminated with the first Theravada ordination in Indonesia in the late 1950s; and (2) the role of women in the development of Buddhism which had begun in the 1930s but gained strength in the post-independence era.

SPELLING

Due to the many languages and dialects used in this study, as well as the fact that it covers both the pre- and post-independence period, the spelling of geographical locations follows current names as much as possible. Therefore, “colonial Indonesia” is preferred to “the Netherlands Indies” or “the Dutch East Indies.” The historical names of cities are kept as such throughout the text, except in the post-independence period when Batavia changed into Jakarta, Buitenzorg became Bogor and so forth. In order to avoid confusion, however, the names of individuals strictly follow the spelling given in the study’s sources, which in several cases diverge from the way these names would be spelled today. In the case of the Chinese names, the sources exhibit inconsistencies in spelling; in such cases one version is used throughout. For instance, Kwee Tek Hoay is also spelled as Kwee Tek Hoeij. In this case, Kwee Tek Hoay is used. In the case of the adoption of Buddhist names, the situation is further complicated. For instance, in this dissertation Kwee Yat Nio or Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij is referred to as Visakha Gunadharma, the Buddhist name given to her by Bhikkhu Narada. This is in recognition of her role in the development of Buddhism.

Chapter 1

Rethinking Buddhist Revivalism

1.1. GLOBAL BUDDHISM

Globalization is not a new phenomenon. A defining characteristic often ascribed to modern globalization is the unprecedented speed of developments in transportation, information and communication. Because of this, the world's regions have become increasingly interdependent.¹ A phenomenon that happens in one region can influence a region that is far away. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed this global phenomenon in the realm of religion as international religious movements mushroomed. The globalization of religion, according to Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene, was not only expressed in geographical expansion but also, and more significantly, tied believers together in new ways across geographical boundaries.² This, according to them, was accelerated through the formation of international organizations and the conscious fostering of religious identities.

1 J.J. Meuleman (ed.), *Islam in the Era of Globalization: Muslims Attitudes towards Modernity and Identity* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002), 2.

2 A. Green and V. Viaene (eds), *Religious Internationalism in the Modern World: Globalization and Faith Communities Since 1750* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 7.

The globalization of religion during the late nineteenth century was also furthered by the increasing spread of print technologies, literacy and urbanization.³ Chris Bayly emphasizes that the period towards the end of this century was not only the age of capitalism, but also the age of nobles, landowners, priests and peasants.⁴ This century also witnessed the appearance of religious movements. In non-Western regions, these movements often consisted of struggles against encroaching Western religions. Nevertheless, they bore considerable resemblance to nationalist Western religious movements.

As a result, Islam in archipelagic Southeast Asia saw new growth in this period. In Islamic scholarship, globalization is not considered a recent process. Azyumardi Azra, an Islamic scholar, points out the existence of trade between Muslims in maritime Southeast Asia and the Middle East around the seventeenth century and, subsequently, the intellectual exchanges that came in their wake.⁵ During the nineteenth century, a globalizing wave of Muslim discourse again reached the shores of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. Those returning from the hajj in the Holy Land reintroduced the spirit of pan-Islamism to the people of the archipelago. Various kinds of Islamic literature were transmitted as well. In the early twentieth century, the so-called "Islamic Modernism" from Cairo arrived in the archipelago and inspired a variety of Modernist movements, most notably Muhammadiyah. Such movements were characterized by the desire to retain and promote Muslim identity, while adopting certain Western ways of structuring religious organizations.⁶

Eastern religions showed similar religious movements. In China, for instance, Chinese Confucianism revivalists K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao launched a Confucian revival in 1895. They proposed to spread Confucianism throughout the Chinese empire, convert unauthorized temples into Confucian shrines and send missionaries to preach Confucianism to overseas

3 S.H. Rudolf, "Introduction: Religion, States, and Transnational Civil Society," in S.H. Rudolf and J.P. Piscatori (eds), *Transnational Religion and Fading States* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 3.

4 C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publication, 2004), 5.

5 A. Azra, *Renaissance Islam Asia Tenggara: Sejarah Wacana dan Kekuasaan* (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya Offset, 1999), 121.

6 A. Azra, "Globalization of Indonesian Muslim Discourse: Contemporary Religio-Intellectual Connections between Indonesia and the Middle East," in J. Meuleman (ed.), *Islam in the Era of Globalization: Muslims Attitudes towards Modernity and Identity* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002), 22-23.

Chinese.⁷ Further in 1898, the movement proposed to make Confucianism a state religion and to officially institutionalize the Confucian temple, that is, to convert unauthorized temples to Confucianism shrines or temples. The Confucian revival spread outside China and flourished more in Singapore and Malaysia than it did in China.⁸ In these regions, the movement began in 1899 with its main objective of establishing Confucian temples and schools. At the same time in colonial Indonesia, particularly in Java, Confucianism also showed signs of emerging among the Peranakan Chinese. According to Charles Coppel, an Indonesian-Chinese scholar, the movement reached the overseas Chinese in Java and resulted in a revival of Confucianism in Java by 1900.⁹

The Buddhist world experienced a similar revival in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Modern Buddhism started to take root in different places in South Asia and Southeast Asia. The motivation of Buddhist revivalism in these regions shares several elements with the Islamic and Confucian revivalist movements, such as a symbolic struggle against colonial power, imperialism and conversion to western religions. It recalibrated Buddhist identity and sought to save Buddhism from Christian missionaries, particularly in colonial Sri Lanka. Gananath Obeyesekere, a Sri Lankan anthropologist who coined the term “Protestant Buddhism,” argues that this movement positioned Buddhism in colonial Sri Lanka (Ceylon) to protest against British colonial rulers and Protestant missionary activity.¹⁰

Historian Thomas DuBois argues that during late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Christian missionaries took a leading role not only in spiritual (personal) liberation but also in the “civilizing” drive of imperialism, often called “evangelical modernity.”¹¹ However, such missionary efforts also motivated the followers of local religions to resist attempts to convert them.

7 C.A. Coppel, “The Origin of Confucianism as an Organized Religion in Java, 1900-1923,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 12 (1981), 182.

8 Ibid., 182.

9 Ibid., 182.

10 G. Obeyesekere, “Religious Symbolism and Political Change in Ceylon,” *Modern Ceylon Studies* 1 (1970), 43-63.

11 T.D. DuBois, “Introduction: The Transformation of Religion in East and Southeast Asia -- Paradigmatic Change in Regional Perspective,” in T.D. DuBois (ed.), *Casting Faiths: Imperialism and the Transformation of Religion in East and Southeast Asia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 2-3.

DuBois' argument suggests that Buddhist revival can be viewed as a manifestation of nationalist awakening. For example, the British historian Mark Frost argues that the Buddhist revivalist movement born in colonial Sri Lanka was generated primarily by a resistance to imperialism and conversion to Christianity. In the case of colonial Sri Lanka, he emphasizes that colonial authorities failed to maintain privileges of education and spatial rights for Buddhists because Christians had secured the right to run massive proselytization projects on the island.¹² The situation is described to have generated a nationalist awakening in the form of religious Buddhist revivalism, which led agitators and publicists to establish wider contacts with Theravada Buddhists.¹³ In print, Buddhist activists soon copied their Christian rivals by publishing Buddhist pamphlets, periodicals and books as well as publicizing their organization, The Society for the Propagation of Buddhism.¹⁴

Frost further argues that religious upheaval took the form of revivalism and was often a manifestation of an early sense of nationalism or proto-nationalism. Generally, religious revivalists resisted colonial authorities and colonial presence by manifesting religious and cultural responses and demanding constitutional change.¹⁵ In this sense, religious revival as a phenomenon was intricately intertwined with nationalism. As it has been argued above, this sets the Indonesian case apart from other Southeast Asian examples.

Buddhist revivalism can also be understood as an instrument for modernization through the reaffirmation of religious identity despite the fact that modernization was imposed on colonial Sri Lanka and India by the British. Historian Balkrishna Gokhale points out that the Buddhist revival in colonial Sri Lanka led by Anagarika Dhammapala (1864-1933) became "a basis for the Sinhala renaissance, involving a restatement of the faith and reaffirmation of its cultural values."¹⁶ In India the movement led by

12 M.R. Frost, "Wider Opportunity: Religious Revival, Nationalist Awakening, and the Global Dimension in Colombo, 1870-1920," *Modern Asian Studies* 36 (2002), 943.

13 Ibid., 942.

14 Ibid., 944.

15 Ibid., 938.

16 B.G. Gokhale, "Theravada Buddhism and Modernization: Anagarika Dhammapala and B.R. Ambedkar," *Journal of Asian & African Studies* 34 (1999), 33.

Ambedkar (1928-1956) used Buddhism as an alternative cultural identity for the purpose of countering the Hindu establishment. Gokhale further points out that Buddhism provided both institutional and cultural references to these respective movements, albeit very different ones.¹⁷ However in both cases, the driver of these revivalist movements was the British attempt to modernize their colonial subjects through education, the creation of an English speaking-middle class, modern transportation and communication systems, and other instruments of colonial control.¹⁸

A full account of the Buddhist revivals in Asia involves understanding that the Buddhist revival in Asia was not particularly a “locally Asian” Buddhist concern, but that it also included Western individuals and organizations, who were important to the anti-colonial politics of early Buddhist revivalism.¹⁹ For example, the Irish Buddhist, Venerable Dhammaloka,²⁰ promoted the Buddhist movement in Burma, Singapore and Ireland between 1907 and 1910.²¹ A record of Venerable Dhammaloka’s social movement in Singapore states that he successfully propagated Buddhism and embraced all classes in Singapore.²²

Western individuals were involved in Buddhist revivals elsewhere in Asia. In colonial Sri Lanka, Buddhist revivalism occurred in conjunction with the rise of the Theosophical Society, an international religious organization in the West. In order to match the power and influence of Christian missionaries, Henry Steel Olcott, head of the Theosophical Society, established Buddhist schools and adapted features of Christian organizational practices to Buddhism. This included a Buddhist catechism which, according to Richard Gombrich, a Pali and Buddhist studies scholar, represents the beginning of the

17 Ibid., 33.

18 Ibid., 34.

19 To contain and organizes his movement U Dhammaloka established an organization called the Buddhist Track Society in Yangon. L. Cox, “The Politics of Buddhist Revival: U Dhammaloka as Social Movement Organizer,” *Contemporary Buddhism* 11 (2010), 174.

20 Venerable Dhammaloka is also usually known as Irish *Pongyee* (Burmese word for Buddhist monk), probably due to his Irish origin and Burmese-Buddhist affiliation.

21 Cox, “The Politics of Buddhist Revival,” 175.

22 *The Straits Times*, (20 January 1904).

modern Buddhist movement worldwide.²³ Olcott also attempted to establish a universal organization for Buddhists called “The United Buddhist World.”

Sri Lankan Buddhists also engaged the Western world. For example, the only Buddhist representative attending the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 was Dhammapala, a leading Sri Lankan figure in the Buddhist movement. Colonial Sri Lanka became the focal point of South Asian Buddhism revivalism in which educated urban Buddhists emphasized the rational and scientific aspects of Buddhism.²⁴

The anti-colonialism of these Buddhist revival movements united the Buddhist world. Although Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma drew closer to one another through improved communication and transportation technology introduced by colonial authorities, the budding Buddhist monastic politics of the region proved to be the more important uniting factor.²⁵ By constantly looking for Buddhist connections beyond colonial borders, the Buddhist world became a “parallel world” to that of the colonial empire. As it spread throughout South and Southeast Asia, this development created a Southern Buddhist culture²⁶ and an increase in (1) the circulation of printed materials on Buddhism, (2) the number of diplomatic missions to South and Southeast Asia; and (3) the movement of lay pilgrims and monks between Sri Lanka and the Southeast Asian regions (especially Cambodia, Burma and Thailand).²⁷

The circulation of printed materials was an important element in the Buddhist revival. It can be argued that ideas about Buddhism were able to reach across borders to like-minded individuals and organizations

23 Richard Gombrich is Boden Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Oxford. He is also the author of a number of books and numerous journal articles dealing with early Buddhism.

24 M. Baumann, “Global Buddhism: Developmental Periods, Regional Histories and A New Analytical Perspective,” *Journal of Global Buddhism* 2 (2001), 9.

25 N. Wickramasinghe, *Metallic Modern: Modern Machines in Colonial Sri Lanka* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2014), 60.

26 The use of “Southern” and “Northern” Buddhism was common in the first half of the twentieth century, which was partly influenced by International Buddhist, while the use of the term “Theravada” to refer to Buddhism oriented toward Pali-language liturgy and scripture was more common in 1930s onward. Blackburn indicates as the influence from the growth of Sinhalese Buddhist institution in Singapore. A.M. Blackburn, “Ceylonese Buddhism in Colonial Singapore: New Ritual Spaces and Specialists, 1895-1930,” *Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series* 184 (2012), 5.

27 Wickramasinghe, *Metallic Modern*, 60.

because of improved and less expensive printing technology. It became the major catalyst for the circulation of Buddhist ideas and enabled Buddhists throughout the world to communicate their ideas with each other more easily. Improved printing technology also became a means to protest colonial rule and missionary efforts to convert Buddhists to other religions. For example, when Buddhists in Sri Lanka obtained printing presses, they used them to counter Christian propagandists.²⁸ The printing press was also an important mouthpiece for lay Buddhists who produced much of the material associated with the colonial Sri Lanka's Buddhist revival. *The Buddhist* was the earliest and first modern Buddhist periodical (December 1888). Initiated by the Theosophical Society and later chaired by the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA), *The Buddhist* provided knowledge about Buddhism, programs and information about Buddhism in different places in around the world.²⁹ It provided an opportunity for Buddhists worldwide to write, connecting them with co-religionists in distant locations. For example, Willem Josias van Dienst, a Dutch Southern Buddhist living in Java, was one of the readers and contributors to the magazine. Buddhists in Java also used the printing press as a catalyst to promote their cause. Each of the Buddhist organizations in Java reportedly started its own journal or periodical.

There is much historiographical evidence that shows the Buddhist revival took place at the same time across the South and Southeast Asia regions. D.G. Marr, an Asian history scholar, claims that the Buddhist revival in Vietnam was spurred by nationalist sentiment and as an alternative for Confucianism that had failed to provide a moral and national ideology that could cope with modernity. Buddhism came to symbolically represent modernity for the Vietnamese, as opposed to Confucianism, which came to be regarded as an increasingly irrelevant tradition.³⁰

H.D. Ngo, whose dissertation was on the Buddhist revival in Vietnam, points out that Vietnamese Buddhists felt Buddhism was "in a great decline." Some Buddhist revivalists saw the source of this decline as a lack of response

28 G.D. Bond, *The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka: Religious Tradition, Reinterpretation and Response* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1992), 47.

29 Publication of "The Buddhist Quarterly Journal of YMBA," <http://www.ymba-colombo.org/activity/publication-'-buddhist'-quarterly-journal-ymba>. (Accessed 5 May 2015).

30 D.G. Marr, *Vietnamese on Trial, 1920-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 115.

on the part of Vietnamese Buddhists to colonial modernity which led to two results: (1) some Buddhists were converting to other religions favoured by colonial authorities and (2) Buddhist monks were abandoning their traditional ascetic mode of life for more secular lifestyles. The revivalists responded to this situation by establishing organizations, publications and a monastic school.³¹ M. Nguyen, whose dissertation was about the Buddhist monastic education and revival in the early twentieth century, notes that Buddhist revivalists aimed to educate Buddhists, both monks and laypeople. In addition, the revivalists also sought to provide social services.³²

The revival of Buddhism in Vietnam connected Vietnamese followers of the Southern School of Buddhism and Southern Buddhism authorities in other countries. Because the revival took place mainly in the southern part of Vietnam, this led to a close bond with its neighbouring country, Cambodia, particularly in the 1930s. For instance, Le Van Giang, a Vietnamese Southern Buddhist, was ordained as a Southern Buddhist monk in Hanoi through the assistance of thirty Cambodian monks.³³

However, the Vietnam Buddhist movement had connections with Southern Buddhism outside of Cambodia. For example, Bhikkhu Narada, the Sri Lankan monk who later would be a prominent missionary monk to Indonesia, made his first trip to Vietnam in 1936.³⁴ From that time onwards, he visited Vietnam as many as thirty-five times to promote Southern Buddhism,³⁵ by planting Bodhi trees around the country to commemorate Buddha's gratitude for assisting his efforts to attain Buddhahood.³⁶ This act

31 H.D. Ngo, "Building a New House for the Buddha: Buddhist Social Engagement and Revival in Vietnam, 1927-1951" (PhD. Dissertation, University of Washington, 2015), 4.

32 M. Nguyen, "Buddhist Monastic Education and Regional Revival Movements in Early Twentieth Century" (PhD. Dissertation, The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2007), 16.

33 M.C.H.K. Lan, "A Study of Theravada Buddhism in Vietnam" (Master's Thesis, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2010), 20.

34 Q.M. Thich, "Vietnamese Buddhism in America" (PhD. Dissertation, Florida State University, 2007), 115.

35 L. Learman, *Buddhist Missionaries in the Era of Globalization* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 43; O. Gunasekera, *Venerable Narada Maha Thera: A Buddhist Missionary Par Excellence*, <http://www.budsas.org/ebud/ebdha296.htm>. (Accessed 25 May 2015).

36 S.C. Berkwitz, "History and Gratitude in Theravada Buddhism, Journal of the

of piety attracted many Vietnamese to Southern Buddhism.³⁷

While studies of Cambodian Buddhism show that Cambodian Buddhists had extensive contacts with Buddhists from other regions of South and Southeast Asia, they also show that the emergence of Buddhist revivalism was not necessarily driven by a resistance to colonial authorities and missionary activities. As Buddhist scholar, Anne Hansen, explains, “the relationship between colonial policies and ideologies and the emergence of [Cambodian] Buddhism was part symbiosis, part subversion, part a war of wills and deep ideological commitments, and part collaboration.”³⁸

In the case of Cambodia, inter-Asian Buddhist relations are also visible. Ian Harris, a professor in Buddhist studies, points to a long-standing relationship between Cambodian and Thai Buddhists that existed before, during and after colonial times. This relationship resulted in new kinds of practices in Cambodian Buddhism among which was the celebration of Vesak in 1855 and the study of the Pali language.³⁹ Cambodian Buddhists also had an ongoing relationship with colonial Sri Lanka. On his way to attend the Colonial Exhibition in Marseilles in 1906, the Cambodian king, Sisowath (r. 1904-1927) visited colonial Sri Lanka to pay homage to the Buddha’s relic with his entourage, among whom were two Cambodian monks. The stopover is claimed to have forged a lasting bond between Southern Buddhists from Cambodian and colonial Sri Lanka. King Sisowath also paid another visit to Sri Lanka in 1909 and donated a new temple to house a relic of the Buddha.⁴⁰ In 1939, the aforementioned Bhikkhu Narada visited Cambodia to plant several Bodhi trees on the ground of the École Supérieure de Pali.⁴¹

Unlike mainland Southeast Asia and colonial Sri Lanka, Buddhist revivalism in archipelagic Southeast Asia was what Trevor Ling, a professor in comparative religions, calls a “revival without revivalism,” which distinguishes

American Academy of Religion, 71, no. 3 (2003), 395.

37 M.C.H.K. Lan, *The Origin of Theravada Buddhism in Vietnam* (10th Conference on Buddhist Studies, n. pag., n.d.), <http://dr.lib.sjp.ac.lk>.

38 A.R. Hansen, *How to Behave: Buddhism and Modernity in Colonial Cambodia, 1860-1930* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007), 110.

39 I.C. Harris, *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practices* (Honolulu: University Hawai’i Press), 107.

40 Ibid., 113-14.

41 Ibid., 278. Narada appeared to continue visiting Cambodia until 1953 when he donated the Buddha’s relic to the Cambodian Buddhists. Ibid., 143.

between “noisy” revivalism which refers to a movement driven by ideology, and “quiet” revivalism which focuses on the renewal of tradition itself,⁴² which in the case of colonial Malaysia, was characterized by enthusiasm and rationality.⁴³ Ling sees Buddhist Chinese communities in the Straits Settlements of Malaya as favouring “quiet” revivalism. He points out that the Chinese community had settled in Malaysia before the region became a part of the British colonial empire and the community had brought with them their religions, of which Buddhism was one. Indeed, the oldest Chinese Buddhist temple, Kwan Fu Kung which is dedicated to Kwan Yin, was established in Penang in 1799.⁴⁴

The Buddhist revival among Chinese Buddhists in Malaysia started in the early twentieth century and intensified in the early 1920s. The Chinese Buddhists in Penang were concerned mainly concerned with the growing popularity of local Chinese superstitions, such as “increased consumption of joss-sticks and joss-papers in the Straits Settlements in the second half of the nineteenth century.”⁴⁵ This concern led to the formation of the first Buddhist society -- the Penang Buddhist Association -- in 1925. Its establishment marked the commencement of the Buddhist revival in Penang. The progress in Penang, however, was supported by two Sri Lankan Buddhist monks, Venerable Pamaratana and Venerable Dhammananda, which suggests that Penang Buddhists were part of an interregional Buddhist network.⁴⁶

Buddhist movements also occurred in Singapore in the early twentieth century. One newspaper article shows the presence of Buddhist activity in Singapore as early as 1904. The article states, “A crusade having as its object the propagation of the principles of Buddhism is in full swing in Singapore at present.”⁴⁷ The crusade was launched from a mission house on Havelock Road under the general direction of Venerable Dhammaloka, an Irish monk with a Burmese Buddhist affiliation.

In contrast to the situation on mainland Southeast Asia, ethnic communities in archipelagic Southeast Asia consisted of members from

42 T.O. Ling, “Revival Without Revivalism: The Case of the Buddhists of Malaysia,” *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 7 (1992), 326-27.

43 Ibid., 333.

44 Ibid., 332.

45 Ibid., 332.

46 Ibid., 334.

47 *The Straits Times*, (20 January 1904).

various religions. Even the Buddhists within a single ethnic community were often adherents of differing schools of Buddhism. This was the case in Singapore. Chinese Buddhism was popular among the Chinese, and Southern Buddhism was popular among Sri Lankans, Thai and Burmese residents. However, while Buddhists of Sri Lankan, Thai and Burmese origin in Singapore were relatively small religious minorities, because they allied themselves with the Chinese Buddhists in order to gain stable ritual space and access to rituals, their influence was considerable.⁴⁸

Given this heterogeneous background of Singapore Buddhist society, Buddhism there can be seen as a cosmopolitan religion, that is, it was much influenced by what happened in the countries from which the Buddhist residents had originated. Ling points out that Buddhism in Singapore started with the growth of "Associational Buddhism."⁴⁹ Chinese Buddhists established an organization called the Chinese Buddhist Association in 1926.⁵⁰ The Singapore Buddhist Lodge (SBL) was established in 1934. By the end of the 1930s, there were already several Buddhist organizations in colonial Singapore, among which was the Malayan Buddhist Syndicate, a branch of the Maha Bodhi Society in Singapore.⁵¹

The growth of associational Buddhism in Singapore appears to have led to the establishment of a Buddhist temple. A letter from acting Consul-General for Siam, Luang Sri Sayamkich, disclosed the intention of the Singapore Buddhist community to acquire land for the purpose of constructing a Buddhist temple. He also agreed to help by becoming the treasurer of the building project.⁵² Aside from a Buddhist temple, a new

48 A.M. Blackburn, "Ceylonese Buddhism in Colonial Singapore: New Ritual Spaces and Specialists, 1895-1930," *Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series* 184 (2012), 5.

49 Ling's account on the growth of associational Buddhism in Singapore is helpful. However, Ling does not provide historical facts such as the dates or years in which the organizations were established.

50 J.J. Corfield and K. Mulliner, *Historical Dictionary of Singapore* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2011), 45.

51 *The Straits Times*, (11 December 1938). Further evidence of the spread of Ceylonese Buddhism and the roles of Ceylonese monks is presented in studies by Blackburn, for instance, Blackburn, "Ceylonese Buddhism in Colonial Singapore," 5.

52 *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, (14 January 1925); *The Straits Times* (10 January 1925).

Buddhist hall was planned to be erected on Outram Road at the cost of about 4,000 Straits Dollars. As the organizer of the construction of the first Buddhist building for the Singapore Buddhist Association states: "what is keenly felt as most essential for a revival of Buddhism in Malaya is the propagation of our Lord's Doctrine which alone stands for the salvation for man. For this purpose, the great and urgent need for a new Buddhist building in Singapore can little be ignored for the inauguration of Buddhist missionary activities."⁵³

Like Southern Buddhism in Sri Lanka and other mainland Southeast Asian regions, Buddhism in Singapore showed waves of change. This is illustrated by the development of a relationship between Chinese Buddhists and Sri Lankan Buddhists.⁵⁴ Sri Lankan immigrants to Singapore had introduced Singapore to a new kind of Buddhism -- Sri Lankan Theravada (Southern) Buddhism that was oriented towards Pali-language authoritative texts and liturgy.

A Sri Lankan trader, B.P. de Silva⁵⁵ who was a patron of Sri Lankan Buddhism in Singapore, actively sought to achieve a more prominent position for Sri Lankan Buddhism in Singapore. De Silva succeeded in securing the Chinese Buddhist temple, Shuang Lin, in 1904 as a place where Sri Lankan ritual specialists could hold Sri Lankan rituals. This led to collaborative festivals and ritual performances between Chinese and Sri Lankan Buddhists at the temple in accordance with the Sri Lankan calendar. Buddhist liturgy also began to be used to carry out civil ceremonies, such as marriages. The *Malaya Tribune* recorded, "an interesting marriage took place this afternoon at Telok Blangah Road, when, for the first time in Singapore a Sinhalese Buddhist wedding was celebrated according to Buddhist rites."⁵⁶ It was B.P. de Silva who conducted a semi-religious ceremony of pouring water while the blessings were chanted in Pali. Such events became more common in the 1920s.⁵⁷ The period was marked

53 *The Straits Times*, (28 April 1937).

54 Blackburn, "Ceylonese Buddhism in Colonial Singapore," 4.

55 Belage Porolis de Silva or better known as B.P. de Silva was a Ceylonese jewellery trader who settled in Singapore in 1872 and founded B.P. de Silva and Co. He was an important figure in Ceylonese, Buddhist, and Theosophical networks connecting the Straits Settlements with Ceylon and Buddhist Southeast Asia. See: Blackburn, "Ceylonese Buddhism in Colonial Singapore," 6; P. Reeves (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Sri Lankan Diaspora*. (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet in association with the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, 2013), 63.

56 *Malaya Tribune*, (27 November 1915).

57 Blackburn, "Ceylonese Buddhism in Colonial Singapore," 12.

by more regularly held religious festivals such as Vesak, the commemoration of the birth of the Buddha, which was customarily observed by Pali-using Buddhists. Celebrating Vesak became increasingly popular thereafter, and finally became a national holiday of the Sinhalese of Singapore in 1924.⁵⁸ After a couple of years, the festival of the birth of the Buddha was, for the first time, recognized as Vesak in 1927. The term “Vesak” was not used prior to 1927. Instead, the holiday was called “Sakyamuni Buddha’s Birthday.” Thus, the use of “Vesak,” which is a Sinhalese term, signified a more stable Buddhist ritual position and popularity in Singapore.

This widening interest in Pali texts and Pali-language liturgy is crucial to understanding new connections within the Buddhist world. In Singapore, the increased liturgical use of the Pali language encouraged the Chinese Buddhists to use Pali as well. This choice in turn resulted in deepening connections between Chinese Buddhists and Pali-speaking Buddhist monks in the 1930s.

Although the Buddhist revival in Indonesia has not been extensively studied, it is likely to have been similar to the Buddhist revival across South and Southeast Asia. This dissertation provides evidence in the remainder of this chapter and those that follow that Buddhist networks from outside Indonesia brought ideas of Buddhist (re)introduction to the Indonesian archipelago. It also demonstrates that the Buddhist revivalism in South and mainland Southeast Asia was not simply replicated in Indonesia; instead, Indonesia had its own “quiet” revival that differed from the revivals which were occurring in other parts of Asia.⁵⁹ Two narratives that come to mind associate the revival of Indonesian Buddhism to the 1920’s and 1950’s respectively. Both attempts assumed Indonesian Buddhism could/should be revived by resurrecting the *Tantrayana* Buddhism that had developed in Indonesia during the seventh century CE. The first attempt dates from the 1920s by Willem Josias van Dienst, a Dutch Buddhist priest with a Burmese Buddhist background. His exact arrival in Indonesia is unclear. However, his religious work in Java is well documented. Van Dienst wanted to resurrect *Tantrayana* Buddhism.⁶⁰ He was convinced that Indonesia’s “original Buddhism” was still thriving on the islands of Bali and Lombok, and this conviction led him to believe that Java should be reconverted into a Buddhist island again because “The Javanese soul

58 Ibid., 13; *Malaya Tribune*, (12 April 1924).

59 Wikramasinghe, *Metallic Modern*, 61.

60 W. J. van Dienst, “Present religious condition in Java”, *The Buddhist*, vol. 7 no. 7 (November 1936), 387.

is created by Buddhism, and it will never find rest till it kneels down again at the foot of the Thathagata....”⁶¹ Hence, as far as some sources are concerned, Van Dienst was the first person to come to colonial Indonesia with the idea of reviving Indonesian Buddhism.

The second narrative which is attributed to Ananda Suyono Hamongdarsono (also known as Ananda Suyono) dates from the 1950s. Ananda Suyono was a Javanese Buddhist from Solo who was a member of multiple religious organizations -- the Theosophical Society in Solo, the Subud and Pangestu Javanese spiritual communities and Santi Loka (a meditation centre that he founded and taught in). He was also a Buddhist activist in the 1950s. During a 2015 interview conducted as part of this dissertation, he recalled that in the 1950s, he encountered other Buddhist activists -- such as Parwati Soepangat, I Ketut Tangkas, M.S. Mangunkawatja, Visakha Gunadharma, Sariputra Sadono, Tee Boan An (later known as Ashin Jinarakkhita) who later became Buddhist leaders. Ananda Suyono and his Buddhist group wanted to rediscover the original Indonesian Tantrayana school of Buddhism. In an interview conducted by *Boeddhsime in Indonesië*, Ananda Suyono explained that the group’s goal was difficult to achieve because there were insufficient authoritative texts on which to base the reconstruction of Tantrayana Buddhism. In fact, they only discovered one Tantrayana Buddhist manuscript -- *Sang Hyang Kamahayanikan*.⁶²

These two accounts raise an interesting question: did Indonesian Buddhist revivalism in the twentieth century actually revolve around reconstructing Indonesia’s “original Buddhism?” This dissertation argues that it did not. The later chapters of this dissertation show that none of the Buddhist revivalists working in the late colonial period actually referred to or used the old Buddhist manuscripts like *Sang Hyang Kamahayanikan* in the course of reviving Buddhism. The data obtained for this dissertation suggest that Indonesian Buddhists, particularly the Peranakan Chinese in Java, carried out their reconstruction of Buddhism in collaboration with European individuals in Indonesia and to a lesser extent the Javanese. These attempts were amplified by ideas about contemporary Buddhism that were brought into Indonesia through connections with the larger movement of Buddhist revivalism across Southeast Asia. These connections, in turn, led to

61 Ibid., 389. *Tathagata* is another name of The Buddha.

62 Y. Sumarta and F. Gales, *Boeddhsime in Indonesie. Afllevering 3* (Hilversum: Boeddhistische Omroep Stichting BOS, 2010) (recorded interview).

the creation of transregional Buddhist networks of which Indonesia became a part.

1.2. NAVIGATING BUDDHISM IN COLONIAL INDONESIA

Studying the history of Buddhism in colonial times can be complicated because there are no references to it in the colonial government's official documents. For example, the population census (*Volkstelling*) conducted in 1930 did not include Buddhism in its list of religions. Rather, the *Volkstelling* divided religion into four main categories, namely: Christianity (subdivided into Catholicism and Protestantism), *Mohamedanen* (Islam), *Israelieten* (Judaism), *Aziatische godsdiensten* (Asian religion), and *geen godsdienst of onbekend* (without religion or of unknown religion). The census provided detailed demographic information on Christians in terms of their racial, ethnic and geographical backgrounds. However, detailed information was not reported for the followers of other religions.

For example, Table 1.1 shows the religious affiliations of Europeans living in Java and Madura during the 1930 census.⁶³ While many people identified themselves as Christians, a number of them listed themselves as belonging to other religions or as unaffiliated with any religion.

Table 1.1. Religions Followed by Europeans in Java and Madura

Religions	Number
<i>Aziatische godsdiensten</i>	1,302
<i>Godsdienst Onbekend</i>	6,876
<i>Israelieten</i>	332
<i>Mohamedanen</i>	194
<i>Protestanten</i>	30,339
<i>Roomsche Katholieken</i>	19,557

Note: This table is adapted from Table 18, classification of the Europeans according to religions. Source: *Volkstelling 1930*, vol. VIII, 396.

63 *Volkstelling 1930*, VI (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1936), 394-402.

Buddhism and other Asian religions (Hinduism, Confucianism and indigenous religions) were not offered as choices. While this omission probably does not reflect an antagonistic attitude of the Dutch colonial authorities toward Asian religions and their belief systems, it does indicate that the authorities regarded these religions as unimportant to governing colonial Indonesia.

In contrast, records describing the relationship between the colonial authorities, Islam and Christianity are numerous. The relationship between Dutch colonial rulers and religious institutions in Indonesia is best described as complex or, as Fred von der Mehden, a scholar of Southeast Asia, puts it, heavily intertwined.⁶⁴ The predominantly Christian colonial rulers closely watched their vast Muslim population. Indonesian Islamic scholar Husnul Suminto explains that the colonial government became increasingly concerned about *Islampolitiek* (Islam Politics) based on the advice of Snouck Hurgronje, an expert in Islamic studies.⁶⁵ As a result, the colonial authorities increased their surveillance of Indonesian Muslims. Such activities included watching the movements of politically active Indonesian Muslims while they were on the hajj in Arabia and having *pengbulu* (village headmen) assist *bupati* (regents) in watching these Muslims.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, the Dutch government also had a tolerant attitude towards religion and supported religious freedom as long as religious beliefs did not challenge its political authority. According to the well-known Southeast Asia scholar Harry J. Benda, the Dutch feared an extremist Muslim rebellion and they hoped that Christianizing the majority of Indonesians would help solve the problem.⁶⁷ The Dutch constitution granted its colonized peoples the right to practise any religion as long as doing so would not lead to social unrest and instability. The constitution also permitted the government to

64 F.R. von der Mehden, *South-East Asia 1930-1970: The Legacy of Colonialism and Nationalism* (New York: Northon, 1974), 18.

65 H. A. Suminto, *Politik Islam Hindia Belanda: Het Kantoor voor Inlandsche Zaken* (Jakarta: PT Pustaka LP3ES, 1985), 2.

66 Ibid., 3.

67 H.J. Benda, "Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and the Foundation of Dutch Islamic Policy in Indonesia," *The Journal of Modern History* 30 (1958), 338; A. Suminto, *Islamic Politics of the Dutch East Indies: Het Kantoor voor Inlandsche Zaken* (Jakarta: Lembaga Penelitian dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial, 1985), 11.

grant permission to followers of a given religion to hold religious festivals.⁶⁸ Muslims were given permission to observe the night journey and the ascension of the Prophet (*Isra mi'raj*), the birthday of the Prophet (*Maulud Nabi*), the concluding day of the Islamic fasting month (*Id al Fitri*) and the day of sacrifice (*Id al Adha*).⁶⁹ Other religions were also granted permission to hold the religious rites and festivals of their traditions.

The absence of Buddhism in colonial sources indicates that the colonial government believed that Buddhism did not merit close attention. Iem Brown suggests that the Dutch regarded Buddhism as a Chinese tradition which did not pose a political danger. Brown's argument is aligned with those of Ali (2007) and Suminto (1985) which, as indicated earlier, point out the colonial government's focus on Islam's potential threat to the Dutch hold on Indonesia.

However, the colonial government's lack of interest in Buddhism and the absence of official records do not imply a complete lack of awareness of the existence of Buddhism. Newspapers, magazines and journals are rich sources of information about Buddhism. In fact, from the early twentieth century to the 1930s an increasing amount of news about Buddhism was published in many newspapers like *Het Nieuws van de Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, *De Indische Courant*, *De Preanger-bode*, *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* and *De Sumatra Post*.

Newspaper advertisements were a common means of informing the public about lectures on Buddhism (see Figure 1.1).⁷⁰ This practice was maintained by Dutch language newspapers throughout the late colonial years and after independence. These periodicals are valuable sources of understanding the presence of Buddhism among the people of the archipelago.

There is evidence that Buddhism was a topic of interest for the European population of colonial Indonesia. Some newspapers published articles about

68 The 1855 *Staatsreglement*, article 119; M. Ali, *Religion and Colonialism: Islamic Knowledge in South Sulawesi and Kelantan, 1905-1945* (PhD. Dissertation, University of Hawai'i, 2007), 59.

69 Ali, *Religion and Colonialism*, 61.

70 Other periodicals such as *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlands Indië*, *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, *De Soematra Post*, *De Indische Courant* also consistently covered news related to Buddhism. *De Telegraaf*, a periodical based in the Netherlands, also wrote about the Buddhist missionaries in Java. In post-independence Indonesia, news about Buddhism also could be found in *De Preangerbode*, *De Locomotief*.

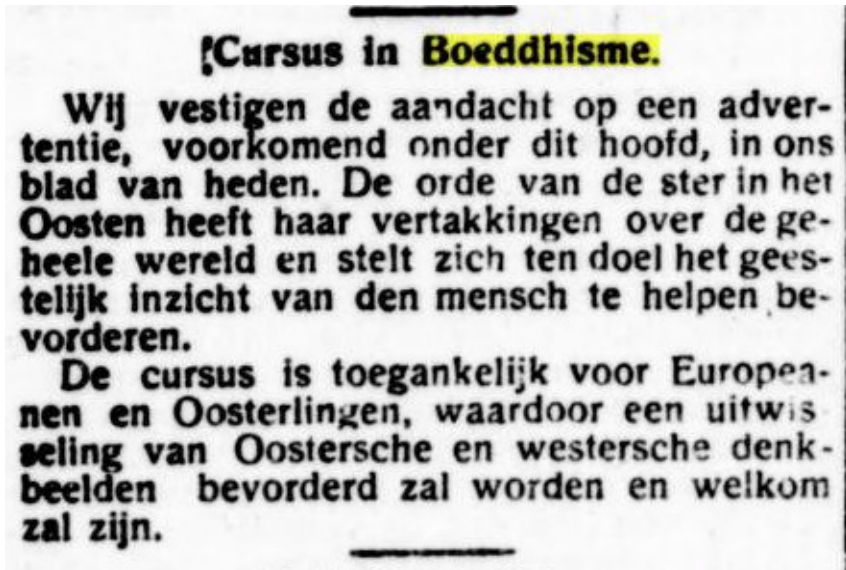


Figure 1.1. An example of a published announcement about a class on Buddhism in 1920. Source: *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* (27 November 1920).

Buddhism and Buddhist celebrations as well as announcements for lectures on Buddhism.⁷¹ Many of these articles appeared even before the coming of Bikkhu Narada, a prominent Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka, who visited Indonesia in 1934.

Aside from newspapers there are other sources about Buddhism in colonial Indonesia. Van Dienst, who arrived in Indonesia in the 1920s, wrote two interesting articles dated 1934 and 1936 about the religious situation in Indonesia for the Sri Lankan magazine, *The Buddhist*. He noted that Islam was the dominant religion in Java,⁷² as evidenced by mosques almost everywhere, including small villages.⁷³

Despite the success of Islam in Java, Van Dienst claimed that it was still

71 To mention a few examples, *Soerabaijasch-Handelsblad* published an article "Boeddhisme." The article was about a lecture held by the Theosophical Society in Surabaya. Eighty people attended the class itself. However, the name of the speaker was not specified. *Soerabaijasch-Handelsblad*, (2 April 1906).

72 W. J. van Dienst, "Buddhist work in Java and Bali", *The Buddhist*, vol. 4 no.6 (October 1933), 77.

73 Van Dienst, "Present religious condition", 387.

possible to revive Buddhism or the old Javanese religions which lay in the Javanese soul. He pointed out that many Javanese still adhered to and had not forgotten their ancestral beliefs. This was particularly discernible in the *Wayang* (Javanese shadow puppet) performances of stories that had been adopted from the original *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*,⁷⁴ and stories about the life of the Buddha and his journey to enlightenment. These performances were evidence that the old traditional religion of Java was still in the heart of the Javanese. Furthermore, in the region of Mount Tengger in East Java, Hinduism and Buddhism still prevailed. Van Dienst suggested that in this region these two religious practices had been intermixed. On the other islands, such as Bali and Lombok, Hinduism was still being practised.⁷⁵ Hence, despite the dominance of Islam in Java, Hinduism and Buddhism still prevailed in the heart of the Javanese in Bali and Lombok.

It is important to note that Van Dienst was writing about Tantrayana (Northern/Mahayana) Buddhism and not Southern/Theravada Buddhism, which he was trying to promote. Tantrayana Buddhism was the earliest kind of Buddhism that existed in Indonesia during the ninth century and it was connected with the construction of the Borobudur temple. Likewise, when he wrote about finding the *Sang Hyang Kamahayanikan*, Van Dienst was writing about an old Buddhist text that belonged to the Tantrayana Buddhist tradition, not to the Southern/Theravada Buddhist tradition.⁷⁶

Van Dienst explained in his 1936 article that aside from the Javanese people of Bali and Lombok, there were four other groups associated with Buddhism in Indonesia -- Chinese Buddhists, Japanese Buddhists, Indians sympathetic to Buddhism and European Buddhists and sympathizers. He pointed out that Buddhism was prevalent in the Chinese community and co-existed with other Chinese religions such as Confucianism and Taoism. He also pointed out that there were Chinese Buddhist priests who lived in the Chinese Buddhist shrines or *klenteng*, but they did not have the competence to preach about Buddhism,⁷⁷ despite the fact that several Buddhist organizations had been established in Indonesia and that there were nearly five million

74 The *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are two great epics originally from India. The epics were introduced into Indonesia and the peninsular countries in Southeast Asia around 200 CE and have remained popular ever since.

75 Van Dienst, "Present religious condition", 387.

76 Ibid., 387.

77 Ibid., 388.

Chinese who had declared themselves to be Buddhists.⁷⁸

Van Dienst also claimed that there were several thousand Japanese living in Java in 1936. The Buddhist organization that he co-founded had tried to reach out to these people, but the Chinese members of the organization refused to support this effort because the Japanese were their business competitors. On the other hand, the Indian sympathizers often funded Buddhist activities and organizations even though they were not Buddhists. Van Dienst noted that although most Europeans were Christians, a number of them adhered to other religions, such as Islam and other Asian religions.⁷⁹ He pointed out that there were at least thirty European Buddhists in Java.⁸⁰

Another important source of information on Buddhism in Indonesia is the publications of the Theosophical Society. According to these sources, the first chapter of the Theosophical Society was established in the late nineteenth century in Pekalongan. This was followed by other chapters in several other cities. These chapters of the Theosophical Society ran many newspaper advertisements for talks and discussions on Buddhism. When other Buddhist organizations, such as the Java Buddhist Association and the Batavia Buddhist Association, were established later, some of their officials were also members of the Society. Many preachers who gave sermons on Buddhism at these other Buddhist organizations were also Theosophists.

Another important source of information on Buddhism in colonial Indonesia are found in the literature about efforts to preserve the Borobudur. A recently published article co-authored by Dutch historians, Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff states that the Dutch colonial government initiated the restoration of Hindu and Buddhist temples in Central Java, among which was the Borobudur. The restoration of the pyramidal monument was started in 1907-1911 under the supervision of the Archaeological Commission (1901) and later continued by the Dutch East Indies Archaeological Service (*Oudheidkundige Dienst*) in 1913.⁸¹ The

78 Ibid., 388. It is important to bear in mind that there is no statistical evidence for the number of Chinese Buddhists that Van Dienst mentioned.

79 Van Dienst's observation is in line with the *Volkstelling* described in above.

80 Ibid., 387.

81 M. Bloembergen and M. Eickhoff, "Decolonizing Borobudur: Moral Engagements and the Fear of Lost. The Netherlands, Japan and (Post)Colonial Heritage Politics in Indonesia," in S. Legêne, B. Purwanto and H. Schulte Nordholt (eds), *Bodies and Stories: Imagining Indonesian History* (Singapore:

authors explain that the restoration project arose from the sense of a moral obligation to preserve the remains of the now-gone civilizations for the peoples of colonial Indonesia, and at the same time to reinforce the legitimacy of the colonial state.⁸² Despite the non-religious motive for the restoration, the Borobudur remains largely a religious legacy. It became central to those interested in spirituality in general and Buddhism in particular, as evidenced by the fact that it gradually became an important site for both Buddhist enthusiasts and followers when the Buddhist missionaries began to proselytise colonial Indonesia in the late 1920s.

A visit to the Borobudur by Bikkhu Narada in the 1930s further heightened the significance of the monument. The Theosophical Society also contributed to the significance of the monument to Buddhism by holding a Vesak ceremony on the site. The restoration of the monument indirectly allowed Buddhists and their sympathizers to establish a symbolic linkage with the monument.

CONCLUSION

Buddhist revivalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been understood as ideological revivalism and a revival without revivalism. This ideological revivalism fits the situation in colonial Sri Lanka where Buddhism was the majority religion and where Buddhist revivalists used technological advances in communication and transport, (introduced by British colonial authorities) to advance the revival of Buddhism by confronting colonial rule and Christian missionary activities. The notion of ideological revivalism also fits cases like Cambodia where Buddhism was the majority religion and where Buddhist revivalists used notions of modernism (introduced by French colonial authorities) to create Buddhist modernism or Modern Dhamma. However, the Cambodian-style ideological revivalism lacked the sharp political and religious confrontation that characterized Buddhist revivalism in colonial Sri Lanka.

In the archipelagic Southeast Asian regions, where Buddhism was not a majority religion and largely confined to a particular community, such as the Chinese community in Malaysia, Buddhist revivalism can be best understood

University of Singapore Press, 2015), 36.

82 Ibid., 36.

as “revival without revivalism” which featured the birth of associational Buddhism. The Buddhist revival in Indonesia fits the understanding of a revival without revivalism, but with specific differences. As in Malaysia, Indonesian Buddhist revivalism was driven by the growth of Buddhist associations. However, unlike what happened in Malaysia, the Indonesian laity played a leading role in establishing these associations and opening them to Buddhists (and their ideas and practices) from South and Southeast Asia and beyond.

Chapter 2

Bringing (Back) Buddhism to Indonesia: the Southern Buddhist Networks

It will not be a difficult task to convert Java. Buddhism is in the hearts of the people, at the very bottom of their souls. The Javanese soul is created by Buddhism and it will never find rest till it kneels down again at the foot of the *Tathagata*, saying: *Buddham saranam gacchami*, I go to the Buddha for refuge.¹

The rise of Buddhism was a global phenomenon that was especially noted in Europe. For instance, the Berlin newspaper *Aneta Transocean* in one of the editions of *Moestika Dharma* stated that²

Newspapers from the Far East showed that there has arisen a big movement in Buddhism that is most likely to influence intellectuals and political notions in the whole of Asia. Politics in China, political unrest on the Asian continent, along with the emergence of nationalism in colonial religions, have caused a tumultuous situation of which European countries should be aware.³

In the early twentieth century, the political changes in mainland China

1 W.J. van Dienst, "Present religious condition in Java", *The Buddhist*, vol.7 no.7 (November 1936), 389.

2 "Aneta Transocean," *Moestika Dharma: Maandblad tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie* 19 (October 1933), 684.

3 *Ibid.*, 684.

triggered the revival of religions, including Confucianism. Consequently, this religion became popular in Southeast Asian regions such as British Malaya and colonial Indonesia. Buddhism was also revived at this time. As part of this revival, some Mahayana Buddhist monks from China were sent to Sri Lanka (what was known as Ceylon) to study Buddhism there and then to establish a centre of Buddhist learning upon their return to China.

In Southeast Asia, various organizations were set up to promote Buddhism. For example, in Chiang Mai, Thailand (what was known as Siam), the Universal Union of Diffusion of Buddhist Philosophy was set up in 1913. In Thaton, Burma, similar organizations were also founded, such as the Young Men's Buddhist Association, which was established in 1906. In British Malaya, particularly in what is known as Singapore today, a couple of Buddhist organizations were also founded. An example was the International Buddhist Union that was established in 1929 and the Singapore Buddhist Association which was established between 1922-1923.

This chapter focuses on the networks affiliated with Southern Buddhism or what is also known as Theravada Buddhism. These Southern Buddhist networks consisted of two international organizations, namely the Theosophical Society and the Java Buddhist Association (JBA), which were founded by Europeans and Asian Buddhists. These organizations played a major role in the introduction of Buddhism in early twentieth century Indonesia.

The Theosophical Society is an international organization with numerous branches in South and Southeast Asia where it influenced the development of Buddhism. In some regions, such as Sri Lanka, the Theosophical Society was a significant support movement to modern Buddhist revivalism. The Theosophical Society also provided connections to help people communicate with each other regarding their concerns about Buddhism. This is particularly seen in Southeast Asia. Thus, the connections established by the Theosophical Society with Buddhists in the Indonesian archipelago will be discussed in this section.

It is particularly important to dissect the web of networks of the Buddhist organizations and its role in bridging individuals and organizations in order to historicize the diverse actors' involvement in the (re)introduction of Buddhism. Internationalism in this Buddhist institutional context is thus understood as not being antagonistic to nationalism. Rather, such a stance is aligned with the perspective taken by Glenda Sluga, a professor in international

studies, who sees internationalism and nationalism linked as liberal ideologies.⁴ Both elements reinforce rather than work against each other.⁵ According to scholars in social studies Jeronimo and Monteiro, religious internationalism in the post-World War I era intersected with imperialism and the colonial project and outlook. Two examples are the Protestant International Missionary Council and the Catholic mission.⁶ Such missionary organizations were able to operate in Indonesia with the support of the colonial government which regarded Protestant and Catholic missionary activities as helpful to the successful implementation of government policies.

In 1901 the Dutch colonial government launched a new policy called the “Ethical Policy.” Consequently, a new era of environmental changes began.⁷ However, although this policy was intended to benefit the entire Dutch colonial territory in Indonesia, its implementation tended to favour Christians. In the work of Indonesian Islamic scholar, Muhamad Ali, he cites Queen Wilhelmina’s words as written by Kroef thusly: “as a predominantly Protestant nation, the Netherlands has a duty to improve the condition of native Christians in the Indonesian archipelago, to give Christian missionary activity more aid and to inform the entire administration that the Netherlands have a moral obligation to fulfil as regards the population of those regions.”⁸ Accordingly, the Christian missionaries were responsible for modernizing and educating the local people in colonial Indonesia.

However, in this chapter it is argued that the institutional progress that took place after the implementation of the Ethical Policy also occurred in other

4 G. Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2013), 3.

5 D. Laqua, “Internationalism and Nationalism in the League of Nations’ Work for Intellectual Cooperation,” In M.B. Jeronimo and J.P. Monteiro (eds), *Internationalism, Imperialism and the Formation of the Contemporary World: The Past of the Present* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 61.

6 M.B. Jeronimo and H.G. Does, “Internationalisms and the Politics and Policies of Mission in the Portuguese Colonial Empire (1885-1930),” *Illes Imperis* 19 (2017), 107.

7 Ricklefs notes that although the Ethical Policy promised much but delivered little real environment change, the policy is still central to explaining changes of colonial environmental policy and Indonesian history in the early twentieth century. See M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1200* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 183.

8 M. Ali, *Islam and Colonialism: Becoming Modern Indonesia and Malaya* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 76.

communities. In particular, it promoted the growth of transnational networks connecting Buddhist organizations. This chapter thus focuses on a period that Takashi Siraishi, a Japanese historian, calls “an age in motion.” Siraishi points out that although the organizations described in this dissertation were not as politically aggressive, the concept of “motion” captures the awareness of a new idea in response to the dynamics of that period.⁹ Like nationalistic organizations that raised political awareness and new ideas among the native populations of South and Southeast Asia, the transnational networks linking Buddhist organizations resulted in a new awareness and ideas about being a Buddhist in the modern world. Thus, the transnational networks between Buddhist institutions were pivotal to the (re)introduction of Buddhism in colonial Indonesia and, consequently, became the hallmark of Buddhist (re) emergence.

Aside from the Theosophical Society, another international organization discussed in this chapter is the Java Buddhist Association (JBA), an organization headed by Europeans Ernest Erle Power (henceforth E.E. Power) and Willem Josias van Dienst. The organization is important because of its role during the course of the introduction of Southern Buddhist tradition, particularly in Batavia. Specifically, the organization challenged misleading practices in the temple and advocated for changes.

In addition to the Theosophical Society and the JBA, Bhikkhu Narada, a Southern Buddhist monk from colonial Sri Lanka, also played a significant role in the introduction of Buddhism in Indonesia. Representing the Asian Buddhist intellectual in this process, his participation extended beyond the end of the colonial empire, hence the discussion on Bhikkhu Narada, which begins in this chapter, continues in Chapter Six.

2.1. THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

The Theosophical Society was founded in New York on 17 November 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891), a Russian-born woman, and Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907),¹⁰ who became the first president of the

9 T. Siraishi, *Zaman Bergerak: Radikalisme Rakyat di Jawa 1912-1926* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), xi.

10 I.P. Nugraha, *Teosofi, Nationalism and Elite Modern Indonesia* (Beji, Depok: Komunitas Bamboo, 2011), 6.

Theosophical Society. The word “theosophy” is derived from the Greek words, *Theos* meaning God and *Sophia* meaning Wisdom. Hence, it is understood as Godly Wisdom or Divine Wisdom, which means obtaining wisdom directly from God.¹¹ The organization was established to counter materialism and atheism, particularly in America and Europe, where the founders believed these perspectives were rising. The members of the society were encouraged to develop freedom of thought and work towards the betterment of society through spiritual ways.

Instead of supporting only one major religion, the Theosophical Society promoted syncretic beliefs. This is reflected in the Society’s three major aims: “first, to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour; second, to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science; third, to investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.”¹² Thus, the members of the Society consisted of people from different faiths, based on the Society’s motto, “There is no Religion higher than Truth.”¹³ The three major aims of the Theosophical Society are an important premise for understanding the different movements in which the society was involved.

Studies of the Theosophical Society cover two major chronological periods. The first covers the period from 1875-1878, when the Society was built on the foundation of Spiritualism. The second period covers the time when the Society underwent an “oriental shift” after it relocated to Adyar, a neighborhood in Madras, nowadays known as Chennai, India in 1879.¹⁴ After this move, the philosophy of the Theosophical Society became heavily influenced by Eastern texts and mythology. Lavoie writes that after its arrival on Indian soil in 1879, the society connected with Arya Samaj, a Vedic group, and established a relationship with it.¹⁵ However, this relationship lasted very briefly because of a dispute over a bill incurred for welcome festivities for Blavatsky and Olcott when they arrived in Bombay. Lavoie further claims that the eclectic attitude of the Theosophical Society was another reason

11 A. Besant, *Theosophy*. (New York: Dodge Publishing Co, 1912), 9.

12 Ibid., 89.

13 Ibid., 90.

14 J.D. Lavoie, *The Theosophical Society: The History of Spiritualist Movement* (Boca Raton, Florida: Brown Walker Press, 2012), 4.

15 Ibid., 31.

why it severed its ties with Arya Samaj,¹⁶ whose nature was theologically exclusivist in contrast to the eclectic nature of Theosophy. Nevertheless, the brief relationship between these two movements indicates that when the Theosophical Society arrived in India, other movements were already established there. In other words, the Theosophical Society was one of many reform movements in nineteenth century India, among which were Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ram Krishna Math and the Mission.¹⁷

After the Theosophical Society ended its relationship with Arya Samaj, it began working with other Buddhist organizations. The relationship with Buddhism began when Blavatsky and Olcott travelled to colonial Sri Lanka. Eventually, both of them converted to Buddhism in 1880. The Sri Lankan visit was followed by other visits with Olcott heading the Theosophical Society. The close relationship between Buddhism and the Society that developed from these visits led to the Society not only establishing itself in Sri Lanka but also in other regions, notably Adyar, India which eventually became the Society's headquarters.

The spread of the Theosophical Society to other regions is briefly reviewed below. After the passing of Blavatsky and Olcott, the leadership of the Theosophical Society was assumed by Annie Wood Besant in 1907.¹⁸ It was under Besant's leadership that the Society became increasingly concerned with wider issues. In their books on the Theosophical Society, authors Iskandar Nugraha, an Indonesian scholar, and De Tollenaere, a Dutch scholar, state that during Besant's leadership, the Theosophical Society became involved with issues regarding religion, education, society and politics as well as spirituality. Besant emphasized the three aforementioned Society goals to draw the attention of people around the world.¹⁹ The Theosophical Society

16 Ibid., 32.

17 P.-O. Fjällsby, *Idealizing India: A Transformative Perspective on Theosophists Contribution to Education and Politics (1879-1930)* (Karlstad: Karlstads Universitet, 2016), 27.

18 Annie Wood Besant was the second president of the Society (1907-1933) with a Victorian English background. Her career in the society began in 1889 where she became a devoted pupil of the Blavatsky and Olcott. From that point, she devoted her life to the society. Aside from her books, she is known for her concern for education and philanthropic work. <http://www.ts-adyar.org/content/annie-besant-1847-1933>; A. Besant and C.H. MacKay, *Autobiographical Sketches* (Peterborough and Buffalo, NY: Broadview Press, 2009), 18.

19 Nugraha, *Teosofi, Nationalism*, 6.

reached its peak between 1907 and 1933 during Besant tenure as its worldwide president.²⁰

Several authors have studied the Theosophical Society's involvement with issues other than spiritualism. In India, Fjällsby researched the influence of the Society on education.²¹ As reckoned by him, the Theosophical Society in its headquarters in Adyar, Chennai was associated with its involvement with the neo-Hinduism movement on the defence of Hinduism and its ritual practices. Politically, the Theosophists were involved in establishing the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885. Furthermore, Besant served as the leader of the Home Rule Movement, an organization she established to be a catalyst for Indian freedom from British rule. In her book, *How India Wrought for Freedom: The Story of the National Congress Told from Official Records*, Besant hoped, "May this book help Britain to understand the shame of her autocratic rule in India, her broken pledges, her selfishness, her preference of her own to India's interest."²² Through Besant's involvement, the Theosophical Society became significantly involved in Indian Nationalism through expanding the movement.²³

Fjällsby argues that the Theosophists also played a crucial role in Indian education. He explains how the Theosophists worked within India's education system with the aim of serving education throughout the nation.²⁴ An example is the establishment of the Central Hindu College in Benares (1898) in collaboration with the Society and Bhagawan Das, who was a nationalist and a Theosophist.²⁵

Aside from its headquarters in Adyar, Chennai, the Theosophical Society also took root in different places and in different forms. Examples of organizations formed under the Society were The Star in The East (Bintang

20 Besant and MacKay, *Autobiographical Sketches*, 19.

21 Fjällsby, *Idealizing India*, 163.

22 A. Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom: The Story of The National Congress Told From Official Records* (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1915), no page.

23 S. Kaur, "Role of Women in India's Struggle for Freedom," *International Journal of Management and Social Sciences Research (IJMSSR)* 2, no. 4 (2013), 113; H. Owen, *The Indian Nationalist Movement, 1912-1922* (New Delhi: Sterling Publisher, 1990), 92-99.

24 Fjällsby, *Idealizing India*, 34.

25 Ibid., 34.

Timoer), Freemasonry, Moeslim Bond, Theosofische Wereld Universiteit and The Liberal Catholic Church. According to Nugraha, these organizations were promoted by different Theosophical Society branches in different parts of the world, including Indonesia.²⁶

2.1.1. The Theosophists and Buddhism

Interest in Buddhism and other Eastern religions, such as Hinduism, emerged among Western writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is evidenced by the emergence of works by Western authors that showed admiration for the Indian cultural heritage. One example is *The Sacred Books of the East* which is a 50 volume series of English translations of the so-called sacred texts from Asia. The series was edited by various oriental scholars included F. Max Müller. The series described elements of eastern religions, including a number of Buddhist texts.²⁷ Fjällsby asserts that Ahlback's argument that Indian ideas, such as reincarnation and karma, increasingly became popular when the Theosophical Society moved to India.²⁸ Aligned with Ahlback's argument, Fjällsby also argues that the Theosophical Society was a product of the age of intellectual discovery and that the discovery of the Indian worldview introduced new ideas outside Western Judeo-Christian to philosophers, writers, and artists and cultural groups during that century.²⁹ An interesting letter written by F. Max Müller in 1895 to his friend, Malabari, indicates that Western interest in India was much more inclined toward Buddhism. The letter shows Müller's dissatisfaction with this interest and reflects the situation at the time. In his letter Müller wrote, "I wish I would rouse more interest and more sympathy for India in England; unfortunately, the only thing that large public admires in India is the folly of Esoteric Buddhism and Theosophy, falsely so called. What a pity it is that such absurdities, nay, such frauds, should be tolerated."³⁰ Another Western

26 Nugraha, *Teosofi, Nationalism*, 46.

27 P. Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 422.

28 Fjällsby, *Idealizing India*, 38.

29 Ibid., 39.

30 F.M. Müller, *The Life And Letters Of The Right Honourable Friedrich Max Müller* (New York: AMS Press, 1976), 327-328; In contrary to the statement made by Müller, Wickremeratne claims, "In the Imperial connection with Asia

notable scholar who paid great interest to Buddhism was Thomas William Rhys Davids (1843-1922). He was known as the first Western scholar and orientalist to translate the Buddhist Pali Canon into English. By doing so, he made the scriptures available to a wider audience.³¹

One of the most influential and well-known works about Buddhism was *The Light of Asia: The Great Renunciation* (1879) -- a book-length poem about the life of the Buddha and Buddhist doctrine published by an Englishman named Sir Edwin Arnold, who at the time was an editor of the *Daily Telegraph*. The poetical book was based on the *Buddhacarita*, the life of the Buddha, written by Ashvaghosha, a poet from the 2nd century CE.³² The book became one of the most important references on Buddhism for Westerners as well as some Asians.³³ In Indonesia, the book was translated into the Malay language and published in *Moestika Dharma*, a weekly Peranakan Chinese Buddhist magazine. Another popular book about Buddhism was Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha* (1922).

Theosophy can be viewed as a bridge between the East and West, which can be seen in many of the Theosophists' works that explicated connections between Theosophical and Buddhist ideas. Several aspects of Buddhism can be found in descriptions of Theosophical doctrines. For instance, a set of terms, images and impressions of Buddhism can be found in many of Blavatsky's publications. Her first works, *Isis Unveiled* (1877) and *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), were filled with theological concepts from Eastern religions, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism.

Unlike Müller who was interested in the Vedas, Sir Edwin Arnold was an advocate for Buddhism. Arnold worked with Anagarika Dhammapala, a Sri Lankan Buddhist revivalist, in forming the Mahabodhi Society in India. He was also a close associate of Bhikkhu Sumangala, a Sri Lankan Buddhist revivalist who was a monk.³⁴ A notable European Theosophist was Caroline

it was Hinduism, rather than Buddhism, which held sway as the undisputed *prima donna* of the stage." L.A. Wickremeratne, *The Genesis of an Orientalist: Thomas William Rhys Davids in Sri Lanka* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1984), ix.

31 Wickremeratne, *The Genesis of an Orientalist*, xv.

32 The book was then translated into the Malay language by Kwee Tek Hoay.

33 Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism*, 420.

34 D. Geary, *The Rebirth of Bodhi Gaya: Buddhism and the Making of World Heritage Site* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), 28.

Augusta Foley Rhys Davids (1857-1942). She was the wife of Thomas William Rhys Davids who founded the Pali Text Society (PTS) in 1881 in England and who was a strong critic of Theosophy.³⁵ A notable writer in her own right, Caroline Rhys Davids wrote, translated and edited a number of works on Buddhism. Another widely known writer on Buddhism was the aforementioned Henry Steel Olcott. He dedicated much of his time to Buddhism, particularly in Sri Lanka. While he was there, he produced the *Buddhist Catechism* (1881) and several other works, such as *The Fourteen Fundamental Beliefs* (1891) and *The Life of Buddha and Its Lessons* (1912). (These works will be discussed in more detail in a later section.)

The Theosophical Society has had very lasting effects, not only on the reception of Buddhism in the West and on the Buddhist society in Asia. This influence was due to the Society's transnational movement which dealt with various issues and interests that addressed progressive industrialization and the impact of colonialism and foreign missionary activities. The movement in Asia addressed the political upheavals of colonialism and missionization quite distinctively. It served as a conduit for the members of the Society and enabled them to connect with individuals who shared similar interests.

The Theosophical Society gave confidence to the local people in defending their national stance against colonialism and missionization. Stephen Prothero, an American scholar of religion, believes that the Theosophical Society was not established to propagate Eastern wisdom but to provide a moral and philosophical "uplift" of spiritualism.³⁶ Evidence of this is the close relationship established with Arya Samaj soon after the Society's headquarters moved to India.

The two leaders of the Theosophical Society provided complementary skills to the organization -- Blavatsky's advanced esoteric philosophy and Olcott's organizational skills. In 1877, Blavatsky published her magnum opus titled *Isis Unveiled*, a book that discusses modern Western knowledge and ancient Oriental sources. In it Blavatsky states that all religions come

35 T.W. Rhys Davids was more known as a famous orientalist who claimed to be the first European scholar that devoted himself exclusively to the study of Pali and Buddhism. He was a close contemporary and associate of Max Müller who worked on Hinduism and Sanskrit. See L.A. Wickremaratne, *The Genesis of an Orientalist*, ix.

36 S.R. Prothero, *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 51.

from “one primitive source,” teach “one eternal truth” and tend toward one common goal.³⁷ Furthermore, she claims that the *ursprung* (origin) of the universal religion is located in the Far East and that Buddhism and pre-Vedic Brahmanism are the sources of all religions.³⁸ It was the publication of *Isis Unveiled* which marked the beginning of the shift of the Theosophical Society’s direction from the West to the East, the birthplace of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Theosophy favoured Hinduism and Buddhism over other religions, particularly Christianity. This was evident in the inability of Olcott and Blavatsky to tolerate the work of Christian missionaries. In a correspondence to a Hindu from Calcutta, Olcott confirms that the Theosophical Society was established to promote the study of Eastern esoteric religious philosophies and expose the moral bankruptcy of Christianity.³⁹ This negativity towards Christianity originated from two reasons. The first reason was the historical context which influenced Olcott. This context was the period known as “modern unbelief,” during which Christianity became popular while other beliefs, such as atheism, agnosticism and other religions that opposed traditional Christianity were questioned. The second reason was Olcott’s awareness that the Eastern religions were in conflict with Christianity.⁴⁰ In this conflict, Theosophy sided with Hinduism and Buddhism against Christian missionaries who were seen as being aggressive when Blavatsky and Olcott converted to Buddhism during their visit to colonial Sri Lanka. Henceforth, they offered their full support for Buddhists in Sri Lanka in turning back Christianity missionaries.

Prothero considers Olcott an example of a culture broker⁴¹ between the Occident and the Orient. In other words, Olcott facilitated the commerce of religious ideas and practices between Asia and the West because he helped to bring a whole new spiritual creation into the world’s religious marketplace.⁴² Prothero explains further that when Olcott, whose religious background was

37 Ibid., 58.

38 H.P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1979), 2639.

39 Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 64.

40 Ibid., 65.

41 Ibid., 2.

42 Ibid., 3.

Christian Protestantism, moved from America to the colonial Sri Lanka he did not leave his American and Protestant baggage behind; in fact, he carried it along with him.⁴³ His background influenced his later spiritual life when he lived in Asia. For instance, he “creolized” American Protestant and Asian Buddhist norms.⁴⁴

To summarize this section, the Theosophical Society was not only a bridge between the West and the East in terms of philosophy and new knowledge, it also supported the spread of Buddhism in different regions of South and Southeast Asia, particularly in colonial Indonesia.

2.1.2. The Theosophical Society in South and Southeast Asia

It has been claimed that the Theosophical Society was one of the fundamental components for the introduction of Buddhism to Western audiences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This section will focus on the places where the Theosophical Society established itself and how it operated such that it made influential contribution to Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Burma, the Straits Settlements (Singapore and parts of Malaysia) and Indonesia.

Understanding the role of the Theosophical Society in the development of Buddhism in Sri Lanka in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provides insights into the emergence of Buddhism in other Southeast Asian regions. Evidence of communities observing religious holy days like Vesak is an important indication of the presence of Buddhism.

The use of similar symbols, on the other hand, can be an indication of a connection between communities in different regions. The following section will provide evidence that ceremonies for observing Buddhist holy days and the use of Buddhist symbols in Indonesia reflected the Theosophical Society’s ideas about performing these ceremonies and using Buddhist symbols, which the society first introduced in Sri Lanka and Burma.

The work of the Theosophical Society had a greater effect on Buddhism in Sri Lanka than Buddhism in any South or Southeast Asian region. The main purpose Olcott⁴⁵ and Blavatsky’s visit to Sri Lanka was to lend the

43 Ibid., 4.

44 Ibid., 5.

45 Olcott was reported to have made himself a Buddhist in Galle which is thus the starting point for him in Buddhist world. See: B.P. Kirthisinghe and M.P.

strength of the West to the struggle of Buddhists in the region, which at that time faced a massive flow of Christian missionaries.⁴⁶

Shortly after embracing Buddhism in 1880, Olcott analyzed the Buddhist's situation in Sri Lanka. Upon his arrival in Sri Lanka in 1884, Olcott organized the Buddhist Defence Committee that elected him an honorary member and charged him to travel to London as its representative. This was his first role acting as an intermediary between the East and West. Furthermore, in his book George Bond, a scholar in Buddhist studies and south Asian religions, highlights the significant role of Olcott in strengthening the role of the laity and shaping their reformist viewpoint. To support his goal, Olcott then formed the Buddhist Theosophical Society with two divisions -- a clerical division and a lay division.⁴⁷ The creation of a lay division gave laymen a new sense of unity in opposition to the Christians as well as independence from the monks that allowed lay people to participate in the reform of Buddhism.⁴⁸

The Buddhist Theosophical Society, under the leadership of Olcott, later produced a large number of polemical works promoting the revival of Buddhism, namely two kinds of publications, such as the *Sarasvati Sandarasa* and *The Buddhist*. Other works by him focused on reforming Buddhist education which led to the introduction of the Buddhist Sunday School, which had the same standards as a Christian Sunday school, but with a curriculum based on Buddhist beliefs and traditions.⁴⁹

In 1880 Olcott raised a number of issues regarding Buddhism to the British colonial government. As a representative of the Buddhist community, Olcott proposed to the British government that Vesak be considered a public holiday. This proposal was approved by the colonial government on 27 March 1885.⁵⁰

Amarasuriya, *Colonel Olcott: His Service to Buddhism* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1981), 3.

46 G.D. Bond, *The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka: Religious Tradition, Reinterpretation and Response* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 1988), 47.

47 K. Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society: 1750-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 246.

48 Ibid., 247.

49 Bond, *The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka*, 49.

50 C.V. Agarwal, *The Buddhist and Theosophical Movement: 1873-2001*, 2nd ed.

Another notable work by Olcott to resuscitate Buddhism included the composition of the *Buddhist Catechism*, which was published in 1881. This work specifically aimed to rival Christian catechisms by providing a succinct and comprehensive overview of Buddhist history, ethics and philosophy for beginners that would enable them to understand and follow the *Dhamma* (the teaching of the Buddha) accordingly. The content of the Buddhist Catechism was divided into five topics: (1) the life of the Buddha; (2) the Dhamma or doctrine; (3) the *Sangha* or the monastic order; (4) the rise and spread of Buddhism; and (5) several reconciliations of Buddhism with science.⁵¹

Olcott aimed not only to awake Buddhism in Sri Lanka but also to unite the Buddhist world. He headed a committee that designed a flag which would symbolize the unity between all Buddhists regardless of region or sect. The flag was raised publicly for the first time on Vesak day of 1886.⁵²

The vision of a united Buddhist world led Olcott to concentrate on developing Buddhism throughout Asia. He set up a transnational Buddhist coalition that Prothero describes as similar to the contemporaneous Evangelical Alliance of American Protestantism.⁵³ The alliance had two goals: (1) to arrive at a common doctrinal statement on which all Buddhists could agree and (2) to launch from this common platform a united mission to reform along Buddhist lines both Occident and Orient. These goals led to *The Fourteen Fundamental Principles of Buddhism* published in 1891. It promulgated fourteen fundamental propositions purposely designed to be held in common by all Buddhists regardless of which sects they belonged to:

1. Buddhists are taught to show the same tolerance, forbearance and brotherly love to all men, without distinction, and an unswerving kindness towards the members of the animal kingdom.
2. The universe was evolved, not created; and it functions according to law, not according to the caprice of any god.
3. The truths upon which Buddhism is founded are natural. They

(Sarnath: Maha Bodhi Society of India, 2001), 41.

51 H.S. Olcott, *Buddhist Catechism*, 36th ed. (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1903), xi.

52 Olcott designed the flag and modified it in consultation with a committee comprising the following: Ven. H. Sri Sumangala, Ven. Migettuwatte Gunnanada Maha Nayaka Thero, H.S. Olcott, D. Dharmapala and C. Pujjita Gunawardena. Agarwal, *The Buddhist and Theosophical Movement*, 43.

53 Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 127.

have, we believe, been taught in successive *kalpa* or world periods, by certain illuminated beings called Buddhas, the name Buddha meaning “Enlightened.”

4. The fourth teacher in the present kalpa was Sakyamuni or Gautama Buddha, who was born in a royal family in India about 2,500 years ago. He was a historical personage and his name was Siddhartha Gautama.
5. Sakyamuni taught that ignorance produces desire. Unsatisfied desire is the cause of rebirth, and rebirth the cause of sorrow. To get rid of sorrow, therefore, it is necessary to escape rebirth; it is necessary to extinguish desire; and to extinguish desire, it is necessary to destroy ignorance.
6. Ignorance fosters the belief that rebirth is a necessary thing. When ignorance is destroyed the worthlessness of every such rebirth, considered as an end in itself, is perceived, as well as the paramount need of adopting a course of life by which the necessity for such repeated rebirth, can be abolished. Ignorance also begets the illusive and illogical idea that there is only one existence for man, and the other illusion that this one life is followed by a state of unchangeable pleasure or torment.
7. The dispersion of all this ignorance can be attained by the persevering practice of an all-embracing altruism in conduct, development of intelligence, wisdom in thought, and destruction of desire for the lower personal pleasures.
8. The desire to live being the cause of rebirth, when that is extinguished rebirth ceases and the perfected individual attains by meditation that highest state of peace called *Nirvana*.
9. Sakyamuni taught that ignorance can be dispelled and sorrow removed by the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, that is:
 - Existence is misery.
 - The cause of productive misery is the desire ever renewed of satisfying oneself, without being able ever to secure that end.
 - The destruction of that desire, or the estranging of oneself from it.
 - The means of obtaining this destruction of desire. The means which he pointed out are called the Noble Eightfold Path, that is right action, right means of livelihood, right exertion, right remembrance and right meditation.
10. Right meditation leads to spiritual enlightenment, or the development of that Buddha-like faculty which is latent in every man.
11. The essence of Buddhism, as summed up by the *Tathagata* (Buddha)

himself, consists of: desisting from all evil; acquiring virtue, purifying the heart;

12. The universe is subject to a natural causation known as *karma*. The merits and demerits of a being in his past existence determine his condition in the present one. Each man, therefore, has prepared the causes of the effect which he now experiences.
13. The obstacles to the attainment of good karma may be removed by the observance of the following precepts, which are embraced in the moral code of Buddhism:
 - Kill not.
 - Steal not.
 - Indulge not in forbidden sexual pleasure.
 - Lie not.
 - Take not intoxicating or stupefying drugs or liquor.

Five other precepts which need not be enumerated here should be observed by those who would attain more quickly than the average layman the release from misery and rebirth.

14. Buddhism discourages superstitious credulity. Gautama Buddha taught it to be the duty of a parent to have his child educated in science and literature. He also taught that no one should believe what is spoken by any sage, written in any book or affirmed by tradition, unless it accords with reason.⁵⁴

Olcott introduced *The Fourteen Fundamental Principles of Buddhism* during his tour of Asian countries. He intended to bring the followers of Mahayana Buddhism in Japan, Korea, China and Vietnam closer to the followers of Theravada Buddhism in countries like India, Burma, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand.⁵⁵ The fourteen principles received respect from both schools of Buddhism, which resulted in the Mahayana and Theravada Buddhist schools agreeing to the concepts stated.⁵⁶ The fourteen principles were signed and approved by the high priests of the nations who were present at a conference held in Adyar, Madras, on the 8-12 January 1891 (A.B, 2434).

54 B.P. Kirthisinghe and M.P. Amarasinghe, *Colonel Henry Steel Olcott: His Service to Buddhism*, (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1981), 15-16.

55 Ibid., 14; For Olcott's influence on Buddhist reformers in Japan, see: Y. Shin'ichi, "Theosophy and Buddhist Reformers in the Middle of the Meiji Period: An Introduction," *Japanese Religions* 34, no. 2 (2009), 119-31.

56 Kirthisinghe and Amarasinghe, *Colonel Olcott*, 17.

Among those who signed were Kozen Gunaratana and Chiezo Tokuzawa (from Japan)⁵⁷; U Hmoay Tha Aung (from Burma); Dharmapala Hevavitarana (from Sri Lanka); and Krishna Chandra Chowdury, by his appointed proxy Maung Tha Dwe (from Chittagong).⁵⁸ In this way, the common platform successfully united the leaders of two major schools of Buddhism in Asia.

The Northern and Southern Buddhists' acceptance of the common Buddhist platform signifies the extent of the Theosophical Society's influence on the Buddhist world in the late nineteenth century. It also reflects the sort of cosmopolitanism within the Buddhism world which allowed it to move towards a united platform. In this regard, the Theosophical Society conformed to what Leela Gandhi calls "affective communities" which refers to communities in which people mixed freely in the spirit of equality and solidarity regardless of their backgrounds in order to resist imperialism.⁵⁹

Moreover, the extent of Theosophical Society's success in these countries was uneven. Burma is an example of this. Despite the fact that the Burmese Buddhist authorities had agreed to the Buddhist common platform, the Theosophical Society in Burma was not able to achieve as much as it had in Sri Lanka. However, the Society was able to influence some monks in the country.

The impact of the Theosophists on the development of Buddhism in Burma can be traced back to British colonial times during King Thibaw's reign. Olcott first arrived in Burma in January 1885 at the invitation of King Thibaw who had apparently learned about Olcott's contribution to the Sinhalese Buddhist revival.⁶⁰ Olcott's first visit to Burma was brief due to Blavatsky's illness. However, he returned again, rejoined his fellow Theosophist Leadbeater in Rangoon and commenced his work after Blavatsky's condition improved.⁶¹

57 The Japanese signatories represent at least seven groups of Northern Buddhists such as the *Shingon Shu*, *Nichiren Shu*, *Zen Shu*, *Jodo Shu*, *Ji-Shu Shu*, *Jodo Seizen Shu* and *Tendai Shu*.

58 Kirthisinghe and Amarasuriya, *Colonel Olcott*, 17-18.

59 L. Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 122.

60 Despite the invitation from King Thibaw, Olcott described the king as "a hen-pecked despot, whose hands were dyed in innocent blood, whose mind full of plots, stratagems and politics and who was not likely to do any good to my wards, the Buddhist of Ceylon..." The rest of his report focussed the king's brother who was a monk and a *Sangharaja* (Buddhist Royal High Priest) with whom Olcott had a positive relationship. *The Theosophist* XII, no. 6 (March 1891), 323-32.

61 *Ibid.*, 323.

Olcott travelled throughout the country in order to introduce the platform. Aside from giving lectures throughout the country, he assisted in the translation of the *Buddhist Catechism* into the Burmese language. He also succeeded in having the *The Fourteen Fundamental Principles of Buddhism* endorsed by the *Thatanabaing* (Burmese Buddhist patriarch), who was the brother of King Thibaw.

Olcott organized the local Theosophical Society into three branches. The first branch was for Burmese Buddhists; the second branch was for Hindus; and the third branch was for Europeans interested in mesmerism.⁶²

The approach that Olcott used in Sri Lanka was the same one he used in Burma to begin a Buddhist revival there. During a council meeting in Mandalay he highlighted the Theosophical Society's achievements in the field of Buddhistic exegesis and propaganda in Sri Lanka. He also alluded to the Sinhalese's zeal for resisting Christian missionary efforts, numerous religious publications, English journals, such as the *Sandaresa* and *The Buddhist*, and some statistics about Buddhist boys and girls who were enrolled in schools established by the Theosophical Society.⁶³ To highlight his goal of forming a united Buddhist world, Olcott pointed out that at the 1881 Adyar council meeting Japanese Buddhists had united despite the fact that they came from various schools of Buddhism.⁶⁴

Olcott also attempted to create a Buddhist organization in the country. He wrote, "I availed some leisure time here to draft a scheme for a National Buddhist society, with a subsidiary network of township and village societies to share and systematize on a national scale the work of Buddhist revival and propaganda."⁶⁵ Stephen Prothero provides detailed information about the formation of the International Buddhist League, which was then subdivided into the National Buddhist League and the Local Buddhist Brotherhoods. These two subdivisions had different objectives. The National Buddhist League aimed to work for the promotion of Buddhism throughout the world and to draw Buddhists together into a brotherly relationship. The later Local Buddhist Brotherhoods promoted local interests such as grant-in-aid Buddhist Schools, the publication and circulation of religious literature, assistance to

62 Ibid., 323; Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 118.

63 *The Theosophist* XII, no. 6 (March 1891), 328.

64 Ibid., 328.

65 Ibid., 325.

poor pagodas, support for priests, repairs for temples and other religious structures, and projects for the revival and spread of Buddhism.⁶⁶

Despite Olcott's effort, the Theosophical Society in Burma did not yield satisfying outcomes. The establishment of branches of the Theosophical Society in Burma and the International Buddhist League had no significant impact on Buddhism there. The Theosophical Society was then soon dissolved.⁶⁷ This was because although Burma and Sri Lanka were both ruled by Britain, Buddhism in Burma had not declined in the ways it had in Sri Lanka. As a result, there was no need for Theosophists to intervene.⁶⁸

Theosophists and Buddhist modernists such as Olcott, Dharmapala, Wentz and Dawa-Sandup shaped the thinking of Shin Ukkattha (1897-1978), a Burmese Buddhist monk activist and nationalist. After studying and traveling in India, he returned to Burma in 1929 where he argued that traditional notions associated with Buddhist cosmology, such as the existence of heaven and hell, should be revised to fit a scientific view of Buddhism cosmology.⁶⁹

The Theosophical Society was also present in the archipelagic region in Southeast Asia. Alan Trevithick, a Buddhism history scholar, calls the Theosophical Society a franchise organization because its branches were found everywhere.⁷⁰ Olcott opened the Gautama Lodge on 4 January 1889 with nineteen members to establish the Theosophical Society in Singapore. In the beginning the lodge was initially attached to the Ceylon section.⁷¹ The website of the Singapore Theosophical Society lodge states that the establishment of the Gautama Lodge was one of the latest lodges because it was established thirteen years after the Theosophical Society was founded in New York and only seven years after its headquarters was moved to Adyar, India in 1882.

Nevertheless, the Gautama Lodge was not very active during its first years.

66 Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 129.

67 Ibid., 130.

68 Agarwal, *The Buddhist and Theosophical Movement*, 45.

69 K. Crosby and A. Janaka, "All Too Human: the Impact of International Buddhist Networks on the Life and Posthumous Conviction of the Nationalist Monk, Shin Ukkattha (1897-1978)," *Journal of the Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions* 3, no. 1 (2016), 228.

70 A. Trevithick, *The Revival of Buddhist Pilgrimage at Bodh Gaya (1811-1949)* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2006), 53.

71 <http://www.theosophyasia.net/singapore.htm>, (accessed: 10 November 2016).

The lodge was reorganized, renamed the Singapore Lodge and initiated by the second International president, Annie Besant, on 1 August 1911. However, the lodge became active after 1925 under the leadership of Mensen Fones. It is noted that the lodge did not have an official address and thus meetings were held at different places, mostly at the residences of the members.⁷² Some lectures were held at the Victoria Memorial Hall; on other occasions they held at the Ramakrishna Mission.⁷³

During its early years the Singapore Lodge hosted important Theosophist figures from outside the country. Local newspapers reported the visits of a number of prominent Theosophists from abroad. For example, George S. Arundale and his wife, Rukmini Devi Arundale,⁷⁴ paid a visit to the Singapore Lodge in January 1929 where they were received with hospitality by Singaporean members.⁷⁵ Local newspapers also reported lectures and gatherings organized by the Society during the first three decades of the twentieth century. The lecturers and their topics were thoughtful and provocative. One of them was Isabel Devereux, an American Theosophist, who lectured about “Man a Living God” at the Singapore Lodge.⁷⁶

The Singapore newspapers also noted that Theosophists visiting Singapore from abroad would describe the membership of the Singapore Lodge as being “cosmopolitan.” For example, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Powel Warrington,⁷⁷ two eminent Theosophist leaders journeying to Java in 1934,

72 Ibid.

73 *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, (21 February 1936); *The Straits Times* (18 March 1936).

74 Mr. Arundale ((1878-1945) was a prominent theosophist who started his career in the Theosophical Society early. In 1934, after the passing of Annie Bessant he was appointed as the president of the Theosophical Society. Rukmini Devi Arundale was the talented classical Indian dance whom Arundale married to in 1920. In 1935, assisted by her husband, Rukmini established the World Federation of Young Theosophists of which she become the president. See: <http://www.ts-adyar.org/content/george-sydney-arundale-1878-1945>. (Accessed 10 November 2016).

75 *Malaya Tribune*, (23 January 1929).

76 *The American Straits Times* (11 March 1935).

77 A.P. Warrington was former vice president of The Theosophical Society of the World (1928-1934), who replaced Jinarajadasa and was later replaced by George Arundale in June 1934. Warrington was the founder of the Krotona Institute of Theosophy in America as well as the general secretary of the American section of the Theosophy; See Y. Shin'ichi, “Three Boys on a Great Vehicle: Mahayana

were reported as “particularly struck with the cosmopolitan nature of the members... irrespective of caste, creed or colour.”⁷⁸ Another news article on the diamond jubilee of the society noted the diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds of the Singapore Lodge’s membership, as there were English, Armenian, Russia, Ceylonese, Chinese and Indian members.⁷⁹

While there is an abundance of sources that trace the development of the Theosophical Society in Singapore, only a few sources shed a patchy light on the relationship between Buddhists and Theosophists. The most revealing source is Anagarika Dhammapala’s journal which described Henry Olcott’s coming to Singapore in 1889. Dhammapala notes that Olcott was renowned among the Ceylonese in Singapore⁸⁰ which is probably accurate considering how remarkably influential the Society was in colonial Sri Lanka at the time.

Another source is the website of the Theosophical Society which mentions P.D. de Silva as the first chairperson of the Theosophical Society. De Silva was both a prominent colonial Sri Lankan Buddhist and Theosophist in Singapore which suggests that Buddhists and Theosophists collaborated closely with each other.⁸¹

A third example that suggests a close relationship between the Theosophists and Buddhist missionaries can be inferred from the connection between C. Jinarajadasa, an ex-vice president of the Theosophical Society, and Bhikku Narada, a colonial Sri Lankan monk. The two travelled together to Java in 1934. Jinarajadasa accompanied Narada during the latter’s visit to Java. During their stay in Singapore, Jinarajadasa was scheduled to deliver a lecture on “Theosophists and the Coming of World Order” at the Victoria Memorial Hall.⁸² In March 1936, the same speaker was also recorded to have had given another speech about titled “The Doctrine of Ataman” at the Koona Vayloo

Buddhism and a Transnational Network,” *Contemporary Buddhism: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 14 (2013), 60.

78 *Malaya Tribune*, (9 October 1934); *Mercantile Advertiser* (9 October 1934).

79 *Sunday Tribune (Singapore)*, (27 October 1935).

80 ADC January 23 1889 in A. Trevithick, “The Theosophical Society and Its Subaltern Acolytes (1880-1986),” *Marburg Journal of Religion* 13, no. 1 (May 2008), 19.

81 <http://www.theosophyasia.net/singapore.htm>, (Accessed 10 November 2016).

82 *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, (21 February 1936); M. Ramstedt, “Colonial Encounters between India and Indonesia,” in B. Sinha (ed.), *South Asian Transnationalisms: Cultural Exchange in the Twentieth Century* (Hoboken, NJ: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 69.

Pillay Hall, Ramakrishna Mission premises on Norris Road.⁸³

The above discussion suggests that the Theosophical Society in 1930s Singapore served as a temporary stop for members of the Society coming from abroad before they moved on to Java. In 1925, the members of the Theosophical Society in Singapore considered establishing a connection with the Java section. The attempt, however, was short-lived because of the different languages used in their publications. The Singapore Lodge used English while the Java section used Dutch.⁸⁴ Thus, the Theosophical Society in Singapore redirected its affiliation to Adyar instead. However, Singapore remained strategic for the Theosophical Society in its efforts to link Indonesia with the Society's global network.

2.1.3. The Theosophical Society in Indonesia

In Indonesia, the presence of the Theosophical Society can be traced back to the colonial period. In 1883, Baron von Tenggagell, a German, initiated the first Theosophical Society lodge in the small city of Pekalongan, Central Java.⁸⁵ However, the lodge did not flourish and it was formally closed in 1895 after the passing of the founder in 1893 in Bogor.⁸⁶

A second attempt was made to re-establish the Theosophical Society in Semarang in 1901. The timing of this attempt coincided with the growing popularity in colonial Indonesia of belonging to a "modern" organization like the Masons, the Order of Eastern Star, Christian Mission groups or the Theosophical Society.⁸⁷ Moreover, the Theosophical Society's attempts to reorganize also coincided with the colonial government's introduction of the Ethical Policy that aimed to improve the socio-economic conditions of

83 *The Straits Times*, (18 March 1936).

84 <http://www.theosophyasia.net/singapore.html>; *Theosofie in Nederlandsch-Indië* = *Theosophie di tanah Hindia Nederland: Officieel Orgaan van de Nederlandsch-Indische Theosofische Vereeniging* (June 1927), 185-86.

85 A lodge had a minimum seven members and it needed official permission from the society's headquarters in Adyar, India. See, Nugraha, *Teosofi, Nationalism*, 8; H.A.O. de Tollenaere, *The Politics of Divine Wisdom: Theosophy* (Nijmegen, 1996), 36.

86 De Tollenaere, *The Politics of Divine Wisdom*, 281.

87 R. van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1960), 14.

Indonesians. The Society supported the Ethical Policy as will be explained below, and so the government supported the Theosophical Society's reorganization.

The re-established Theosophical Society began with about fifty registered members and Van Nieuwenhoven Hellbach as its first president and it was directly attached to the Theosophical Society in Metropole, the Netherlands. Thereafter, the Society's name underwent three changes from *Het Dag in Het Oosten* to *Eerste Nederland-Indië Theosofische Vereeniging* and finally to *Centraal Indië Loge der Theosofische Vereeniging*.⁸⁸

The Theosophical Society immediately began to expand its membership. This move was led by a Dutchman, A.P. van Asperen van de Velde, who distributed brochures inviting interested persons to join the Society.⁸⁹ As a result, the Society soon spread to Surabaya (1903), Yogyakarta (1904) and Surakarta (1905). For his efforts, Asperen van de Velde was awarded the title of *De Geestelijke Vader der Loge* (The Founding Father of the Lodge).⁹⁰ De Tollenaere, a Dutch scholar, notes that in 1903 an additional five lodges were established in Bandung, Batavia, Klaten, Medan and Malang.⁹¹

The Theosophical Society spread its influence to the Javanese elite class under Dirk van Hinloopen Labberton's presidency from 1912/1913 to 1930).⁹² Van Hinloopen Labberton (1874-1961) arrived in Indonesia in 1893 and started his career as a chemical analyst in the sugar industry in Gajam Pasuruan, East Java. Being linguistically gifted, he studied the Malay and Javanese languages and the geography and ethnology of the archipelago, especially of Java. He became a teacher at the *Gymnasium Willem III* in Batavia from 1904 to 1913.⁹³ The Theosophical Society supported the Ethical Policy and the emancipation of Indonesians from poverty.⁹⁴ When Van Hinloopen

88 Nugraha, *Teosofi, Nasionalisme*, 9.

89 Ibid., 19.

90 Ibid., 9.

91 De Tollenaere, *The Politics of Divine Wisdom*, 281.

92 The leadership of Van Hinloopen Labberton was briefly interrupted when was replaced by J.J. Kuisheer because he went to Japan. After returning from Japan Van Hinloopen Labberton re-assumed his position until he was succeeded by Kuisheer in 1930.

93 F. Tichelman, "Hinloopen Labberton, Dirk van (1874-1961)," in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*, URL:<http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn4/hinloop>. (Accessed 2 April 2018).

94 Tichelman, "Hinloopen Labberton, Dirk van (1874-1961)," (Accessed: 2 April



Figure 2.1. Van Hinloopen Labberton with the committee of Javaanse Cultuurontwikkeling (Javanese Cultural Development) in Surakarta (5-7 July 1918). (First row from left to right: R.M.A. Woerjaningrat, Pangeran Hadiwijoyo, R. Sastro Widjono (president), Dr. Radjiman Wediodipoero, Z.H. Pangeran Adipati Ario Praboe Prangwedono (honorary president), S. Koperberg (secretary). Second row from left to right: Dr. Satiman Wirjosandjojo, Z. Stokvis, D. van Hinloopen Labberton, dr. Tjipto Mangoenkoesomo, J. Rottier, A. Mühlenfeld, R.M.S. Soeriokoesoemo.) Source: KITLV (FD941).`

Labberton (an early supporter of the Ethical Policy) became president of the Theosophical Society, its support for the Ethical Policy helped him enter into Javanese elite circles. He was able to have a certain amount of influence with young Javanese elites, among whom were Tjipto Mangoenkoesomo,⁹⁵ H.S Tjokroaminoto and other future young nationalist leaders,⁹⁶ because of his understanding of Javanese culture and fluency in the Javanese language.

2018); Nugraha, *Teosofi, Nasionalisme*, 25.

95 One of the founders of the Indische Partij later changed to Insulinde.

96 L.J. Sears, "Intellectuals, Theosophy, and Failed Narratives of the Nation in Late Colonial Java," in H. Schwarz and S. Ray (eds), *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 337; Takashi indicates Van Hinloopen Labberton was the theosophy teacher or *guru* of Tjipto Mangoenkoesomo. T. Shiraishi, *Zaman Bergerak: Radikalisme Rakyat di Jawa 1912-1926* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1997), 171 and 231.

By 1906, Indonesia's Theosophical Society had 200 members, most of whom were Europeans. Due to its growth, the Society headquarters in Adyar promoted the Indonesian branch to the status of an autonomous chapter with Annie Besant announcing "it is pleasant to chronicle the formation of a National Society in Java, which now feels strong enough to stand on its own feet, without the support of its mother, the Theosophical Society in the Netherlands."⁹⁷

The new Indonesian branch continued to grow for many reasons, although the one advanced by Robert van Niel, a Dutch American working on Southeast Asian history, is the emergence of the Indische Partij (Indies' Party) in 1911, which favoured East Indian nationalism rather than Javanese or Indonesian nationalism. This contributed to disenchanted Javanese joining the Society, which had formed a close relationship with the Javanese upper class.⁹⁸ Table 2.1 summarizes the changes in the Society's membership in Indonesia between 1913 and 1935.

Table 2.1. Changes in the Theosophical Society's Membership, 1913 and 1935

Race	1913 ^{#1}	1926 ^{#2}	1927 ^{#3}	1935 ^{#4}
European	331	982	1027	577
Indonesian	177	770	851	524
Chinese	25	183	197	191
Total	533	1935	2075	1232

#1 De Tollenaere, *The Politics of Divine Wisdom*, 107.

#2 Theosofie in Nederlandsch-Indië = *Theosophie di Tanah Hindia Nederland: Officieel Orgaan van de Nederlandsch-Indische Theosofische Vereeniging* (June 1927), no page.

#3 Ibid., (May 1928), 152-53.

#4 Ibid., (April 1935), 63.

By 1927, the Society had grown to forty lodges and eleven centres across colonial Indonesia.⁹⁹ The decrease in its membership also affected the existing numbers such that there were only twenty-five lodges and twenty centres in

97 Besant, *Theosophy*, 327.

98 Van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern*, 63.

99 *Theosofie in Nederlandsch-Indië*; (May 1928), 152-53.

the whole of Indonesia.¹⁰⁰

There was a continuous increase in membership between 1913 and 1927 among all racial groups of members. However, the total membership decreased by more than one-third between 1927 and 1935. Van Niel offered a reason for why the Society lost its appeal. He stated that starting from 1916 the Society was the only modern organization (aside from the Indische Partij) that had a policy of inclusive membership based on a brotherhood traversing race and belief. In contrast, the other modern organizations maintained a policy of exclusive membership, so the Society no longer fit the preferred notion of a modern organization.¹⁰¹

Nugraha puts forth another reason. According to him the Society's loss of members stemmed from two causes: a schism among the leaders of the Theosophy Society's international headquarters in Adyar and the rise of the Indonesian nationalist movement. Both situations led to people leaving the society and, in some cases, joining other organizations with more overt political aims.¹⁰²

Despite its declining membership, the Theosophical Society in Indonesia remained cosmopolitan. As described in the preceding section, the Theosophical Society in Indonesia attracted Europeans, Javanese and Chinese. As noted above, the Javanese elite showed great interest in joining the Theosophical Society when the Ethical Policy was implemented. According to Van Niel, the Society was able to inspire Hollanders while at the same time opening the way for Indonesians to aspire for a better future.¹⁰³ For instance, the Javanese elites were directly affected by the Ethical Policy because they now had access to western training and the liberal social philosophy of the West.¹⁰⁴

The case of Dr. Radjiman is an example. He was a member of the Theosophical Society before he went to Europe where he read deeply into the philosophy of Kant, Hegel and Bergson. He was trained in medicine and became a physician in the Netherlands. He later became a physician to the Susuhunan of Surakarta. He combined Javanese culture with the Theosophical Society's philosophy of brotherhood, syncretic religion and the

100 *Theosofie in Nederlandsch-Indië*, (April 1935), 63.

101 Van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern*, 129.

102 Nugraha, *Teosofi, Nasionalisme*, 22.

103 Van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern*, 9.

104 *Ibid.*, 45.

mystic potency of life. The alignment of Javanese culture with the philosophy of the Theosophical Society was a cosmopolitanism that the Indonesian elite desired.¹⁰⁵ This desire led a number of elite and educated Javanese to become members of the Theosophical Society.

2.1.4. The Theosophical Society and Buddhism in Indonesia

Several studies have investigated the involvement of the Theosophical Society in the revival of Buddhism in Indonesia. Iem Brown states that the resurgence of Buddhism in Indonesia was fuelled by Europeans, particularly those involved in the scientific study of religions and in search of what some called the “wisdom of the East.” In an article titled *The Revival of Buddhism in Modern Indonesia*, she briefly highlights the influence of the Theosophical Society members.¹⁰⁶ Yoneo Ishii’s fuller article credits the Theosophists with the revival of Buddhism in Indonesia and argues that their participation in the Buddhist world of Indonesia came before Bhikkhu Narada’s 1934 visit to Java.¹⁰⁷ Another researcher, Marieke Bloembergen, focuses on the involvement of the Theosophical Society in the resacralization of Borobudur.¹⁰⁸ However, these articles raise unanswered questions about the relationship between Indonesia’s Buddhists and Theosophists.

This section analyses the involvement of the Theosophical Society members in the emergence of Buddhism in late colonial Indonesia. In this regard, the discussion will focus on two aspects of the Theosophical Society’s involvement in the making of Indonesian Buddhism: the resacralization of religious sites and the production of Buddhist knowledge.

The Theosophical Society treated old religious sites with the highest

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 54.

¹⁰⁶ I. Brown, “The Revival of Buddhism in Modern Indonesia,” in M. Ramstedt (ed.), *Hinduism in Modern Indonesia: A Minority Religion between Local, National and Global Interest* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 45.

¹⁰⁷ Y. Ishii, “Modern Buddhism in Indonesia,” in G. Dhammapala, R. Gombrich and K.R. Norman (eds), *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Hammalava Saddhatissa* (Nugegoda: Buddhist Research Library Trust, 1984), 108.

¹⁰⁸ M. Bloembergen, “Borobudur in the Light of Asia: Scholars, Pilgrims, and Knowledge Networks of Greater India,” in M. Laffan (ed.), *Belonging Across the Bay of Bengal: Religious Rites, Colonial Migrations, National Rights* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 35-55.

respect and wished to “resacralize” them because a “historical site played an important role in the Theosophical Society’s activities which aimed to fuse the worlds of East and West into symbolic paraphernalia of Theosophical ideas, objects of new devotion and pilgrimage and as settings for religious, societal and moral rituals.”¹⁰⁹ The Theosophical Society’s first project was the resacralization of Borobudur under Van Hinloopen Labberton’s leadership. This project is further discussed in Chapter Four.

This dissertation also argues that the Theosophical Society was the principal agent for producing knowledge about Buddhism. This happened in a number of ways. The Theosophical Society organized Buddhist classes and discussions as part of its mission to encourage people of all religions and backgrounds to join the Society. Newspapers announced that classes on Buddhism were being held at various lodges across Java almost on weekly basis. Some classes focused on general topics about Buddhism. These were free of charge and open to the public. One such class was reported as starting on 7 December 1920 and meeting once weekly at the Theosophical Society lodge on Koningsplein W 17.¹¹⁰ Other classes focused more on specific topics about Buddhism, like the one held at the Dharma Lodge and titled “Wat wil het Boeddhisme?” (What does Buddhism want?). It was conducted by D. van Golberdingen.¹¹¹

In the 1930s, more lectures were organized in different places that included other areas, such as Probolinggo in East Java. A theosophist named E.F. Wildervanck was reported to have delivered a lecture on “Het Boeddhisme” which explained the Buddha as the founder of Buddhism.¹¹² The lecture specifically situated the Buddha’s founding of Buddhism in the context of Southern (Theravada) Buddhism, which explained the founding of Buddhism in terms of the Three Jewels of Buddhism, namely the Buddha, the Dhamma (the teaching) and the Sangha (the monk’s congregation).¹¹³ In Malang, East Java, Mangelaar Meertens lectured about Buddhism. He lectured about *Karma*, a fundamental concept in Buddhism.¹¹⁴ Interestingly

109 Ibid., 36.

110 *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* (27 November 1920).

111 *Algemeen Handelsblad* (19 May 1923).

112 *De Indische Courant* (14 January 1935).

113 Ibid.

114 *De Indische Courant*, (9 December 1927).

the lectures were not only about Buddhist teachings but also about Buddhism and Javanese arts, for example, a lecture delivered by A.H. Kroes about “Het Boeddhisme en Zijn Kunst op Java” (Buddhism and Its Art in Java).¹¹⁵ The Theosophical Society regarded classes on Buddhism essential to the process of introducing Buddhism to Indonesian audiences.

Brown points out that the Peranakan Chinese acquired knowledge of Buddhism mainly from two sources -- the Theosophical Society and the Java Buddhist Association.¹¹⁶ As noted above, the Peranakan Chinese were among those invited to attend lectures on Buddhism.¹¹⁷ As mentioned earlier, several Peranakan Chinese, such as Kwee Tek Hoay, were prominent members of the Theosophical Society. The encounter between the Peranakan Chinese and the Theosophical Society was not only a major source of knowledge about Buddhism, it also inspired the Peranakan Chinese to establish their own Buddhist association and to maintain a connection with the Theosophical Society as indicated by their invitations to Theosophists to deliver talks on Buddhism at the Batavia Buddhist Association.

Before the formation of the Batavia Buddhist Association, the Theosophical Society collaborated with the Java Buddhist Association to celebrate Vesak in 1932.¹¹⁸ During Bhikkhu Narada’s visit to Java (4-24 March 1934), the monk gave several lectures at Theosophical Society lodges in Bandung and Buitenzorg.¹¹⁹ After the formation of the Batavia Buddhist Association, Theosophists frequently gave lectures at the Association’s centre in Batavia. Prominent Javanese Theosophists, such as Kadiroen, lectured on Buddhism to the new association. In the 1930s, Ong Soe Aan, who was the chairperson of Giri Lojo (the Theosophical Society’s lodge in Bandung), invited Sri Lankan monks to visit the archipelago for the first time in 1934.¹²⁰ The invitation was co-arranged together with the abovementioned Kwee Tek Hoay.

115 *Nieuwe Apeldoornsche Courant*, 19 March 1932).

116 Brown, “The Revival of Buddhism,” 48.

117 *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, (27 November 1920).

118 *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, (23 May 1935).

119 *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, (16 March 1934).

120 This part of history later became the most popular part on the revival of Buddhism in Indonesia. In fact, most of the local history of Buddhism started from the point when the Sri Lankan monks came to Indonesia. See Brown, “The Revival of Buddhism,” 47.

The Theosophical Society became a channel through which intellectuals in colonial Indonesia, both native Indonesians and Peranakan Chinese, learned about Buddhism. This, in turn, led to these intellectuals, particularly the Peranakans, to contribute to the building of networks that further spread Buddhism in Indonesia.

2.2. THE JAVA BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION (JBA)

2.2.1. The Founders

The Java Buddhist Association (JBA) was the first Buddhist organization established in colonial Indonesia. It was founded by Ernest Erle Power (hereafter E.E. Power) as the chairperson and Willem Josias van Dienst as the deputy chairperson.

Little is known about the personal background of the founders. However, what is known shows that the Western connection to Buddhism happened outside of Indonesia but that some individuals came to Indonesia bringing Buddhism with them. Inspired by Carolien Stolte's "mapping a life, mapping a network" in her study of the struggle of Raja Mahendra Pratap against imperialism in his travels outside the country,¹²¹ this section focuses on individuals who established important religious sites as a result of their travels.

The personal background of E.E. Power (1886-1953) is rather enigmatic. A document from the US Department of Labor Naturalization Service reveals that he was born of British parents on 25 February 1886 in Vorden, the Netherlands. It also stated that Power had been living in Boston since March 1911 and was working as an assistant manager at an unspecified company. In the year that the World War I ended (1918), Power filed a petition for becoming a US citizen; he was granted citizenship in the same year.¹²²

It is not known when Power arrived in colonial Indonesia. Still more mysterious is his life in Indonesia and his encounters with other Buddhist

121 C. Stolte, "‘Enough of the Great Napoleons!’ Raja Mahendra Pratap’s Pan-Asian Project (1929-1939)," *Modern Asian Studies* 46 (2012), 407.

122 Petition no. 26992, date signed 2 May 1918. He was eventually granted the citizenship with the date of admission stated as 16 September 1918. "Power, Ernest Erle," Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685-2009 (Record group 21). Series: Name Index to Petitions and Records of Naturalization, ca. 1900-1991. File ID: 65323130 (consulted at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/65323130>).

networks, in particular about his collaboration with Josias van Dienst. Power's name is listed as a member of the organizing committee for the Joint Agreement of Churches for a "Universal Religious and Spiritual Mission" which was held in Chicago on 25 June 1933.¹²³ Another source indicates that at one point, Power went to Sri Lanka to volunteer at the Maha Bodhi College.¹²⁴

Power authored several books on Buddhism. One of these is considered as the most important book for the development of Buddhism, *The Path of the Elders: A Modern Exposition of Ancient Buddhism* which was published in 1928. The book was translated into Malay and became one of the most referred books in the early twentieth century during the emergence of Buddhism in colonial Indonesia. Kwee Tek Hoay called the translated version a one-of-a-kind book.¹²⁵ Several of Power's lectures were also transcribed and translated into Malay and then published in the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* journal. In 1953, an obituary announced his passing. It called for relatives or friends to provide information about him.¹²⁶ This record is the only one that indicates his continuous presence in Java throughout World War II and Post-Independence Indonesia.

The second important figure in the JBA is the deputy chairperson, Willem Josias van Dienst.¹²⁷ Van Dienst was born on 3 June 1897 in Den Haag, the Netherlands. Before he went to colonial Indonesia, Van Dienst worked as an instructor at the Theological College of the Salvation Army in Rotterdam (1917-1920). He also worked as bookkeeper and correspondent at

123 The event was attended by at least 39 people from various religious organizations and religious leaders from various continents including Asia. Among the many religious leaders, Dharmapala was a member of the Missions Committee. I suspect that such an event was important to Power for networking with the other members. See the Joint Agreement of Churches for a "Universal Religious and Spiritual Mission," www.revista-ariel.org.

124 Power rebuked Dharmapala for being treated very poorly during his stay in Sri Lanka. See S. Kemper, *Rescued from the Nation: Anagarika Dharmapala and the Buddhist World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 414.

125 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Salinan Melajoe dari boekoe: The Path of the Elders" *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 47 (August 1938), no page.

126 *Java-Bode: Nieuws, Handels en Advertentieblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, (14 October 1953).

127 For quite some time, Van Dienst's name was listed as Josias van Dienst until more archival findings revealed his complete name as Willem Josias van Dienst.

Richard Oswald's film bureau in Rotterdam. In 1921, he moved to colonial Indonesia, where he initially worked as an accountant for the Indische Handels Company (1921-1924) and then as a salesman for various companies, such as the Java Ford Import Company, the Good Year Rubber Company and the Fiat Import Company (1924-1929). In 1929, he established his own bureau of translation and legal advice for small businesses, but it was unsuccessful and went bankrupt in 1932.¹²⁸

Van Dienst started privately studying Buddhism in the late 1920s. He was then ordained as a Buddhist priest in 1932 and remained active in the priestly service for the next three years.¹²⁹ In *The Buddhist* magazine, Van Dienst wrote that he was ordained as an *upasaka* (Buddhist lay follower) of the Right Reverend Maha Upasaka U. Mg. Hla from Thaton, Burma.¹³⁰

In 1935, Van Dienst went to Japan to raise financial support for the Buddhist movement in Java.¹³¹ He lived about ten months in the Empukuji monastery near Yawata, Kyoto. The origin of Van Dienst's connection with the monastery is rather unclear. However, it is likely that Van Dienst learned about the Empukuji monastery's hospice program which was designed to facilitate the study of Zen Buddhism from the magazine, *The Buddhist*,¹³² because he subscribed to it. This information corresponds to that in *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*, a Peranakan Chinese magazine, which mentioned that Van Dienst was ordained as a Zen Buddhist priest during his stay in Japan.¹³³

Van Dienst decided to return to Japan together with his family in 1936.

128 National Archive, The Hague. Netherland Forces Intelligence Service [NEFIS] en Centrale Militaire Inlichtingendienst [CMI] in Nederlands-Indië, entry no. 2.10.62, inventory no. 806028.

129 Ibid.

130 W. J. van Dienst, "Java Buddhist Association", *The Buddhist*, vol. 4 no. 4 (August 1933), 53.

131 The Buddhist projects included establishing Buddhist school and reviving the magazine, *Nama Buddhaya*. See Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kabar pergerakan Sam Kauw. Centraal Buddhist Instituut", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, (February 1936), 39. However, he was unable to raise funds for these projects. Also see: National Archive, The Hague. NEFIS and CMI in Nederlands-Indië, entry no. 2.10.62, inventory no. 806028.

132 Van Dienst was found to have written a short self-introduction of himself, his Buddhist background and his work in Java which was published in *The Buddhist*. See Van Dienst, "Java Buddhist Association", 4 (August, 1933), 53.

133 Kwee, "Kabar pergerakan Sam Kauw", 39.

This was likely the end of his involvement with the JBA as well. However, a report in the Dutch National Archive notes his conviction for aiding the Japanese during World War II.¹³⁴ Van Dienst was accused of aiding the Japanese by making propaganda radio broadcasts, which earned him the sobriquet of the Dutch Lord Haw Haw.¹³⁵ For this reason he was sentenced to three years of imprisonment with three years deduction of time spent in preventive detention. He finally received clemency and was released in 1948.¹³⁶

The above discussion shows that the two founders of the JBA were Europeans who arrived in Indonesia in the 1920s. While Power appears to have already had much experience in Buddhist activity prior his activism in Indonesia, Van Dienst started his activism only sometime after having arrived in Indonesia. Nevertheless, a common feature of their backgrounds is that both of them came from very transnational Buddhist backgrounds. Power was a Buddhist activist in America, Sri Lanka and Singapore, while Van Dienst was ordained as a Buddhist priest by a Burmese Buddhist. A second common feature in their backgrounds is that both men followed the traditions of Southern (Theravada) Buddhism, which helps to explain the emergence of Southern Buddhist networks in colonial Indonesia as a new form of Buddhism in Indonesia.

2.2.2. The Structure and Characteristics of the JBA

The JBA was formed as the first Buddhist association in colonial Indonesia in August 1929. It was originally called the Association for the Propagation of Buddhism in Java until its name was changed to the Javanese Buddhist Association in order to better accommodate anyone who was Buddhist or

134 National Archive, The Hague. NEFIS and CMI in Nederlandsch-Indië, entry no. 2.10.62, inventory no. 806028.

135 Lord Haw Haw was originally a nickname applied to William Joyce William who broadcasted Nazi propaganda during the Second World War. *Het Dagblad: Uitgave van de Nederlandsche Dagbladpers te Batavia*, (28 May 1948).

136 F.L. Borch, *Military Trials of War Criminals Trials in the Netherlands Indies 1946-1949* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 198-200; *Het Dagblad*, (28 May 1948); Also see Netherlands Institute of War Documentation (NIOD), Amsterdam. Processen-verbaal van vonnissen van de Temporaire Krijgsraad Batavia tegen Nederlandse onderdanen inzake collaboratie met de Japanse bezetter, afschriften. Inv 407, (no. 16, 1948) Pro Justitia.

was simply interested in Buddhism.¹³⁷ The JBA was an extension of the International Buddhist Mission based in Thaton, Burma.

The organization was established with the aim to propagate Buddhism in Indonesia, particularly in Bali and Lombok where, according to Van Dienst, the tradition of ancient Buddhism and Hinduism still prevailed. However, the process of missionary work in Bali was not easy due to the problems arising from the Christian missionaries who had been preaching Christianity and inviting people to convert to Christianity. The Balinese rejected the Christian missionaries' insistence on conversion and forced the colonial government to stop the Christian mission. Thus, the government issued Article 177 of the Netherlands Indies State Rules and Regulations forbidding Christian mission work in Bali.¹³⁸ Learning from the Christian missionaries' failure, the JBA filed a petition with the colonial government to obtain a proper licence to carry out its Buddhist mission. While waiting for this licence the JBA published a magazine called *Nama Buddhaya*.¹³⁹

The JBA was the first Buddhist organization established in Indonesia for sole aim to carry out missionary work. The founder of the organization referred to the JBA as the pioneer of Buddhist missionary organizations.¹⁴⁰ It was founded with the main purpose of resuscitating Buddhism, particularly in Java:

It will not be a difficult task to convert Java. Buddhism is in the hearts of the people, at the very bottom of their souls. The Javanese soul is created by Buddhism and it will never find rest till it kneels down again at the foot of the *Thatagatha*, saying: "*Buddhay sarana gacchami*, I go to the Buddha for refuge."¹⁴¹

The JBA was also the first transnational Buddhist group to be established

137 *Nama Buddhaya. Orgaan van de Java Section der International Buddhist Mission, Thaton-Burma, alsmede van the Java Buddhist Association, Gevestigd te Buitenzorg*, 1 (1933); Ishii, "Modern Buddhism in Indonesia," 109.

138 W.J. van Dienst, "Buddhist working in Java and Bali", *The Buddhist*, vol. 4. no. 6 (October 1933), 79.

139 *Ibid.*, 79.

140 Van Dienst, "Present religious condition", 389. Several newspapers published reports about the organization when it was first established, for example, *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*, 04 November 1929; *De Indische Courant*, (11 October 1929).

141 This was in the article written by van Dienst as a plea to the world Buddhist brethren for help. See Van Dienst, "Present religious condition", 389.

beyond the nation-state in modern Indonesia and undertake what Ishii calls Buddhist evangelism.¹⁴²

It is important also to recognize the individuals who were involved in the JBA. Unlike the Theosophical Society, which kept records on its membership, the JBA did not do so. Van Dienst only recorded information about the presence of Buddhists in Java. In his short article published in *The Buddhist* journal, he stated that the Buddhists in Java were mainly Chinese. He claimed that there were as many as five million Chinese who were professed Buddhists, but there are no sources to support his claim. There were at least thirty Europeans and an unspecified number of Javanese who particularly adhered to Javanese culture, traditions and *Igama Koeno*, the old religion of the island.¹⁴³ Additionally, there were a few Indians who appreciated the work that the JBA had done because Buddhism was an Indian religion.¹⁴⁴

Van Dienst's article about Buddhism in Java sheds light about individuals who were involved in the JBA. He felt that the JBA was a poor organization and pointed out that it had very limited financial support from very few individuals and organizations. Among the JBA's supporters were the Indian Association in Batavia, an individual donor named A. van der Velde and the chairperson of the organization, E.E. Power.¹⁴⁵ He also said that there were times when the organization could not afford to buy stamps to mail letters. In short, the organization heavily relied on donations from Buddhist enthusiasts. Van Dienst also described himself as not financially secure and able to support the association.¹⁴⁶

Exasperated, Van Dienst sent a plea to Buddhist societies all over the world asking for their support for the JBA's missionary work in Java. He wrote

To our other brethren in all parts of the worlds, to whom may come this plea, we wish to say: the whole world longs for happiness, for freedom from suffering and for Peace. The law of the Buddha gives a better way to Eternal Peace than all human laws and Peace Conferences. Help us to give this part of the world the greatest gift man ever can give, and remember that the gift of law excels all others gifts.¹⁴⁷

142 Ishii, *Modern Buddhism in Indonesia*, 109.

143 Van Dienst, "Present religious condition", 388-89.

144 Ibid., 388-89

145 Van Dienst, "Buddhist working in Java", 79.

146 Ibid., 79

147 Ibid., 80.

The above quotation demonstrates the existing linkages and networks between the JBA and other Buddhist organizations and societies outside colonial Indonesia. The quotation also mentions the power of linkages to raise awareness about the JBA's on-going Buddhist missionary work in Indonesia.

In addition to opening up new connections and networks to support Buddhist missionary work, the JBA used the print technology to connect people in different places. Abigail Green, a British historian, and V. Viaene, a history and international relations scholar, point out that religious reformers and organizations were among the first to publish mass printed journals and newspapers for international readerships.¹⁴⁸ This dissertation argues that in the Buddhist transnational context, journals were crucial for diffusing knowledge, new ideas and information about Buddhism, as well as raising funds for Buddhist missionary work. The printed Buddhist journals shortened the distance between Buddhists around the world. For instance, *The Buddhist*, a quarterly journal published by the Colombo Young Men's Buddhist Association (1888), circulated widely and reached colonial Indonesia. As a result, Van Dienst became one of *The Buddhist's* active contributors. He listed the following international journals as circulating in Indonesia:

- *Buddhism in Burma* published by the International Buddhist Mission and Buddhist Religious Tract Society, Thaton, Burma;
- *Peace*, a journal published by the International Buddhist Union, Singapore;
- *The Maha-Bodhi Journal* published by the Mahabodhi Society, India;
- *The Eastern Buddhist* published by the Eastern Buddhist Society, Kyoto, Japan; and
- *The British Buddhist* published by the Buddhist Mission, British Mahabodhi Society, London.¹⁴⁹

Print journals became crucial for Buddhist activists in Indonesia to communicate with Buddhists and Buddhists sympathizers. It is also obvious that most Buddhist organizations, including the JBA, published journals and magazines to facilitate the dissemination of their ideas, activities and programs. The JBA alone established at least two print publications, namely the *Nama*

148 A. Green and V. Viaene. "Introduction: Rethinking Religion and Globalization," in A. Green and V. Viaene (eds), *Religious Internationals in the Modern World. Globalization and Faith Communities since 1750* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 7.

149 W.J. van Dienst, "Goede Boeddhistische tijdschriften zijn", *Nama Buddhaya*, 1 (1933), 20.

Buddhaya (1933) and *De Dhamma* in the Nederlandsch-Indië: Officieel Orgaan van het Central Boeddhistisch Instituut voor Java (The Central Buddhist Institute for Java) (1934).¹⁵⁰

The content of the first edition of *Nama Buddhaya* identified the distinctive characteristics of Southern Buddhism. One of the journal's distinctive characteristics was the use of the Pali language in its opening page. It also featured *Pansil* (also *Pancasila* Buddhist), the five rules of Buddhist moral conduct. In this dissertation, *Pancasila* is used.¹⁵¹ The journal started with three verses that paid homage to the historical Buddha, followed by verses about taking refuge in the Triple Gems (*Tisarana*) -- the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha (the Bhikkhu assembly) -- and the five rules of moral conduct for Buddhist laypeople. The *Pancasila* Buddhist was the vow taken by Olcott when he converted into Buddhism in Sri Lanka.¹⁵² The *Pancasila* also includes some verses from the Buddhist canon called *Dhammapada*.¹⁵³ Other Southern Buddhism characteristic that appears in the journal is the Pali verse *Nammo Tassa Bhagavato Arāhato Sammāsambuddhassa* (homage to Him, the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One).¹⁵⁴

2.2.3. The Encounter with Peranakan Chinese Society

The collaboration between the JBA and the Peranakan Chinese is seen as the first “official” connection between the two schools of Buddhism in Indonesia. As the pioneer Buddhist organization, the JBA established ties with other various organizations, including Peranakan Chinese organizations. However, the JBA did not originally plan to operate in the heart of colonial Indonesia,

150 Both publications were short-lived and terminated after publishing two editions due to insufficient financial support.

151 W.J. van Dienst, “Pansil”, *Nama Buddhaya*, 1 (1933), 3.

152 D.S. Lopez, Jr., *Buddhism and Science: Guide for the Perplexed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 11.

153 W.J. van Dienst, “Enkele teksten uit het Dharmapada”, *Nama Buddhaya* 1 (1933), 15-16.

154 Ibid., 15-16; *Nama Buddhaya*, 2 (1934), W.J. van Dienst, “Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa”, *De Dharma In Nederlandsch-Indië: Officieel Orgaan van het Centraal Boeddhistisch Instituut voor Java*, 1 (August 1934), 1.; W.J. van Dienst, “Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa” *De Dharma in Nederlandsch-Indië: Officieel Orgaan van het Centraal Boeddhistisch Instituut voor Java*, 2 (September 1934), 1.

Batavia. It originally aimed to introduce Buddhism in Bali and Lombok¹⁵⁵ because they were part of the Majapahit kingdom (the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries) whose rulers favoured Buddhism and Hinduism. The JBA's original purpose was to resurrect the past glory of Hinduism and Buddhism and reverse Christian missionary attempts to replace Hindu and Buddhist values with Christian values.¹⁵⁶ The leaders of the JBA sought support from the Balinese and Lombok leaders. Goesti Anak Agoeng Barajang Wangsa, the youngest son of the King of Lombok, extended his support and permitted Buddhist missionaries to spread Buddhism in his territory.¹⁵⁷

However, the JBA also became interested in spreading Buddhism to other parts of Indonesia, more specifically to Batavia. One goal of the JBA was to introduce Theravada Buddhism. This goal led the JBA to investigate the status of Buddhism elsewhere in Indonesia. The investigators found the Peranakan Chinese, who traditionally followed Northern Buddhism, to be open to Theravada Buddhism. This prompted the JBA to become the first transnational Buddhist organization to introduce Theravada Buddhism to the Peranakan Chinese community.

The JBA established a good relationship with the local Peranakan Chinese Buddhists in Batavia, which started with a meeting on 16 January 1934 at Klenteng Kwan Im Tong on Jalan Prinselaan, Batavia. The meeting was attended by klenteng officials, namely, the Rev. Lin Feng Fei, a Northern (Mahayana) Buddhist monk (*hweshio*) and head of the klenteng, and Chiu Yin Ho, a graduate from Shanghai College and the resident of Klenteng Kwan Im Tong, and JBA representatives, namely, Kwee Tek Hoay, Van Dienst and Tjoa Hin Hoeij. Van Dienst initiated discussion forums with the Chinese community in the Klenteng Kwan Im Tong.¹⁵⁸ The meeting highlighted the need to reform the klenteng, but no decisions resulting from the first meeting

155 Kwee Tek Hoay, "berbangkitnja kembali Agama Buddha", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 19 (October 1933), 687.

156 Ibid., 687.

157 Ibid., 687.

158 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Beroending di Kwan Im Tong", *Moestika Dharma Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 24 (March 1934), 879.

were recorded. However, another meeting was set for 21 January 1934.¹⁵⁹

Van Dienst (wearing the attire of a Buddhist priest) arrived at the second meeting in the company of Tjiam Kim Hoat and Tjoa Hin Hoeij, Peranakan Chinese from the klenteng. The second meeting was attended by twelve people which included another four Mahayana Buddhist monks residing in the klenteng.¹⁶⁰ Upon his arrival, Van Dienst performed a gesture of respect in front of the Buddha statue on the altar and gave an opening speech on the topic of whether or not there is Allah.

Clearly inspired by his background as a priest in the Southern Buddhist school, Kwee Tek Hoay asked Van Dienst whether or not Allah (the Southern Buddhist name for God or the Supreme Being) should be asked for blessings and good luck. His response obliquely censured the common practice of the klenteng's worshippers who asked for worldly gains. For Van Dienst, doing so was not in accordance with Buddhism.¹⁶¹

Van Dienst and the members of the klenteng agreed that they would work together to propagate the philosophy of Buddhism and to reform the klenteng. The account of the meeting stated that "There has arisen a strong desire to reform the function of klenteng, so that the place is not only used for superstitious interests but also as a source for teaching and spiritual knowledge; in addition, the klenteng should not be used to shelter the homeless, but to transform it into a proper religious shrine."¹⁶² The meetings between the JBA members of the Southern Buddhist school and the Peranakan Chinese from the Northern Buddhist school resulted in a joint purpose, which was to improve the deteriorating situation of the klenteng using the Southern Buddhism resources and networks.

It can be argued that the agreement to reform the klenteng was one of the most important results of the meetings between the JBA and the Mahayana Buddhist monks. The issue of reform was important to the Buddhist Peranakan Chinese, who did not yet have places of worship and prayer nor centres to learn about Buddhism. Kwee Tek Hoay predicted, "Although it was a small meeting, it can be foreseen that the meeting will yield bigger and more important results. One day it will lead to changes in the Chinese klenteng in

159 Ibid., 881.

160 Ibid., 879.

161 Ibid., 880.

162 Ibid., 880.

Indonesia.”¹⁶³ His prediction came true in the years that followed.

2.2.4. Reforming Buddhism

The meeting between the members of Klenteng Kwan Im Tong and the JBA caused a shift in the JBA's goal from reviving Buddhism in Bali and Lombok to the reformation of klenteng as places for Buddhist worship and centres of Buddhist learning in partnership with the Peranakan Chinese and other members of the Buddhist community.¹⁶⁴

The shift also led the JBA to introduce Southern Buddhism to as wide an audience as possible by publishing magazines and lectures. The defunct *Nama Buddhaya* was collaboratively republished by the Java section of the International Buddhist Mission and the Java Buddhist Association in Bogor became the core for diffusing information and knowledge about Buddhism. The same organization then created a new journal called *De Dhamma in Nederlandsch-Indie: Officieel Orgaan van het Centraal van het Centraal Boeddhistisch Instituut Voor Java*. The magazine was in Dutch to attract a wider audience who understood Dutch. The founders of the JBA, Power and Van Dienst provided most of the periodical's contents. For example, Van Dienst wrote a lengthy article titled “Voor Mediteerenden” (For Meditators),¹⁶⁵ which discussed *vipassana* (insight) meditation techniques based on *Vipassana Dipani: A Manual of Insight* by Ledy Sayadaw, a well-known Burmese meditation teacher. Another article published in *Nama Buddhaya* was “De Boeddha en Zijne onmiddellijke leerlingen” (The Buddha and His Disciples), which was summarized in *Buddhavamsa*, a highly regarded work in the Southern Buddhist canon that chronicled the life of Buddha Gautama and the twenty-four Buddhas who appeared before him.

It seems that Van Dienst was attempting to bridge Northern (Mahayana) and Southern (Theravada) Buddhism. This is suggested in his article titled “Mahayana Boeddhism als moderne wereldbeschouwing” (Mahayana Buddhism as a Modern Worldview) in which he discusses both the northern and southern schools of Buddhism. In this work Van Dienst explains how several Buddhist concepts are understood in Mahayana and Theravada

163 Ibid., 880.

164 Ibid., 881.

165 W.J. van Dienst, “Voor Mediteerenden”, *Nama Buddhaya*, 3 (n.d.), 80-105.

Buddhism. Further, he stated that Mahayana Buddhism deserved the attention of Western readers because its substance is not vastly different from that of Southern Buddhism (Theravada Buddhism).¹⁶⁶

In order to advance its missionary work, the JBA appointed two assistant directors -- A. van der Velde for Buitenzorg (now Bogor) and J. W. de Witt for Batavia. Two more individuals were appointed -- a Deputy Director-General en Oepasaka Prediker for the New Zealand section and an assistant director for the New South Wales section. Such appointments indicate that JBA's missionary activities had become transnational.

The JBA was not the only organization concerned with the propagation of Buddhism. Other organizations were also engaged spreading Buddhism and there is evidence to show that the JBA maintained good relations with these other international organizations. One of them was the Theosophical Society, with which the JBA worked. The newspaper, *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, announced on 25 January 1930 that Van Dienst would deliver a lecture on "Waarom ben ik Boeddhist?" (Why Am I a Buddhist?) at the Theosophical Society lodge.¹⁶⁷ The Peranakan Chinese community (led by the JBA's Kwee Tek Hoay) and the Theosophical Society (led by Ong Soe Aan) also collaborated during the visit of the Sri Lankan monk, Bikkhu Narada, in April 1934.¹⁶⁸

Despite the success of its activities, the JBA was short-lived. There is no detailed account of the cause(s) leading to its formal termination on 9 July 1934. Interestingly, the influence of Van Dienst remained and took another form, and the Centraal Boeddhistisch Instituut voor Java (The Central Buddhist Institute for Java) succeeded the JBA.

The Institute aimed to become an important Buddhist organization and offer help and assistance to different Buddhist groups and organizations without interfering in their internal business. The Institute wanted to work with all Buddhists in both Indonesia and other countries. Below were the objectives of the Institute:

166 W.J. van Dienst, *Mahayana Boeddhisme als moderne wereldbeschouwing* (Buitenzorg: Publicatie van Het Centraal Boeddhistisch Instituut der Soenda Eilanden, 1935), 3.

167 This lecture was also delivered together with E.E. Power. *Het Nieuws van de Dag* (25 January 1930).

168 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kedatenggannja Bikkhu Narada Thera", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabinan dan Filosofie*, 25 (April 1934), 922.

- To educate the *Oepasaka* or priests to serve various Buddhist groups, organizations and associations in the kingdom of Nederland;
- To establish Buddhist organizations and study clubs;
- To give assistance to other Buddhist associations and organizations who are ready to work together;
- To establish non-sectarian elementary Buddhist schools;
- To establish a Buddhist University in Java;
- To establish Buddhist branches, temples and *vihara* (Buddhist praying house) as well as to maintain and serve Buddhist monks and priests therein;
- To encourage the establishment of libraries; the organization of classes and temple services; and the publication of books, periodicals and other types of print materials by legal and non-political means;
- To obtain the legal recognition of the Buddhist religion in the Netherlands Indies, as well as of Buddhist monks and Oepasaka preachers, so that these will also be included with those to whom that which is determined by article 70 of the Draft Regulation (staatsblad 1924, no. 24) applies;
- To organize an annual Buddhist congress in the Netherlands Indie; and To work on the translation of the Pali Buddhist canon (*Tipitaka*).¹⁶⁹

Aside from aforementioned goals, the Central Buddhist Institute for Java listed the following Buddhist organizations associated with it:

- The International Buddhist Mission, Thaton, Burma;
- The World Buddhist Council;
- The Universal Union for the Diffusion of Buddhist Philosophy, New York;
- The Permanent Congress of Buddhist Leaders and Philosophers;
- The Buddha Society, Mumbai;
- The Buddhist World, Bangalore;
- The International Buddhist Union, Singapore;
- The Buddhist Lodge, London;
- The British Maha-Bodhi Society, Calcutta;
- The Maha-Bodhi Society of Ceylon, Colombo;
- The International Institute of Hawaii, Honolulu;
- Das Buddhistische Haus, Berlin-Frohnou; and

¹⁶⁹ Van Dienst, “*Namo tassa bhagavato*”, 2.

- Neo-Buddhistischer Verlag, Berlin-Frohnou en verschilende andere binnen en buitenlandsche Boeddhistiesche lichamen.¹⁷⁰

The Institute also published *De Dhamma in Nederlandsch-Indië*, a four-page bulletin in Dutch in August and September 1934.

2.3. BHIKKHU NARADA: THE FIRST YELLOW-ROBE FROM THE SOUTH

The Sri Lankan monk Bhikkhu Narada visited colonial Indonesia for *Dhammic* work (missionary work that involved the teaching of Buddhism by Buddhist monks). Called Sumanapala before he became a monk, Narada was born on 14 July 1898 in Kotahena, Sri Lanka.¹⁷¹ Before entering monkhood, the young Narada was educated at St. Benedict's College, Kotahena, which exposed him to Christian rituals and the discourse of Christianity. In this respect, Narada did not entirely grow up in a Buddhist environment. His first encounter with Buddhism happened only when he was eighteen years old, when he met the most Venerable Pelene Vajiragnana Maha Nayaka Thera. The young Narada was soon ordained as a Buddhist novice and received full ordination as a Buddhist monk two years later at the Vajiraramaya monastery.¹⁷²

Narada was described as a promising young monk. His debut in the international world took place when he was thirty-one years old. He went to Sarnath, India to participate in the opening ceremony of the Mulagandakuti Vihara erected by Anagarika Dharmapala. Because of his excellence and eloquence he was appointed to lead all the proceedings at the historic event. Olcott Gunasekera, the founding president of the Dharmavijaya Foundation, recorded that following Narada's visit to India, he started his missionary work in other Asian regions such as Indonesia, Singapore, Nepal and Vietnam.¹⁷³

In modern Indonesia, Narada is often regarded as the first Buddhist monk who visited Indonesia after the end of the Hindu-Buddhist era in the sixteenth century. However, this claim is only partially true. In the previous section, it was pointed out that the meetings between the JBA and the

170 Ibid., 2.

171 <http://www.budsas.org/ebud/ebdha296.htm>. (Accessed 6 May 2016).

172 Ibid.

173 Ibid.

Peranakan Chinese showed that there were Buddhist monks of Mahayana/Northern tradition residing in Java. It is more accurate to say that Narada was the first monk from the Southern (Theravada) Buddhist tradition to visit Java after the Hindu-Buddhist era.

Narada first visited Java in 1934. The account of his first sojourn in Indonesia demonstrates the expanding chain of Buddhist networks and linkages in two ways. First, Singaporean Buddhists funded Narada's journey to Java; such financial support was crucial to the success of this journey. Or, as Kwee Tek Hoay put it, outside funding was essential because Buddhist community in Java could not afford to supply such aid.¹⁷⁴ Second, Narada's repeated visits to Java further developed transnational Buddhist networks in the 1930s. As Buddhist organizations led by Europeans (the JBA and the Theosophical Society) closed down, Narada continued to guide and mentor Indonesian Buddhists into the 1950s. Under his guidance, Southern Buddhism developed new networks, rituals and symbols that strengthened the spread of Buddhism during the late colonial period and pass independence. As Buddhist organizations led by Europeans (the JBA and the Theosophical Society) closed down, Narada continued to guide and mentor Indonesian Buddhists into the 1950s. Under his guidance, Southern Buddhism developed new networks, rituals and symbols that strengthened the spread of Buddhism during the late colonial period and pass independence.

Chapter Six will present a more detailed look at Narada's inter-Asian Buddhist connections gave a new direction Indonesian Buddhism.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has addressed the question of how and by which means Buddhism was introduced to twentieth-century colonial Indonesia. Despite its status of being unrecognized religion in the formal statistic, Buddhism lived within the society. Sources in the form of Buddhist religious publications and newspapers accounts show how various Buddhist organizations and individuals, both within and outside of Indonesia.

There are three majors connections or players that worked together at

174 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Bebrapa keterangan tentang Bikku Narada Thera", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie* 24 (April 1934), 828-31; Van Dienst, "Buddhist working in Java", 79.

the same time, namely the Theosophical Society, the European individuals represented in the Java Buddhist Association, and the Asian connection, represented by Bhikkhu Narada from Sri Lanka. The three players introduced the Southern school of Buddhism to Indonesia through missionary work and print publications in the early twentieth century. This event marked a new beginning of the presence of Buddhism in colonial Indonesia. This chapter also provides vivid foundation towards further development of Buddhism when they paired themselves with the Northern Buddhism group, the Peranakan Chinese.

The emergence of Buddhism in Indonesia was accelerated by transnational networks that were, in turn, a part of a wider movement of ideas that circulated around, through and beyond the borders of British and Dutch colonial empires in South and Southeast Asia. The next chapter focuses on Theravada Buddhism missionary activities as they came face to face with the Northern Buddhist school.

Chapter 3

Peranakan Chinese: The “Northern Wind” Buddhists

Parallel to the previous chapter, this chapter introduces another wind of Buddhists who were the followers of the Northern schools of Buddhism. The school alone refers to Mahayana Buddhism. In colonial Indonesia, the school is attributed to the society of Peranakan Chinese who, by tradition, claimed themselves to be accustomed with the Northern school. This chapter argues that the Peranakan Chinese was an important community for the (re) emergence of Buddhism in Colonial Indonesia. This was because of their desire to preserve their traditional Chinese identity. The Peranakan Chinese wanted to do this by reinvigorating their culture and Mahayana Buddhism, which was their traditional religion. However, they faced difficulties finding resources to do so. As a result, they connected with Theravada Buddhism networks, which became their main source of knowledge about Buddhism and Buddhist practices. Three people were key to achieving the Peranakan Chinese goals, namely Kwee Tek Hoay, an intellectual who helped to articulate the reforms needed to align the Peranakan Chinese's beliefs, ritual practices and organization with modern ideas of Buddhism that favoured the Southern (Theravada) School of Buddhism; Ong Soe Aan, a member of the Khong Kauw Hwee who connected the Peranakan Chinese community to transnational Buddhist networks operating both inside and outside of Indonesia; and

Visakha Gunadharma, an intellectual and the first Peranakan Chinese woman whose preaching made the reformation of Buddhism acceptable to her community and who helped to maintain the community's connections with Buddhist networks from abroad.

In order to understand the Peranakan Chinese interest in Buddhism, it is important to know the backdrop of Chinese society in colonial Indonesia.

3.1. THE LANDSCAPE OF CHINESE SOCIETY

Colonial Indonesia society was classified into four racial groups, namely native Indonesians (*Indonesiër*), Europeans (*Europeanen*), Chinese (*Chineezen*) and other foreign orientals (*Vreemde Oosterlingen*) (see Table 3.1).¹ These racial categories become legal and political realities in 1854. The Chinese population comprised 1,233,214 or 2.0 per cent of the total population of colonial Indonesia.² They inhabited several regions, such as Java, Madura, Sumatra, Borneo, Sulawesi and other regions.

In Java and Madura, the Chinese population born in Indonesia was over 460,000 or almost 80 per cent of the total Chinese population in the islands.³ Most Chinese in Java settled in urban areas such as Batavia, Bandung, Semarang, the *Vorstenlanden* (princely lands, such as Yogyakarta and Surakarta), Surabaya and Malang. George W. Skinner, an American anthropologist and scholar of China reckons that by 1930, 58.4 per cent of the Chinese in Java lived in urban areas, comprising 10 per cent of the total urban population in the island.⁴ The Chinese urban settlement was partly the result of a colonial policy which encouraged the Chinese to live in specific urban quarters (*wijkenstelsel*). However, not all of them did so. Ong Eng Die, a Chinese Indonesian politician and economist, states that some of them settled

1 *Volkstelling: Census of 1930 in Netherlands India, deel VIII: Overzicht voor Nederlandsch- Indië*= vol. VIII: *Summary of the volumes 1-VII. Department van Economische Zaken ((Nederlandsch-Indië)* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1936) 2.

2 *Ibid.*, deel VII, 10.

3 *Ibid.*, 10.; M.S. Heidhues, "Chinese Settlements in Rural Southeast Asia: Unwritten History," in A. Reid (ed.) *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Sydney: Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen & Unwin, 1996), 166-67.

4 G.W. Skinner, "Java's Chinese Minority: Continuity and Change," *Journal of Asian Studies* 20, 3 (1961), 357-58.

Table 3.1. Chinese Population in Indonesia in 1930

Region Inhabited	Number	%
West Java	259,718	2.3
Central Java	130,360	1.2
<i>Vorstenlanden</i>	33,864	0.8
East Java	158,489	1.1
Java and Madura	582,431	1.4
Sumatra	448,552	5.4
Kalimantan	134,287	6.2
Sulawesi	41,402	1.0
<i>Elders</i>	26,542	0.6
<i>Buitengewesten</i>	650,783	3.4
Total	1,233,214	2.0

Source: *Volkstelling: Census of 1930 in Netherlands India, deel VIII: Overzicht voor Nederlandsch- Indië= vol. VIII: Summary of the volumes 1-VII. Department van Economische Zaken ((Nederlandsch-Indië) (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1936) 2.*

in rural areas.⁵ This is in line with the Australian historian Charles Coppel's finding that the distribution of the Chinese population in colonial Indonesia varied from area to area.

According to the *Regerings Almanak* which was published in 1910, the Chinese population was the second largest racial group in colonial society, the first being the native population. This was the case in almost in all the regions and cities. The Europeans comprised the third largest group, and they were followed by the Arabs and other foreign orientals (*Vreemde Oosterlingen*).⁶ Based on these statistics, the Chinese population in the different regions and cities of Indonesia was indeed sizeable compared to the other non-native populace. For instance, in Batavia, the number of the Chinese was 9,252. Compared to this number, the number of Europeans was 13,808; the Arabs

5 E.D. Ong, *Chineez in Nederlandsch-Indië: Sociografische monografieën* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp. N.V, 1943), 16. Also see *Volkstelling: Census of 1930 in Netherlands India*, deel VII, 19.

6 *Regerings Almanak*, (1910), 4-10.

was 2,772 and other foreign orientals (*andere vreemde oosterlingen*) was 277. Other cities such as Semarang, Surabaya, Surakarta and Padang also showed similar patterns.⁷ In other words, the Chinese comprised the largest group among the foreign orientals (*Vreemde Oosterlingen*).

The Chinese population was generally divided into two major groups on the basis of their birthplace -- *Totok* and *Peranakan*.⁸ The *Totok* referred to those born in mainland China; the *Peranakan* referred to those born in Indonesia. Lea E. Williams also indicates that the *Totok* (also known by him as *singkeh*), usually resided in rural areas; the *Peranakan* were more likely to be found in urban areas.⁹ However, Donald E. Willmott, author of the book titled *The Chinese of Semarang*, offers a rather fluid definition of the *Totok*. To him not all *Totok* were born in China.¹⁰ According to Willmott, in the twentieth century when another wave of Chinese migrants arrived in Indonesia, they brought their own wives; thus, their descendants were called *Totok*. His definition is based on a person's ancestry rather than his birthplace.

On the other hand, to Leo Suryadinata, an eminent scholar on Chinese Indonesians, interracial marriage and birthplace did not immediately earn a person the status of Chinese. He postulates that the terms "*Totok*" and "*Peranakan*" were used in a more cultural sense. Suryadinata offers a different insight on the definition of a *Peranakan*. According to him the language that the community used was what determined whether they were *Totok* or *Peranakan*. In short, when they lost fluency in the Chinese language at home and used Indonesian instead, the Chinese became *Peranakan*.¹¹ In line with Suryadinata's perspective, Skinner asserts that birthplace cannot be the basis for determining whether one is Chinese or not. He strongly disagrees with Williams' definition that being *Totok* and *Peranakan* were determined solely by one's birthplace. This is because a Java-born Chinese could still be growing up in the twentieth century as a *Totok*.¹²

7 Ibid., 4-10.

8 L.E. Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism: The Genesis of the Pan-Chinese Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1916* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1960), 10-11.

9 Ibid., 11.

10 D.E. Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang: A Changing Minority Community in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 103-04.

11 L. Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesians, the Chinese Minority and China: A Study of Perceptions and Policies*, 3rd edition (Singapore: Heinemann Asia, 1992), 2.

12 Skinner, "Java's Chinese Minority," 358.

The Chinese of Java and Madura were mostly Peranakan.¹³ Those in Java mostly lived in Central and West Java. Those who lived in East Java were predominantly Totok.¹⁴ Ong Eng Die defines the Peranakan Chinese as being heavily acculturated to local customs and habits, and they used Malay and other vernacular languages as their medium of communication.¹⁵ As for the Totok, they maintained a separate cultural identity from the Peranakan.

Unfortunately, the population census of 1930 contains little information on the distinction between the Totok and the Peranakan Chinese. This census classified both groups under the category of “Chinese” and included them under the classification of “foreign oriental.” However, some previous historiographies on the Peranakan Chinese offer useful help on identifying the Peranakan Chinese. An example is Skinner’s analysis of the 1930 census, which was used by Mary F. Somers in her work on Peranakan Chinese politics in Indonesia. In her work, Somers used Skinner’s figures pertaining to the local population to refer to the Peranakan Chinese, and his figures pertaining to the foreign-born Chinese to refer to the Totok.¹⁶

The discussion on the cultural identity aspect of Chinese society in colonial Indonesia still uses the classification of the group as the point of reference. Leonard Blussé, a Dutch scholar on the history of European-Asian relations, points out that “the cultural identity and the position of the Chinese population group in Indonesia society is a contentious one.” Underlying this issue is the question of whether or not the Chinese were allowed to maintain their own cultural identity or integrate their culture with the Indonesian culture.¹⁷ This question was relevant not only in the post-colonial period, but even more so before Indonesia gained independence.

The end of the nineteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century marked the rise of Chinese nationalism, hence the heightened awareness of Chinese cultural identity throughout Asia. The Chinese living

13 Ibid., 6.

14 C.A. Coppel, *Studying Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia* (Singapore: Singapore Society of Asian Studies, 2002), 106.

15 C.A. Coppel, “The Origin of Confucianism as an Organized Religion in Java, 1900-1923,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 12 (1981), 180.

16 M.F. Somers, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Indonesia*, (PhD Dissertation, Cornell University, 1965), 24.

17 L. Blusse, “The Role of Indonesian Chinese in Shaping Modern Indonesia Life: A Conference in Retrospect,” *Indonesia, Southeast Asia Program Publication at Cornell University* (1991), 1-11.

overseas were urged to return to their ancestral traditions. Chinese Nationalist figures, such as Sun Yat Sen, exercised their influence to raise patriotic sentiment among the Chinese overseas and encouraged them to improve their ethnic status overseas.¹⁸ During this period the Chinese started to evaluate and define their “Chineseness” (*ketionghoaan*).

In discussing the Chinese cultural identity in Indonesia, Claudine Salmon, a prominent scholar in Indonesian-Chinese studies, states that the attempt to preserve the Chinese identity started in the 1900s. She writes that in Java, such as in Surabaya and other regions, there were attempts to preserve and revive Chinese customs.¹⁹ In particular, this revival movement was launched to counter the trend among the Peranakan Chinese to turn their backs on their traditions and embrace other religions, such as Islam.²⁰ Salmon’s argument is based on the study of two Chinese *klenteng* (a Malay word for Chinese shrine) -- the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe (the Temple of the Merits of Fujian) in Surabaya and the Hokkien Kong Soe (the Fujian Collective Ancestral Temple) in Makassar. These shrines had been established in the mid-nineteenth century as a response to weakening Chinese traditions. They were built on the initiative of the heads of the local Chinese community for conducting Chinese rituals, such as marriages and funerals. In this regard, Salmon reveals two elements related to Chinese society. First, the Chinese struggled to keep their traditions alive, both locally and regionally. Second, the Chinese shrine appears to have been central to Chinese longevity-related customs because these were performed in these shrines. Salmon also postulates the idea that the cultural identity of the Peranakan Chinese requires a careful study as this community comprised two groups -- those whose inclination towards Chinese culture and tradition are apparent and those who have merged their identity with local customs resulting in the invisibility of their Chineseness.²¹

A study conducted by Lea E. Williams focused on the nationalism of the Chinese overseas. Unlike Willmott whose perspective was rather lenient,

18 Ibid., 3.

19 C. Salmon, “Ancestral Halls, Funeral Associations, and Attempts at Resinicization in Nineteenth-century Netherlands India,” in A. Reid (ed.), *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press), 183-204.

20 Ibid., 183.

21 Ibid., 184.

Williams argued that the attitude of the colonial state towards the Chinese society's customs and traditions was unsympathetic. According to him the growth of Chinese nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a direct result of the hostile colonial policy towards the Chinese.²²

During the awakening of the Pan-Chinese movement, a wave of Chinese nationalism arrived in Java where the first modern Chinese organization called *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* (THHK) was established in 1900. The organization was concerned with the reawakening of Chineseness among the Peranakan Chinese.

The following section discusses the *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* and *Khong Kauw Hwee*, two organizations that were established to revive the Chinese culture. This is followed by a discussion of two organizations established by the Peranakan Chinese, namely the *Sam Kauw Hwee* (SKH) and the *Batavia Buddhist Association* (BBA), which were seen as a Peranakan Chinese reaction to the emergence of a Chinese cultural movement popularized by the THHK.

3.2. PERANAKAN CHINESE IDENTITY: CULTURE AND RELIGION

3.2.1. *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* (THHK) and *Khong Kauw Hwee* (KKH)

In 1900 a feeling of national solidarity or Chinese nationalism emerged among the Chinese in Indonesia which, according to Leo Suryadinata, resulted in different political notions among them. Both the Totok and the Peranakan Chinese began to orient themselves toward China.²³ Consequently, several Chinese organizations were established. These included the *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* (THHK), *Sing Hwee*, *Khong Kauw Hwee* (KKH), *Sam Kauw Hwee*

22 These grievances include unreasonably large taxes, the pass system (*passenstelsel*), the maintenance of separate residential areas for Chinese (*wijkenstelsel*), and also the position of Chinese under the jurisdiction of the courts for natives (*politierol*). Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 27-28.

23 Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesians, the Chinese Minority and China*, 48. For more detailed elaboration on Peranakan Chinese politics in Indonesia in early the 1900s. See, Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*; M.F. Somers, *Peranakan Chinese Politics*; L. Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1976).

(SKH) and Soe Pa Sia or Reading Clubs.²⁴

It was the establishment of the THHK that marked the emergence of the Chinese movement in colonial Indonesia. It was founded in 17 March 1900 by a Peranakan Chinese named Lie Kim Hok.²⁵ Its goal was to promote Chinese culture and reform Chinese customs and traditions based on Confucianism. In other words, it sought to awaken interest in Confucianism and promote Confucianism thought and conduct.

Interestingly, the Confucian movement in mainland China had not been a success. In 1895, there was a proposal to make Confucianism the state religion and convert all unauthorized temples into Confucian shrines. However, the proposal was rejected by the emperor Kuang-hsu. Consequently, the Confucian movement was crushed.²⁶ However, it generated similar efforts beyond mainland China, such as Singapore and Malaya.²⁷

This revivalism also spread to Java.²⁸ There the Confucian revivalism was very much a Peranakan Chinese phenomenon. Charles Coppel states that unlike in Singapore and Malaya, most of the leaders of the THHK in Java were Peranakan Chinese.²⁹ This is evidenced by the existence of Peranakan writings on Chinese tradition and the first Malay translation of Confucian classics in Java. These writings also reveal a connection between Java and Singapore. In one of these writings, Tan Ging Tiong, mentions his meeting in colonial Singapore with Lim Boon Keng and Song Ong Siang, who were promoters of Confucianism and who established The Chinese Philomatic Society in 1898 in colonial Singapore.³⁰ Suryadinata states that the revivalism movement which developed in Singapore served as a model for Indonesia.³¹ As Williams describes it, “reborn Confucianism was a stone dropped into the overseas

24 Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 110.

25 Ibid., 57. Lie Kim Hok was a Peranakan Chinese who received his education and served as an assistant teacher in mission schools.

26 Coppel, “The Origins of Confucianism,” 182.

27 Y. Ching-hwang, “The Confucian Revival Movement in Singapore and Malaya, 1899-1911,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 7 (1976), 34.

28 Ibid., 34.

29 Coppel, “The Origins of Confucianism,” 180.

30 Lohanda, Mona, *Growing Pains: The Chinese and the Dutch in Colonial Java, 1890-1942* (Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, 2002), 51; Also see Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 55.

31 L. Suryadinata *The Chinese Minority in Indonesia: Seven Papers* (Singapore:

Chinese pond; the ripples it generated spread and, under the force of breezes and gales from every quarter, grew to be waves of great size and power.”³²

In his book, *Origins of the Modern Chinese Movement in Indonesia*, Kwee Tek Hoay presents the three main objectives of the THHK, namely,

- to improve the customs of the Chinese, by using Confucianism to civilize conduct and broaden Chinese knowledge of language and literature;
- to establish and maintain in Batavia and in other places in Indonesia, quarters that would serve as meeting places for the members of the association to discuss the affairs of the association and matters of general interest and to maintain schools to achieve its goals without violating the law; and
- to build up a collection of books that would be useful for acquiring knowledge and understanding.³³

To achieve these objectives, the THHK focused on education and in 1901 it founded its first school in Batavia. Govaars-Tjia states that special attention was given to adult education since the aim was to promote the status of the Chinese and their children.³⁴ Hence, the lectures given in the school focused on Confucianism and Chinese culture. Furthermore, the education project also provided advice and information about Chinese culture and Confucianism, which were important to the Chinese community.³⁵ Finally, the project promoted a new style of education in elementary schools, which included the teaching of Mandarin. This Chinese language became the medium of instruction. It was not long before the THHK was able to expand their network of schools throughout Indonesia.³⁶

The role of schools as a catalyst in promoting Confucian teaching according to Chinese culture is aptly described by Kwee below:

Thus, the initial purpose of the THHK School for the Confucian religion was like the Bible or mission school for Christianity or the Mohammadjah

Chopmen Enterprises, 1978), 35; Ching-hwang, “The Confucian Revival Movement,” 40.

32 Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 54.

33 Kwee Tek Hoay, *Atsal Moelanja Timboel Pergerakan Tionghoa jang Modern di Indonesia*. Lea E. Williams (trans.) *The Origin of the Modern Chinese Movement in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1969), 7.

34 Govaars-Tjia, *Dutch Colonial Education*, 55.

35 Ibid., 55.

36 Kwee, *Atsal Moelanja Timboel Pergerakan*, 62.

school for the Moslems. People felt it was necessary to revive the teachings of Confucius among the overseas Chinese here, because thirty or forty years ago our marriage and funeral precepts and customs were so confused and full of superstition which caused many difficulties so they had to be changed and improved.³⁷

The Confucian revival movement also aimed to improve the moral and spiritual quality of the Chinese people's lives through the teaching of Confucius. The first step to achieving this goal was by teaching them how to read Chinese characters and language.

As the number of the schools increased, the educational aspect of its efforts became increasingly vital to the organization. With increasing support from the Chinese community, in 1908 the number of the THHK schools increased to 15.³⁸ Later, the focus of the THHK shifted from promoting Confucianism to a focus on Chinese nationalism.

The popularity of the THHK schools among the Chinese, both Totok and Peranakan, soon caught the attention of the colonial government. Consequently, as Mona Lohanda, an Indonesian historian, states the introduction of English as the second language at the Sekola Tjina THHK aroused the suspicion of the colonial authorities, hence the establishment of the Hollandsch Chineesche School (HCS) or Dutch-Chinese School in 1908. This school was meant to counter the effect of the nationalist movement. This was followed by the removal of the Dutch policy on Chinese society, such as the pass and quarter system, and the inclusion of the Chinese in the Dutch civil law. The Peranakan Chinese reacted positively to this school because its use of the Dutch language as the medium of instruction made it relevant to the Indonesian situation.³⁹

Relations between the Totok and Peranakan Chinese weakened in the late 1920s, partly because they preferred different schools. The Peranakan Chinese preferred the HCS while the Totok preferred the THHK schools. However,

37 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Lezing tentang Khong Kauw", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 2 (November 1934), 26-27. Kwee's marriage and funeral drew specific attention because they were costly and seen as being heavily influenced by indigenous practice found in the region of West Java.

38 J. Goan, "Pendidikan THHK Setengah Abad," in *Hari ulang tahun ke-50 Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan Djakarta* (Jakarta: Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan, 1950), 8; Lohanda, *Growing Pains*, 53.

39 Lohanda, *Growing Pains*, 54-55; Govaars-Tjia, *Dutch Colonial Education*, 85.

the weakened connection also came about with the establishment of political organizations. The gap between the Totok and Peranakan grew wider when the THHK officially terminated the Confucian movement in 1928⁴⁰ and the educated Peranakan Chinese who were pro-Dutch established Chung Hwa Hui (CHH). In 1932, the Partai Tionghoa Indonesia (PTI) was formed by a group of Indies-oriented Peranakan, while those who were China-oriented established *Sin Po*,⁴¹ a Malay language magazine which openly questioned the accuracy of Confucianism as religion. *Sin Po* openly accused the Khong Kauw Hwee (KKH) of not supporting the Chinese cultural movement in Indonesia and countering the spirit of democracy which had developed in mainland China.⁴²

Despite opposition, interest in Confucianism continued. The role of promoting it was assumed by the KKH, which was established in 1923 in Solo. One of its moves was the establishment of the Sin Bin publishing house in Bandung. Its magazine, *Sin Bin*, published Tan Hwan Tjiang's⁴³ article titled "Kapentingannja Khong Kauw Hwee Boeat Bangsa Tionghoa" (The Importance of the Khong Kauw Hwee for the Chinese People) in 1923. Tan Hwan Tjian had earlier declared that "*Khong Kauw* had for thousands of years been in the real religion of the Chinese ... if people said that Khong Kauw was not a religion, it followed that Chinese were a people with no religion."⁴⁴

By 1925, the KKH had established thirteen branches, most of which were in East Java, Yogyakarta, Central Java, West Java and Madura.⁴⁵ To publicize its progress, the organization held a conference in Yogyakarta in

40 Ibid., 55. The THHK later received a smaller subsidy from the *Kong Koan* because the THHK discontinued maintaining the Confucian portrait and altar. The THHK also prohibited any form of form of worship within the vicinity of the school. See: Coppel, "The Origins of Confucianism", 185-86.

41 Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics*, 51-53.

42 Ibid., 130.

43 Tan Hwan Tjian was a pseudonym of Dr. Chen Huanzhang, a disciple of Kang You-wei who established the Confucian Religion Association (Kongjiaohui) while still a student at Columbia University in 1907. See C.A. Coppel, "Is Confucianism a Religion? A 1923 Debate in Java," *Archipel* 38 (1989), 132.

44 Coppel, "Is a Confucianism a Religion?," 132-33.

45 Ko Keng Yam, "Lijst nama-nama Hoofdbestuur dan Bestuur Khong Kauw Hwee di seloeroeh tempat", *Khong Kauw Goat Po: Orgaan Khong Kauw Tjong Hwee Bandoeng Java*, 20 (21 June 1925), 24.

1925.⁴⁶ Representatives from almost all of its branches attended, and Ong Soe Aan, president of the KKH Bandung branch, served as the chairman of the conference. The conference program highlighted the issue of the progress of the KKH, one of which was to set up Fonds Khong Kauw or Khong Kauw Kie Poen Kiem. These funds were meant to support propagandists invited to join the KKH. They were also meant to support inviting Confucian propagandists from mainland China, such as Ko Hong Bing, Khang Jow Wie and Nio Kee Thiau.⁴⁷ The conference highlighted the importance of Confucianism to the Peranakan Chinese in Indonesia and affirmed the idea that Confucianism was a religion, which was a response to the attack by the THHK.

The KKH's defence of Confucianism as a Chinese religion was criticized by some Peranakan Chinese in Batavia. Their criticism focused on two points: the KKH's definition of religion and the failure of the KKH to mobilize the Peranakan Chinese to defend the Chinese religion. Such criticism led to the formation of another Chinese Peranakan religion-based organization in Batavia, the Sam Kauw Hwee.

3.2.2. Sam Kauw Hwee (The Association of Three Religions)

The Sam Kauw Hwee (SKH) was founded by a Peranakan Chinese named Kwee Tek Hoay in May 1934. After a conference held by the KKH in August 1931 in Solo, Kwee appeared to respond to the indicated problem discussed during the meeting. These problems were about the deterioration of Chinese religion and the need for the purification of religious practices. In 1932, Kwee decided to publish his periodical called *Moestika Dharma*; it targeted mainly Peranakan Chinese readers. *Moestika Dharma* sought to address the issue of spirituality in general, and the issue of Chinese spirituality in particular. In the periodical, Kwee discussed a concept of Chinese religion called Sam Kauw (Three Religions) which comprised Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Later, the SKH also became involved in defying the influence of Christian missionaries, which according to Kwee contributed to the deterioration of the Chinese tradition.

46 The conference was held at Centrale Vereeniging Tionghwa, in Sajidan. See Ko Keng Yam, "Conferentie Khong Kauw Tjong Hwee 26 September 1925 di Djokjakarta", *Khong Kauw Goat Po: Orgaan Khong Kauw Tjong Hwee Bandoeng Java*, 22-23 (August 1925), 34.

47 Ibid., 35.

Many Chinese disagreed with the establishment of the SKH because they believed that the Confucian organization had not made any significant progress. The Chinese partly suggested that there was no need to establish the SKH, since there were already a Confucian and a Buddhist organization.⁴⁸ Despite this setback, the SKH continued to conduct its activities.

Like the Theosophical Society, the SKH was pluralistic and accommodating of other religions. As a matter of fact, Kwee Tek Hoay, the founder of SKH, had been an active member of the Theosophical Society. He admitted using the structure of the Society as a model for the SKH. As Kwee declared, "Sam Kauw Hwee is comparable to the Theosophical Society but on a smaller scale. In this sense that it does not work for all religions, but only for the three religions known as the Chinese Religions."⁴⁹ In other words, the SKH aimed to facilitate communication among the three religions.⁵⁰

The influence of the Theosophical Society could also be seen in the structure of the SKH, which adopted a western style executive committee. Further, the members of this committee came from different spiritual backgrounds. The members included Kwee himself (chairperson).⁵¹ Kwee's daughter, Kwee Yat Nio (chairperson for the women's section) and the Venerable Lin Feng Fei, a Mahayana Buddhist monk (chairperson for Klenteng Kwan Im Tong).⁵² The SKH also replicated the Theosophical Society's program of activities. These included lecture series and discussions, to which speakers from the Theosophical Society were often invited.⁵³

48 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kenapatah moesti berdiriken Sam Kauw Hwee?", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 2 (November 1934), 2.

49 Ibid., 3.

50 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Toedjoean jang djelas dan tetep", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 5 (February 1935), 1-7.

51 Kwee Tek Hoay also later became the chairperson of the Batavia Buddhist Association (BBA).

52 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Toedjoeanna ini maandblad", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 1 (Oktober 1934), 16.

53 Among the Theosophical Society members, Soekirlan and Mg. Mangoendisandjoto appeared to consistently give lectures at the headquarters of the organization. See Mg. Mangoendisandjoto, "Penjakit batin dan obatnja"

However, the SKH was not formally structured. In speaking about the organization's regulations or the "Sam Kauw Hwee Reglement", Kwee explained that both the SKH and the Batavia Buddhist Association did not have statutes or decrees. Kwee emphasized that the SKH was only designed to pursue objectives and tactical matters to reach its goals concerning the Chinese religions.⁵⁴

Rather, the SKH focused on programs that allowed better access to the learning of the three religions, such as conducting lectures. As stated below,

By becoming members of the Sam Kauw Hwee, Buddhists would be able to participate in the lectures or any religious activities organized by Confucians; In the same manner, the Confucians also would have the opportunity to partake in the Wezak celebration. In the house of Sam Kauw Hwee, both Confucian and Buddhist leaders might be invited to deliver lectures.⁵⁵

The SKH soon gained the attention of people outside Batavia. Tan Khoen Swie (1894 -- unknown), a Chinese man from Kediri in East Java, established a branch of the SKH in his region.⁵⁶ Tan believed that the SKH was the Chinese ancestors' legacy by which people could reach the highest spiritual achievement, that is, the discovery of Truth (*membuka resianja Toehan*).⁵⁷ He also believed that the SKH could halt the declining influence of the THHK. He wrote, "The THHK and the Khong Kauw in Indonesia are

Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong, 4 (January 1935), 25-27. R. Soekirlan, "Apa jang diwariskan oleh kake-mojang kita", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po:Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 4 (January 1935), 28-43.

54 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Sam Kauw Hwee dan reglement-nja", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po:Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 4 (January 1935), 7-8.

55 Ibid., 7-8.

56 Tan Khoen Swie was one of the prominent Chinese who was also a writer, mystic, and the publisher of Boekhandel Tan Khoen Swie from Kediri. He was also a committee member of the THHK and also an advocate for Chinese Women Association (Hoe Lie Hiap Hwee) in Kediri. See L. Suryadinata, *Prominent Indonesian Chinese: Biographical Sketches* 4th Edition (Singapore: ISEA-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2015), 289-90.

57 Tan Khoen Swie, "Soeal Sam Kauw, tiga Agama Tionghoa", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po:Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 5 (February 1935), 32.

not flourishing but they are undergoing a series of ups and downs just like that of an unhealthy plant. Is it because of improper work? The SKH is expected to close that gap and rise together with the rest (of the organizations)."

⁵⁸ Tan added that the SKH would also enable the Chinese in Indonesia to reconnect with China as well as establish relations with other countries such as Hindustan and America ⁵⁹ With the increasing interest in Chinese *kebatinan* (spirituality), the SKH became more appealing to the Chinese. Hence, Tan was also able to establish another SKH branch in the region of Tulungagung (16 April 1935) and Kertosono (March 1935). ⁶⁰ Additionally, outside Java, Oeij Pek Yong established a branch of the SKH in Manado. ⁶¹

With the growing number of SKH branches, this dissertation argues that the SKH became one of the most stable religious organizations formed by the Peranakan Chinese in early twentieth century Indonesia. The steady growth was followed by another periodical exclusively dedicated to the work of the organization. The periodical was named *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong* (October 1934-1941). Like the *Moestika Dharma*, the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* was targeted at the Peranakan Chinese. Thus, it was published in Malay, the vernacular language of the Peranakan Chinese. Being an owner of a publishing house in Kediri, Tan also published a monthly journal called *Socara Sam Kauw Hwee*, further increasing the number of periodicals focused on Chinese religion. ⁶²

The *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* was interesting in that it contained information about the goals of the SKH as well as the debate about Chinese religions. Thus, with this publication the SKH not only served one but many other religions. After the establishment of the Batavia Buddhist Association, a movement pioneered also by Tan Khoen Swie, the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* officially served

58 Ibid., 33.

59 Ibid., 33.

60 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Roepa-roepa kabar tentang pergerakan Sam Kauw", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 8 (May 1935), 37.

61 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kabar pergerakan Sam Kauw", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 8 (May 1935), 9 (June 1935), n.pag.

62 Kwee tek Hoay, "Kabar pergerakan Sam Kauw", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 6 (March 1935), 37.

both the SKH and the Batavia Buddhist Association. On its cover, it said *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*.

In addition to its objective to facilitate communication among the three religions, as stated earlier, the SKH also sought to counteract conversion into Christianity and other religions among the Chinese. Michonne van Rees discussed this topic in his master's thesis entitled "Sam Kauw Hwee and Christian Conversion amongst the Peranakan Chinese in Late Colonial Java." Van Rees states that "the increased exposure to Western education and modern technology heightened the feeling of uncertainty in what was already an unstable environment. The emergence of the SKH and the increased popularity of Christianity are seen as the consequences of those backgrounds."⁶³ The Christian missionary penetration into Peranakan Chinese society appears to have propelled the development of the religious organization among the Peranakan Chinese. They felt the urgency to preserve their traditions and religious and cultural identity. As reported in *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*, the Peranakan Chinese saw the popularity of Christianity as a threat to their group. For instance, in the November 1940 edition of the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*, it was reported that in Manado out of 7,000 Chinese, 400 had converted to Catholicism. The number of converts increased when the H.C. Jongens School was established because the Chinese who studied there were attracted to Catholicism.⁶⁴ The conversion into Catholicism was also facilitated by Catholic charity projects. In other words, the Chinese receivers of the charity would convert to Catholicism. The SKH was also particularly concerned about the conflict between Catholic and Chinese traditions. An example was the Chinese tradition of burning incense as a gesture of respect for deceased families and relatives, a practice prohibited by Catholicism. Additionally, upon their death the Chinese who had converted to Christianity had to be buried according to Christian, not Chinese, traditions.⁶⁵

63 M. Van Rees, *The Sam Kauw Hwee and Christian Conversion amongst the Peranakan Chinese in Late Colonial Java*. (Master's Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1987), 17.

64 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Hatsilnja pergerakan Sam kau di Manado", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 74 (November 1940), 5-10.

65 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Lezing: Khong Tjoe dan Buddha", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 51 (December 1938), 14.

It appears that the above conversion trend was not regarded by the Peranakan Chinese simply as a religious issue. Kwee stated that for the Peranakan Chinese religious conversion was also a form of cultural conversion and that the Chinese who converted into other religions had abandoned customs associated with Chinese religion and beliefs. Not only that, they were also forbidden to pray for their ancestors as well as to pray to the Chinese *Thian* (God or Allah).⁶⁶

These statements by Kwee suggest that he was concerned about the impact of Christianity on Chinese tradition and culture. To Kwee, religion and culture were interrelated and he was concerned that exposure to Christianity would result in the unwanted conversion. Consequently, in the October 1934 issue of the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* it was emphasized that “The Sam Kauw Hwee is to spread the essence of the three religions, it is aimed not only to achieve spiritual enlightenment and a union between the followers of the three religions, but also with the intention of upholding Chinese religions, most of which arise from those religions.”⁶⁷ It could thus be concluded that the main goal of the SKH was not only to keep the Chinese religions (*Sam Kauw*) alive and practised by the Peranakan Chinese, but also for them to withstand the influence of the Christianity.

3.2.3. The Batavia Buddhist Association (BBA)

Aside from the SKH, another Chinese *kebatinan* organization established by the Peranakan Chinese was the Batavia Buddhist Association (BBA). This was the first Buddhist organization established by the Peranakan Chinese in Batavia, Indonesia in 1934. It was established by the same community that was headed by Kwee, and they did so not long after they founded the SKH. Until the end of the colonial times, the BBA was the only Buddhist organization founded by non-Europeans in Indonesia.

Kwee attributed the founding of the BBA to the growing interest in Buddhism after the establishment of the SKH. This is unlike Iem Brown’s

66 Kwee Tek Hoay, “Mengapa pendirian Sam Kauw Hwee ada perloe”, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 6 (March 1935), 4.

67 Kwee Tek Hoay, “Sam Kauw Gwat Po”, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 1 (October 1934), 9.

perspective of the BBA as a reincarnation of the Java Buddhist Association (JBA). To Brown the JBA changed its name to the BBA because it was trying to distance itself from western influence.⁶⁸ The source, *Moestika Dharma*, though demonstrates differently. The finding shows that when the BBA was formed on 17 May 1934 the JBA still existed. Besides, as stated in Chapter Two of this dissertation, the JBA was succeeded by another organization, Het Centraal Boeddhistisch Instituut voor Java.⁶⁹

The establishment of the BBA raises an interesting point regarding the centre for Buddhist existence in late colonial Indonesia. In his article, Yoneo Ishii claims that Buitenzorg (now Bogor) was one of the important sites for the Theosophist and Buddhist movements.⁷⁰ While his argument about the Theosophical Society's contribution to Buddhism in this period is plausible. However, the evidence obtained for this dissertation indicates that the centre of Buddhism was in Batavia. The first evidence is the presence of the BBA in Batavia where it became an enclave for Buddhist enthusiasts and intellectuals. The second evidence is the conversion of the klenteng into the centre for Buddhist activities and the headquarters of the BBA. In other words, the klenteng was made into the formal site for Buddhists to perform their religious activities. (The klenteng will be discussed further in a later chapter.)

Kwee emphasizes that the formation of the BBA resulted from an organic process. In other words, it was established due to a need to give full attention to Buddhism as independent from the Sam Kau Hwee (SKH). In fact, it was the heightened interest in Buddhism which encouraged Kwee to establish a separate organization mainly for Buddhism. Prior to this decision, there were two meetings with the community which were held at Klenteng Kwan Im

68 I. Brown, "The Revival of Buddhism in Modern Indonesia," in M. Ramstedt (ed.), *Hinduism in Modern Indonesia: Minority Religion Between Local, National, and Global Interests* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 51.

69 The Java Buddhist Association was terminated due to two main reasons: (1) the request from the International Buddhist Missionary in Thaton, Burma requested its termination and (2) the president, Mr. Power, had left Indonesia for America for personal reasons. See Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kabar pergerakan kebatinan", *Moestika Dharma: Maandblad tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 29 (August 1934), 1111.

70 Y. Ishii, "Modern Buddhism in Indonesia," in G. Dhammapala, R. Gombrich and K.R. Norma (eds), *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Hammalava Saddhatissa*. Hammalava Saddhatissa Felicitation Volume Committee (Sri Lanka: University of Srti jayawardenepura, 1984), 109.

Tong. These were held on 10 May 1934 and on 17 May 1934. The decision to establish the BBA was made at the second meeting, which was attended by around eighty people.⁷¹

The BBA had the same organizational structure as its predecessor, the SKH. Hence, it also used the same Dutch terms as the SKH, such as *studieklas* (study class), *hoofdbestuur* (mainboard), *statuut* (statute) and *voorzitter* (chairperson). The different positions and responsibilities in the BBA were assigned to the founders and members. For example, the head of Klenteng Kwan Im Tong, Hwesio Lin Feng Fei, was appointed as honorary president; Kwee as president and Vogelpoel as vice-president.⁷²

However, unlike the SKH which catered primarily to the Peranakan Chinese and other Chinese communities, the BBA catered to people from different ethnic backgrounds. In fact, the organization increasingly gained more attention from native Indonesian intellectuals. An example of this feature was the teaching programs, which were conducted primarily by Javanese individuals active in the organization.⁷³ These included Mangoensoesilo, K. Mangoenpoernomo, R.M. Ng. Poerbatjaraka,⁷⁴ Kadiroen,⁷⁵ Mg. Mangoendisandjoto⁷⁶ and R. Soekirlan,⁷⁷ who gave lectures on various topics about spirituality (*kebatinan*).⁷⁸ Unfortunately, other than this activity little is known about the Javanese involvement in the BBA. However, there was brief mention of a relevant fact in the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* periodical under the topic “Mengapa Moesti Berdiriken Sam Kauw Hwee?”

71 Kwee Tek Hoay, “Pergerakan kaoem Buddhist di Batavia”, *Moestika Dharma: Maandblad tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 27 (June 1934), 1013-20.

72 Ibid., 1013-20

73 As far as sources are concerned, there is no indication that the BBA recorded the names of its members.

74 He was an expert in *horoeft* dan *bahasa Djawa Koeno* (Old Javanese script and language). He delivered a lecture on “Buddhism in the Old Times” (Agama Buddha pada Djeman Koeno) and “Guides to Borobudur” (Beberapa keterangan tentang Borobudur) at the Batavia Buddhist Association’s lecture series. See Poerbatjaraka, “Hal Agama Buddha di Java pada djeman koeno dan bebrapa katerangan tentang Boroboedoer”, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*, 4 (January 1935), 18-24.

75 Member of the Theosophical Society of Batavia.

76 Executive member of *Kebatinan* (spirituality) from Pekalongan.

77 He was a theosophist at one of lodges in Batavia.

78 The lectures on Buddhism by the Javanese named above appeared in various issues of the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*, (1935-1941).

(Why should Sam Kauw Hwee be established?) It indicated that after being involved in the BBA, the Javanese spirituality (kebatinan) group in Batavia led by Mg. Mangoendisandjoto established an organization called Agama Djawa Koeno on 11 November 1934. Its aim was to introduce ancient Javanese beliefs, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, and the belief in ancestors, which was similar to practiced during the Majapahit period.⁷⁹ Thus, it seems that the emergence of the above organizations was not a mere coincidence. Rather, it was a result of interconnection existed between individuals and organizations who shared similar interest.

The membership of the BBA also indicates visible cosmopolitanism. The teaching schedule reveals that aside from Peranakan Chinese, and Javanese, there were also Indians and European who participated in the organization's lecture program. Table 3.2 presents a list of the weekly lectures (*studieklas*) delivered in the month of June 1934.⁸⁰

Table 3.2. Weekly BBA Lectures Delivered in June 1934

Speaker	Ethnic Background	Title of Talk
Visakha Gunadharma	Peranakan Chinese	Buddhism in Household Life (<i>Agama Buddha dalam Rumah tangga</i>)
Nanda Lal Punj	Indian	The Sin of Meat-eating (<i>Kadoaannja memakan daging</i>)
Gouw Key Lok	Chinese	The First Step to Buddhism (<i>Tindakan Pertama ka Agama Buddha</i>)
E.W.P. Vogelpoel	Dutch	De Weg van Een Bhikkhu (<i>Tjara Penghidoepannja Satoe Bhikkhu</i>)
Jaganath L. Ghandy	Indian	Comparison of Buddhism and Jainism (<i>Perbandingan antara Agama Buddha dengan Agama Djain</i>)
Chinese Hwesio Lin Feng Fei	Totok Chinese	Three Refuges and Five Precepts in Buddhism (<i>Sam Kwie Ngo Kha</i>)

* Kwee, "Pergerakan kaoem Buddhist", 1013-20.

79 Kwee, "Kenapatah moesti berdiriken Sam Kauw Hwee?", 6.

80 Kwee, "Pergerakan kaoem Buddhist", 1020.

Given the variety of nationalities involved in the BBA's teaching program, it could be said that the organization had a cosmopolitan nature. It provided people from different races and ethnic backgrounds space to commingle.

The rich dynamics of the BBA's membership is evidence of the presence of pluralism in late colonial Indonesia. Although the members of Islamic organizations at that time were not as diverse as those of the BBA, in his dissertation Muhammad Ali, Indonesian scholar on Islamic history, presents evidence of the pluralization of Islamic knowledge and orientations in colonial Indonesia. Ali claims that the Islamic world in the early twentieth century was largely pluralistic and dynamic. Many "modernist" Muslims did not see a problem in adopting the Dutch and Christian organizational model.⁸¹

Members of Buddhist organizations had always come from various backgrounds. Thus, the Peranakan Chinese denied that their attempt to form a Buddhist organization of their own meant that they were withdrawing from the European Buddhist organizations. As previously mentioned in this dissertation, Brown claimed that at the beginning of its existence, the BBA aimed to detach distance itself from the influence of Western Buddhism, which in this case referred to the JBA. However, sources indicate otherwise. There is evidence to show that the BBA maintained a good relationship and continued its collaboration with the JBA which was led by Europeans, Power and Van Dienst. The BBA also continued to sponsor guest lectures given by Europeans. Further, the founder of the BBA, Kwee, also evidently remained dedicated to translating books and articles written by European writers into the Malay language.⁸²

Another interesting aspect of the BBA's nature was the fact that apparently not all members were Buddhists. An example was Jagannath L. Gandhi, the vice-president. Although he was one of the most active and supportive board members of the BBA, he was not a Buddhist but a follower of Jainism. In referring to him, the magazine, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*, considered it a privilege to have a BBA member who was a follower of Jainism and who was able to share his knowledge of Jainism. Gandhi frequently gave lectures on

81 M. Ali, *Religion and Colonialism: Islamic Knowledge in South Sulawesi and Kelantan, 1905-1945* (PhD Dissertation, University of Hawai'i, 2007), 176; M. Ali, *Islam and Colonialism: Becoming Modern in Indonesia and Malaya* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 36-37.

82 Among which a book written, *Buddhism in Java (Agama Buddha di Jawa pada Djerman Koeno)*, by Arthur Fitz.

the comparative study of Buddhism and Jainism at Klenteng Kwan Im Tong.⁸³ One such lecture which he gave on 18 October 1934 was titled “Consciousness of Karma” (Kasadaran dari Karma). He ended this lecture with the following Buddhist verse: *Nammo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhassa!* (I pay homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One!) Kwee Tek Hoay translated this lecture into the Malay language.⁸⁴

The BBA was effective in introducing Buddhism to those who were interested in knowing more about this religion. This can be seen in the intensity with which they pursued their Buddhist-related activities. Additionally, the weekly lectures and discussions were often conducted by more than one speaker in English, Chinese or Dutch. They were translated into Malay and then published in the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*. These lectures and discussions provided more opportunities for dispersing knowledge about Buddhism.

As mentioned earlier, the Peranakan Chinese had limited sources of information about Buddhism. To solve this problem, the BBA invited individuals and organizations to share their knowledge of Buddhism. For instance, the chairperson of the Theosophical Society in Batavia, Kadiroen Mangoenpoernomo, delivered a lecture about “Wet Gaib atawa Karma” (Supramundane Law or Karma), the basic tenet of the Buddha’s teaching. The BBA is also said to have received support from Gonggrijp,⁸⁵ the chairperson of the Pakoempoelelan Theosofie Batavia (Batavia Theosophical Society), who attended a lecture at the BBA headquarters.⁸⁶

Unlike in the SKH, the BBA lectures and discussions covered a wide range of topics about Buddhism. The first lecture was given by Hweshio Lin Feng Fei, the honorary president of the BBA and abbot of Klenteng Kwan Im Tong. The title of his lecture was “Tong Siang Hwat Hoed” (Performing Devotion to the Buddha at Home).⁸⁷ Some lectures were interesting such as

83 J. L. Gandhi, “Consciousness of Karma”, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 2 (November 1934), 8.

84 Ibid., 9.

85 Full name not recorded.

86 Unfortunately, there are no details of what kind of support was provided by the Theosophical Society in Batavia. Kwee, “Roepa-roepa kabar”, 38

87 Lin Feng Fei, “Tong Siang Hwat Hoed. Berbakti pada Buddha di dalem roemah sendiri”, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam*

that delivered by Nanda Lal Punj⁸⁸ on 29 November 1934. Titled “Why I like to be a Buddhist,” it focused on the speaker’s testimony on being a Buddhist. In the lecture, the speaker discussed the five reasons why he chose Buddhism as his religion. These were:

1. Buddhism gives freedom of thought;
2. The Buddha does not require anyone to follow his teaching rigidly;
3. Buddhism gives a unique perspective on God;
4. Buddhism invites its followers to prove its teaching and not to blindly believe; and
5. The Buddha has boundless loving kindness and compassion.

Throughout its existence the BBA coexisted and cooperated with the SKH. For instance, the BBA lectures and discussions were open to members of the SKH. The relationship between these two organizations was documented in the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* which published a record (*verslag*) and transcripts of the BBA lectures (*lezing*). The collaboration with the SKH and other organizations, such as the Theosophical Society and the JBA allowed the BBA to remain active and flourish until the World War II.

Since the BBA had its own headquarters, it could conduct religious activities. In 1935, in collaboration with the SKH and the Theosophical Society, the BBA organized the first celebration of Vesak, which is a Buddhist celebration to commemorate the life events of the Sakyamuni Buddha. It is attributed to Southern (Theravada) Buddhism, not Northern (Mahayana) Buddhism. (A more detailed discussion of Vesak is found in the following chapter.)

Without doubt, the role of the BBA in bringing back Buddhism to Indonesia was very significant. Being the first Buddhist organization established by the Peranakan Chinese in Indonesia, the BBA was often overshadowed by other international organizations. However, the BBA proved to be; it lasted until just before the start of the Second World War. (This topic will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.)

Among other nature conceived by the organization, the pluralism in the BBA is prominent and is become key factor to Peranakan Chinese for being more receptive to welcome and to accept other tradition which is Southern Buddhism. In spite of traditionally belonged to Mahayana Buddhist tradition

Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong, 1 (October 1934), 27-37.

88 The speaker was also the vice president of the BBA.

they welcome Buddhism from the Southern tradition. The reception of this group to this new Buddhist tradition is attributed to some major factors such as the fact that it was in conjunction with the time when Southern Buddhism was on the rise and revival. That in term of networks, they have more connection with the people of the Southern tradition that become the source for Buddhism knowledge and inspiration. The lack of financial ability of the Peranakan Chinese to invite Buddhism expert from China also become another determining factor Buddhist society in Batavia to eventually opted for the Southern/Theravada Buddhist networks.

3.3. INDIVIDUALS IN THE BIRTH OF BUDDHISM

The establishment of Buddhist organizations and the publication of literature about Buddhism by laypeople were two defining characteristics of the modern Buddhism which developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁸⁹ In other words, during this period, the laypeople, both men and women, were said to have enjoyed equal opportunity in term of becoming leading figures in Buddhism. It was common for an organization to address both religious and nonreligious issues at the time. For example, the first nationwide Muslim movement, Sarekat Islam (founded in 1909), was a religious organization but it also dealt with economic concerns.⁹⁰

Furthermore, in the context of modern Indonesia Buddhist organizations were curated by intellectuals who foresaw the need for organizations to accelerate the development of Buddhism in colonial Indonesia. It was the Peranakan Chinese who emerged as initiators and curators of Buddhism for the Batavia Buddhist organization.

Three individuals are worthy of note in this regard -- Kwee Tek Hoay, Ong Soe An and Visakha Gunadharma. Their involvement and work were critical to the spread of knowledge about Buddhism. They were particularly instrumental in establishing contact with other Buddhist networks and later maintaining these connections.

Furthermore, it is very important to mention here that while the first two individuals are men, the last figure is a woman. The males are named Kwee Tek

89 See A. Turner, L. Cox and B. Bocking, *A Buddhist Crossroads: Pioneer Western Buddhists and Asian Networks (1860-1960)* (London: Routledge, 2015), 1.

90 Ali, *Islam and Colonialism*, 112.

Hoay and Ong Soe Aan and the female is named Visakha Gunadharma. She is a deserving figure who should be reckoned separately to show her outstanding participation in Buddhist society. Additionally, discussing her role also helps defining the pivotal role of Buddhist women which has so far been rarely discussed in the historiography of Modern Buddhism. Taking Gunadharma into account opens a new perspective of activism in modern Buddhism. Within the Indonesian context, Gunadharma represents a historical period during which adult women started to take on social roles through education and social engagement. For Gunadharma, her participation in women's emancipation was performed through religious activism and literature.

3.3.1. Kwee Tek Hoay (1886-1952): The Founding Father of the Buddhist Institution

Kwee Tek Hoay was a Peranakan Chinese who was a talented writer, novelist, playwright, philosopher and religious scholar.⁹¹ Less known is the fact that he was also a Theosophist. He was born on 31 July 1886 in Buitenzorg. His parents were Kwee Tjiam Hong and Tan An Nio, who were originally from Fujian Village in mainland China. Kwee Tek Hoay was the first generation in his family to be born in colonial Indonesia. He had three children, -- a daughter named Kwee Yat Nio,⁹² who followed her father's footsteps,⁹³ and two sons, who both pursued careers in business.⁹⁴

Kwee's career was very much influenced by his linguistic ability. In his publications, he used at least three different languages, namely the Malay language, English and Dutch. Kwee learnt English from S. Maharaja, an Indian teacher at the THHK in Buitenzorg. Kwee perfected his Malay language with the help of his mother's friend who worked at a Church. Finally, he learned

91 L. Suryadinata, *Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent: A Biographical Dictionary* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies: Chinese Heritage, 2012), 464.

92 Kwee Yat Nio was the only daughter of Kwee who followed the path of his father and became an important figure. She is discussed in a later section.

93 V. Gunadharma, "Riwayat Hidup Kwee Tek Hoay," in M. Sidharta (ed.), *100 Tahun Kwee Tek Hoay: Dari Penjaja Tekstil sampai Pendekar Pena* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1989), 267.

94 Kwee Tjun Gin studied at Institute Dudley Richard and later worked at China Life Insurance; Kwee Tjun Kouw studied in MULU and later worked at water company.

Dutch from two Dutchmen -- Dirk Van Hinloopen Labberton and Wotman⁹⁵ -- who were members of the Theosophical Society in Bogor.⁹⁶ His proficiency in these three languages enabled him to write multilingual texts, often using all three languages in the same text. Suryadinata has described Kwee as having an “interesting education background because he was very literate although he had no advanced formal education. Despite his lack of formal education, Kwee mastered three languages, namely, Dutch, Malayu and English.”⁹⁷

Kwee’s keen interest in literature was crucial to his writing career. Claudine Lombard Salmon in her *Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia* states that Kwee was an active contributor to several publications, such as the weekly *Li Po*, *Sin Po* and the newspaper *Bintang Betawi*. One of his well-known writings published in *Sin Po* is titled “Pemandangan Perang Dunia ke-1, tahun 1914-1918”. Furthermore, within the Chinese society, Kwee was known for his endearing work in literature. Kwee was a brilliant writer with extensive knowledge, as shown by this statement: “His writings were so brilliant and good. People would not have thought that he himself had written them. He wrote of broad topics, spanning from chronicle to literatures, politics to philosophy. These works were written with clarity and lucidness.”⁹⁸ John B. Kwee, whose dissertation was titled “Chinese Malay Literature of the Peranakan Chinese in Indonesia, 1880-1942,” wrote an article about Kwee. In this article he called Kwee one of the most productive Chinese writers at the time⁹⁹ and highlighted Kwee’s most significant works, namely *Boenga Roos dari Tjikembang* (The Rose of Cikembang, 1927), *Drama Dari Krakatau* (Drama of Krakatau, 1929), *Drama di Boven Digoel* (Drama in Boven Digoel, 1938) and *Nonton Tjapgomah* (Watching Tjapgomah, 1930), one of Kwee’s most well-known novels. According to John

95 Full name not recorded.

96 Unfortunately, there is no further information about the name of the Dutch teachers. However, I think that it was Hinloopen Labberton who was the president of the Theosophical Society in 1920s Indonesia. For further details, see Gunadharma, “Riwayat Hidup Kwee Tek Hoay,” 260.

97 L. Suryadinata, *Tokoh Tionghoa & Identitas Indonesia: Dari Tjoe Bou San sampai Yap Thiam Hien* (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 2010), 40.

98 *Orang-orang Tionghoa jang Terkemoea di Java (Who’s who)* (Solo: The Biographical Publishing Centre, 1935), 194.

99 Yoneo Ishii noted that Kwee Tek Hoay was a prolific Hokkien Peranakan writer. See Ishii, *Modern Buddhism in Indonesia*, 110.

B. Kwee, many of Kwee's works contain reflections of society at that time.¹⁰⁰ *Watching Tjapgomah*, for instance, is a novel critiquing Chinese closed-mindedness, such as their disapproval of men and women holding hands in public.¹⁰¹

Kwee's literary career advanced when he put up his own publishing house which published periodicals and books. He was the director of two monthly magazines, namely *Moestika Dharma* (1932-1934) and *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* (1934-1941).¹⁰² Yoneo Ishii claims that through his writing Kwee played a major role in the production of Buddhism knowledge in colonial Indonesia.¹⁰³ Kwee's published work on Buddhism can be seen as early as 1927. For instance, he penned *Agama Buddha Jang Betoel* (The Right Buddhism), a book about genuine Buddhism, that is, Buddhism that is not idolatry nor blind worship. In other words, genuine Buddhism is different from Chinese worship traditions practiced at the *klenteng*.¹⁰⁴ This particular work reflects Kwee's concern about the religious practices at the *klenteng*, which he compared and contrasted to the practices of Buddhism.

Kwee chronicled the life of the Buddha in his book titled *Hikajat Penghidoeupan dan Peladjaran Buddha Gautama* (The Life and the Teaching of the Gautama Buddha). The book was serialized in ten parts and published between 1931 and 1933. It was the first of its kind ever to be produced in

100 For complete details on the list of Kwee Tek Hoay's work, particularly his novel, see Sidharta (ed.), *100 Tahun Kwee Tek Hoay: Dari Penjaja Tekstil sampai Pendekar Pena*, 306-14.

101 J.B. Kwee, "Kwee Tek Hoay: A Productive Chinese Writer of Java (1880-1952)," *Archipel* 19 (1980), 87-88. John B. Kwee's article is among the few that are specifically dedicated to study Kwee Tek Hoay. However, just even though it gives good information about the topic, the writer has overlooked several fundamental aspects important to the life of Kwee. For instance, the stated year of Kwee's birth (1886) does not match his actual birth year (1880). Another instance is that John Kwee's claim about Tridharma being a Theosophy organization, is untrue. Also see, J. Sumardjo, "Kwee Tek Hoay sebagai Sastrawan," in M. Sidharta (ed.), *100 Tahun Kwee Tek Hoay: Dari Penjaja Tekstil sampai Pendekar Pena* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1989), 89-165.

102 In 1925, Kwee was appointed to be the chairperson in the daily *Sin Bin* in Bandung. In the year that followed, he became the chairperson of the weekly, *Panorama*, a position he held until 1932. He later also become the chairperson for monthly magazine, *Moestika Panorama*, from 1930 to 1932.

103 Ishii, *Modern Buddhism in Indonesia*, 110.

104 Kwee Tek Hoay, *Agama Buddha jang Betoel* (T'jitjuroek: 1927), 465.

the Malay language.¹⁰⁵ Another of Kwee's publications about the life of the Buddha was *Sembahyang dan Meditatie: Menoeroet Atoeran dan keterangan Buddha Gautama* (Prayer and Meditation, in Accordance to and Explanation of the Gautama Buddha). It was published before the coming of Bhikku Narada. The first book was published in 1932 and the second edition was published in 1935.

Table 3.3 lists all of Kwee's publications which contributed to the production of Buddhist knowledge.

Table 3.3. Kwee Tek Hoay's Publications about Buddhism

No.	Title of Publication and Translation	Year Published
1	<i>Agama Buddha jang Betoel</i> (The Right Buddhism)	1927
2	<i>Penghidoepan Prins Sidharta di waktu moeda</i> (The Life of Young Prince Sidharta)	1931
3	<i>Buddha Gautama, 10 volumes</i> (Gautama Buddha, 10 volumes)	1931-33
4	<i>Hikajat Penghidoepan dan Peladjaran Buddha Gautama</i> (The Life and the Teaching of the Buddha)	1931-33
5	<i>Sembahjang dan meditatie</i> (Prayer and Meditation)	1932
6	<i>Omong-omong Tentang Agama Buddha</i> (Discussions on Buddhism)	1935
7	<i>Agama Buddha di Java</i> (Translation from Dr. Arthur Fitz: Buddhism in Java)	1935
8	<i>Kehidupan Disananja Kubur</i> (Life after Death)	1935
9	<i>Bimba Dewi (Yasodhara), Istrinja Prins Sidharta</i> (Bimba Dewi (Yasodhara), Wife of Prince Sidharta)	1938
10	<i>Hikmah Adjaran2 Buddha Gautama Udjar2 Emas Buddha</i> (Golden Words from the Buddha)	1961
11	<i>Moral dan Batin</i> (Moral and Soul)	1961

Source: Books collected by author of this dissertation.

¹⁰⁵ Melajoe Rendah was the lingua franca of Peranakan Chinese in Indonesia at the time.

During his time, Kwee was a leader in the field of publishing Buddhism books. Some of his publications were translations of his own work, while others were adaptations (*saduran*) of them.¹⁰⁶

Kwee's books on Buddhism reflect the influence of the knowledge of Buddhism at the time. His first Buddhist book, *Buddha Gautama*, was clearly inspired by *The Gospel of Buddha* (1894)¹⁰⁷ and *The Light of Asia* (1879). These books have been shortlisted as the most celebrated works of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *The Gospel of the Buddha* was co-authored by renowned scholars and Western orientalist such as Thomas William Rhys Davids,¹⁰⁸ F. Max Muller,¹⁰⁹ Edmund Hardy, Spence Hardy, Bhikkhu Nyanatiloka,¹¹⁰ Karl Eugen Neumann and others.¹¹¹ In the world of Buddhism at the time, the book was respected and well received. For instance, Japan and colonial Sri Lanka officially adopted the book for their Buddhist schools and temples. A prominent Buddhist abbot of Kamakura, Rev. Shaku Soyen, had the book translated into the Japanese language. *The Light of Asia* (1879) was written by another Western Orientalist named Sir Edwin Arnold.

112

Kwee was not only a leader in the production of knowledge about Buddhism. He was also a leader in the institutionalization of Buddhism among

106 D.S.M. Singgih, *Tridharma Selayang Pandang* (Jakarta: Yayasan BAKTI Balai Kitab Tridharma Indonesia, 2011), 2.

107 The book was first published in 1879. P. Carus, *The Gospel of The Buddha: Compiled from Ancient Records* (Chicago and London: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1915).

108 His name is usually shortened into Rhys Davids, a notable British Buddhist scholar and the founder of the Pali Text Society in London.

109 Frederich Max Muller was a German-born philologist and orientalist.

110 He is known as the first European Theravada Buddhist monk born in Germany, 1878. His first publication was *Das Wort des Buddha*, published in 1907. In the following year, the English version, *The Word of the Buddha*, was published. Since then the book has been reprinted at least ten times included the reprint by the Young Men Buddhist Association in Colombo, 1948. The book also has been translated into multiple languages such as French, Bengali, Czech, Finnish, Russian, Japanese, Hindi, Bengali, Sinhalese and even Pali, under the title *Sacca-Sangaha*. The later was published in 1914. See Nyanatiloka, *The Word of the Buddha: An Outline of the Teaching of the Buddha in the Words of the Pali Canon* (Kandy, Ceylon: Buddhist Publication Society, 1967), VIII.

111 Carus, *The Gospel of Buddha*, preface.

112 Ibid., preface.

the Peranakan Chinese in colonial Indonesia. Inspired by the Theosophical Society, Kwee established two of the most important organizations which worked for the progress of the Chinese religion (Sam Kauw or Three Religions), which was the aim of the SKH, and Buddhism, which was the aim of the BBA.

Kwee was also the key figure that allowed the meeting between the Northern Wind Buddhist and Southern Wind Buddhist took place. It is known that before fully putting his confidence on the Southern Buddhist as his partner in reviving Buddhism and *klenteng*, Kwee hesitated to accept the element of Southern Buddhism on the reason that the school was not belonged to the Peranakan Chinese community. At this point, Ong Soe Aan, another Peranakan Chinese convinced him to invite Bhikkhu Narada, a Southern Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka.¹¹³ Further discussion on this will be elaborated in chapter four.

As he was living in Indonesia when the spirit of nationalism was arising, Kwee's writings reflected his politics. According to Suryadinata,¹¹⁴ these were rather conservative. Moreover, Kwee's writings seemed to also represent the voice of Chinese society. For instance, he expressed his disagreement with the Communist revolt in colonial Indonesia in 1926-27, and claimed that, in general, the Chinese did not support the revolt. On the other hand, Kwee also showed his alignment toward Indonesia. When the Dutch government attempted to crush the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI) in 1929, he encouraged the Chinese in Indonesia to support the organization.

In summary, given Kwee's work cited above it can be said he was not only a leader in the production of knowledge about Buddhism but also a leader in the institutionalization of Buddhism among the Peranakan Chinese in colonial Indonesia. Thus, he can be rightfully called a reformer of Chinese religion and Buddhist modernist in colonial Indonesia.

113 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Siapatah lagi jang aken toeroet?", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 11 (February 1933), 382.

114 L. Suryadinata, "Kwee Tek Hoay sebagai penulis masalah masyarakat Tionghoa dan politik: sebuah pengkajian awal," in M. Sidharta (ed.), *100 tahun Kwee Tek Hoay: Dari Penjaja Tekstil sampai Pendekar Pena* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1989), 1.

3.3.2. Ong Soe Aan (1884-Unknown): *Pendekar Anti Madat* (The Knight of Anti-Opium)

Ong Soe Aan's role in the Buddhist revival in colonial Indonesia focused on two aspects -- the purification of the *klenteng* and initiating contact between the Sri Lankan monks and the Peranakan Chinese in Batavia, both of which resulted in the introduction of Southern Buddhism. Ong's enthusiasm for the resacralization of the *klenteng* was also evident in his professional career as a member of an anti-drug or opium movement. In *Panorama*, a publication headed by Kwee Tek Hoay, there is a section in which Ong's agenda of the resacralization of the *klenteng* influenced his fight against the use of opium.¹¹⁵

Ong's role in the emergence of Buddhism is mostly outshined by other figures. In many writings, he is only briefly mentioned, consequently diminishing the centrality of his role in the process. Iem Brown, however, is an exception as she provides many details on Ong's contribution.¹¹⁶ In support of Brown's perspective on Ong, this dissertation argues that Ong was as important as Kwee. Sources demonstrate that he displayed much interest in the Chinese *kebatinan* (spirituality) and its project, including planting the seed of Buddhism in Indonesia. In this connection, one of the most highlighted points was the understated dispute between Kwee and Ong in connection with the momentous visit of Bhikkhu Narada from Sri Lanka.

In this section, much of the personal information about Ong is derived from a book published in Solo in 1935.¹¹⁷ It presents much evidence that Ong was an interesting intellectual and that he was very active in many *kebatinan* organizations, both Chinese as well as Western ones, and organizations affiliated with the colonial government. Ong was popular among the *Sia Hwee* as well as the *kebatinan*. He was a member of the THHK committees and the *Chineesche Werkloozenfonds* (Chinese Funds for the Unemployed). He was an officer of the *Nederlandsch-Indische Anti Opium Vereeniging*¹¹⁸ and one of the awardees of the *Star Orde van Oranje Nassau*, a military and civil Dutch order of chivalry.¹¹⁹

115 *Panorama*, 194 (December 1930), 26.

116 Brown, "The Revival of Buddhism", 49.

117 *Orang-orang Tionghoa*, 178-79.

118 He was once sent to Madras, India by the colonial government to study the method to control opium addiction. Brown, "The Revival of Buddhism," 49.

119 *Orang-orang Tionghoa*, 178-79.

Ong was also active in several spiritual organizations, and he held important positions in some of them. For example, he was a member of the board (*hoofdbestuur*) of the Theosofie Vereeniging as well as the chairperson (*voorzitter*) of the Giri Lojo lodge in Bandung.¹²⁰ The annual report (*jaarverslagen*) of the Theosophical Society stated that Ong actively supported the activity of Theosophy. For instance, the 1928 annual report indicated that many of Theosophy activities, such as *studieklas*, were held at Ong's house. As a prominent leader of the Theosophical Society, he travelled to Adyar in India to study about the kebatinan movement, during which he met with Krishna Murti and Annie Besant.¹²¹ Outside the Theosophical Society, he led a group called Perkoempoelan Lahir Batin Oetama (Lahir Batin Oetama Association) and he was an honorary member of the JBA. He was the leader of the Khong Kauw Tjong Hwee, a Confucian association in Bandung, and the administrative director of the periodical, *Kong Kauw Goat Po*. Indeed, Ong's involvement in various organizations and networks showed him to be very cosmopolitan.

Sources indicate that in the third decade of the twentieth century, when the Peranakan Chinese community was most concerned about reviving its identity, Ong offered an option. He proposed that Bhikku Narada be invited to preach Buddhism in order to help the Peranakan Chinese realize their objective of reviving their cultural identity. Because he was the chairperson of the Theosophical Society lodge in Bandoeng, as well as an officer of the Nederlands-Indische Anti Opium Vereeniging, he had access to a wide network. During the height of opium addiction in Indonesia in 1932, the Dutch government sent Ong to Madras, India to learn methods of controlling opium addiction. This work assignment occurred at the same time as a Theosophical Society conference in Adyar, which he was also assigned to attend. In the conference he met Jinarajadasa, one of the leaders of the Theosophical Society. This meeting resulted in an exchange of information regarding the situation of Chinese kebatinan in Java, and an agreement to send a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk to Java.¹²²

120 See *Lijst van loges, centra en adressen. Theosofie in Nederlandsch-Indië = Theosophie di tanah Hindia Nederland : Officieel Orgaan van de Nederlandsch-Indische Theosofische Vereeniging* 7 (July 1928), 211.

121 Ibid., 211.

122 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kedatengannya padri-padri Buddha dari Ceylon", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 12 (March

Accordingly, on his way to Madras, India, Ong made a brief stop in Sri Lanka during which he met a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk named Bhikku Narada. Ong's visit to Sri Lanka was significant because it exposed him to a different religious environment. It is not clear how long Ong stayed in Sri Lanka, but in his letter to his fellow Peranakan Chinese, Kwee, he described his first encounter with the Sri Lankan Buddhist community and its setting. In his letter, Ong expressed his fascination with the interior of the Sri Lankan Buddhist shrine which was well ordered and which had a space for meditation. Although the altar was the focal point of the shrine, it was minimally decorated with flowers, water and candles. He added that the religious rites in the shrine was unlike those held in the Chinese *klenteng* in Indonesia.¹²³ Ong also remarked on how the Buddhist shrine and *klenteng* were different in terms of their interior design. The Buddhist shrine (*vihara*) in Sri Lanka was decorated with a few pieces of wood carvings depicting the Buddha's life. Ong was also fascinated by the appearance of the monks who lived in the Buddhist monastery. Of these monks he wrote, "The monks or *hweshio* are clad in yellow robes and appeared well educated. Most of them speak English and are modern."¹²⁴

Given his experience with the Buddhist monks and the environment of Sri Lanka, Ong expressed his hope that Buddhists in Indonesia would invite Sri Lankan monks to visit. Thus, he wrote, "In my opinion, *klenteng* in Java that practice Buddhism must learn or invite Buddhist monks from Colombo in order to learn from them."¹²⁵ He emphasized that it was time to restore and purify Buddhism in Indonesia. Thus, he asked Kwee to assist him in his plan to invite a monk from Sri Lanka.¹²⁶

Unfortunately, Ong's proposal did not get an affirmative response from Kwee. In his response to Ong's letter, Kwee gave three reasons for his refusal,

1933), n. pag.

123 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Siapatah lagi jang aken toeroet?", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 11 (February 1933), 382; Brown, "The Revival of Buddhism," 49.

124 Hoay, "Siapatah lagi jang aken toeroet?", 382.

125 Ibid., 382.

126 It was not the first time that Ong urged Kwee to reinvigorate Buddhism in the Archipelago. Previously he had suggested inviting Buddhist monks from China. See, Kwee Tek Hoay, "Memperbaiki *klenteng-klenteng* di Java", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 12 (March 1933), 418.

a response that subtly disparaged Ong's ideas. First, Kwee believed that Java was not ready for change. Second, unlike the Buddhism in Sri Lanka which consisted of only one strand, the one in Indonesia was composed of two different strands, namely Mahayana and Hinayana (Theravada). Third, the Chinese *klenteng* in Indonesia were mostly of the Mahayana Buddhism tradition.¹²⁷

Kwee's aversion to Ong's plan was based on the difference between the Buddhism that Peranakan Chinese followed and the Buddhism followed by the Sri Lankans. For Kwee, it was inappropriate to invite a Buddhist monk from colonial Sri Lanka, a country which was oriented to the Theravada tradition. As Kwee declared, "Hence, if Buddhist monks from Colombo are invited to reform the Chinese *klenteng*, it would be the same as inviting Protestant priests to reform Catholic churches."¹²⁸ Kwee added that inviting a Buddhist monk of a different tradition would raise confusion in the Chinese community.

Although there is no record of how the disagreement between Ong and Kwee was finally resolved, this event offered valuable insight. Aside from presenting a picture of the situation of the Buddhists in Java, it revealed different perspectives within the community regarding the purification of the *klenteng*. Ong's deep impression of the Buddhist environment in Ceylon served as an inspiration and a model for a Buddhist site and Buddhist practices. This, in turn, would further inspire Buddhist activists in their endeavours to reclaim the *klenteng* as Buddhist sites and centres.

It is interesting to note that Kwee's refusal of Ong's proposal reflects the desire to maintain the Chinese Buddhist tradition. The events in the lives of Ong and Kwee show that the acceptance of Theravada Buddhism in Indonesia underwent considerable examination and consideration, particularly with regard to the interests of the Peranakan Chinese.

3.3.3. Visakha Gunadharma: Daughter of the Buddha (1907-1993)

This dissertation has suggested that one of the core features of modern Buddhism was women's active participation in the introduction of Buddhism

¹²⁷ Ibid., 419.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 419.

to colonial Indonesia.¹²⁹ However, previous research on the Buddhist revival in Indonesia has mainly focused on the role of men or Buddhist monks. Hence, this section provides evidence of Buddhist women's involvement in bringing modern Buddhism to colonial Indonesia.

Despite being a marginalized group in colonial society, Chinese women in particular secured an important leading position in society through various intellectual endeavours, such as producing literary works and being involved as decision-makers in organizations to which they belonged. Accordingly, this section focuses on the public life of Kwee Yat Nio, a Buddhist woman of Peranakan Chinese descent, as an example of women's participation in the Buddhist revival of Indonesia. Hereafter we will use her Buddhist name, Visakha Gunadharma, which was given her by Bhikkhu Narada.

Visakha Gunadharma was born into a literary family in 1907 in Bogor; she was the oldest daughter of Kwee Tek Hoay.¹³⁰ She studied at the THHK school in Bogor and the Methodist Girls' School, also in Bogor, where she stayed on as a teacher. As a young woman, Gunadharma established Chie Mey Hwee (CMH), an organization for young, unmarried Peranakan Chinese women based in Bogor.¹³¹ The organization's main goal was to provide education for women and promote the equality of women in society. The members of organization were mostly students of the local Hollandsch-Chineesche School (HCS) and the Methodist Girls' School.¹³²

After her marriage to Tjoa Hin Hoeij, Gunadharma continued to teach at the Batavia English School from 1928-1932.¹³³ In the 1930s she started to contribute articles to *Moestika Romans* and *Moestika Dharma*, periodicals founded by her father. She also contributed to leading Sino-Malay newspapers -- *Sin Tit Po*, *Mata Hari* and *Keng Po*, and edited the *Dames Rubriek* (ladies' column) in *Sin Tit Po*.¹³⁴

Gunadharma's concern for women's emancipation coupled with the

129 A. Turner, L. Cox and B. Bocking, "A Buddhist Crossroads: Pioneer European Buddhists and Globalizing Asian Networks 1860-1960," *Contemporary Buddhism: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 14 (2013), 2.

130 Gunadharma, "Riwayat Hidup Kwee Tek Hoay," 268.

131 F.Y. Chan, "Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij (1907-1990): Peranakan Chinese Women Write in Late Colonial Indonesia," *Archipel* 42 (1991), 24.

132 Ibid., 24.

133 After which she was also known by Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij.

134 Chan, "Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij," 24.

supportive circumstances in which she grew up led her to become one of the key figures in the development of Buddhism in modern Indonesia. In this regard, Faye Chan asserts that the Peranakan Chinese women's emancipation during this period was a result of changes in education, increasing western influence, the rise of Indonesian nationalism and the growth of Chinese nationalism among the Chinese diaspora.¹³⁵

As the daughter of a prominent writer and founder of organizations, Gunadharma was exceptionally literate compared to most of women of her time. Under the tutelage of her father, she started writing very early. Her publications presented her as bold and original. Unlike most Chinese women writers of her time who concealed their true names, Gunadharma preferred to use her married name, Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij. Kwee seemed to have played a major role in nourishing Gunadharma's passion for writing. He himself was generally a great advocate of female literacy, which distinguished him from the traditional Chinese view on women. He believed that women should at least acquire reading and writing skills. It could be said that he translated this belief into action by consistently publishing the work of women writers in *Panorama*, *Moestika Dharma* and *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*.

Given his progressive view on women, Kwee urged Gunadharma not only to write but also to translate English stories and articles from the *Ladies' Home Journal* and *The Guardian* into the Malay language for publication in local newspapers such as *Sin Po* and other Sino-Malay newspapers.¹³⁶ In September 1935, Gunadharma started her solo career in publication with a Malay language monthly magazine for Peranakan Chinese women called *Maandblad Istri*. She published this magazine from 1935 to 1959 with a nine-year hiatus due to the Japanese Occupation (1942) and the Indonesia revolution (1945-1949). Through this magazine, she exhorted readers to not neglect the Chinese standards of decorum in their haste to become western or modern. Her objective was driven by her aspiration to make traditional values from becoming estranged from modern Chinese society. This concern particularly aimed at Western-educated Chinese women who, according to her, were prone to be lacking in knowledge of their traditions and thus liable to bring shame on the Chinese race despite their intelligence.

135 F.Y. Chan, "Chinese Women's Emancipation as Reflected in Two *Peranakan Journals* (1927-1942)," *Archipel* 48 (1995), 45.

136 Interview with Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij, 23/11/89 in Chan, "Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij," 24.

Maandblad Istri was meant to reach women, both Peranakan Chinese as well as Indonesian, belonging to the urban middle-class.¹³⁷ In an interview with Chan, Gunadharma mentioned that the magazine was intended to primarily educate women. Based on its goal, the magazine featured a "Social Problems" section which addressed a broad range of social issues, such as women's emancipation, education, employment, marital relationships and the declining morals of the younger generation. Gunadharma wrote most of the articles in the magazine.

As briefly mentioned earlier, women's emancipation became a topic of lively discussion starting in the early twentieth century. Claudine Lombard-Salmon divides the Chinese women writers' participation in this discussion into several periods, namely, before 1924, 1925-1928 and 1929-1942.¹³⁸ Lombard-Salmon and Chan conclude that formal education introduced in early twentieth century led to this effect. The establishment of schools both by the THHK (1901) and the Dutch-Chinese School (Hollandsch-Chineesche School, HCS) in 1908 gave women access to formal education which changed women's perspective of their place in colonial society.¹³⁹

In the 1920s, literacy in colonial Indonesia was very much an urban phenomenon. More women were attending schools which increased women's literacy from 9 per cent to 13 per cent between 1920 and 1930 in Java alone, especially among the Peranakan Chinese women.¹⁴⁰ The establishment of the THHK school accelerated the process of education among the Peranakan Chinese and increased their exposure to the rest of the world.¹⁴¹ Interestingly, the rate of women's literacy surpassed that of men. Along with this rise came the emergence of women's organizations.

137 Ibid., 46.

138 C. Lombard-Salmon, "Chinese Women Writers in Indonesia and Their Views of Female Emancipation," *Archipel* 28 (1984), 149-71.

139 The first THHK school for girls was established in Batavia in 1903. Another school was an American mission school that started accepting girls around the same year. See M. Boecquet-Siek, "The Peranakan Chinese Women at a Crossroad" in L. Manderson (ed.), *Women's Work And Women's Role: Economic and Everyday Life in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1983), 43; Chan, "Chinese Women's emancipation," 60.

140 E. Locher-Scholten, *Women and the Colonial State: Essays on Gender and Modernity in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), 19.

141 Chan, "Chinese Women's Emancipation," 45.

The increase of literate Peranakan Chinese is evidenced by the growing number of women's writing which appeared in periodicals. More education gave more women the opportunity to publicly express their ideas about the social circumstances of women's lives. Print publications became a space for discussing ideas between the writers and readers. This has been said to be the impetus for the creation of Soera Persatoean Kaoem Prempoean Tionghoa Indonesia (The Voice of Chinese Women's Federation) formed in 1928.

Chan states that topics related to education, employment, emancipation, economic independence and sexual equality in the personal and public sphere were examined by women. She adds that women journalists and freelance writers played a role through their writings as these provided a means of communication with other women in different geographical areas of Indonesia.¹⁴²

The rise in women's education also helped women to enter professions like teaching and being a board member of an organization. This led to idea that Peranakan Chinese women had, to a certain extent, effected social reform.¹⁴³ Visakha Gunadharma's role in the religious public space will be elaborated on in the following section.

As described above, Gunadharma was an active writer, translator, journalist and publisher who had a special interest in women's emancipation. However, she also became interested in Chinese kebatinan in Indonesia and she wrote a variety of articles regarding spirituality/religion in *Moestika Dharma* magazine.

Reflecting on the new social roles of women in Peranakan society, Gunadharma integrated her concerns on women's role into her writing. She stated that

Without women's presence and involvement no movement of any kind would make good progress and development. The reason for that is because women and men should exist side by side -- like Yin and Yang -- where men and women should be in balance. Hence, since the olden times women have been playing important roles in politics, society and religion, as well as household matters.¹⁴⁴

She saw a connection between education, home and religion which she

142 Ibid., 49.

143 Ibid., 50.

144 Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij, "Prampoean Tionghoa dengan agama", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 3 (June 1932), 109-10.

articulated in an article titled “Agama Dalem Roemah Tangga” (Religion in the Household). For her, education began at home and home was where religion had to be rekindled.¹⁴⁵ This connection was a solution to a problem: Peranakan Chinese families had too little concern for religious matters. In particular, the younger generation of Peranakan Chinese were ignoring religion. One telling example of this situation was the younger generation’s neglect of the practice of venerating their ancestors’ ashes.¹⁴⁶ To Gunadharma the solution lay with mothers. They were the most critical agents for producing a better generation, and their work began with teaching their children religious values.¹⁴⁷

Gunadharma published a number of articles on spirituality. In one article, she discussed the belief in reincarnation held by some religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism. Gunadharma proved her skills in writing and public speaking when religious reform began in Peranakan Chinese society. Being active in the Batavia Buddhist Association, the first Peranakan Chinese Buddhist organization in Batavia, she frequently delivered lectures at different *klenteng* in Batavia and elsewhere.

Furthermore, the topics of her lectures were unconventional and critical. They reflected her comprehensive knowledge of Western writers who were largely unknown to her audiences. The following are two examples of her lecture topics.

- “Dari Mana Kita Dapetken Kita Poenja Roh?” (Where do our souls come from?): This was a lecture delivered in Surabaya.
- “Agama Zonder Pandita” (Religion without priests): This lecture questioned whether a religion could exist without a priest acting as an intermediary between human beings and God. This topic particularly captures how well-read she is as she cites several Westerners’ knowledge.¹⁴⁸

The Buddhist Torch Bringer

In 1934, Bhikkhu Narada, the Southern (Theravada) Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka gave a series of lectures to the Buddhist community in Batavia which

145 Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij, “Agama dalam roemah tangga,” *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 6 (September 1932), 216.

146 Ibid., 216.

147 Ibid., 216.

148 Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij, “Agama zonder pandita,” *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 13 (April 1933), 462-3.

were organized by the Theosophical Society and the JBA. Because Visakha Gunadharma was well-educated and had good English language skills, she became Narada's interpreter when he delivered his lectures on Buddhism at Chinese shrines and temples, Theosophical Society lodges and other venues. He noted that she was the first and only female interpreter he had ever had during his missionary work in Asia.¹⁴⁹ Her role as translator continued when Narada encouraged her to translate several books on Buddhism into the Malay language. This made her the first Peranakan Chinese woman to be involved in producing books on Buddhism in modern Indonesia.

Furthermore, Gunadharma was among those (mostly men) who established the Batavia section of the JBA in the presence of Narada on 22 March 1934 at Klenteng Kwan Im Tong.¹⁵⁰ She was appointed as secretary and she worked with J.W. de Witt, Assistant Director-Java section from the International Buddhist Mission as the president; three vice-presidents, namely, Kwee Tek Hoay for the Chinese members, Jagannath L. Gandhi for the Indian British members living in Batavia and R.M. Ng. Poerbatjaraka for the native Indonesian members.¹⁵¹ When the BBA was created, Gunadharma also served as its secretary from 1934 to 1938. Being in this position put her in frequent communication with Bhikkhu Narada after he left Batavia. In their exchange of letters Narada often encouraged Gunadharma to continue her work in promoting Buddhism.¹⁵² Her correspondence with Narada extended across several decades after the first of his many visits to Indonesia.¹⁵³ She seems to have valued her relationship with Narada greatly as she wrote, "As the first female interpreter since Bhikkhu Narada first arrived in 1934, I have

149 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Lezing oleh Bikku Narada Thera di Thoeng San Toeng", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 25 (April 1934), 940-41.

150 However, Brown wrote in her article that the formation of the Batavia Buddhist Association was changed to the Java Buddhist Association. The Batavia Buddhist Association then severed its link with the International Buddhist Mission in Burma. See Brown, "The Revival of Buddhism," 51.

151 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kedatengannja Bikku Narada Thera", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 25 (April 1934), 924.

152 Bhikkhu Narada, "Letters to Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwee Batavia, Manado dan Telok Betong*, 34 (July 1937), 38.

153 Further detail on this account will be discussed in the chapter on Bhikkhu Narada.

experienced and gained *virīya*¹⁵⁴ to overcome exhaustion in spreading the Dhamma.”¹⁵⁵

Gunadharma was not only active as a writer and organizer of Buddhist activities. Her zeal for promoting Buddhism was such that she could also be called a teacher. Her enthusiasm in promoting new social roles for women in society made her an influential figure in the propagation of Buddhism throughout Indonesia. In addition to the dynamism she brought to the process of popularizing Buddhism, she was also an outstanding representative of Buddhist modernity by her use of new methods to promote Buddhist activities. Through her, Buddhism became a new space for women to be socially and religiously engaged, and consequently a vehicle for women's emancipation.

CONCLUSION

The argument of this chapter revolved around the importance of the Peranakan Chinese society to the (re)emergence of Buddhism in Indonesia. The Peranakan Chinese community was important to the (re)emergence of Buddhism in colonial Indonesia for two reasons. First of all, the Peranakan Chinese wanted to preserve their Chinese identity primarily by reinvigorating their culture and religion, which by tradition was Mahayana Buddhism. In other words, their main desire was to maintain their Chinese identity, not specifically Mahayana Buddhism. Secondly, however, there was a complication. The Peranakan Chinese could not find references that would help them relive Mahayana Buddhism. Since Southern (Theravada) Buddhism was able to provide them with the knowledge of Buddhism that they wanted, they accepted this school of Buddhism.

These two points are related to the main argument of this dissertation that the (re)emergence of Buddhism in colonial Indonesia was not solely prompted by the Peranakan Chinese desire to revive Buddhism. Rather, it was the result of larger causes such as the rise of global Buddhist transnational networks outside of colonial Indonesia and the rise of Chinese nationalism in Asia, which led the Peranakan Chinese to oppose the modernization of

154 *Virīya* is a Pali term for zeal or effort.

155 V. Gunadharma, *Mengenang Ven. Narada Mahathera* (Jakarta: Yayasan Dhammadipa Arama, n.d.), 3.

Indonesian Chinese society and the conversion of Indonesian Chinese to Christianity.

This chapter also introduced three Peranakan Chinese whose roles were crucial for the (re)emergence of Buddhism in Indonesia: Kwee Tek Hoay, Ong Soe Aan and Visakha Gunadharma. These three people played a major role in introducing Southern (Theravada) Buddhism to reinvigorate the Northern (Mahayana) Buddhist traditionally followed by the Peranakan Chinese. In particular, the chapter focused on Visakha Gunadharma to highlight the expanding social roles of women within the Peranakan Chinese society which had been traditionally male dominated -- an aspect of the Buddhist revival in Indonesia that has been overlooked. Chapter Three detailed how Gunadharma actively and publicly engaged as a leader, organizer and teacher.

Equally overlooked is the role of laypeople in the (re)emergence of Indonesian Buddhism. The role of laypeople as leaders, organizers and producers/distributors of knowledge about Buddhism was something unique to the (re)emergence of Buddhism in Indonesia. Their involvement was a major feature of modern Buddhism in parts of South and Southeast Asia in the late colonial period. This point will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Finally, Kwee Tek Hoay, Ong Soe Aan and Visakha Gunadharma can be seen as “curators” of Buddhism in the sense that they played a key role in (1) deciding to use Southern (Theravada) Buddhism to reform the Northern (Mahayana) traditions of the Peranakan Chinese and (2) planning and implementing the means to successfully convince the Peranakan Chinese community to accept the reform of their religious traditions. Their work as “curators” of Buddhism will be discussed more fully in Chapters Four and Five.

Chapter 4

Reclaiming Religious Sites: The Klenteng and the Borobudur

This chapter focuses on two important sites related to the emergence of Buddhism in Indonesia in the twentieth century -- the klenteng and the Borobudur monument. It seeks to explain the extent to which the klenteng and the Borobudur were central to the emergence of Buddhism in modern Indonesia, and how Buddhist agents -- the Peranakan Chinese and the western Theosophists -- regarded these two sites as crucial to the development of Buddhism in colonial Indonesia.

In the context of modern Buddhism, the study of religious sites allows for a deeper understanding of how the global notions of Buddhism reached Indonesia. The exchange of material cultures which happened in the early twentieth century through Buddhist enthusiasts who travelled to different places and brought different religious materials with them¹ is very relevant to what happened in Indonesia. When international Buddhist intellectuals, all of whom have been discussed in Chapter Two, came to Indonesia, they actively participated in introducing Buddhism there and interacted with Buddhist intellectuals in the country. Consequently, Buddhist material culture, such as Pali texts, Buddhist rituals, the Bodhi tree, Buddha's images and the Buddhist flag were brought to Indonesia.

1 R.M. Jaffe, "Buddhist Material Culture, 'Indianism,' and the Construction of Pan-Asian Buddhism in Prewar Japan," *Material Religion* 2, 3 (2006), 266-93.

This chapter briefly discusses the klenteng and the Borobudur as contexts of Vesak, a newly introduced religious ritual in Buddhism. With the emergence of Vesak as well as other new Buddhist traditions and rituals, there arose a need for new spaces to serve as venues for these activities which, as this chapter argues, led to the restoration of the function of the klenteng and the Borobudur.

This argument is supported by the gradual increase of activity in both sites, starting in the late 1920s and early 1930s for some klenteng. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the klenteng and the Borobudur were not only places for religious rituals; they also served as venues that allowed transnational Buddhist networks and Buddhist missionaries to meet and associate with the local religious propagandists and enthusiasts. Hence, these sites also became new locations for Buddhism and consequently centre for Buddhist knowledge reproduction.

In this chapter, the klenteng and the Borobudur are discussed as two separate reclamation projects. The first project focused on a particular klenteng in Batavia and aimed at the purification of the klenteng by making them the centre for Buddhism under the grand project of cultural revitalization of the Chinese. This project was undertaken by the Peranakan Chinese. The second project focused on the Borobudur and it was initiated by the western Theosophists.

This dissertation argues that the existing dimensions of Buddhism at the klenteng and Borobudur represent two groups with intertwined dimensions of heritage, symbolism and identity. The klenteng represented the heritage of the Peranakan Chinese who adopted Buddhism to fit their agenda. On the other hand, the newly discovered Borobudur temple ceased being simply an archaeological monument. Rather, it was considered a Buddhist monument imbued with the soul of Buddhism through the efforts of the colonial society. Consequently, the Borobudur became a Buddhist symbol for the transnational Buddhists as well as an archaeological project.

4.1. KLENTENG

The term “klenteng” is derived from a local language in Indonesia. Buanadjaya, who wrote an article on the klenteng, explains that the word is an example of an onomatopoeia, that is, a word that phonetically resembles the sound of what is named. In this case, “klenteng” resembles the sound of bells used

during a religious performance.² Ong Eng Die, an Indonesian scholar and economist, gives a similar description -- that “klenteng” is a Javanese term for a Chinese temple.³ Since it is a Javanese term, the term is used only in Indonesia.

Furthermore, the term “klenteng” does not exclusively refer to a Buddhist temple or a Buddhist house of prayer. According to Buanadjaya, before the term klenteng came about, the building which it referred to was known by several other names, such as *Bio*, *Kiong*, *Tong*, *Ting*, *Si* and *Toa Pek Kong*.⁴

Within this study, the definition of Buddhist klenteng is not the main question. Rather, the study focuses on the iconography represented in the klenteng and the degree of Buddhist activities held at certain klenteng. The following section will explore these two characteristics in more detail.

4.1.1. Klenteng Across Batavia as an Overlapping Chinese Enclave

The klenteng are found in many places in Indonesia and studying them is pivotal to understanding the Peranakan Chinese. There are a few studies on the religion of the Peranakan Chinese that regard the klenteng as important. Dennys Lombard and Claudine Salmon’s work on the Peranakan Chinese klenteng fills the gap in studies on the Peranakan Chinese in Indonesia, which mostly focus on socio-economy and politics. Lombard and Salmon claim that the klenteng is an important site for the Peranakan Chinese, as it is crucial for understanding the religious dynamic and the social and individual dimensions of this society. Their research shows that the presence of the klenteng in Indonesia dates back as early as when the Chinese settlers arrived in the Indonesian archipelago, more specifically the seventeenth century in the case of Batavia.⁵

2 Bs. Buanadjaya, “Mengenal Lebih Dekat: Apakah Klenteng Itu?,” in Moerthiko (ed.), *Riwayat Klenteng, Vihara, Lithang, Tempat Ibadah Tridharma se-Java* (Semarang: Sekretariat Empeh Wong Kam Fu, 1980), 95.

3 It is also called Toa Pek Kong or Bio in Chinese. O.E. Die, *Chineezen in Nederlandsch-Indie: Sociografische Monografieën* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp. N.V., 1943), 190.

4 Buanadjaya, “Mengenal Lebih Dekat,” 97.

5 D. Lombard and C. Salmon, *Le Chinois de Jakarta: Temples et vie collective = The Chinese of Jakarta: Temples and Communal Life* (Gueret: Societe pour l’Etude et la Connaissance du Monde Insullinedien, 1977), xii.

With regard to its function, the klenteng is indicated to have served as an educational site for the Peranakan Chinese. In 1787, they used a klenteng as a centre for education to replace a failing house of education (*roemah-pergoeroehan*) that served at least thirty to forty students.⁶

Thorough research on the klenteng in Batavia reveals that there were at least seventy-two klenteng, including those established in post-Independence Indonesia. Table 4.1 lists the number of klenteng and the time when they were established.⁷

Table 4.1. Number of Klenteng in Batavia from the 17th Century until Post-Independence Indonesia

Date of Construction	Number of Klenteng
Seventeenth century	4
CA Eighteenth century	9
First half of the nineteenth century	9
Second half of the nineteenth century	14
First half of the twentieth century	14
Second half of the twentieth century	22
TOTAL	72

Source: C. Salmon and D. Lombard. *Le Chinois de Jakarta: Temples et vie collective = The Chinese of Jakarta: Temples and Communal Life* (Gueret: Societe pour l'Etude et la Connaissance du Monde Insullindien, 1977), ii-iii.

In the early twentieth century the number of the klenteng did not increase as much as the previous decade. Unfortunately, there is no record to explain the cause of this decline. However, Lombard and Salmon view the decline as a result of the inflow of Chinese nationalism into Indonesia, combined with the increasing flow of western thought and Confucianism. The establishment of the Tiong Hwa Hwee Koan (THHK) in 1900 further intensified feelings of Chinese nationalism.⁸

6 F. de Haan, *Oude Batavia*, 2nd edition (Bandoeng: Nix, 1935), 392; N.J. Lan (ed.), *Riwajat 40 Taon Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan Batavia (1900-1939)* (Batavia: Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan, 1940), 21.

7 C. Salmon and D. Lombard, *Le Chinois de Jakarta*, ii-iii.

8 Ibid., xxii.

Furthermore, the increase of western influence among the Peranakan Chinese reduced their belief in superstition, which gradually resulted in the deterioration of the proper use of the klenteng. In her work on the decline of the Chinese Council, Monique Erkelens defines this council as a group of Peranakan Chinese which worked together to coordinate social and religious activities. The group was composed of the local elites of the community. Erkelens states that the century saw the decreasing power of the Peranakan Chinese in many ways. Gunadharma Table 4.2 lists the klenteng that are characteristically Buddhist based on the iconography stored in the klenteng.⁹

Table 4.2. Buddhist-oriented Klenteng

No.	Name of Klenteng	Year Founded
1	Jin-de Yuan	Seventeenth century (ca. 1650)
2	Wan-jie Si	Eighteenth century (ca. 1761)
3	Guan-yin Tang (commonly written as Kwan Im Tong)	Late nineteenth century
4	Guan-yin Tang	Late nineteenth century
5	Tian-bao Tang	Twentieth century
6	Tong-shan Tang	ca. 1925
7	Shan-yuan Tang	ca. 1930
8	Jing-fu Tang	ca. 1930
9	Xiang-qing Tang	ca. 1935
10	Shan-fu Tang	ca. 1935
11	Nan-hua Si	ca. 1935 (from Hakka)
12	Yu-qing Shan Tang	ca. 1936
13	Fu-pu Xian Zong-yi-ci	ca. 1927
14	Vihara Tunggal Dharma	ca. 1938

Source: C. Salmon & D. Lombard, *Le Chinois de Jakarta*, xi-xxiv.

According to Lombard and Salmon, there are two bases for naming a klenteng. Firstly, the klenteng can be named after the principal deity to which it is dedicated. For instance, the name Klenteng Guan-yin Tang means it is

⁹ Salmon and Lombard, *Le Chinois de Jakarta*, xi-xxiv. Also see the Appendix, 325-27.

dedicated to Guan-yin -- the Mahayana Buddhist pantheon. Secondly, the klenteng is named after the place of its origin in mainland China or the place where it was built in Batavia, such as Klenteng Antjol and Klenteng Tanjung which were named after the place where they were built.¹⁰

In an interesting book about Chinatowns around the world which was edited by B.P. Wong and Tan Chee-Beng, Chinatowns are defined as enclaves where the Chinese lived. These enclaves were gradually transformed into centres for economic activity.¹¹ In some places, such as Batavia, the Chinese enclave also contained a klenteng. In his comment about the presence of Klenteng Jinde Yuang in Batavia, Chee-Beng notes “the presence of the Chinese temples that add to the appearance of a Chinatown.”¹² While rather vague, this comment suggests the klenteng’s important role in the Chinese enclaves.

With the exception of Klenteng Guan-yin, which was explicitly dedicated to the Buddhist pantheon, Guan-yin, other temples played other functions in Chinese society.¹³ According to Indonesian scholar Herwiratno, besides being mainly a house of prayer the klenteng also serves as a venue for social activities.¹⁴ He states that the klenteng can be a (1) centre of religious teaching; (2) symbol of the development of Chinese society; (3) centre for learning religious symbols; and (4) centre for social activities and arts.¹⁵

Kwee Tek Hoay, the founder of the Sam Kaw Hwee and the Batavia Buddhist Association provides another classification of the klenteng, namely:

1. Those that were originally derived from the most ancient belief of the Chinese, whose teaching had been handed down through generations;
2. Those centred on the existence of God and angels (aid to have followed the Taoist school);

10 Vihara is an alternative name that has been mostly used in post-independence times, particularly after 1965 to denote Buddhist orthodoxy as well as the political change implemented by the New Order. Most of the klenteng with “gong” and “miao” in their names became Vihara. See Salmon and Lombard, *Le Chinois de Jakarta*, xxix-xxx.

11 T. Chee-Beng, “Chinatown: A Reflection,” in T. Chee-Beng and B.P. Wong (eds), *Chinatowns Around the World: Gilded Ghetto, Ethnopolis, and Cultural Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 272.

12 Ibid., 277-79.

13 For example, the ashes of deceased ancestor could be enshrined in these temples.

14 M. Herwiratno, “Klenteng: Benteng Terakhir dan Titik Awal Perkembangan Kebudayaan Tionghoa di Indonesia,” *Jurnal Lingua Cultura* 1 (2007), 80.

15 Ibid., 80-82.

3. The Mahayana Buddhism klenteng with shrines usually decorated with Buddha, *Bodhisattwas* (*Po-sat*), *arabant* (*O-lo-han*) and a statue of Kwan Yin; and
4. Those that were built by warriors whose images and statues were revered by the people in certain regions.¹⁶

Kwee adds that in practice these types of klenteng were distinct from one another, particularly in respect to the statues enshrined in them and the types of rituals or ceremonies performed inside them. For instance, a Buddhist klenteng would not place an offering taken from living creatures, such as meat, on the altar.¹⁷

Echoing the above perspectives, Salmon and Lombard state that aside from serving as the site for religious celebrations, the klenteng also served as a venue for various social ceremonies and festivals,¹⁸ such as those celebrated communally during the Chinese New Year holidays, Tjengbeng (Tomb Sweeping Day), Tjoko (Hungry Ghost Festival) and anniversary days of Chinese gods.

Evidence that the Chinese celebrated Chinese festivals in the klenteng is found in a letter written by the Chinese Council to the Betawi authority seeking permission for the Chinese to celebrate their festivities, and sometimes to perform their daily religious rituals in the klenteng.¹⁹ Aside from religious rituals, the Chinese also incorporated Dutch public holidays in their celebrations in the klenteng, but under the supervision of the Dutch authorities. As indicated by Dutch historian Erkelens in her dissertation, in 1913 the Chinese Council was instructed to supervise prayers in the Glodok and Goenoeng Sahari klenteng which were held to commemorate the centennial of the Dutch Kingdom's independence from French rule.²⁰ A similar example is the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Dutch

16 Kwee Tek Hoay, *Pemandangan Sam Kauw atas Sifatnja Klenteng-klenteng Tionghoa, Maksoed Dan Toedjoean Dari Pamoedja'an, Kabaekan dan Kafaedahan Jang Didapet oleh Si Pemoedja dengan Dibanding sama Laen-Laen Kapertjajaan dari Berbagi-bagi Bangsa*. (Tjitjoeroeg: Typ. Drukk. Moestika, 1949), 32-33.

17 Ibid., 35.

18 C. Salmon and D. Lombard, *Klenteng-klenteng Masyarakat Tionghoa di Jakarta*. (Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, 1985), 49.

19 Malay Minutes, NM 5 (16 January 1928), 317.

20 Erkelens, *The Decline of The Chinese Council of Batavia*, 220.

queen, Wilhelmina. This event was attended not only by the Chinese but also by the Dutch.

By the 1930s, the communal rituals celebrated at some klenteng included very typically Southern (Theravada) Buddhist rituals and practices, such as Vesak and *Asadha*. As discussed in Chapter Three, since the early 1930s Vesak and *Asadha* have been consistently celebrated at the klenteng; they have become part of the klenteng religious cosmos.

It is clear that the klenteng became one of the most important buildings in a Chinese neighbourhood and that it played a crucial social role. It was an educational, religious and cultural centre that reflected the values of the neighbourhood that supported it.²¹ Consequently, the klenteng became the only Buddhist centre in colonial Indonesia. It also became the home of the first Buddhist organization founded by the (Peranakan) Chinese society in Indonesia. Indeed, the klenteng was an important enclave where Chinese religious performativity intertwined; it represented their culture.

On New Year's Day, the Chinese usually performed a ritual to honour their ancestors by making offerings on their altar at home and at the klenteng. The offering usually consisted of materials with a symbolic meaning to them, such as cake *tjin* or *kue keranjang* wrapped in banana leaves, which were placed in the shape of a pagoda. Another example comprised sweet foods that symbolically meant good luck and fortune for the year to come.²² Aside from social and collective rituals, some individual worship, which usually involved honouring ancestors, was also done at the klenteng. Donald Willmott, author of the book titled *The Chinese of Semarang*, points out that this worship mostly involved bowing in front of the altar and making ceremonial offerings of incense.²³ This individual worship was also performed at the individual's house.

The positioning of the klenteng as a place for worship is certain. Japanese scholar, Tsuda Koji, confirms that the function of the klenteng in the past was much more complex, and that, in fact, it served more than a religious function. He claims that the klenteng were hubs of the ethnic Chinese society.²⁴ Although Tsuda's research mainly focused on the contemporary period, his

21 Ibid., 102.

22 Kwee, *Pemandangan Sam Kauw*, 7.

23 D.E. Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang: A Changing Minority Community in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 208.

24 T. Koji, "The Legal and Cultural of Chinese Temples in Contemporary Java,"



Figure 4.1. Chinese parade at Situbondo in East Java on the occasion of the twenty-year anniversary of Queen Wilhelmina, circa 1923. Source: KITLV, 38968.



Figure 4.2. Tjapgome festival circa 1913 in Malang, East Java. Source: KITLV, 153589.

argument is also a resonance of the past as the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* monthly magazine also states that the klenteng was also a venue for socialization among the Chinese.²⁵

The klenteng as a social hub also sometimes showed its connection with the arts and culture, as the Chinese often held celebrations there in the form of games and theatrical performances in order to appeal to the common people.²⁶ It seems that the frequency of these social events obscured the real function of the klenteng, as it became more like a *sociëteit* (private club house) rather than a religious site. Kwee reports that large entertainment performances were usually hosted by those klenteng with weaker religious functions. For instance, the klenteng in Serang, Buitenzorg, Bandung and other places where “El Capone” Tionghoa became an executive member had weaker religious functions, such that these klenteng were then claimed to be gambling dens.²⁷

Another important aspect to explore with regards to the klenteng is ownership. Some klenteng were under the Chinese organization named *Kong Koan* (Chinese Council -- *Chineesche Raad*). These included Klenteng Kim Tek Ie (Glodok), Klenteng Wan Kiap Sie (Goenoeng Sahari), Klenteng Antjol and Klenteng Tandjoeng Grogol.²⁸ In some cases, the Chinese Council was also responsible for management issues, such as the physical renovation of the klenteng whenever necessary. For instance, in 1922, the Council instructed Lieutenant Oeij Kim Liong, one of the six lieutenants in the Chinese Council, to take charge of the renovation of one klenteng.²⁹ For such undertakings, the Council provided the funds.

Sometimes some klenteng owned by a family had conflicts with the community which claimed ownership of the same klenteng. For example, there was a family-owned klenteng in Welahan which was sold so that the proceeds of the sale could be divided among the heirs.³⁰ Only a few klenteng employed good management and strict control of the property.

Asian Ethnicity 13, 4 (2012), 396.

25 Kwee Tek Hoay, “kegoenaan jang bener dari Klenteng-klenteng Tionghoa”, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 17 (February 1936), 1.

26 Vogelaar in Salmon and Lombard, *Les Chinois de Jakarta*, iii.

27 Kwee, “kegoenaan jang bener”, 1.

28 Malay Minutes, NM5 (16 January 1928), 316-17.

29 The fund was taken from the Council’s expenses. See *ibid.*, NM5 (16 October 1922), 36.

30 Kwee, “kegoenaan jang bener”, 2.



Figure 4.3. A Chinese klinteng in Batavia, circa 1900. Source: KITLV, 1400689.

Some klinteng had limited funds of their own called *Doeit Toapekong* (Toapekong fund), which was used as loans to people who wanted to start a business or for other purposes. The loaned amount was f 100, with a small interest upon repayment. Klinteng loans were usually given once a year at the time of *Tjiagwee Tjapgauw* (the Thi Kong ritual). As explained by Kwee, aside from interest from such loans, the klinteng had no other source of income.³¹

Some klinteng were established from donations, which often led to management problems. One interesting case was that of Klinteng Guan-yin (Kwan Im Tong) in Batavia. In the late nineteenth century, a Singaporean woman named Ong Tjong Hi received a donation in the form of a plot of land in the Kroekoet region in Batavia and she established a klinteng there.³² Problems arose when the donor of the land passed away and her heir laid a claim to the land. The situation eventually resulted in the demolition of the klinteng in Kroekoet. With the help of another female donor named Tan Eng Toan, Ong Tjong Hin constructed a new Klinteng Guan-yin in another neighbourhood. The construction took several years to complete because Ong Tjong Hin died in 1929. The building was finally completed in 1935 with the help of other Klinteng Guan-yin in Batavia, which reportedly took

31 Ibid., 4.

32 *Sin Po*, (January 1936); Salmon and Lombard, *Les Chinois de Jakarta*, 176.



Figure 4.4. Chinese Mahayana Buddhist monks in Batavia, circa 1900. Source: KITLV, 6605.

over the management of the klenteng thereafter.³³ In this case, the transfer of management was smooth due to the good relationship between Ong Tjion Hin and the association of Klenteng Guan-yin, some of whose monks were from Singapore.

There is little information regarding how klenteng funds were managed. Available sources indicate that various funding systems were used. In Batavia, the klenteng were mostly funded by donations. Those outside Java, such as in Manado, followed systematic ways of obtaining funds. In 1936, the *verslag* wrote that the klenteng owned as much as f 4000, which they used to help the poor, pay for death-related ceremonies and finance the education of poor students.

To conclude, the klenteng was an important enclave within the landscape of the Chinese society. Not only was it a venue for religious activities, it was also an important social hub. This dissertation focuses on the klenteng in Java, particularly in Batavia, because a few of them later became centres for the SKH, as well as Buddhist centres.

33 Salmon and Lombard, *Les Chinois de Jakarta*, 176.

4.1.2. “Problematic” Klenteng

The claim about the deteriorating state of the klenteng is found in some issues of the Peranakan publication, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*. It reported that the Tao klenteng were not propagating the teachings of Lao Tze and the Buddhist klenteng were not part of the Buddhist tradition. Rather, they functioned as sites for ritualistic activities and ceremonies.³⁴ Additionally, it was reported that both the (Mahayana) Buddhist priest or hwesio and the Chinese Taoist priest were not eagerly performing their religious duties, such as preaching about religion. Consequently, the visitors to these places could not obtain information about their respective religions.³⁵

The following paragraphs demonstrate the further decline of the klenteng. With the growing influence of Islam and Christian missionaries, the klenteng's influence waned further. “Many Chinese klenteng with great Chinese arts and architecture, both in China and Indonesia have slowly become extinct. Several klenteng in West Java have recently lost their Chinese character. In Buitenzorg, Klenteng Kwan Im has even taken on the character of a Roman Catholic church or a mosque.”³⁶

The decline of the klenteng is also associated with the growing interest in Christianity among the Peranakan Chinese, which caused a decrease in their appreciation of the Chinese art and characteristics in the klenteng building. When the interest in Christianity among the Chinese in Indonesia and mainland China grew, western-style churches were built. According to Kwee, this trend brought about a decline in the knowledge of Chinese arts.³⁷ Simultaneously, some relatively well-maintained klenteng became a haven for beggars, the homeless and the jobless. In some instances, the klenteng became a place where people smoked marijuana and consumed opium. These situations depict the inappropriate use of the klenteng. The contestation from other religions was another cause of the klenteng reform.

34 Kwee Tek Hoay, “Sam Kauw, atawa Tiga Agama jang dianoet oleh Bangsa Tionghoa sadari riboean taon jan laloe”, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 76 (January 1941), 14.

35 Ibid., 14.

36 Kwee Tek Hoay, “Kagoenaan jang bener dari klenteng-klenteng Tionghoa”, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*, 17 (February 1936), 7.

37 Ibid., 7.

In the early 1900s, when the Chinese kebatinan was awakening, the Chinese responded to the situation and the reformists voiced their criticism. For instance, Kwee heavily criticized the klenteng for being unproductive. He pointed out that most of the klenteng were not utilized for religious purposes. Some klenteng had turned into gambling and drug dens. In the face of the situation, the educated Chinese and Peranakan Chinese expressed a desire to bring back the religious function of the klenteng.

The klenteng appears to be the first place where cultural and religious reform began. As a symbol of and an embodiment of Chinese culture and beliefs, the klenteng regained its importance to them and it became the focal point of the Peranakan Chinese efforts to retain Chinese culture, religion, and most importantly, Buddhism.

4.1.3. Making the Klenteng more Religiously Buddhist

In the face of such challenges to the klenteng, the Chinese came up with various strategies to tackle the problems. The Chinese Council, which was responsible for some of the Chinese sites in Batavia, supervised the monks, priests and abbots of the temples to ensure they performed the religious ceremonies properly.³⁸ The Peranakan Chinese kebatinan associations, such as the SKH, along with the Batavia Buddhist Association (BBA), played a critical role in this situation.

According to *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*, the dismal state of affairs encouraged the SKH and the BBA to revive the klenteng. Both organizations proposed that aside from rituals that were already a tradition in the klenteng, it should also host lectures on spirituality. They believed these lectures would give people more meaning in their lives and they would also start learning about the teachings of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. In other words, the organizations wanted to transform the klenteng into *gredja* Sam Kauw, or a centre for Sam Kauw Churches (the Chinese three religions churches).³⁹

Kwee also encouraged making the klenteng into more than just a place of worship. To him, it should serve as a catalyst for Chinese culture and art, as seen in his statement that “The Chinese who uphold their ancestors’ belief should preserve the klenteng; not only for a worship place but also for art

38 Erkelens, *The Decline of the Chinese Council of Batavia*, 102.

39 Kwee, “Kagoenaan jang bener dari klenteng”, 6.

and architecture as they are the legacy of their nation.”⁴⁰ In support of this perspective, publications about the klenteng highlighted their importance. For example, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* consistently featured klenteng in mainland China as a part of the campaign to reintroduce the klenteng. For instance, it featured the Klenteng Kwan Im in Szechuan⁴¹ and the Klenteng Langit in Peiping.⁴²

Indeed, the klenteng was of great importance to the Chinese. To the Peranakan Chinese in particular, it was not only an important place of worship, it was also a legacy and source of cultural pride. The educated and elite Peranakan Chinese constantly worked to resuscitate the sacredness of the klenteng.

A special note must be given to the participation of Ong Soe Aan in the campaign to reinvigorate the klenteng. Ong was an officer of the Nederland Indie Anti Opium Vereeniging. As such his duties included ridding the klenteng of opium-related activities.

Ong’s visit to colonial Sri Lanka in 1934 proved significant to his belief in Buddhism. His encounter with the Sri Lankan monk Bhikkhu Narada led him to visit and explore a Southern Buddhist monastery. This visit provided him a real view of the imagined Buddhist worship place and further strengthened his reform spirit. In a letter to Kwee, Ong described how a Theravada Buddhist temple in Colombo was arranged, “Each room is decorated with the picture of Buddha Gautama and his disciples, also the life story of the Buddha. Unlike in the Chinese klenteng in Java where pictures were hung on the wall, the figures here are in the form of statues that delicate and finely crafted.”⁴³ Ong also commented on how different the arrangement of the altar was to the klenteng in Java, “... and the offering placed before the statue of the Buddha is only composed of flowers, and water without foods unlike that at the klenteng in

40 Ibid., 7.

41 Kwee Tek Hoay, “Klenteng Kwan Im di Szechuan”, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 48 (September 1938), n. pag.

42 Kwee Tek Hoay, “Klenteng Langit di Peiping”, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 50 (November 1938), n. pag.

43 Kwee Tek Hoay, “Siapatah jang aken toeroet?”, *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 11 (February 1933), 382.

Java.”⁴⁴ At the end of his letter, he stated that the purification of the klenteng could be done by inviting a Theravada monk from Ceylon. He said “...the priests or *hwesio* wear yellow robe and look educated, most of them speak English and modern. ... In my opinion, the Buddhist klenteng on Java need to learn closely from them or to even invite them to receive clear guidance from them.”⁴⁵

Ong’s letter and the experience of being the first Peranakan Chinese who came into contact with Southern Buddhism is very significant. This experience did not only inspire him to free the klenteng from unwanted impediments, it also laid the ground for the future visit of the Sri Lankan monk, Bhikkhu Narada, to Java. Accordingly, attempts to purify or revive the original function of the klenteng as a house of worship were launched.⁴⁶ The klenteng was an important component of Chinese religions as well as the Chinese community. It was a crucial space in which religious interactions took place and from which potential religious transition or change emerged.

During the time when the reform spirit arose among the Peranakan Chinese, the JBA approached the community with a new concept of Buddhism, which was Southern (Theravada) Buddhism, to help resolve the klenteng’s problem. In 1933 Willem Josias van Dienst, the first European Theravada Buddhist who interacted with the Peranakan Chinese, met with Hwesio Lin Feng and Kwee Tek Hoay at the Klenteng Kwan Im Tong. At this meeting that Van Dienst openly criticized the defects of the klenteng and encouraged reformation. In particular, he suggested introducing Southern (Theravada) Buddhism into the klenteng. His idea was well received and both parties agreed to use the klenteng as a centre for learning Buddhism.⁴⁷ They also agreed that the Buddhist centre would be complemented with schools and a library.⁴⁸ Thus, for the first time, Buddhists in the Batavia declared the klenteng as a centre for Buddhism. In the end, reforming the klenteng to reclaim its religious function by incorporating some productive activities into it made the klenteng a Buddhist centre.

44 Ibid., 382.

45 Ibid., 382.

46 Kwee Tek Hoay, “Memperbaiki klenteng-klenteng di Java”, *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 12 (March 1933), 419.

47 Kwee Tek Hoay, “Beroending di Kwan Im Tong”, *Moestika Dharma*, 24 (March 1934), 881.

48 Ibid., 881.

To pursue his idea of introducing Southern (Theravada) Buddhism at the klenteng, Van Dienst continued to approach more klenteng in Batavia and Buitenzorg. On 24 February 1934 he visited Klenteng Hok Tek Bio in Buitenzorg, Klenteng Besar Toa See Bio in Batavia, Klenteng Kwan Im tong in Kroekoet and Klenteng Thoeng San Thoeng in Petak Sinkian. The last two klenteng belonged to a Mahayana Buddhist nun (*nikko*). Following the advice of Tjian Kim Hoa, Van Dienst approached the Kong Koan (*Chineesche Raad* or Chinese Council) to ask permission to access other klenteng and teach Buddhism in these places.⁴⁹

As Southern (Theravada) Buddhism was being introduced into the klenteng, Bhikkhu Narada visited Java and offered more support to this effort. Consequently, the klenteng became a centre for learning Buddhism. The klenteng also became a venue for meetings, during one of which Narada delivered his speech on Buddhism. During his twenty-one day visit to Java, Narada visited several klenteng to deliver lectures on Buddhism. Table 4.3 lists the klenteng he visited and the activities he conducted therein.⁵⁰

Table 4.3. Klenteng Visited by Bhikkhu Narada in 1934

No.	Name of Klenteng	Region	Date of Visit and Activity
1	Klenteng Toa See Bio	Batavia	6 March (Activity unspecified)
2	Klenteng Bandoeng	Bandoeng	8 March (Delivered lecture which was attended by almost 1000 people who were mostly Chinese)
3	Klenteng Tin Kok Sih	Solo	11 March (Delivered a lecture (<i>lezing</i>))
4	Klenteng Hok Tek Bio	Buitenzorg	14-19 March (Stayed and delivered talks at night)
5	Klenteng Kwan Im Thoeng San Toeng	Petak Sinkian, Batavia	24 March (This klenteng was especially for nuns; thus, mostly women attended the lecture.)

Source: *Moestika Dharma*, 25 (April 1934), 922-24.

49 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kedatengannja Bikku Narada Thera", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 25 (April 1934), 919-25.

50 Ibid., 922-24.

Table 4.2 shows that Narada's visit to Java was focused mainly on giving lectures on Buddhism. After his visits, the klenteng became the centre of Buddhist organizations. In fact, a branch of the JBA was formed in Batavia during the 22 March 1934 meeting at Klenteng Kwan Im Tong, thereby drawing the klenteng closer to Buddhism.

Following the establishment of the new JBA branch, the klenteng became an important centre for gatherings and lectures. Interestingly, although the klenteng was associated with the Peranakan Chinese, the people from various backgrounds came to these gatherings and lectures. Thus, the klenteng's newly formed membership reflected a wide range of cultural and ethnic diversities. Subsequently, the klenteng became a space for the Chinese Totok, Peranakan Chinese, Europeans, Indians and Indonesians to interact with one another.

The model of a plural society as Michael G. Smith, a social anthropologist, envisaged it developed naturally within the klenteng and without one group trying to dominate the other. This egalitarian interaction was evident in the structure of the new branch of the JBA. In particular, the administrative positions of the branch were filled by representatives of various ethnicities -- the president was Jaganath L. Gandhi, a British Indian; the vice-presidents were Kwee, a Chinese and R. Ng. Poerbatjaraka, a native Indonesian; and the secretaries were Visakha Gunadharma, a Peranakan Chinese and Mej A. Boer, a Dutch woman. The egalitarian nature of the JBA is also seen in the fact that people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds delivered lectures sponsored by the klenteng.

With organizations being formed, the klenteng society started to launch a more solid agenda to propagate Buddhism and other spiritual subjects. The first regular Buddhist program at the klenteng was the weekly lecture, with the first lecture occurring on 26 April 1934. It was delivered by Hwesio Lin Feng Fe and it was titled "The Life of the Buddha Based on the Chinese Text." According to the recorded list in the *Moestika Dharma*, the weekly lecture took full effect in May 1934. On every Sunday of this month the lectures given by different speakers focused on the study of Buddhism.⁵¹

51 The program of weekly lecture: 3 May: M.N.C. Nag, "Theoretical and Practical Side of Ahimsa and Nirvana;" 10 May: Vogelpoel, "De leer van Boeddha volgens 't begrip en vertaald uit de heilig boeken der Zuidelijke Boeddhisten door bhikkhu Subadra;" 17 May: Chakrabutty, "The Origin and Source of Buddhism;" 24 May: Z. Boer, "Buddhism for Ladies;" 31 May: Hwesio Lin Feng Fei, "Perbandingan antara Agama Buddha dengan agama Kong Hoe T'joe." Kwee Tek Hoay, "Vergadering pertama dari Java Buddhist Association afdeeling

Once the weekly lectures were fully established, the focus shifted to religious rituals. The establishment of the BBA on 17 May 1934 allowed Buddhism to further penetrate into the klenteng. The celebration of Vesak was introduced for the first time in the klenteng on 28 May 1934 and henceforth became an annual program.⁵² Like the weekly lectures, Vesak celebrations were also attended by people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The JBA and the BBA jointly organized the event.

The BBA introduced another new program called the klenteng excursion. The activity involved visits to the klenteng in the vicinity of Djembatan Lima, Batavia.⁵³ One of the excursions visited Lam Hoa Sie at Petak Sembilan in Batavia, a Buddhist cluster where some hwesio resided. Although the report on this excursion does not offer much detail about the klenteng itself, it is described as being by nature a Buddhist klenteng where Mahayana Buddhist monks dwelled.

The above discussion indicates that some klenteng in Batavia had developed a commitment to Buddhism. Not only had the monks started to commit themselves to Buddhist activities, they also began adapting new material and traditions into the klenteng. As an important component of religiosity in the klenteng, a new religious ritual was introduced -- Vesak. This tradition had been associated with the followers of Theravada Buddhism. However, during this time Vesak was adopted as a new celebration to be carried out in the klenteng. Similarly, Pali, a liturgical language for carrying out Southern Buddhist rituals, began to be used in the klenteng.

4.2. THE BOROBUDUR FOR BUDDHISTS

The Borobudur is the largest Buddhist temple in the world which was built

Batavia", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 25 (9 May 1934), 967.

52 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Pergerakan kaoem Buddhist di Batavia", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 26 (June 1934), 1013. Also see: Kwee Sin Kiong, "Memperingetin itoe harian Wesak", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 26 (June 1934), 1017.

53 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Klooster Lam Hoa Sie di Kampoeng Krendang, Djembatan Lima, Batavia", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 75 (December 1940), n. pag.

during the reign of Syailendra dynasty in eighth century Java. After the fall of the ruling dynasty in the tenth century, the temple was rediscovered in 1814. Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff state that since it was rediscovered the Borobudur has become the object of fascination, contemplation and research of both local and foreign people.⁵⁴ Between 1907-1911, a Dutch engineer named Theodoor Van Erp headed the first Borobudur conservation project.

Previous research on the heritage formation of the Borobudur and Javanese antiquities conducted by Dutch colonial historians Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff offers an insight on the Borobudur heritage formation.⁵⁵ More importantly, their research suggests that during the awakening of the Greater India visions in the early twentieth century, the Borobudur was one of the oldest surviving temples in the world which received much scholarly and spiritual attention from people across wider Asia. Bloembergen and Eickhoff confirmed that the Borobudur was placed on the new religious and scholarly map.⁵⁶ During this period scholars, pilgrims, religious revivalists and transnational and international organizations visited the temple. For Bloembergen and Eickhoff, these activities represented the visitors' search for meaning by investigating the past connection and interaction between Asian peoples through the Borobudur. Consequently, this

54 M. Bloembergen and M. Eickhoff, "A Wind of Change on Java's Ruined Temples: Archaeological Activities, Imperial Circuits and Heritage Awareness in Java and the Netherlands (1800-1850)," *BMGN: Low Countries Historical Review* 128, 1 (2013), 85.

55 M. Bloembergen and M. Eickhoff, "Save Borobudur! The Moral Dynamics of Heritage Formation in Indonesia across Orders and Borders, 1930s-1980s," in M.S. Falser (ed.), *Cultural Heritage as Civilizing Mission From Decay To Recovery*. Proceeding of the 2nd International Workshop on Cultural Heritage and the Temple Angkor: Chair of Global History, Heidelberg University, 8-10 May 2011 (Berlin: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2013); idem., "Decolonizing Borobudur: Moral Engagements and the Fear Of Loss. The Netherlands, Japan and (Post-Colonial) Heritage Politics in Indonesia," in S. Legêne, B. Purwanto and H.S. Nordholt (eds), *Sites, Bodies and Stories: Imagining Indonesia History* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2015), 33-66; idem., "A Wind of Change on Java's Ruined Temples: Archaeological Activities, Imperial Circuits and Heritage Awareness in Java and the Netherlands (1800-1850)," *BMGN: Low Countries Historical Review* 128, 1 (2013), 81-104; idem., "Exchange and the Protection of Java's Antiquities: A Transnational Approach to the Problem of Heritage in Colonial Java," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 72, 4 (2013), 893-918.

56 Bloembergen and Eickhoff, "A Wind of Change on Java's Ruined Temples," 95.

led to the next degree of inter-sojourners activity, that is material exchange.⁵⁷

Bloembergen and Eickhoff's analysis about the position of the Borobudur within the scholarly and spiritual world in the early twentieth century offers a crucial perspective for this dissertation. Accordingly, this section investigates how the Buddhist community and Buddhist enthusiasts at that time adopted the Borobudur into their religious cosmos. This section also scrutinizes how their search for meaning led these communities and enthusiasts to interact with the wider Buddhist community, thus enhancing their Buddhist networks and initiating the process of making the Borobudur a part of their Buddhist identity. In other words, this search for meaning has made the Borobudur not only an object of antiquity and the visitors as "the real lover of antiquities." Rather, it has infused this search with a spiritual meaning.⁵⁸

This section also highlights the transfer of cultural materials that took place in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Buddhism was propagated in various ways, such as through the exchange of ideas, practices, teachers, cultural materials and institutions.⁵⁹

Other propagation strategies used by Pan-Asian Buddhists sought to reclaim what was considered sacred ground for Buddhist. This is best exemplified by the movement launched by Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933), a Sri Lankan Buddhist revivalist in India. According to many studies, Dharmapala was less than a conventional Buddhist. He was often portrayed as being modern and influenced by western ideas, primarily because of his relation with the Theosophical Society, which offered him support in the form of networks, supporters and benefactors.⁶⁰

Researcher David Geary, who specializes on Buddhism and the making of world heritages sites, states that Anagarika Dharmapala focused on reviving the sacred site of Buddhism, Bodh Gaya. Bodh Gaya is one of the

57 Ibid., 95.

58 Sieburgh observed that only a few visitors to Borobudur took notice of what they saw. For example, one visitor, a Chinese butcher, studied the relief by comparing them, making notes and drawing. Sieburgh called him 'the real lover of antiquity'. Bloembergen and Eickhoff, "A Wind of Change on Java's Ruined Temples," 101.

59 D. Geary, "Rebuilding the Navel of the Earth: Buddhist Pilgrimage and Transnational Religious Networks," *Modern Asian Studies* 48 (2014), 647.

60 A. Trevithick, *The Revival of Buddhist Pilgrimage at Bodh Gaya, 1811-1949: Anagarika Dharmapala and the Mahabodhi Temple* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publisher, 2006), 14.

four sites mentioned in classic Buddhist literature (*Mahaparinibbana sutta*) which were specifically designated by the Buddha as holy places for Buddhist pilgrims to visit. In 1891 the Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya temple was the subject of a dispute between the Buddhist community and the Hindus. For the Buddhists, the temple was sacred because it was believed to be the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment. For the Hindus, the temple was revered as a monument to “Buddha Dev” or Hindu’s God. Because he was concerned about the Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya, Dhammapala came to Bihar, India in 1891 and immediately responded to the issue by establishing the Mahabodhi Society. His main reason for doing so was to reclaim the Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya for all Buddhists.⁶¹

Alan Trevithick, who has researched the history of the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya, argues that Bodh Gaya was “a latent ground for action based on pan-Buddhist sensitivities.”⁶² Furthermore, he contends that Bodh Gaya has been discovered and has now become a modern symbol for the Buddhist population.⁶³ The story of Bodh Gaya is a testament to the success of the efforts of the Buddhist revivalist movement, making Bodh Gaya not only the centre of the Buddhist sacred zone, but also a holy site for the pilgrimage of all Buddhists worldwide.⁶⁴

Like Bodh Gaya, other Buddhist symbols, rituals, and religious values were also introduced. In 1891 when he first set foot in Bihar, India, Dhammapala had aspired for Buddhists of various nationalities to establish their own Buddhist centres in the Bodh Gaya complex. In one of his articles, Trevithick noted that Dharmapala had written “Burmese, Japanese, Chinese, Siamese [and] Tibetan should have cottages built for each country.”⁶⁵ It is clear that Dharmapala wanted to have all Buddhist schools represented in Bodh Gaya. In other words, Dhammapala wanted Bodh Gaya to become the centre of Buddhism across schools and traditions.

In her article, Bloembergen, a Dutch cultural historian, wrote that in 1896 Siam’s King Chulalongkorn visited the Borobudur. At this visit, there was an exchange of Buddhist knowledge and prayers for material gifts. To Bloembergen this event marked the beginning of the resacralization of the

61 Trevithick, *The Revival of Buddhist Pilgrimage*, 1.

62 Ibid., 13.

63 Ibid., 13.

64 Ibid., 1.

65 Ibid., 205.

Borobudur.⁶⁶ In early twentieth century Indonesia, the Borobudur was rediscovered after jungle growth around it was cleared. The newly discovered eighth century Buddhist monument received generous attention from the colonial state and orientalist, as well as the budding Buddhist community. The state's concern for antiquities and monuments resulted in the establishment of Oudheidkundige Dienst (Dutch East Indies Archaeological Service). This was followed soon after by a vigorous restoration project.⁶⁷ Relevant to this idea, Bloembergen and Eickhoff suggested that the fear of loss also contributed to the restoration project and to the process of making the site as cultural heritage.⁶⁸

The European fascination with Java, particularly with ancient temples, offers an interesting starting point to learn how people from different backgrounds perceive and relate to the Borobudur. A good illustration is C.J. Ryan, a contributor to the *Theosophical Path Magazine*. Ryan wrote some articles describing the European Theosophists' fascination with and interest in ancient temples. In 1917, the *Theosophical Path Magazine* published an article written by Ryan comparing the Borobudur to the American architectural style and focusing on their visible connection. After a few years, in 1924, he wrote another article on the Borobudur which included a discussion on the Mendut temple and the Pawon temple. In it he described the temples as being massive and in severe condition and he wondered about the function of the temples as the shrines of faith but remained puzzled about their real existence.

The campaign to consider the Borobudur as a Buddhist religious site in modern Indonesia, which occurred at about the same time as the case of Bodh Gaya in India, was dominated by the Theosophical Society's networks and support. The connection between Theosophists and the Borobudur can be seen in the admiration of the Theosophical Society's founder for the Borobudur's connection with Indian spirituality.⁶⁹ Later, during the leadership of Dirk Van Hinloopen Labberton, Borobudur again received

66 Bloembergen and Eickhoff, "Exchange and the Protection of Java's Antiquities," 896.

67 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised edition (London: Verso, 1983), 180

68 Bloembergen and Eickhoff, "Decolonizing Borobudur," 33.

69 M. Bloembergen, "Borobudur in the Light of Asia: Scholars, Pilgrims, and Knowledge Networks of Greater India," in M. Laffan (ed.), *Belonging across the Bay of Bengal: Religious Rites, Colonial Migrations, National Rights* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 36.

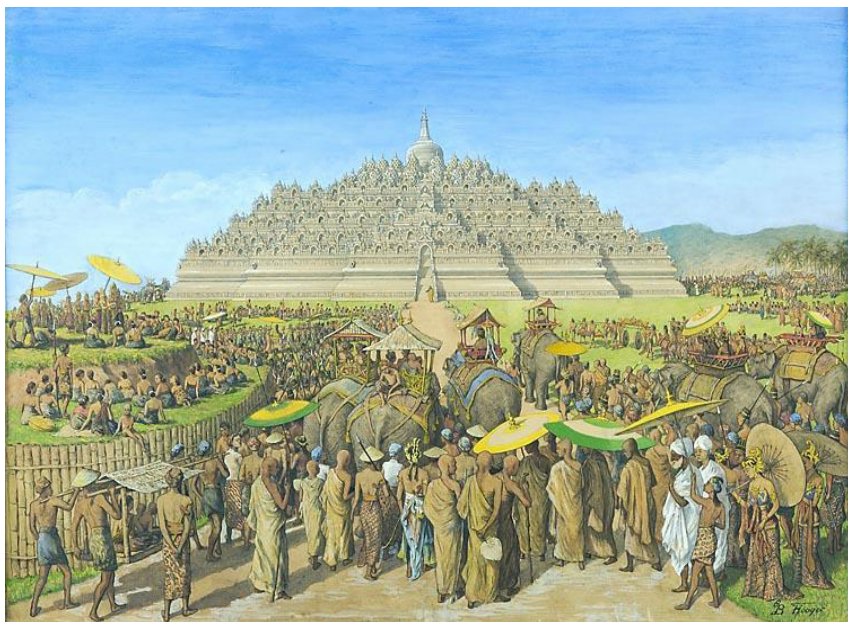


Figure 4.5. Borobudur as a place for pilgrimage by G.B. Hooijer, circa 1919. Source: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen. Tropenmuseum.

attention from the Society. For instance, Van Hinloopen Labberton visited the Borobudur during the first summit of the Theosophical Society held in Yogyakarta. During this visit, he addressed the audience and cited Borobudur as a symbol of divine life and also the whole division of the universe, the multiplicity of all forms of life.⁷⁰

It has been argued that the Theosophists had an important role in recovering the religious function of the Borobudur. The most prominent indicator of this role was the Theosophists' initiation of the celebration of Vesak at the Borobudur. They established this celebration as a Buddhist event annually performed at the Borobudur.

The Theosophical Society's first recorded performance of the so-called modern form of the Buddhist ritual, Vesak, was held at the Borobudur complex in 1927.⁷¹ Special credit is given to Mangelaar Meertens, a European

⁷⁰ *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, (22 April 1908).

⁷¹ *Theosofie in Nederlansch Indië=Theosophie di Tanah Hindia Nederland: Officieel Orgaan van de Ned-Indische Theosofische Vereeniging*, 1 (January 1927), 20.

Buddhist leader from Malang,⁷² because he was responsible for organizing the annual Vesak celebration at the Borobudur. He was one of the well-known Theosophists and a member of the mainboard (*hoofdbestuur*) of the same organization. During a Theosophical Society conference in Semarang, he was nominated together with Van Leeuwen as a candidate for the President of the Nederlands Indische Theosofische Vereeniging (NITV), or the chairperson for Theosophical Society in colonial Indonesia.⁷³

Sources indicate that Meertens was noted for his efforts to revive the function of Buddhist temples in the Indonesian archipelago. The Borobudur and Mendut temples were his main concerns and he tried to restore their functions as centres of worship for Buddhists. He began by convincing Buddhists to commemorate Buddhist holidays, such as Vesak, at the temple. Another of his projects was transferring the management of both temples to Buddhists. Finally, he attempted to establish living quarters (*ashram*) for those who were on a spiritual quest.⁷⁴

In 1930, Meertens published an announcement about the Vesak celebration to be held at the Borobudur temple in the monthly magazine of the NITV. He continued to do so each year in the Theosophical Society's annual report. The 1930 celebration of Vesak was particularly significant as the event took place in the Borobudur instead of the Mendut temple, where it was normally held.⁷⁵ To help achieve his goals, Meertens pioneered the establishment of a Buddhist association called the Vereeniging voor Boeddhisme (Perkoempoelan Boeat Agama Boeddha *or* Association for Buddhism) on 7 October 1935 in Yogyakarta. This association is significant because it was the only association that received permission from the Oudheidkundige Dienst (Dutch East Indies Archaeological Service) to hold an annual Vesak ceremony at the Borobudur complex.⁷⁶ Henceforth, the

72 Unfortunately, there is no statistical record on the number of Buddhist in Malang.

73 He obtained 15 votes; meanwhile Van Leeuwen secured 21 votes. Kwee Tek Hoay, "Toedjoean jang tetep", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 46 (July 1938), 1.

74 Ibid., 4.

75 *Theosofie in Nederlandsch Indië=Theosophie di Tanah Hindia Nederland*, 4 (April 1930), 209-10.

76 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Berdirinja vereeniging voor Boeddhisme (Pakoempoelan Boeat Agama Boeddha)", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist*

Vesak celebration at the Borobudur complex was always organized by the same association.

Meertens' commitment to make Vesak an important day can be seen in his response to Kwee Tek Hoay, the chairperson of the Batavia Buddhist Association, who invited him to participate in the program of the association. Meertens courteously refused the offer due to his tight schedule. He replied to Kwee Tek Hoay, "at the moment I can only focus on one issue, that it is to make sure the Vesak celebration is observed yearly."⁷⁷ Meertens' concerns about making Borobudur characteristically Buddhist is demonstrated in Chapter Five as he had consistently organized Vesak on an annual basis.

The regular celebration of Vesak at the Borobudur became a symbol for the Buddhist community's reconnection to the Buddhism of Indonesia in the past. It became a focal point for the reawakening of Buddhism. According to Kwee Tek Hoay, the Vesak celebration organized by Meertens in the Borobudur and Mendoet temples was a strategy to reinvigorate Buddhism.⁷⁸ Within the context of the Buddhist school, Vesak was similarly identified as a sign of the emergence of a Southern (Theravada) Buddhism through the connection with various networks at the time. In other words, Vesak was a result of the connection among the various Buddhist networks at the time.

Another event that contributed to making the Borobudur more religiously Buddhist was the visit of Bhikkhu Narada to colonial Indonesia in April 1934. When Narada visited the Borobudur, he brought with him a Bodhi tree obtained from Bodh Gaya, Bihar, India. This Bodhi tree was planted in the Borobudur complex and it became the first Bodhi tree in the holy site.⁷⁹ Consequently, the Borobudur became an increasingly more important site for Buddhists in modern time.

Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong, 77 (February 1941), n. pag. The organization became the second Buddhist organization established by European Buddhist. Unfortunately, there is no sufficient information about this organization.

77 Hoay, "Toedjoean jang tetep", 4.

78 Ibid., 1-4.

79 The Bodhi tree was brought from India the year before by Meertens. Kwee, "Kedatengannja Bikku Narada Thera", 922-24.

4.2.1. The Chinese Buddhists, the Javanese and the Borobudur

It is clear that both the state and the Theosophists were interested in the Borobudur. The question is whether or not the Chinese who were fully committed to reinvigorating their own culture, tradition and religion, -- some of whom were increasingly drawn to Buddhism-- aware of the events surrounding the Borobudur, a structure that was culturally distant from them

In answer to this question, there is evidence that the Peranakan Chinese did connect themselves with Borobudur. They did so through the practice Buddhism and the production of knowledge about the Borobudur. Some sources produced by the Peranakan Chinese show that the Buddhist community in Indonesia was aware of the developing discourse about the Borobudur. The community had connections with members of the Theosophical Society, who were mostly Javanese and Europeans. As stated in Chapter Three, the Batavia Buddhist Association, whose founder was also an active member of the Theosophical Society, invited speakers from the Society to speak about the Borobudur. Among them was Soekirlan, a member of the Javanese Buddhist organization and a Theosophist. He delivered the first lecture about Borobudur entitled “Apa jang Diwariskan oleh Kake Mojang Kita?” (What is the Legacy of Our Ancestors?). In this lecture, he spoke about the deities described in Hinduism that correspond to Buddhism as depicted in the relief of the Borobudur.⁸⁰ Another lecture was delivered by C. Beyer. It was titled “Arts: The Life of the Buddha as Depicted in the Relief of Borobudur” (Arts: Penghidoepan Buddha menoeroet oekiran di Boroboedoe). The lecture focussed on a story depicting the life of the Buddha.⁸¹

Another speaker was R.Ng. Poerbatjaraka, a Javanese literature expert and Leiden-trained philologist who at the time was regarded as the person who was most knowledgeable about the Borobudur. He delivered a lecture titled “Hal Agama Buddha di Java pada Djeman Koeno dan Beberapa Keterangan tentang Boroboedoe” (Buddhism in ancient Java and several descriptions

80 R. Soekirlan, “Apa jang diwariskan oleh kakek mojang kita”, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 4 (January 1935), 36.

81 C. B. Arts, “Pengidoepan Buddha menoeroet oekiran di tempel Boroboedoe”, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 10 (July 1935), 18-39.

on Borobudur) wherein he highlighted several core points about the temple. Below is a quote from the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* write-up on Poerbatjaraka's lecture.

It particularly discusses the relief on the temple. The first section focussed on the life history of the Buddha. The second part turned out to be very interesting as no one in the gathering had known about it. This part was about the origin of the Buddha's statue. According to him the Buddha statue only existed after the demise of the Buddha. When Buddha was still alive, he suggested that he shouldn't be made a God (*toapekong*). However, after his passing, the first Buddha statue was made in Greece. Before that period, people only made and used representations of the Buddha's feet or "tapak kaki Buddha". These representations were used as an object of veneration and they were housed in a *stupa*. This *stupa* was usually made of stone and it was shaped like a spiral pillar with a pointed top. It was usually located at a crossroad so it would be visible to the passers-by. The oldest *stupa* was found in Borobudur, the shape of which has undergone some changes over time.⁸²

Poerbatjaraka also provided a more detailed description of the Borobudur's main stupa. Located at the top of the temple, it contained an unfinished statue of the Buddha. He explained that the Borobudur is a Buddhist temple of the Mahayana tradition, and this is evidenced by the kind of Buddha statues that were placed in different directions as well as by the Buddha's *mudra* (hand positions). He showed pictures of different Buddha in different *mudra*, namely *Akshobhya*, *Ratnasambhawa*, *Amitabha* and *Amoghasiddha* and he provided detailed explanations of these pictures.⁸³

In addition to the lecture series, some literature on the Borobudur was translated and published by Boekhandel Moestika. For example, *Borobudur*, a book written by an acclaimed Theosophist author, C.W. Leadbeater, was published. This is evidence that the Peranakan Chinese Buddhists participated in the global enthusiasm about Buddhism and the Borobudur.

The participation of the Chinese in the rituals held at the Borobudur is evident. Records show that in the celebration of Vesak, Chinese participation was consistent. For instance, during Vesak in 1935, there were at least forty-

82 R. ng. Poerbatjaraka, "Hal agama Buddha di Java pada djeman koeno dan bebrapa keterangan tentang Boroboedoer", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association*, *Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 4 (January 1935), 20-21.

83 Ibid., 24.

eight Chinese people, men and women, participating in the event at the site.⁸⁴ Such participation remained consistent in the following years. For example, the picture in Chapter Five, shows Ong, a Chinese theosophist leader, attending the event together with Meertens.

Based on the sources found, in the late colonial period the Peranakan Chinese Buddhists did show religious sentiment towards the Borobudur. The interest of the Peranakan Chinese in Borobudur continued in the post-independence period. Chapter Seven will show how the Borobudur became a religious site for Indonesian Buddhists from all ethnic groups.

CONCLUSION

In brief, Buddhism in the early twentieth century Indonesia was very much exposed to the global narrative of Buddhism. Buddhist intellectuals travelling to different places in the world were the major points of connection. While there were not many Buddhist intellectuals from Indonesia travelling outside the country to collect and exchange material cultures of Buddhism, the Buddhist community within the country, particularly the Peranakan Chinese, served as an efficient receptacle for input from the international Buddhist travellers.

The klenteng and the Borobudur became central venues for receiving this input. This chapter has shown how the members of the Buddhist community who came from various backgrounds interacted at different Buddhist sites.

The interest of the European society and the Theosophists specifically revolved around the Borobudur and this greatly influenced the process of reclaiming the neglected religious meaning of the Borobudur as a temple. Further, the notion of global Buddhism is shown in the exchange of material culture, specifically as exemplified through the planting of the Bodhi tree which had been brought directly from India.

The Chinese society, on the other hand, focused on the klenteng and their efforts resulted in re-establishing the religiosity of the klenteng. Additionally, the Chinese Buddhists, in cooperation with the Javanese Theosophists, also engaged in the production of knowledge about the Borobudur. By doing so

84 Anonymous, "Peraja'an di Boroboedoer: verslag dari seorang jang hadir", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 9 (June 1935), 38.

they oriented themselves to their Indonesian identity. Their participation in Vesak held at the Borobudur and their enthusiasm about the Borobudur itself is testament to their integration of Indonesian identity.

Chapter 5

Performing Buddhism: Vesak

In recent years, it has become custom in Central Java, that on the day of the full moon in May, Vesak Day, some members of the NITV's Jogja lodge go to Mendoet and the Borobodur in the late afternoon just before evening to commemorate this feast and to join in the celebrations, as much as the latter was within their abilities.¹

This is an excerpt from a letter written in 1929 by L. Mangelaar Meertens describing celebrations of Vesak that had been held during recent years in Central Java. The Nederlandsche Indische Theosofische Vereeniging (NITV) in Yogyakarta confirmed Meertens' observation that Vesak had been commemorated in the past. However, the Mendoet temple and the Borobudur temple was the venue for the 1929 observance of Vesak for the first time.

Vesak commemorates three important occasions in the Buddha's life -- his birth, attainment of knowledge and passing away -- and usually takes place during the full moon of the fifth lunar month. The word, Vesak, is a generic term derived from Vaisakha, the name of the second month in the Indian national calendar. Buddhist scholars claim that Vesak is historically rooted in

1 *Theosofie in Nederlandsch-Indië = Theosophie di Tanah Hindia Nederland: Officieel Orgaan van de Nederlandsch-Indische Theosofische Vereeniging*, 7/8 (July/August 1929), 307-08.

the Southern/Theravada Buddhist tradition. Donald K. Swearer, a scholar of Southeast Asian Buddhism, sees Vesak as a historical tradition that marks the most sacred occasion of Theravada Buddhism's yearly celebrations.²

Taking Aronson-Lehavi's notion of religious performativity as a starting point³, this chapter shows that Vesak emerged from a set of complex historical events particular to Buddhist communities in colonial South and Southeast Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries rather than from beliefs, values or practices inherent to Buddhism. Understanding Vesak as an invented tradition explains why notions of modern Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia differed from Western scholars' notions of Modern Buddhism such as those put forth by Heinz Bechert, a German Indologist who is well known for his work titled *The World of Buddhism*.

Bechert understood modern Buddhism as constructing and living in a minimalist and demythologized world. However, South and Southeast Asian Buddhists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries understood modern Buddhism as constructing and living in a maximalist and ritualized world of tradition. Modern Buddhists' invention of Vesak first in Sri Lanka and then elsewhere in South and Southeast Asia reflects what Eric Hobsbawm, a British historian and social theorist, and Terence Ranger, an African historian, define as the invention of tradition -- "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seeks to calculate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies the continuity of the past."⁴

The two points above raise a question about how the understanding modern Buddhism as constructing and living in a maximalist and ritualized world of tradition led a reinvented celebration of Vesak. This chapter suggests that exploring religious -- in this case, Buddhist -- performativity provides a response to this question. Investigating religious performativity involves analysing the contexts in which religious activities occur and comparing these

2 D.K. Swearer, *Buddhism and Society in Southeast Asia* (Chambersburg, PA: Anima Book, 1981), 43.

3 Aronson-Lehavi's area of research includes late medieval and performance and religious theatre. See S. Aronson-Lehavi, "Transformation of Religious Performativity: Sacrificial Figures in Modern Experimental Theatre," *Performance and Spirituality* 3, 1 (2012), 60.

4 E. Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Tradition," in E. Hobsbawm and E.T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1.

activities for evidence of similar features. This chapter presents evidence that the ceremonies and rituals associated with Vesak in Indonesia during the early twentieth century first appeared during the late nineteenth century in celebrations of Vesak in South Asian Buddhist communities, which followed Theravada Buddhism. These innovated Theravada Buddhist ceremonies and rituals were introduced via various international Buddhist channels and networks to colonial Indonesian Buddhist communities which then adopted these ceremonies and rituals for their celebrations of Vesak. The Indonesian Peranakan Chinese Buddhists, who traditionally followed Northern/Mahayana Buddhism, appropriated these innovated Southern/Theravada Buddhist ceremonies and rituals for their celebrations of Vesak in a way that maintained their community's allegiance to Buddhism; however, it also transformed their understanding of Buddhism.⁵

5.1. VESAK AS A GLOBAL MODERN PERFORMANCE

The ceremonies and rituals of Vesak underwent a considerable change in Sri Lanka at the end of the nineteenth century as part of a movement against colonial authority, Christian dominance and later as a symbol of Asian modernity.⁶ How the ceremonies and rituals of Vesak were changed in colonial Sri Lanka is perhaps one of the most researched aspects of Buddhism in Asia. Although Vesak was widely celebrated by Asian Buddhists, it also provided powerful symbols for mobilizing support for the Buddhists' successful anti-colonial movement and Asian modernity.⁷ Vesak became a symbol of the Buddhists' successful anti-colonial movement in predominantly Buddhist Sri Lanka after the colonial government's recognition of Christmas as a public holiday. This sparked Buddhists' resistance to what they saw as the growing, government-supported dominance of Christianity. In 1888 Henry Steel Olcott, a prominent Theosophist and new convert to Buddhism, petitioned the government to also recognize Vesak as a public holiday to commemorate

5 D. Turpie, *Wesak and the Recreation of Buddhist Tradition* (PhD Dissertation, McGill University, 2002), 6.

6 J. Snodgrass, "Performing Buddhist Modernity: The Lumbini Festival, Tokyo 1925," *Journal of Religious History* 33, 2 (2009), 145.

7 Ibid., 145.

the Buddha's birthday so that the Vesak (Buddha's birthday) would officially be recognized as equal to Christmas (Jesus Christ's birthday). The colonial authorities eventually made Vesak a public holiday.

A number of researchers have referred to Asian Buddhist revivalist movements as the Protestant Buddhism Movement.⁸ This designation highlights the fact that Buddhist activists began to emulate aspects of Christian religious practices. Aside from advancing Vesak as an officially recognized festival, Buddhists also used Christian missionary practices, Sunday school instruction, wedding ceremonies and print publications to propagate Buddhism.⁹

The presence of Protestant Buddhists in colonial Sri Lanka is demonstrated by a special edition on Vesak in *The Buddhist* published in 1937:

The festival we are celebrating, today, is the greatest of our year. Our Christian friends celebrate the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of their leader on as many different days, but in our case all is concentrated in this one great occasion -- the Full-Moon Day of Vesak -- on which we commemorate at once the birth of our Lord, his attainment of Buddhahood, and his departure from the world whose misery he did so much to alleviate.¹⁰

The passage above frames Vesak as superior to the Christians' Christmas. Furthermore, it claims that no other festival can approach Vesak in importance.¹¹ It frames Vesak as superior to Christmas with the implication that Buddhism is a match to Christianity despite Christianity's dominance as the favoured religion of the colonial state.

Resistance to colonialism as well as concern about the Christian missionaries' success at winning converts prompted Buddhist communities in colonial territories beyond Sri Lanka to adopt Christian missionaries' practices in an effort to propagate Buddhism. Part of this effort involved introducing new Vesak ceremonial rituals from colonial Sri Lanka in their celebrations

8 R. Gombrich and G. Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 205; S. Prothero, "Henry Steel Olcott and 'Protestant Buddhism,'" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LXIII/2 (1995), 289; H. Kim, "A Buddhist Christmas: The Buddha's Birthday Festival in Colonial Korea (1928-1945)," *Journal of Korean Religions* 2 (2011), 51.

9 Kim, "A Buddhist Christmas," 51.

10 D. B. Jayatileke and V. de Silva, "Vesak 1937", *The Buddhist*, vol. 8, no. 1 (May 1937), n. pag.

11 *Ibid.*, n. pag.

of Vesak. However, aside from resisting colonialism and the incursions of Christian missionaries, a new spirit of union throughout the whole Buddhist world seems to have energized a desire to revitalize Buddhism. Another passage from the journal quoted above called for the union of the Buddhist world through Vesak celebrations:

...it is right and well that Buddhists all over the world should combine in the joyous celebration of Vesak -- that it should be a time when all differences are forgotten, all quarrels are made up -- when scattered members of the family meet together once more, and with one heart join in laying their pure and lovely flower offerings on the holy shrines of the Great Teacher.¹²

The quotation reveals that Vesak had come to symbolize a modern Pan-Buddhist spirit Buddhism capable of resisting Christianity for Buddhist activists and intellectuals.

In the early twentieth century, Vesak was beginning to be celebrated in parts of East Asia. Hwansoo Kim, a scholar on Korean Buddhism and culture, notes that the celebration of Vesak in colonial Korea as early as 1928. He refers to Vesak as a “Buddhist Christmas” and argues that the new practice was instituted as the culmination of a joint Asian Buddhist effort between Japanese and Korean Buddhists to respond to modernity, nationalism, colonialism and Christian missions. Kim points out that this reconfiguration of the Buddha’s birthday was parallel to the reinvention of Christmas in the modern world and in colonial Korea and that it was intended to symbolically define the Buddhists’ religious identity and power.¹³ More specifically, Kim explains that the Buddha’s reconfigured birthday in colonial Korea was a product of interaction, complex negotiation and collaboration between Japanese and Korean Buddhists, which served to announce that neither Japanese nor Korean Buddhists were puppets of Japan’s colonial ambitions.¹⁴ Kim’s analysis not only demonstrates the role of Buddhism as an emerging counterforce to colonialism in East Asia but it also demonstrates a transnational connection involved in the process of the invention of a new practice. It also suggests the possibility that the rethinking of Vesak practices in South and Southeast Asia could have been part of emerging anti-colonialism and anti-Christian sentiments that were spread by contacts and interconnections not only among Asian Buddhists but also between Buddhists from the East and the West.

12 Ibid., n. pag..

13 Kim, “A Buddhist Christmas,” 47.

14 Ibid., 49.

Another important research relevant to this discussion is Judith Snodgrass' work on Vesak in 1920s Japan. Snodgrass argues that Vesak became a tool for performing modernity in Japan during the 1920s after Japanese Buddhists transformed the traditional Buddhist festival of Hana Matsuri¹⁵ into Vesak, which they celebrated as the Lumbini Festival during the 1920s -- a modern international celebration of the birth of the historical Sakyamuni Buddha. Snodgrass emphasizes that "it was a modern event in its association with the centres of consumer culture, the department stores; in its calculated use of mass communications both broadcast and print, and most particularly in the public nature of the performance..."¹⁶ She adds it was modern because the event used the latest technology and made the Japanese being part of the international community.¹⁷ Snodgrass shows how Japanese Buddhists, along with changing the festival's name from Hana Matsuri to the Lumbini Festival, also changed the space in which the festival took place. The Hana Matsuri festival was typically held in the local temples and involved a simple ritual act of ladling sweet tea over a Buddha image. Around 1925, the observance became more public and festive.¹⁸ As the years progressed, the celebration started to be held in large public spaces and public institutions in Tokyo.¹⁹

Vesak was not simply one of the few festivals shared by Buddhists of various schools and cultural backgrounds; it was also already a potent symbol of Asian modernity and successful anti-colonial protest.²⁰ Snodgrass continues by comparing what happened in Japan to what happened in regions of South Asia such as colonial Sri Lanka where proposing Vesak as a public holiday became a symbolic act protesting Christianity dominance. She claims that the decision to celebrate Vesak publicly also symbolized Buddhist modernity because "it reinforced the Orientalist scholarship of the time, which against Buddhist traditions, emphasized the historical humanity of the Buddha as founder of the religion, the basic premise of modern humanist Buddhism."²¹ Snodgrass emphasizes that to Buddhists in Japan, performing Vesak allowed

15 The Japan had been observing *Hana Matsuri* (Flower Festival), a festival equated to Vesak since the reign of Empress Suiko (circa 606 CE).

16 Snodgrass, "Performing Buddhist Modernity," 135.

17 Ibid., 135-36

18 Snodgrass, "Performing Buddhist Modernity," 134.

19 Ibid., 134

20 Ibid., 145.

21 Ibid., 145-46.

them to feel Japanese, Buddhist, modern and a part of an international community all at the same time.²²

Donald K. Swearer, whose work focuses on Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand, explains that Vesak originated from a “festival cycle of Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia has two closely connected patterns, one agro-economic, the other Buddhist,” so as a result Vesak was never inherently Buddhist.²³ Changes in the place where Vesak was celebrated reflect the beginning of Vesak as a performance of Buddhist modernity. Swearer points out that regions such as colonial Sri Lanka, Burma, Laos and other Southeast Asian regions traditionally observed Vesak within the monastery. The celebration of Vesak was private and carried out by monks. When Vesak began to be used to celebrate Buddhist modernity, Vesak became more celebrative in nature, took place beyond the monastery and involved both monks and laypeople.²⁴

In regions where Buddhism was predominant, the changeover from a closed, private celebration to an open, public celebration is easily seen. For instance, in the case of Sri Lanka, the traditional Vesak celebration involved various monastic activities, such as reaffirming one’s commitment to Buddhist tradition by affirming the five precepts and taking refuge in the Triple Gems (Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha). Such monastic-based activities marked the Vesak celebration as being private in nature or what Snodgrass called a private festival.²⁵

Vesak became an open, public celebration in colonial Sri Lanka before Korea and Japan. Buddhism was regarded as more equal to Christianity after Vesak was declared as a public holiday in 1885. It is most likely that Sri Lankan Buddhists were the first to gain legal recognition of their right to celebrate Vesak in the colonialized regions South Asia. This success inspired neighbouring Buddhist regions and communities to do the same.

In colonial Singapore, an identical movement took place in the early twentieth century. The Ceylonese Buddhist in Singapore also attempted to obtain legal recognition for their religious practices. Ann Blackburn, an American historian on Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia, points out that

22 Ibid., 136.

23 Swearer, *Buddhism and Society*, 17-18; D.K. Swearer, *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010), 47.

24 Ibid., 47.

25 Snodgrass, “Performing Buddhist Modernity,” 135.

the birthday of the Sakyamuni Buddha first became an officially recognized Buddhist festival in Singapore known as Buddhist New Year, and in 1924 it was officially designated as the National Day of the Sinhalese of Singapore.²⁶ Blackburn explains that the success of the Sinhalese Buddhists enlarged the ritual space for Buddhists in Singapore. The festival on Serangoon Road, where the Sinhalese Buddhists held the Vesak festival, allowed all Buddhists, regardless of their ethnic and nationality backgrounds, to join the event. The festival in turn made Buddhist practices and customs known to a wider Singaporean audience.²⁷

Blackburn also highlights a crucial aspect of Vesak in colonial Singapore that offers an insight into understanding the development of Vesak in colonial Indonesia. She notes the festival became a point of contact between the Chinese Mahayana Buddhists and Ceylonese Buddhists in Singapore, which led the two groups to cooperate with each other. For example, in 1904 the Shuang Lin temple became the centre of Vesak rituals in which Chinese and Sinhalese Buddhists performed together.²⁸ A second example comes from an announcement in *The Straits Times* newspaper: “[A] special service will also be held at the new Chinese Buddhist Temple at Balestier Range. This temple has been specially decorated by B.P. D’Silva in honour of Lord Buddha.”²⁹

There was not only interaction between Chinese and Ceylonese Buddhists but also between European, Japanese and Eurasian Buddhists in Singapore. Buddhists in general followed instructions by the Buddhist Mission, such as the following instruction for Vesak Day: ...all Buddhists, both European and native, will illuminate their houses on Saturday night.”³⁰ Acts of charity were carried out across ethnic and socio-economic divides regardless of the particular Buddhist school one followed. For example, B.P. D’Silva gave food to about three thousand poor people.³¹ Hence, the Vesak festival appeared to function in colonial Singapore both as a religious ritual as well as an occasion to draw followers of different Buddhist schools together.

26 A. Blackburn, “Ceylonese Buddhism in Colonial Singapore: New Ritual Spaces and Specialists, 1895-1935,” *Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series* 184 (2012), 13.

27 Blackburn, “Ceylonese Buddhism in Colonial Singapore,” 14.

28 Ibid., 8.

29 *The Straits Times*, (28 April 1904).

30 Blackburn, “Ceylonese Buddhism in Colonial Singapore,” 8.

31 Ibid., 8.

The above section has described a common pattern of celebrating Vesak in different regions of East and South Asia and offers the notion of “performance” as a starting point for looking at similar Buddhist activities in colonial Indonesia or as Catherin Bells, whose studies focused on Chinese religions and rituals, puts it -- the power of “not being told or shown something so much as [being] led to experience something.”³² The next section looks at Vesak in terms of theatrical performances designed to lead Buddhists to new religious experiences, for example the recitation of the Buddhist Pali canon and Buddhist liturgy.

5.2. PERFORMING VESAK

The coming of Vesak to colonial Indonesia was the result of crisscrossed relations between Buddhist schools; intellectuals’ interest in Buddhism; resistance to the Christian missionaries’ efforts to convert Indonesian Buddhists; and the Peranakan Chinese’s efforts to return to their ancestor’s traditions.

The introduction of Vesak as a new Buddhist practice in colonial Indonesia was initially led by laypeople who became involved in modernizing Buddhism due to the lack of Buddhist monks in Indonesia. This is obviously different from the case in colonial Sri Lanka as well as in the Straits Settlements, where Buddhist monks led the modernization of Buddhism and initiated changes to Vesak.

In order to fully understand the nature of Vesak performativity in early twentieth century Indonesia, this section describes three sites where Vesak ceremonies were carried out -- the Theosophical Society Lodge, the Borobudur and the Chinese klenteng. The details of how Vesak’s new rituals were staged at each site were described in sources such as newspapers, the Theosophical Society’s journal and Peranakan Chinese magazines, such as *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* and *Moestika Dharma*. Among the Peranakan Chinese, Vesak is found to be celebrated along with other existing Chinese ritual practices such as Tjapgomeh and Sin Tjia. This, in turn, marks Vesak as a new emerging practice within the Peranakan Chinese Buddhist community.

32 C.M. Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford and NYC: Oxford University Press, 1997), 160.

5.2.1. Vesak at the Theosophical Society Lodge

The Theosophical Society was the first organization to hold Vesak in colonial Indonesia. In Chapter Two, the Theosophical Society's connections with Buddhism were explained. One goal of the Society was to spread Buddhism by publicly celebrating Vesak. This goal mirrors the Theosophists' role in the campaign to promote Vesak as a public holiday in colonial Sri Lanka. The Theosophists' successful campaign resulted in the British governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, declaring Vesak as a public holiday in Sri Lanka on 27 March 1885. The declaration of Vesak as a national holiday was then followed by the raising of the Buddhist flag in the country. The success story in colonial Sri Lanka later inspired Ceylonese Buddhists in Singapore to promote a similar cause with success. The introduction of Vesak in colonial Indonesia proved central to the efforts to modernize Buddhism in Indonesia, colonial Sri Lanka and colonial Singapore.

Kwee Tek Hoay noted that the Theosophical Society was one of the organizations that routinely performed Vesak rituals.³³ The celebration in this organization was held in conjunction with Lotus Day, a day to commemorate the passing of H. P. Blavatsky the founder of the organization. Sources indicate that there were several centres performing Vesak. The *Jaarverslag* hinted that the Giri Lojo lodge in Bandung consistently included Vesak in its annual agenda.³⁴ Other centres, such as that on Blavatsky Park Street, in Batavia also held a similar event.³⁵ Outside Batavia and Bandung, the centres in Solo, Yogyakarta and Malang were also cited as performing Vesak.

The first Vesak celebration held by the Theosophical Society was in late 1920s. In 1929, a Vesak service was held at Giri Lojo centre in Bandung. A Javanese man named Sastrowirjo gave a sermon about Vesak Valley and also led the ceremony. That year, twenty-three Boemiputra and nine Chinese out of the forty-one members of the centre attended the event.³⁶ Although

33 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Omong-omong tentang Agama Buddha: Hari-hari raja Buddhist (dari golongan Hinayana)", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 111 (June 1941), 208-10.

34 *Theosofie in Nederlandsch-Indië = Theosophie di Tanah Hindia Nederland*, (April 1929), 179.

35 *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, (4 May 1931).

36 Ibid. Also see *Theosofie in Nederlandsch-Indië = Theosophie di Tanah Hindia Nederland*, (March 1930), 150.

no European members are recorded to have attended the celebration, the event still demonstrates the presence of different ethnic groups at the Vesak celebration. This parallels Blackburn's observation that in colonial Singapore the Vesak performance brought together followers of Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism.

In the 1930s, more reports on Vesak were published in the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*. The Giri Lojo lodge led by Ong Soe Aan held Vesak which included a *kampvuur* (campfire), speeches and rituals. Sasrowirjo delivered a speech, and Hwesio Nio Thong Ie from Klenteng Bandoeng conducted religious prayers.³⁷ The Batavia lodge also appeared to have held a Vesak celebration with a ritual that was described as impressive yet serene. The ritual was started at 5.30 in the evening. All participants were invited to take off their shoes and to enter what was called *Esoterische Kamer* (Esoteric Room), where cushions were provided and arranged on the floor. People were free to choose either to sit on the cushions or chairs. The attendees then turned their faces towards the wall facing towards a picture of the Buddha, which is similar to the one in the Borobudur temple. It is the one which shows him teaching *mudra*. Flowers and incense were placed in front of the picture as offerings. After the audience was seated, the president of the Theosophical Society of Batavia lodge, Mrs. Gonggrijp, delivered a speech about the importance of the celebration which was then followed by meditation. The celebration was attended by people of different ethnic groups, namely five Chinese, five Boemiputra and many Europeans of both genders.³⁸

The Vesak ritual practices at the Theosophical Society lodge seem to have been less elaborate than those performed at the Chinese klenteng. The Theosophists' Vesak rituals also seem to have been distinguished by a meditation session and by the Theosophists' omission of a recitation of Tisarana and Pancasila Buddhist during the ritual. The recitation of Tisarana and Pancasila Buddhist was a regular feature of Vesak celebrations organized by the Batavia Buddhist Association. The Tisarana and Pancasila Buddhist, as explained in an earlier chapter, was a distinctive feature of the Southern tradition. Skipping these two verses suggests that the Vesak performed at the Theosophical Society was not exclusively intended for Buddhists because these

37 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kabar kerajaan Buddhis: Kerajaan Wezak", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 9 (June 1935), 37.

38 Ibid., 33.

verses were recited only by Buddhists to affirm their faith. Thus, the Vesak commemoration at the Theosophical Society lodges interestingly did not go the full length of an exclusively Buddhist ceremony.

5.2.2. Vesak at the Borobudur Temple

As mentioned in Chapter One, the Borobudur was an important Dutch archaeological project in the early twentieth century. The Borobudur temple underwent its first restoration between 1907 and 1911 under Theodoor van Erp, the Dutch engineer who was in charge of this restoration.³⁹ In 1929, Dutch Theosophists publicly celebrated Vesak in the Mendoet temple near Borobudur for the first time in 1929 and at the Borobudur temple in 1930.⁴⁰

The performance of Vesak in the Medut and Borobudur temples was more exclusively Buddhist oriented than the celebrations in the Theosophical Society lodges because of L. Mangelaar Meertens, a Buddhist leader and a member of hoofdbestuur of the Nederlands Indische Theosofische Vereeniging (NITV). He staged the Borobudur Vesak celebration as a specifically Buddhist ceremony.

The Vesak performance in the Borobudur was part of an effort by Meertens to revive the sanctity of Buddhist temples throughout the Indonesian archipelago, but particularly the temples in Borobudur and Mendoet. This effort was driven by three goals: (1) to commemorate Buddhist events such as Vesak at the Borobudur temple since it was larger and could accommodate more participants,⁴¹ (2) to transfer the management of both temples to the Buddhists once they became able to do so; and (3) to establish rest houses (ashram) for those who wanted to pursue a spiritual quest.⁴²

39 M. Bloembergen and M. Eickhoff, "Decolonizing Borobudur: Moral Engagements and the Fear of Loss. The Netherlands, Japan and (Post) Colonial Heritage Politics in Indonesia," in S. Legêne, B. Purwanto and H.S. Nordholt (eds), *Sites, Bodies and Stories: Imagining Indonesian History* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press), 34.

40 M. Bloembergen, "Borobudur in the Light of Asia: Scholars, Pilgrims, and Knowledge Networks of Greater India," in M.F. Laffan, (ed.), *Belonging Across the Bay of Bengal: Religious Rites, Colonial Migrations, National Rights* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 39.

41 *Theosofie in Nederlandsch-Indië = Theosophie di tanah Hindia Nederland*, 4 (April 1930), 209-10.

42 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Toedjoean jang tetep", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan*

From 1930 onwards, Vesak was held at the Borobudur and Mendoet temples. Ong Soe Aan reported in *Moestika Dharma* that people of different ethnic backgrounds attended Vesak celebration held at the two temples on 20 May 1932.⁴³ Ong noted that there were three statues of *Sampo*⁴⁴ in Mendoet. He described the atmosphere as serene and peaceful. Having finished the program in Mendoet, people proceeded to Borobudur where they climbed to the top of the upper level of the temple there and discussed Bishop Leadbeater's book titled *De Meester en het Pad* (The Master and the Path).



Figure 5.1. Vesak performance organized by Theosophists and Buddhists at the Borobudur on 12 May 1930. (Photo: Ong Soe Aan). Source: *Sin Po*, June 1930.⁴⁵

dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong, 46 (July 1938), 4.

43 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Perhoeboengan Buddha Gautama dengan Doenia II. Kerajaan Wesak", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 3 (June 1932), 101.

44 It was not clear what the word, *Sampo*, refers to.

45 I would like to especially thank Muhammad Ryski Wiryawan for his generosity

As the highlight of the program, they interlocked hands with one another and performed a clockwise circumambulation (*pradakshina*) around the topmost level of the Borobudur stupa. The gesture of handholding, as Ong described, symbolized world brotherhood (*persoedaraan sadoenia*). Furthermore, Ong felt that the experience was mystical and likened the atmosphere to *swarga* (heaven) that brought peace to the human mind. For him the experience of circumambulation was incomparable.

The circumambulation ritual was intended to connect the Borobudur Vesak celebrations to the ritual depicted by the ancient Buddhist art of India. Susan Huntington, who studied early Buddhist art in India, points out that the circumambulation ritual is often seen in ancient reliefs carved into Buddhist stupas in Madhya Pradesh, India.⁴⁶ Depictions of the circumambulation ritual is the earliest surviving example of Buddhist narrative art. Clockwise circumambulation is a clear marker of the Buddhist ritual, while the counter-clockwise circumambulation is a clear marker of the Hindu ritual. The object around which veneration is performed varies. In a relief carving from Bharhut in India, a building that contains a wheel (*cakra*) is the object of veneration. In another relief, the object of veneration is a Buddhist stupa (a monument or pillar).⁴⁷ The antiquity and great number of circumambulation relief carvings suggest Buddhists have long regarded this ritual as a fundamental expression of what is important in their religion. This point is underscored by the fact that the practice of circumambulation was integrated into the circular design of Borobudur monuments.⁴⁸

In 1935, another Vesak celebration was held at the same site.⁴⁹ The ritual activities listed in the program were similar to those listed in past programs. The circumambulation was one of the core activities of the 1935 celebration, followed by a speech by C.C.W. Ganswyck, the Dutch Theosophical Society

in giving me permission to use his collection of pictures for this dissertation.

46 S.L. Huntington, *Lay Ritual in the Early Buddhist Art of India: More Evidence Against the Aniconic Theory* (Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academie van Wetenschappen 2012), 13.

47 Ibid., 14-15.

48 Ibid., 15.

49 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Perajaan di Boroboedoe. Verslag dari seorang jang hadir", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 9 (June 1935), 38-40.

leader.⁵⁰ There were approximately 120 people who attended the event, among whom were forty-eight Chinese, mostly from Temanggung and Magelang. There are no further details concerning the social background of the attendees.

In 1938, the Vesak celebration was more elaborate and centralized at the Borobudur. Oei Thiam An wrote that on 14 May people from different places, such as Yogyakarta, Magelang, Temanggung and Grabag, gathered at the temple complex. There was a large number of Javanese but only a few Europeans and Chinese. The ceremony started at six o'clock in the evening and was led by Meertens, the Buddhist leader in Malang. At the centre of the site for the ritual was an altar decorated with candles, jasmine flowers and roses. The air was filled with the fragrance of burning incense on the altar adding to the serene, tranquil, unruffled atmosphere. After the chanting of the scriptural recitation, which is done to review the teachings of the Buddha, lectures followed. One lecture was given in Dutch by Meertens, and another lecture in the Javanese language was given by Mangoen Soekarso, a Javanese Buddhist as well as a teacher from Taman Siswa school.⁵¹

Approximately 150 people attended the event.⁵² The Vesak ceremony was then concluded by the circumambulation ritual at the biggest stupa at 10.30 pm. Like previous Vesak celebrations at the Borobudur, the 1938 Vesak was an exercise in signifying the Borobudur celebration as different from those held in other places.

Vesak at Borobudur has shown interesting finding. Being held at the temple complex, it has been demonstrated that there were Javanese people attended the occasion. The use of the Javanese language as the second medium after Dutch language supported the report about Javanese participants on the occasion. In this respect the Vesak in Borobudur also became a means to answer the question about the presence of Javanese society in the new Buddhist community which otherwise relatively unseen in Batavia.

Meertens was apparently not involved in the 1939 Borobudur Vesak celebration. Nevertheless, the celebration was held with mentions of Van

50 The talk in Vesak 1935 was given by C.C.W. Ganswyck. It was about Buddha, Buddhism, karma, reincarnation and Nirvana which was translated into Malay by Soepono.

51 Oei Thiam An, "Kerajaan Wezak di Boroboedoer", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 45 (June 1938), 30.

52 Ibid., 32.

Ganswijk, who was the secretary of the *Vereeniging Voor Boeddhisme* (Association for Buddhism), which was established in Yogyakarta in 1935. Van Ganswijk lived in Yogyakarta and later moved to Bandung. Some other people who were also reportedly in the crowd were Raden Mas Koesoemodihardjo, Lim Tik Liang from Solo and Soejatiman from Yogyakarta. In replacement of Meertens, Van Ganswijk delivered a brief Vesak message about the life of the Buddha and his teachings, with a focus on the non-existence of God and non-self.⁵³

The Vesak celebration at the temple complex was halted in 1940 due to the German invasion of the Netherlands. Although Vesak celebrations at the *klenteng* and the Theosophical Society lodges continued, Meertens could not obtain permission from the colonial government for the outdoor Borobudur celebration.⁵⁴ Instead, all Vesak celebrations were to be held indoors. A similar situation again occurred in the following year, when Vesak was only celebrated in the *klenteng* and Theosophical Society lodges. The year 1939 marked the last Borobudur Vesak celebrations until the 1950s.

In conclusion, Vesak was held at Borobudur for about seven times during 1930s, which resulted in a new but enduring Buddhist tradition and which was arguably a significant contribution to the spread of Buddhism. Furthermore, the Borobudur Vesak celebrations also resulted in the introduction of old Buddhist rituals, such as the circumambulation, which were adapted for performance in the Borobudur temple complexes but which were not performed in other venues. These rituals became part of a new tradition that was initiated by members of an international organization -- the Theosophical Society -- and participated in by Javanese, Peranakan Chinese and other Buddhists from the areas surrounding Borobudur.

5.2.3. Vesak at the Klenteng

In addition to Theosophy lodges and to the Borobudur, the Chinese *klenteng* was another venue where Vesak was celebrated. In this section, this study

53 Oei Thiam An, "Peraja'an Wezak di Tjandi Boroboedoe", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 56 (May 1939), 37.

54 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Keraja'an Wezak di Boroboedoe dibatalken", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 69 (June 1940), 37.

argues that the performance of Vesak in the klenteng was new phenomenon and a significant feature of the Peranakan Chinese acceptance of a new Buddhist tradition, the South (Theravada Buddhism). As discussed in Chapter Three the klenteng was considered to be a cultural site as well as a crucial site for the Peranakan Chinese religion. Similarly, the celebration of Vesak at the klenteng can be said to demonstrate the Peranakan Chinese acceptance of Vesak. This chapter argues that the inclusion of Vesak into the klenteng program strengthened the bond between the two Buddhist traditions, the Northern and Southern Buddhism. As the performance of Vesak included a set of rituals and recitation of Buddhist verses, the community of the klenteng also began to include the use of Pali-language and more Southern Buddhist resources. Therefore, it may be said that Vesak at the klenteng is another proof of the impact of Southern Buddhist networks, as represented by members of the Theosophical Society and Southern Buddhist agents, such as Josias van Dienst, E.E. Power and Bhikkhu Narada.

To begin with, during late colonial times, four religious festivals were formally acknowledged by the colonial government; one of them was the festival of the Chinese religion.⁵⁵ Although there is no indication that Vesak was formally recognized by the colonial government, this festival had been observed by the Chinese society. Vesak was celebrated by the Chinese Buddhist at Klenteng Kwan Im Tong located in Prinselaan Batavia in the 1930s. In collaboration with the Sam Kauw Hwee (SKH), the Batavia Buddhist Association (BBA) and the Java Buddhist Association (JBA) collaborated in organizing the event in 1934;⁵⁶ however, there is little information about the Vesak performance in that year. Nevertheless, the available information does indicate that different organizations were involved in the implementation of newly invented traditions. During this Vesak celebration, Josias van Dienst was invited to lead the ceremony as a manifestation of the harmonious relationship between the BBA and the JBA. As Kwee points out, the BBA was designed for all Chinese religions followers to have equal access to each other's program, including Vesak celebrated by Buddhist at the klenteng.⁵⁷ In this regard, the

55 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kerajaan Wezak", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 79 (April 1941), 38.

56 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Pergerakan kaoem Buddhist di Batavia", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 27 (June 1934), 1014.

57 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kenapatah moesti berdiriken Sam Kauw Hwe", *Sam Kauw*

Vesak at the klenteng in Batavia was religiously more diverse; it was attended by followers of other religions as well as people from different social backgrounds.

There is more extensive information on the commemoration of Vesak in the following year. It was initiated by the BBA and it took place at the Klenteng Kwan Im Tong on 18 May 1935. This event was attended by more people from different associations and ethnic backgrounds than in the previous year. Among them were Mrs. Gonggrijp, the president of the Batavia Theosophical Society and Egmond from Vrij Katholiek Kerk. Some Javanese were also seen in the venue such as Poerbatjaraka, Soetardjo, Soekirlan and Kadiroen Mangoenpoernomo; some Sinhalese, Hindus and Sikhs; and about forty Chinese men and women.⁵⁸

As described in the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* magazine, the celebration was a formal and sacred event. It involved a set of expressions, ritual gestures and formal speech, such as the recitation of Pali verses. Unlike in Borobudur where the event involved only laypeople, Vesak at the klenteng was formally opened by Hwesio Lin Feng Fei., the Mahayana Buddhist monk who was the abbot of the Klenteng Kwan Im Tong in Batavia. This was followed by a speech of the BBA president and then the recitation of Pali verses to salute the Buddha (*oetjapan dowa-dowa peodjian pada Buddha*). The verses were translated into various languages for the benefit of the heterogenous audience. E.D. Simon recited the verses in the Pali language; the Chinese translation was recited by Tjoa Hin Hoeij; the Javanese translation was recited by Soetardjo; the Dutch translation was recited by H.F. N. Boussard; and finally, the Malay language was recited by Tjiong Kie Koan.⁵⁹ During the verse recitation, the Javanese sat cross-legged on the floor, while the Chinese knelt.

After the above recitation of the Pali verses, lectures were delivered by four people. Their names and lecture topics are listed below:

- B.L. Simon -- The meaning and purpose of Vesak (in English);⁶⁰
- Soekirlan -- *Kerajaan Vesak Ballei dan laen-laen* (Vesak Valley celebration

Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong, 2 (November 1934), 3.

58 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Keraja'an di Klenteng Kwan Im Tong", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 9 (June 1935), 34.

59 Ibid., 36.

60 Visakha Gunadharma translated his lecture, *The Meaning and Purpose of Vesak*, into Malay language, *Maksoed dan Toedjoeannja Wezak*.

and other things) (in Malay);

- Kadiroen Mangoen Poernomo -- *Orang-orang Buddhist jang soedah naik ka dalem tingkatan soetji jang terdiri dari beberapa grad* (Buddhists who have achieved various degrees of enlightenment) (in Malay); and
- Visakha Gunadharma -- *Penawar jang Buddha sediaken bocat semboehin manoesia peonja segala kesakitan* (The antidote for human suffering by the Buddha).⁶¹

A similar program of activities was followed in the Vesak celebration the next year, 1936.⁶² The BBA continued to be the main organizer and it received support from the SKH and the Theosophy Lodge Djakarta (Batavia). The audience grew larger, reaching about two hundred people. Unlike the celebration in the previous year, however, E. E. Power, the vice-president of the JBA introduced a crucial Buddhist element to the event, the recitation of the Pali Buddhist liturgy in the ritual. After three Mahayana monks opened the Vesak ritual, Power proceeded with the recitation of the Tisarana and the Pancasila. The verses were recited in their original language, Pali, and then translated into English. They were also recited in the Javanese language (by Soetardjo), Chinese (by Tjoa Hin Hoeij), Dutch language (by H.F.N. Boussard) and Malay (by Visakha Gunadharma).

Tisarana:

Buddham saranam gacchami
(I take refuge to the Buddha.)

Dhammam saranam gacchami
(I take refuge to the Dhamma.)

Sangham saranam gacchami
(I take refuge to the Sangha.)

Dutiyampi Buddham Saranam gacchami
(For the second time, I take refuge to the Buddha.)

Dutiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchami
(For the second time, I take refuge to the Dhamma.)

61 Kwee, "Keraja'an di Klenteng Kwan Im Tong", 36.

62 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Hari Wezak", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 50 (May 1936), 639-41.

Dutiyampi Sangham saranam gacchami
(For the second time, I take refuge to the Sangha.)

Tatiyampi Buddham saranam gacchami
(For the third time, I take refuge to the Buddha.)

Tatiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchami
(For the third time, I take refuge to the Dhamma.)

Tatiyampi Sangham saranam gacchami
(For the third time I take refuge to the Sangha.)

Pancasila Buddhist:

Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
(I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures.)

Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
(I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given.)

Kamesu micchacara veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
(I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct.)

Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
(I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech.)

Surameraya majjhapamadatthana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
(I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs which lead to carelessness.)

The recitation of the Tisarana and Pancasila were crucial to the progress of Buddhism in Buddhist social history. As previously explained, the recitation of the Tisarana and Pancasila is one of the salient features of monastic activities, especially in the Ceylonese Buddhist tradition. The recitation symbolizes the reaffirmation of the Buddhist commitment to Buddhism.⁶³ The Tisarana

63 Swearer, *Buddhism and Society in Southeast Asia*, 548.

is also known as the Three Articles of Faith that have an essential part in Buddhist worship and devotional practices going back to the Pre-Asokan period.⁶⁴ Hence, the recitation of these verses during important, such as Vesak at the klenteng, signifies the penetration of Southern Buddhism (Theravada) into Chinese society. In turn, the recitation of these verses by the Buddhist community at the klenteng indicates the receptive attitude of the Chinese Buddhists to a new Buddhist tradition. The recitation of these verses can be compared to Olcott's conversion into Buddhism, and perceived as the pinnacle of the coming of Buddhism to Indonesia when the people affirmed themselves to be Buddhists.⁶⁵ Based on this historical investigation, it was during this period of time (1936) that the klenteng members -- the Peranakan Chinese and the Mahayana Buddhists -- officially accepted Southern Buddhism.

On 25 May 1937 another Vesak was held at Klenteng Kwan Im Tong in Batavia. Hwesio Ling Feng Fei led the ritual performance in Chinese tradition by offering incense at the nine different altars in the klenteng. By this time the Tisarana and Pancasila had become core components of the program. Four people of different ethnicities recited the verses and precepts in four different languages. The Chinese version was recited by a Chinese (Siau Tik Kwie), the Pali version by an Indian (Chakrabutti), the Javanese version by a Javanese (M. Soetardjo), the English version by a European (E.E. Power), and the Malay version by Tjong Kie Koan.⁶⁶

In 1938, another Vesak celebration was held at Klenteng Kwan Im Tong. (A group picture was taken during this occasion. Unfortunately, because of its poor quality, it cannot be included in this dissertation.) The picture shows several important figures such as Hwesio Lin Feng Fei, Poerbatjaraka and his wife, the family of Jagannath L. Ghandy, Virchend Venchand Shah with his wife, Siau Tik Kwie and Souw Sien Giap (one of the very active members of the BBA), Toan Kie Hok Kioe, Kwee Tek Hoay and his wife, Oeij Giok Lien (the chairperson for the Women group at Klenteng Kwam Im in Mr. Cornelis).⁶⁷ In another picture, the lecturers were shown standing and

64 V.V.S. Saibaba, *Theravada Buddhist Devotionalism in Ceylon, Burma and Thailand* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld Ltd., 2005), 3.

65 The Tisarana and Pancasila were recited to affirm one's intention of becoming a (Theravada) Buddhist in Indonesia.

66 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Keraja'an Wezak di Kwan Im Tong", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 33 (June 1937), 26.

67 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Keraja'an Wezak, 14 Mei 1938, di Klenteng Kwan Im Tong

delivering lectures in front of an altar, surrounded by the audience. Visakha Gunadharma and Poerbatjaraka were seen sitting on chairs next to each other, while sitting opposite them were Kwee Tek Hoay and Chakrabutty.

Three notable speeches were given during the 1938 Vesak celebration held at Klenteng Kwan Im Tong. The first speech was delivered by Chakrabutty and translated into Malay by Kwee Tek Hoay. The second speech was given by Poerbatjaraka and it focused on the interpretation of Queen Maya's dream before the birth of the Buddha -- the white elephant entering Maya Dewi's womb at the time of conception. Finally, the third speaker was E.E. Power, who delivered his talk in Dutch. It was translated into Malay by R. Soekirlan Poespadibrata. In his talk, he raised an issue about the importance of studying and practicing Buddhism in the time of calamities. He also stated that Buddhism is not a religion and that it is not the same as Hinduism. He explained that Buddhism is a philosophy for life which people ought to believe in; instead it must be proven through daily practices. Buddha is also not the leader of Buddhists; he is only a teacher who shows the way. Buddhism survived throughout the time because people kept following the teachings. Buddhist practice is founded on the five basic rules, namely, no killing, no stealing, no lying, no sexual misconduct and no misleading sensual pleasures and practices.

In the 1938 commemoration of Vesak, an interesting figure emerged as a guest lecturer. His name was Virchend Penchand Sha. He was identified in the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* as one of the assistants of Mahatma Gandhi, a nationalist leader from India.⁶⁸ Kwee translated his talk into Malay language. Sha began his speech with an overview of the religious setting in India that was influenced by Jainism, Hinduism as well as other philosophies, including Buddhism. He

Batavia", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 45 (June 1938), n. pag.

- 68 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Hari Wezak dari taon ini", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 45 (June 1938), 16. I would expect to have more information about this figure that I suspect to be crucial in developing my argument about the Indian intellectual connection with Buddhist organization in Batavia at the time. Several editions of *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* recorded that Sha gave another lecture at the Batavia Buddhist Association, among which topics was about *Present India and Her message*. The lecture was delivered in 21 May 1938. V. P. Sha, "Present India and Her Message", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 46 (July 1938), 5-13.

went on to explain how Buddha influenced the social dimension and practices in India through his revolutionary teachings. An example was his disapproval of slaughtering animals for worship. Sha stated that the Buddha's teaching continued to benefit places beyond India, reaching Tibet, China, Japan, Siam, Burma, Ceylon and many more regions. Sha's presence and his lecture at the 1938 Vesak celebration proves the presence of Buddhism's transnational connections, particularly with India. It showed the vast networks that the Buddhist organization in Batavia had from the time it emerged in the early twentieth century.

By the end of the 1930s, the Vesak celebration had been reportedly done at the *klenteng* in different places in Java and beyond, such as in Menado, Sulawesi and Banjarmasin in Borneo. *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* recorded that in 1939, the Pakoempoelan Bibliotheek: Kamadjoean Lahir-Batin in Bandjarmasin, Borneo island led by Lie Tjong Tie organized the first Vesak celebration.⁶⁹ Meanwhile in Batavia, the Vesak had already been held for the sixth time at Klenteng Kwan Im Tong on 3 May 1939. A public announcement about the Vesak was disseminated in several newspapers prior the event.⁷⁰ This time three *hwesio* from Klenteng Lam Hoa Sie in Djembatan Lima, Batavia led the ritual, to take the place of *Hwesio Lin Feng Fei*, who passed away in November 1938.

Figures 5.2a and 5.2b present pictures taken at the 1939 Vesak celebration. This event was special as the Buddhist flag was introduced to the Buddhist community for the first time in Indonesia at this occasion. The flag was a gift from Bhikkhu Mahaweera to Visakha Gunadharma during her visit to Singapore for the celebration of Vesak.⁷¹ At her sermon on this occasion, Gunadharma spoke about the meaning of the flag, the instruction given by Bhikkhu Mahaweera to display the flag at their houses, as well as her experience celebrating Vesak in Singapore. In summation, the 1939 Vesak was significant because it manifested the increased influence of Modern Buddhism which was

69 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Keraja'an Wezak di Bandjarmasin", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 56 (May 1939), n. pag.

70 *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indie*, (2 May 1939); *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, (3 May 1939).

71 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Keraja'an Wezak di Batavia oleh Pakoempoelan Batavia Buddhist Association", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 56 (May 1939), 7. Details about this visit and connection are discussed in a later chapter.



Figure 5.2a. Vesak celebration at Klenteng Kwan Im Tong, Batavia, 3 May 1939. Source: *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong* 56 (May 1939).

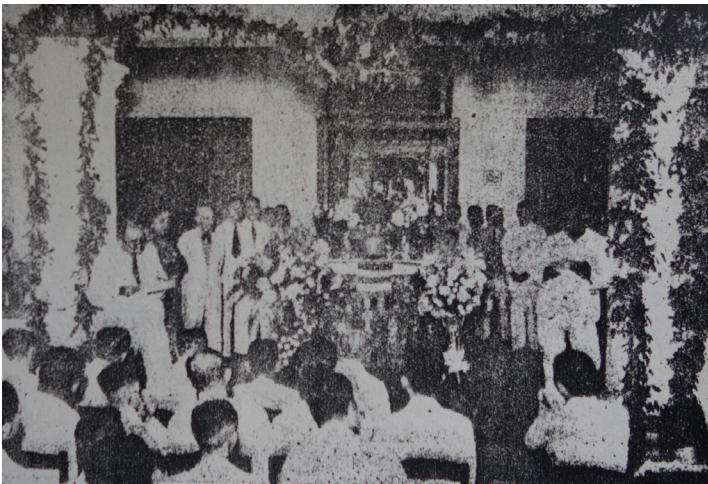


Figure 5.2b. Vesak celebration at Klenteng Kwan Im Tong, Batavia, 3 May 1939. Nanda L Punj (standing on the right) is reading a sermon in English that was translated into Melajoe by Kwee Tek Hoay (standing on the left). Standing behind Kwee Tek Hoay are Visakha Gunadharma and E.E. Power. The altar is embellished with a Buddhist flag brought by Visakha Gunadharma from Singapore. Source: *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 56 (May 1939).

symbolically communicated through the gift of the Buddhist flag.

On 10 May 1940, the colonial government issued a state of emergency (*Staat van beleg*) as Germany overran the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg to invade France. As a result, the Vesak at Borobudur was cancelled as mentioned earlier,⁷² and the klenteng were unable to issue public invitations to their celebrations of Vesak because the government suspended public announcements in the newspapers. Hence, the 1940 Vesak celebrations were relatively quiet. The Vesak celebration at the Klenteng Kwan Im Tong was attended only by eighty people, which included members of the JBA. After finishing with recitation of the Tisarana and Pancasila in Pali (affirmation of faith), Nand Lal Punj and Visakha Gunadharma delivered sermons. Power delivered a sermon entitled *A Practical Philosophy of Life* which content discussed the relevance of Buddhism in times of calamity such as the war in Europe and other places.⁷³ The remaining two speakers spoke about the teaching of the Buddha: Nanda L. Punj's talk was entitled *Rebirth* by and Gunadharma's talk was entitled "Flower Offering to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha" which was based on a book written by Cassius A. Pareira (later known as Bhikkhu Kassapa from Vihara Vajirarama, Colombo). Gunadharma's talk was exceptionally important because it explained that the act of flower offerings to the Buddha and altar on which the offerings are place express the core teachings of Buddha, namely *Anicca* (impermanence), *Dukkha* (suffering) and *Anatta* (non-self).⁷⁴ Kwee then concluded the event at eleven o'clock in the evening, after which some left while other stayed for more conversation while eating the offering fruits from the altar.

In 1941, Vesak was held as it had been before the German invasion of western Europe, but it was also the last recorded celebration of Vesak before the Japanese invasion of colonial Indonesia. Although Vesak was not celebrated in Borobudur, celebrations were held in several places. For example, the BBA Vesak celebration at the Klenteng Kwan Im Tong Batavia

72 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Keraja'an Wezak di Batavia", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 69 (June 1940), 5.

73 E. E. Power, "Buddhism, a practical Philosophy of Life", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 69 (June 1940), 10-18.

74 Mrs. T'joa Hin Hoeij, "Flower Offering", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 69 (June 1940), 23-30.

was attended by about 300 male and female Indians, Javanese, Europeans and the Peranakan Chinese. By this time, the number of Europeans attending was much reduced.⁷⁵ The event this year also highlighted another significance pertaining to Buddhist connection to the empire. The Vesak event was moved from 15 May to 10 May in order to show respect and solidarity with the Netherlands which had been invaded by Germany in the previous year.⁷⁶ In aligned with this spirit, E.E. Power delivered a talk on “Why the World Is at War.” Hence, the Vesak in 1941 marked a religious occasion (the Buddha’s birth, enlightenment, and death) and a political event (the attack of Germany on Netherlands).⁷⁷ In this respect, the Buddhist community particularly those who had ties with the Klenteng Kwan Im Tong in colonial Indonesia showed their connection to the Dutch empire, interweaving their religious activity with the corresponding political situation.

In conclusion, Klenteng Kwan Im Tong -- later followed by other klenteng particularly in Batavia -- started organizing Vesak celebrations as early as 1935 and continued to do so until 1941. They transformed themselves into new religious sites for observing a new way of celebrating Vesak.

5.3. SYNCRETIC PERFORMATIVITY: INDONESIA AS A MICROCOSM OF MODERN BUDDHISM

The history of Chinese religion in colonial Indonesia is a study of syncretic traditions. For the Peranakan Chinese, as represented by Kwee, Chinese religion was a combination of Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism, a topic discussed in Chapter Three. The emergence of Buddhism in Indonesia involved a number of organizations. One of Kwee’s articles indicates that the Peranakan Chinese’s interest in Chinese religions and culture could have been one of crucial factors in the development of Buddhism. Kwee points out that

75 Kwee Tek Hoay, “Keraja’an Wezak di Klenteng Kwan Im Tong”, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 80 (May 1941), 5.

76 Kwee Tek Hoay, “Keraja’an Wezak dan peringetan 10 Mei”, *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 80 (May 1941), 2. Also see *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, (8 May 1941).

77 Kwee, “Keraja’an Wezak dan peringetan 10 Mei”, 3.

the connection can be seen from how the Peranakan Chinese maintained their partnership and connection with the Theosophical Society (an international organization) as well as local Buddhist organizations such as the JBA.⁷⁸ These two organizations have been discussed in Chapter Two and the above section in this chapter, both of which demonstrate these organizations' extensive influence on the spread of Buddhism in colonial Indonesia.

Furthermore, Kwee explicitly acknowledged that the Theosophical Society was a model for Peranakan Chinese spirituality (kebatinan). Although the number of Chinese who joined the Theosophical Society was small, he was convinced that it did demonstrate the fact that the Chinese were interested in kebatinan.⁷⁹ Kwee saw the cooperation with the Theosophical Society as an important factor into spread the Chinese religions and developing the local religious organizations. Kwee seems to have doubted that the Chinese would have made progress because many activities and programs organized by local religious organizations were mostly collaborations with local Theosophists.

With respect to Buddhism, it has been shown that the Peranakan Chinese relied more on intellectuals from the Theosophical Society and other international Buddhist organizations as sources of their knowledge. The involvement of these groups greatly diversified the kebatinan networks of the Peranakan Chinese and led to changes in the practice of Buddhism, particularly in performance of religious rituals. The collaboration with various organizations during religious performances caused inclusiveness to grow as a valued feature in the Peranakan Chinese Buddhist community. Inclusiveness, in turn, contributed to the invention of new Buddhist practices.

That Vesak practices were easily blended into the existing traditions of Peranakan Chinese Buddhists without major complications is the main example discussed in the sections above. Kwee's early writing on Chinese holy days do not mention the celebration of Vesak. The fact that the celebration

78 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Apa jang pakoempoelan-pakoempoeland kabatinan Tionghoa bisa dapat dari kaoem Theosofie", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 65 (August 1937), 282.

79 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Orang Tionghoa di Indonesia dengan pakoempoelan Theosofie", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 63 (June 1937), 201-06. Kwee states that until the year 1937 there were approximately 200 Chinese registered as members of the Theosophical Society throughout Indonesia. Semarang, Surakarta and Medan are claimed to have had the highest number of Chinese members. However, Lodge Penerangan in Surabaya was the only lodge whose members were all Chinese.

of Vesak gradually became a part of the Peranakan Chinese Buddhist practice suggests that the close connections between the Peranakan Chinese community, the Theosophical Society and Southern Buddhists were factors that led to the development of syncretic practices. The Peranakan Chinese began to follow the Theosophical Society's calendric routines. Records show that both groups annually observed Vesak at the full moon in May, which indicates that the two communities were starting to unify.⁸⁰

The Vesak celebrations organized by Buddhist organizations and the Theosophical Society shared similar features. One feature is that Javanese, Chinese, Indian and Europeans participated in the celebrations. During one Vesak celebration at a klenteng, Kwee noted that for Vesak, people were invited to celebrate the teaching of the Buddha regardless of their religion and ethnolinguistic group.⁸¹ He further emphasized that the truth in Buddhism was not exclusively for Buddhists, but for all. Another feature is that the klenteng were committed to maintaining good relationships with older Buddhist organizations such as the JBA. Thus, the BBA always involved the leaders of various organizations to play a part in celebrations.

Vesak celebrations at the Theosophical Society lodges and Chinese klenteng featured a heterogenous style which reflected the diversity of the participants in the celebration. A telling aspect was the usage of language. At least four languages were used on such occasions, namely, Pali, Malay, Chinese and Javanese, with Pali being one of the core liturgical languages of the Southern Buddhism Vesak celebrations. However, for most people, the use of Pali in colonial Indonesia was limited to mere recitation -- not comprehension -- of the language. Nevertheless, this limited use still made them a part of the Pali-using Southern Buddhist world.

Apart from the use of Pali, the Vesak celebration reflected, but did not entirely follow, modern Buddhism, whose proponents argued for excluding ritual activities from Buddhist practices and emphasizing the rational and practical aspects of spirituality with the objective of reclaiming the true message of the Buddha. Indonesian Vesak celebrations were characterized by a set of simple ritual activities, which suggests that the encounter with European

80 Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 125.

81 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kenapa kita orang rajaken ini Hari Wezak", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 56 (May 1939), 4.

Buddhists influenced them to invent a new set of simple ritual practices but not to abandon ritual celebrations.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that Vesak became one of the most important activities of Buddhism in modern Indonesia as a result of the influence of transnational Buddhist networks. The Peranakan Chinese, who desired to maintain Chinese culture within their community, perceived that celebrating the Buddhist Vesak could help make *klenteng* (Chinese temples and shrines) the main centres for organizing regularly held Buddhist activities. However, Vesak did not develop as a religious celebration for maintaining a single cultural tradition. Rather, it became a syncretic religious celebration that intertwined the Peranakan Chinese religious traditions and Southern Buddhism. Vesak brought people of different backgrounds and ethnicities together in the same space to perform the same set of ritual ceremonies.

To conclude, this chapter offers two new understandings of modern Buddhism in colonial Indonesia. First, the development of modern Buddhist practices did not result in a complete demythologization or removal of ritual. In fact, Vesak itself became reinvented as a new Buddhist ritual. Second, the Dutch empire became a place where the Western scholars, Buddhist enthusiasts and native Indonesian intellectuals met and devised a new set of invented religious practices to reform Peranakan Chinese Buddhism. Buddhist in Indonesia celebrated modernity and at the same became a part of international community through the practice of Vesak ritual.

Chapter 6

Inter-Asian Buddhist Connections

In the twentieth century, Buddhist traditions have not only increasingly forged links among themselves in Asia, they have also emerged from Asia, being carried by emigrants, picked up by travellers, and taught by Buddhist missionaries to new peoples of the Western and non-Western world.¹

This chapter dissects the connections or networks established among Buddhist intellectuals, particularly the Asian Buddhists in Indonesia in the early twentieth century. In Chapter Two fundamentally important Buddhist connections that came from outside colonial Indonesia were discussed -- the Western Buddhist networks represented by the Theosophical Society and the JBA, and the Asian Buddhist connection represented by Bhikku Narada. The second connection is paramount to contributing a new perspective to the historiography of Buddhism in Indonesia and the wider historiography of Modern Buddhism.

Chapter Six is crucial to the arguments made in this dissertation for several reasons. Firstly, the history of Buddhism in colonial Indonesia has been largely assumed to have developed under international and European influences. In this view, the spread of Southern Buddhism was mostly

1 L. Learman, "Introduction," in L. Learman (ed.), *Buddhist Missionaries in the Era of Globalization* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 1.

attributed to the Theosophical Society. Without denying the role of the Society, this chapter will deepen this superficial analysis by arguing that the emergence of Buddhism in Indonesia was also largely influenced by the connection with other Asian intellectuals. This was particularly true when the Peranakan Chinese started their own Buddhist organization. Secondly, this chapter demonstrates that intra-Asian Buddhist intellectuals sustained their connections throughout the third decade of the twentieth century and beyond with only a short break during the Second World War. Thirdly, the inter-Asian Buddhist intellectuals' connection is a historiographical argument that amidst the Western influence in Buddhist thought, the Asian Buddhists developed partnerships and productive connections among themselves that were actually sustained throughout the colonial times. These interactions went beyond school and sect. In other words, adherents to Southern (Theravada) and Mahayana Buddhism interacted and formed durable partnerships. Finally, the Western/European Buddhist institution lost their Dhammic influence after Willem Josias van Dienst left for Japan.

The inter-Asian connections within Indonesian Buddhism are scrutinized using the case of the Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhist monk, Bhikku Narada, who was briefly introduced in Chapter Two. As a missionary, Narada was a renowned representative of the Southern/Theravada Buddhist school. His acclaimed knowledge of Buddhism gave him the authority to spread this knowledge to receptive audiences in colonial. It is important to note that for a long time, Buddhists in other regions in Southeast Asia looked to colonial Sri Lanka to revive their monastic lineages. This is because colonial Sri Lanka had historically been a region with a long-standing and positive reputation in the Buddhist world. Thus, Buddhists in other regions in Southeast Asia looked to colonial Sri Lanka to revive their monastic lineages.² Additionally, Sri Lanka had been the origin of many authoritative Buddhist texts. It was also home to famous Buddhist commentators, such as the much-celebrated author, Buddhaghosa, who lived in the fifth century.³

This chapter argues that Southern Buddhism began to take root not only beyond Asia but also within Asian itself due to the influence of Narada. In this particular case it took root in colonial Indonesia where this branch of

2 A.M. Blackburn, "Buddhist Connections in the Indian Ocean: Changes in Monastic Mobility, 1000-500," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58 (2015), 256.

3 Ibid., 256.

Buddhism was not popular at the time of his arrival. Two methods of analysis are used in this chapter. First, the journey of Narada in colonial Indonesia is traced and the interactions he had with the Buddhists there are scrutinized. This research aims to show the extent of the Southern Buddhism's movement in the 1930s South and Southeast Asia, as well as the implications of this movement for Buddhism in Indonesia. It argues that the presence of Narada further developed Buddhist connections with neighbouring regions, such as colonial Singapore, from which Indonesian Buddhists had obtained Buddhist material culture, such as the international Buddhist flag and statues of the Buddha.

Hence, instead of presenting Narada as the most important individual for the spread of Buddhism in (colonial) Indonesia, the purpose of this chapter is to investigate the ways in which he created fundamental conduits for the formation of Buddhist networks at the time, not only during the span of late colonial Indonesia but also for future Buddhists in post-colonial Indonesia. It is interesting to investigate what the Dhammic (or Buddhist) connection between inter-Asian Buddhists meant to Indonesian Buddhism. "Dhammic" is the Anglicized term for *Dhamma*, which was traditionally used by Southern Buddhism. It is used here in order to emphasize the kind of networks and connections that grew between the Indonesian Buddhists and Southern Buddhists from colonial Sri Lanka.

6.1. DHAMMIC CONNECTION WITH COLONIAL SRI LANKA

This section focuses on the Dhammic connection between the Buddhists in colonial Indonesia and colonial Sri Lanka. The historiography on the revival of Buddhism in modern Indonesia has always focused on one central figure -- Bhikku Narada. Particularly in the Theravada Buddhist community in Indonesia, Narada is widely accepted as someone who almost singlehandedly rekindled Buddhism in Indonesia. His name appears in almost every article about Buddhism in modern Indonesia. Being known as the first Southern Buddhist monk who visited Indonesia after the fall of the Hindu-Buddhist Empire, Narada's travel to Indonesia is important, for two reasons. First, it symbolically marks the construction of a new Buddhist community in Indonesia. Second, it defines how this new community saw themselves as part of a global society that traversed colonial state boundaries.

Buddhist connections among Asians was not new. In her research, Anne Blackburn recounts how Asian Buddhists had had interactions and connections among themselves in the eleventh to the fifteenth century. These connections involved the importation of monks to revive Buddhist lineage through higher ordination (Pali: *upasampada*) and the formation of Sangha (the community of Bhikkhu).⁴ Blackburn points out that the importation of Buddhist monastic orders took place from Ramanna to Polonnaruwa in eleventh century Sri Lanka. Then in the fifteenth century, a Sukhothai Buddhist monk (from present-day Thailand) performed a pilgrimage to Sri Lanka. In the same century, Burma sent envoys to Sri Lanka to secure a new higher ordination for bhikkhu in Bago, Burma (presently in Myanmar).⁵ This evidence shows the connection and communication between Asian Buddhist communities.

In modern times, the travels of Sri Lankan monks to different parts of the world led to the “Theravadizing” of local systems of belief, including those of non-Theravada Buddhists.⁶ Colonial Sri Lanka was known as the birthplace of Buddhist revivalists. Several revivalist figures from there were internationally well known. For example, the celebrated revivalist Anagarika Dharmapala was known for defending Buddhism and Buddhist sites. Earlier, Bhikkhu Hikkaduve Sumangala, as portrayed by Blackburn, strove for the stability of Buddhism in the country. The encounters between Buddhism, colonialism and Christianity there created a new popular discourse on Buddhism. An example of this was the birth of the concept of “Protestant Buddhism” as well as the notion of missionary work within Buddhist society. Many Buddhist revivalists started their work in colonial Sri Lanka, and many of them were connected on an individual basis, for example as pupil and teacher, like Hikkaduve Sumangala and Dharmapala, or as contemporaries who maintained a close relationship with each other like Anagarika Dharmapala and Narada.

Being a senior and reputable Buddhism revivalist, Dharmapala was one of those monks who had an international reputation for preaching Buddhism. He possessed a deep knowledge of Buddhism and exceptional English-language

4 Ibid., 238.

5 Ibid., 239.

6 S. Kemper, “Dharmapala’s *Dharmaduta* and the Buddhist Ethnoscape,” in L. Learman (ed.), *Buddhist Missionaries in the Era of Globalization* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 41.

skills which enabled him to talk about Buddhism to audiences beyond colonial Sri Lanka. This is evident in the interaction between Dharmapala and Narada, especially in their initial meetings. Dharmapala was reported to have purposely visited Narada to invite him to join the inauguration of Mulagandhakuti Vihara in Sarnath (India) because he recognized Narada as possessing exceptional qualities for a *Dhammaduta*.⁷ These qualities included knowledgeability in Buddhism, proficiency in English, as well as the ability to conduct Buddhist ceremonies in English, which were not common attributes at the time.⁸

The connections between Indonesia and Sri Lanka are evidenced by traces of communication between both regions in the pre-modern period. Archaeological findings dating back to 792 CE reveal the connections between Java and Sri Lanka, as shown in an inscription found at the Ratu Boko temple which reads: "This Abhayagiri Vihara here of the Sinhalese ascetics was established."⁹ In support of this inscription, Veronique Degroot, whose research focuses on the history and archaeology of Indonesia, states that the architecture of the Ratu Boko temple and the epigraphic data suggest strong influences from the Sri Lanka style of Buddhism, particularly the meditation monasteries of Abhayagiri-vihara of Anuradhapura.¹⁰ These archaeological traces are proof of a Dhammic connection that was made in the distant past. Robin Conningham et. al. whose research focuses on South Asian archaeology arrived at the same conclusions. They state that the traces at the Ratu Boko temple are evidence of the communication and shared architectural concepts across the Indian ocean regions.¹¹

7 Dhammaduta is Pali term which literally means "Messenger of Truth", usually to designate "Buddhist missionary". According to Jonathan Walters, the term is a late-nineteenth century coinage. Several others Pali terms that rendered "preaching" utilized during the same period of time was *Dhammadesana* (explication of Truth), *Dhammadhaja* (Flag of Truth), *Dhammadāna* (Gift of Truth). J. Walters, *Rethinking Buddhist Missions* (PhD Dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1992), 203-05

8 Kemper, "Dharmapala's *Dharmaduta*," 34.

9 M.J. Klokke, "The Buddhist Temples of the Sailendra Dynasty in Central Java," *Arts Asiatiques*, 63 (2008), 164.

10 Ibid., 164; V. Degroot, "The Archeological Remains of Ratu Boko: From Sri Lankan Buddhism to Hinduism" *Indonesia and the Malay World* 34 (2006), 56.

11 R. Coningham et al., "Archaeology and Cosmopolitanism in Early Historic and

Thus, the visit of Bhikku Narada to Indonesia is an indication of the Dhammic connection between colonial Sri Lanka and Indonesia. *De Sumatra Post* reported in 1934 that the *Adjunct-Adviseur voor Inlandsche Zaken* regarded Narada's visit as historical and stated that: "*de Thera is namelijk de eerste monnik sedert de Middeleeuwen, die hier voet aan land heeft gezet*" (the Thera was the first monk since the Middle Ages to set foot on this land).¹² Narada journeyed from colonial Singapore to Batavia, and disembarked in Tanjung Priok on 4 March 1934. He was accompanied by two male *dayaka*.¹³ The first was Jinarajadasa, a middle-aged Theosophist who was fluent in English. The second was B.L. Martin, a Sri Lankan Singaporean who was a jewellery trader.¹⁴ At the port, Narada was met by Willem Josias van Dienst, Tjoa Hin Hoeij and a few Singhalese people.¹⁵ From the port, they proceeded to Kwee Tek Hoay's house on Prinsenlaan 69, where they were hosted for lunch.

It is from this point that the arrival of Narada confirms a crossroad for Buddhism as this 21-day visit further validated the new school of Southern/Theravada Buddhism in Indonesia.

6.2. BUDDHISM AT A CROSSROAD: THE EMERGENCE OF NEW BUDDHIST AFFILIATIONS IN BATAVIA

This section focuses on Bhikku Narada's Dhammic mission during his visit to Indonesia. Through his activities, Narada planted the seeds of Southern (Theravada) Buddhism which created a firm relationship between the Indonesian Buddhist community and other Asian Buddhists, particularly after the Western Buddhist influence had decreased. At that time, the Buddhist

Medieval Sri Lanka," in Z. Biedermann and A. Strathern (eds), *Sri Lanka at the Crossroads of History* (London: UCL Press, 2017), 29-30.

12 *De Sumatra Post*, (15 March 1934).

13 Dayaka is a Pali word that means lay person whose duty to attend or accompany a monk.

14 It is mentioned that both of Bhikkhu Narada were held for some time at the immigration office. However, later were released. Kwee Tek Hoay, "Bebrapa keterangan tentang Bikku Narada Thera", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie* 24 (April 1934), 929.

15 They were described as *Hindoe* and *Keling* people.

society comprised people from different backgrounds; they had significant roles in promoting Dhammic works on different levels. The Europeans, such as Van Dienst and L. Mangelaar Meertens, were on the frontline in promoting Buddhism and Buddhist rituals. Hence, it is not an exaggeration to say that Western Buddhists were influential propagators of Buddhism. Nevertheless, despite their enthusiastic dedication, the Western propagators seem to not have served a lasting role. Their influence was strong only during the beginning of the twentieth century; it gradually became less important, particularly in the post-independent period.

The efficacy of the Western individuals and organizations' Dhammic mission waned in the second half of the 1930s. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Van Dienst left for Japan in 1936 and his departure severed the positive ties he had established with the Buddhist groups in Batavia.¹⁶ Consequently, the JBA no longer served as a Buddhist international institution.¹⁷ The only remaining ties that the JBA had with the BBA was sustained by the chairperson of the JBA, E.E. Power, who continued to be actively involved in the BBA.¹⁸

The gap between the Western Buddhists and the Buddhist community in colonial Indonesia is also seen in the case of the Dutch Theosophist Buddhist, Meertens. As noted in Chapter Five, Meertens was invited by the leader of the BBA to join an activity organized by the Peranakan Chinese. However, he declined because he wanted to focus on his Borobudur project.¹⁹ This refusal suggests a gap between the Western and the Indonesian Buddhist groups. Although he was very actively engaged with the Dhammic mission, Meertens did not nurture relationships with the Buddhist group of the Peranakan Chinese.

16 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kabar pergerakan Sam Kauw. Centraal Buddhist Instituut", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 17 (February 1936), 39.

17 Ibid., 39.

18 On the side note, in his prolonged relationship with the Batavia Buddhist Association, E.E. Power was rarely mentioned to be the representative of the Java Buddhist Association. Hence, as assumed in the chapter two that the Java Buddhist Association has terminated its influence after Josias van Dienst left for Japan (1936).

19 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Toedjoean jang tetep", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 46 (July 1938), 4.

The lack of a relationship between the European and the Indonesian Buddhists was overcome by the presence of other Asian Buddhist networks, which assured the continuity of Buddhist adaptation and production of Buddhist knowledge. In particular, Narada's visit in 1934 exemplifies this connection between Asian Buddhist networks and the local community.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that in colonial Indonesia laypeople were officially introducing the Southern Buddhism. Narada was not the first prominent Buddhist who introduced Southern Buddhism to Indonesia. There had been previous visits by other laymen and these had paved the way for Narada's visit. This strengthens the argument that Indonesia was not void of Buddhism and its enthusiasts. However, as the first Southern Buddhist monk to visit Java, his presence was extremely significant in accelerating the progress of the movement there.

Furthermore, Narada's visit to Java reveals an important Dhammic connection between Buddhists in Batavia and those in colonial Singapore, a connection that was reinforced by the visit of the board member of the BBA, Visakha Gunadharma, to Singapore to attend a Vesak celebration there in 1939.²⁰

The Dhammic connection with colonial Singapore was part of the missionary circuit of travelling monks. For example, Narada's correspondence with Visakha Gunadharma shows that he was travelling to different places, such as China (1935) and Japan (May 1935),²¹ and he made a stop in colonial Singapore where he preached to a local audience. This supports Kemper's idea that Sri Lankan monks who went on a Dhammic mission often made several stopovers, visiting various places on the way to their final destination.²²

In preparation for Narada's first visit to Java, the Buddhist community of the Chinese society planned the program of his activities. In one of their discussions, Kwee suggested two priorities for Narada's visit, firstly, Narada should have discussions with those interested in Buddhism, in particular with the Mahayana monks who lived at Klenteng Kwan Im Tong in Batavia,

20 Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij, "Lezing. Wezak di Singapore", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 59 (August 1939), 7-8.

21 Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij, "Kedatengannja Bhikkhu Narada", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 11 (August 1935), 36-37.

22 Kemper, "Dharmapala's *Dharmaduta*," 37.

to allow him to get some understanding about the Buddhist circumstances in Java and gain more support from the society. Secondly, Narada should encourage Buddhists in Batavia to establish a Buddhist organization so that Buddhism would continue to thrive after his departure.²³

Accordingly, Narada's encounter with the Buddhists in Java took place on several occasions which were collaboratively organized by the JBA and the Peranakan Buddhist community. In his record of Narada's visit, Kwee Tek Hoay reported that sometimes the monk gave lectures in different places in one day. Most of his lectures took place at the klenteng, Theosophical Society headquarters and schools.²⁴ During his visits to different places outside Batavia, such as Buitenzorg, Bandoeng, Solo and Yogyakarta, he frequently gave religious sermons at the klenteng.²⁵

The highlight of Narada's visit was his pilgrimage to the Borobudur temple on 10 March 1934. Newspaper accounts of that visit emphasized that Narada was the first Southern Buddhist monk to visit the temple in about three hundred years.²⁶ During this visit, Narada planted a Bodhi tree, which has been discussed in the previous chapter.²⁷ In a picture taken during this occasion, he is seen pouring water on the tree. Other people in the picture include a Borobudur official, the president of Theosophical Society of Yogyakarta, the president of Java Buddhist Mission -- E.E. Power, and Jinarajadasa, Narada's personal assistant (Pali: *dayaka*).²⁸ After the Bodhi tree planting event, Narada delivered a lecture to an audience composed mostly of Javanese and Dutch people.²⁹

Narada spent two days in Central Java and Yogyakarta, where he delivered a lecture at the Theosophical Society lodge. Reports of this event state that

23 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Soel menjiarken Agama Buddha di Java", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 22 (January 1934), 803.

24 Khong Kauw Hwee School during his visit to Solo, and Batavia English School in Batavia.

25 The headquarter was using the house of A. Van Der Velde.

26 *Malaya Tribune*, (6 April 1934).

27 As it has been explained in the previous chapter, the Bodhi tree was presented to Bhikkhu Narada by L. Mangelaar Meertens.

28 The picture is too poor in condition to display. Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kedatengannja Bikku Narada Thera", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 25 (April 1934), 920.

29 Unfortunately, there are no further details about the names of the audience attended the pilgrim except the group who accompanied Narada. *Ibid.*, 920.

at the end of this lecture five people -- three Dutch men, a Dutch woman and a Javanese -- declared they were embracing Buddhism.³⁰ The last day of Narada's visit to Central Java was spent in Solo. In the morning he visited and delivered a talk on Buddhism to the students of the Khong Kauw Hwee (KKH) school.³¹ In the evening he delivered another lecture at the Klenteng Tien Kok Sie, which was attended by many people despite the pouring rain. In a report about Narada's visit to Solo, Auw Ing Kiong, a member of the KKH school, noted that Narada had delivered his morning talk on Buddhism at the request of Liem Tiang Hwat, the president of the KKH school.³² In his welcome speech, Liem highlighted the importance of Narada's visit to the Confucian klenteng. Liem thought that Narada's lecture would be of benefit to them because there had been a lack of teaching by priests and monks.

Narada's observations during the trip resulted in crucial notes for the future direction of Buddhism in Indonesia. On 20 March 1934, four days before he left Batavia, Narada gave a lecture at the Kwan Im Tong. More than two hundred and fifty people attended, with most men suited up in white and the women wearing tightly-knotted hair. A Mahayana monk, Hwesio Lin Feng Fei, and Poerbatjaraka, a female Mahayana Buddhist nun from Klenteng Tong San Toeng, can be seen in a picture taken at the event (Figure 6.1). Considering the large number and quality of people attending his lecture, the message he delivered must have been impactful.

Narada made several points regarding Buddhism at the lecture. One point pertained to the absence of Buddha statues at Buddhist temples, which later prompted him to send several Buddha statues to colonial Indonesia from colonial Singapore. Another point pertained to the generally poor knowledge of Buddhism possessed by the Buddhists in Java as illustrated by the Mahayana Buddhist nuns who were running an orphanage in Bandoeng.

After visiting the Borobudur temple, Narada spent his remaining days in Batavia, Buitenzorg and Bandoeng delivering lectures. In Bandoeng, Ong Soe Aan, the president of the Theosophical Society in Bandoeng, organized a program for Narada to deliver a lecture at the Theosophical Society lodge. In Bogor where the Theosophical Society was active, Narada gave lectures at

30 Ibid., 920.

31 Khong Kauw Hwee School is a school founded by Confucian association.

32 Auw Ing Kiong, "Bikkhu Narada Thera di Solo. Lezing di dalem Gredja Tien Kok Sie", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 25 (April 1934), 925.

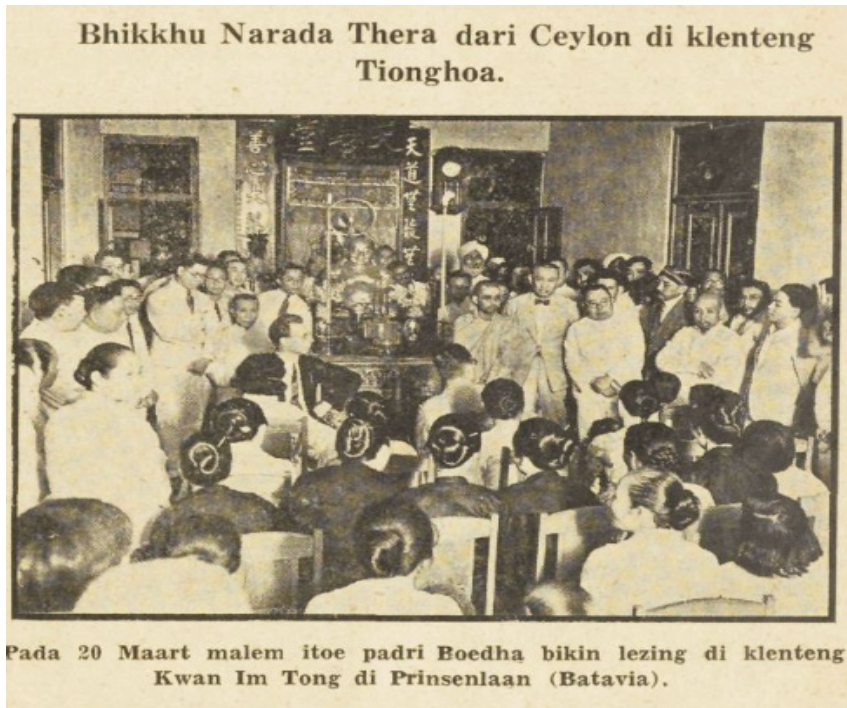


Figure 6.1. Bhikkhu Narada at Klenteng Kwan Im Tong in Batavia. Source: *Sin Po*, 24 March 1934.

two places -- the Klenteng Ho Tek Bio and the Theosophical Society lodge.

Establishing religious institutions was another highlight of Narada's activities during his visit. In Buitenzorg he initiated the establishment of a new Buddhist organization in which local Chinese took part as representatives. The organization was called the International Buddhist Mission (IBM).³³ A branch of this organization was later established in Batavia in Narada's presence.³⁴ Hence, there were two Buddhist organizations in Buitenzorg at that time, making the city central to the development of Buddhism: the JBA and the newly established IBM.

33 Kwee, "Kedatenggannja Bikku Narada", 924. The officials of the new organization is as follow: A. van der Velde (the president), The Teng Hoeij (vice president), and first and second secretaries: Oeij Oen Ho and Ie Tjoen Leng.

34 Detail on the International Buddhist Mission in general has been elaborated in the chapter two.

In Batavia, most of Narada's lectures took place at the klenteng and in Chinese organizations. One of his most noteworthy lectures was held at Lee Tjie Sia, a grand meeting building for Chinese elites.³⁵ In this lecture, he spoke about the core of Buddha's teaching, "The Four Noble Truths" (Cattari Aryasaccani in Pali) to an audience composed of Chinese, Javanese and some Europeans. Additionally, he spoke about the need to establish a branch of the IBM in Batavia ('Afdeeling Batavia dari International Buddhist Mission'),³⁶ which led to another meeting at the Klenteng Kwan Im Tong on 22 March. At this meeting, an agreement was reached and an organization consisting of representatives from different ethnic backgrounds was formed. In what seems to have been an effort to provide representation from various ethnicities, the officers of this organization came from different ethnicities. The president was a European named J.W. de Witt (assistant director of the Java section of International Buddhist Mission). The three vice-presidents, each representing their different ethnic backgrounds, were Kwee Tek Hoay (for the Chinese), Jagannath L. Gandhi (for the Indians), and R. Ng. Poerbatjaraka (for the Javanese). There were two secretaries -- Visakha Gunadharma and Mej. A. Boer. Finally, the treasurer was Chakrabuty.³⁷ This branch of the IBM became the second religious institution established in the presence of Narada.

The progress of the women's community was also an integral part of Narada's introduction of Buddhism. For example, Visakha Gunadharma, who served as the translator for Narada's lectures, and from him she received support and advocacy to engage in Dhammic mission in Indonesia.³⁸ The connection between Narada and Gunadharma continued for decades, during which their relationship turned into that of pupil and teacher. Another example of Narada's interest in women's progress was his connection with the Klenteng Kwan Im Thoeng San Toeng in Petak Sinkian, where a group of Mahayana female nuns (*boedjin*) from the Chinese *Kbe* resided. While in Batavia, Narada frequently gave lectures at this klenteng. To the nuns at this klenteng, he gave instructions on meditation. Additionally, Narada visited the Klenteng Kwan Im Tong in Kroekoet, which belonged to nuns of Chinese

35 Anonymous, "Lezingnja Bikku Narada Thera di Lee Tjie Sia", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 25 (April 1934), 936.

36 Ibid., 936.

37 Kwee, "Kedatengannja Bikku Narada", 924.

38 Ibid., 924.



Figure 6.2. Klenteng “Prampoean” di Batavia (“Female” Klenteng in Batavia). Source: *Sin Po* 669 (25 January 1936).

Hokkien (see Figure 6.2). In this klenteng, only nuns and women were allowed to reside. In a special report on this klenteng, *Sin Po* stated that there were at least five resident nuns there and that they were led by Hoedjin Lim Ko Nio.³⁹ Reportedly one of the nuns said, “We are so underprivileged when it comes to knowledge about Buddhism. Therefore, we will be very pleased to receive guidance from a competent person.”⁴⁰ A report in *Sin Po* also affirmed this remark noting that the teaching of the Buddha, such as on *Kamma* and other fundamental Buddhist values, were not preached at this klenteng.⁴¹ For this reason, Narada gave meditation instructions and held a lecture about Buddhist tenets to this group of Mahayana nuns.⁴²

39 *Sin Po*, 669 (25 January 1936), n. pag.

40 Kwee, “Kedatengannja Bikku Narada”, 922.

41 *Sin Po*, 669 (25 January 1936), n. pag.

42 There is no record of the name of this Singaporean young woman, but her present there had helped translating the Chinese into Malay for Bhikkhu Narada. Apparently, no single nun in the klenteng was able to read Chinese letters. See, *Ibid.*, n. pag.

Another significant aspect of Narada's visit to Batavia was his encounter with a representative of the Batavia Museum, a government institution. This encounter is worth noting because it shows some important highlights. At this meeting, Narada was hosted by the director of the museum, F.D.K. Bosch, and Poerbatjaraka, who was an expert native philologist and a member of the BBA.⁴³ The two officials received Narada and took him on a tour of the museum, during which the monk donated his spare yellow monk robe and alms-round bowl to the museum.⁴⁴

Based on his assessments of the state of Buddhism in Indonesia, Narada offered some important suggestions that seem important for understanding the departure point of the new direction of Buddhism in Indonesia. Narada insinuated the act of affirmation of being Buddhist and administered it himself. In what seems to be a criticism of Buddhists in Indonesia, he emphasized that Buddhists must possess faith in three elements in Buddhism, namely: the Buddha, the Dhamma (the teaching of the Buddha) and the Sangha (the monk assembly). He also emphasized that Buddhists must practice the observance of the Buddhist five precepts (Pancasila Buddhist).⁴⁵ As Learman put it:

Taking the Three Refuges is the Buddhist institutional equivalent of conversion in the sense of a change of affiliation. It is formally marked when a person, in the presence of an ordained member of the Sangha, declares their intention to take the Buddha, his teachings, and the Sangha as their religious guides, to the exclusion of other paths or faiths.⁴⁶

Further, Narada encouraged Buddhists in colonial Indonesia to install an altar in which they could enshrine a Buddha statue or a picture of the Buddha. Apropos to this idea, Narada commented on the tradition of the Chinese offering to deceased relatives. He suggested a reverence ceremony

43 The name of Poerbatjaraka has appeared in the previous chapter particularly in relation with his involvement with the Batavia Buddhist Association such as giving lecture on Borobudur. Meanwhile, F.D.K Bosch further involvement with Buddhist society in Batavia is hardly known except that a few sources indicated him to have great interest in study of Buddha images. He himself was also the head of the Archaeological Service.

44 Kwee, "Beberapa keterangan tentang Bikku, 928-31.

45 Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij, "Lezingnja Bikku Narada Thera dalam Klenteng Kwan Im Tong", *Moestika Dharma; Maandblad Tentang Agama, Kabatinan dan Filosofie*, 25 (April 1934), 932-35.

46 Learman, "Introduction," 1.

which no longer involved offering living creatures on the altar. He introduced a new practice adopted from Southern Buddhist concept of *pattidana*, which literally means merit transfer, in which the living relatives perform meritorious deeds in the name of their departed ones.⁴⁷

Narada's unequivocal proposal for a new direction of Buddhist tradition at the time is well depicted in the following account. He argued that people should abandon their habit of asking for blessing by doing rituals and paying homage to the Mahayana Buddhist god, Kwan Im. He explained that in the Buddhist perspective the Buddha is not a God, nor was he a deity, dewa or *Toapekong*. Instead, he emphasized the role of the Buddha as a teacher through his preaching on the life of the Buddha.⁴⁸

Another highlight of Narada's visit was his introduction of meditation, a new practice for the Buddhist community in Batavia at the time. In fact, there were several occasions when Narada gave instructions on how to meditate in the communities he visited. Thus, it can be said that emphasis on meditation was a core element of Southern Buddhism which Narada emphasized.

Finally, other than lectures and instructions, books on the teaching of Buddhism were crucial materials that introduced the Buddhist community in Batavia to Southern Buddhism during Narada's visit. For example, Narada's magnum opus titled *Buddhism in a Nutshell* (*Ringkesannja Agama Buddha*) and another book, *Life of Venerable Sariputta* (*Penghidoepean Bhagawan Sariputta*), were presented to the community. Later, the BBA translated these books into Malay. Narada's magnum opus was used by the BBA to commence their course program (*studieklas*) on Buddhism that they launched for the first time in 13 December 1934.⁴⁹

Given all of the encounters and connections between the Buddhist community and Narada discussed above, it may be said that his 21-day visit to different places in Java definitely exposed the Buddhist community in Indonesia to a new source of knowledge of Buddhism. More importantly, the new Dhammic connection inspired by Narada imbued them with a new desire to further develop their Buddhism project that is evidenced by the establishment of Buddhist organizations or institutions in Indonesia.⁵⁰

47 Mrs. Tjoa, "Lezingnja Bikku Narada Thera", 932-35.

48 Ibid., 932-35.

49 Kwee, "Kabar redactie", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*, 2 (November 1934), n. pag.

50 Anonymous, "Lezingnja Bikku Narada Thera di Lee Tjie Sia", 936.

As for Narada himself, the visit gave him a better understanding of the circumstances surrounding Buddhism on Java Island. In the final days of his visit, he made several important remarks about Buddhism in Indonesia. These remarks focused on the direction which the Buddhist society in Indonesia must take in the future. Narada's influence encouraged the growth of the Southern Buddhism's influence through symbols, networks and knowledge production.

6.3. BUDDHIST MATERIAL CULTURE: THE BUDDHA IMAGE, THE BUDDHIST FLAG AND THE BUDDHIST NETWORKS

In Chapter Five, the concept of material culture was applied to the discussion on the Borobudur. In this section, the concept is again utilized to see how the exchange of cultural materials continued to take place after Bhikku Narada's visit. Such an exchange was especially obvious after the establishment of the Batavia Buddhist Association (BBA) by the Peranakan Chinese Buddhists, when various Buddhist material cultures, such as the Buddha's image, the Bodhi tree and Buddhist modern symbols such as the Buddhist flag, were transferred and adopted by the Buddhists in Java. Such material culture is regarded as one of the most important contributors to the sustainable relationship between the BBA community and the inter-Asian networks. The cultural material exchange also served to make Indonesia part of the Pan-Asian Buddhism.

Material culture in Asian religions is not limited to artefacts and inscriptions.⁵¹ Unlike the traditional approach of using only texts as objects of study in the school of religious studies, this dissertation uses religious texts in conjunction with other religious cultural materials, which include religious sites, articles on temples, statuary, pilgrimage sites and even newspapers and manuscripts.⁵² Altogether, these aspects of religious material culture can be utilized to reconstruct the history of an individual religion.

The issue of the Buddhist material that was brought to Indonesia at

51 B.J. Flemming and R.D. Mann, "Introduction: Material Culture and Religious Studies," in B.J. Flemming and R. D. Mann (eds), *Material Culture and Asian Religions: Text, Image, Object* (London: Routledge, 2014), 2.

52 Ibid., 2.

the time has a very interesting connection with Anne Blackburn's work on Ceylonese Buddhist ritual experiments and alliances in colonial Singapore.⁵³ The success of the Ceylonese in forming a foothold in Singapore resulted in several outstanding outcomes, among which was the increased interest of Singaporeans in the Southern Asian Buddhist tradition. It appears that Ceylonese wealthy Buddhist donors rendered their support to the missionary work in a number of ways. One of these ways was through the Ceylonese monks. An example was sponsoring Bhikkhu Narada's trip to Indonesia, which has been discussed previously. Also crucial was their support in the founding of new Buddhist centres where Ceylonese monks coming from Sri Lanka could reside during their missionary work in Singapore, Malaysia and later Indonesia. One of the most fundamental places established in the 1930s was a meeting hall at 67 Spottiswoode Park Road in Singapore. The building later became an important Ceylonese enclave at the time. It was leased to house the incoming monk, Mahaweera, who later became the resident monk. Mahaweera was a fellow missionary monk of Bhikkhu Narada, who also resided in this building during his visit in 1935.⁵⁴

Narada's 21-day visit to Indonesia inspired the budding Buddhist society in the cities he visited. The formation of organizations which united people of different ethnic groups further inspired the establishment of more organizations in Batavia. As discussed in Chapter Three, the Batavia Buddhist Association (BBA) was formed only a couple of months after Narada's visit. It was the first Buddhist association that was established by the Peranakan Chinese in Batavia which showed consistent progress in propagating Buddhism.

According to the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* publication published in 1935, the BBA wanted to invite Narada to Batavia again, and it communicated this plan to the IBM since one of the IBM's roles was to facilitate all communication between Buddhists in Indonesia and Buddhist networks outside of Indonesia. As the IBM's Deputy Director General as well as a representative of some international Buddhist organizations, this plan was also communicated to Van Dienst.

However, the IBM, particularly Van Dienst, did not respond favourably

53 A.M. Blackburn, "Ceylonese Buddhism in Colonial Singapore: New Ritual Spaces and Specialists, 1895-1930," *Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series* 184 (2012), 6.

54 Ibid., 20.

to the BBA's plan to invite Narada again. There were several reasons for this unfavourable response. First, the IBM was preoccupied with another activity, which consisted of Van Dienst going to Japan to invite Buddhist monks from Japan to convert 65,000,000 Indonesian Muslims to Buddhism. (This was reported in the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*.) Second, Van de Velde, the deputy of Van Dienst, informed the secretary of the BBA that the IBM was unable to share or take financial responsibility for Narada's planned visit. The third reason was that since the IBM was an extension of a Burmese organization and since Narada was not from Burma, the IBM could not invite him.⁵⁵

The BBA was disappointed with the IBM's response. They believed that the IBM had been untrue to its responsibility as an international representative. Kwee Tek Hoay, the president of the BBA, accused the IBM of being insincere with regard to their role as an international organization. Kwee expressed his disappointment when he wrote: "So what does the word "international" mean, if their actions actually run counter to the objective of the International Buddhist Mission or the Central of the Buddhist Institute for Java. Such fallaciousness should be publicized in order to make people know the real quality of the organizations led by Van Dienst and his friends."⁵⁶

The BBA's disappointment with the IBM, particularly with Van Dienst, forced them to plan Narada's visit by themselves. Eventually, this experience led them to making more independent decisions with regards to the progress of their work on Buddhism. Rather than going through the IBM, the BBA appeared to have communicated with Narada through the help of the secretary, Visakha Gunadharma, Kwee's daughter. This direct communication with Narada signalled that the BBA no longer depended on the IBM for its networking, and consequently the BBA assumed the leadership of the progress that took place later in Buddhism.

The plan for Narada's second visit was cancelled; nevertheless, communication between Narada and the BBA continued to flourish. For example, Narada updated the BBA on the progress of his missionary work, such as when he visited mainland China.⁵⁷ Further, in a 14 November 1935 letter which Narada sent from colonial Singapore, he encouraged Buddhists

55 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kabar pergerakan Sam Kauw. Kedatengannya Bikku Narada", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 12 (September 1935), 37.

56 Ibid., 37-38.

57 Bhikkhu Narada, "Letter to Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan*

in Java to send one or two men to colonial Sri Lanka to learn Buddhism there. These men could then become monks who would later return to Java and teach Buddhism there. The letter also described a plan for Narada and an unspecified fellow Sri Lankan monk in colonial Singapore to create a periodical containing Narada's teachings as well as those of other Southern Buddhist monks. These examples show that there were attempts from the Ceylonese monks and the Buddhist community in Indonesia to develop Buddhism in Indonesia. Through such networking, Buddhists in Indonesia were introduced to a range of Buddhist customs practiced outside Indonesia.

Meanwhile in Java, the Buddhist programs and publications continued to thrive, and Buddhism continued to echo among the Chinese society in Batavia. As the only Peranakan Chinese Buddhist organization, the BBA became the primary source of information about Buddhism. They also maintained the Dhammic connection with Narada. For example, when the BBA received a letter from a young Chinese man from East Java who was interested in becoming a monk or *upasakha* (Buddhist laymen), the BBA publicly announced that anyone with such an interest should contact the BBA, which could then arrange for them to learn Buddhism in colonial Sri Lanka under the tutelage of Narada.⁵⁸

Besides disseminating information about Buddhism, Buddhists in Indonesia through the BBA also started to engage themselves in adopting Buddhist regalia, such as Buddhist symbols, arts and traditions. This practice led to the use of more Buddhist products from abroad by Buddhists in Indonesia. The 1930s was especially significant in this regard. During this period, Indonesian Buddhists connected to the wider Buddhist world through religious symbols. Examples of these symbols include the Bodhi tree, the statue of the Buddha and the Buddhist flag. Buddhist items such as statues and flags were sent from Singapore, along with Narada's exhortations to Buddhist organizations in Indonesia.

In the previous discussion on the *klenteng*, mention was made of the presence of Buddhist symbols, such as the statue of Kwan-Im. There was no mention of a Buddha statue. Sources indicate that the modern Buddhist

dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong, 15 (December 1935), 35.

58 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Kabar pergerakan kebatinan", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 15 (December 1935), 38.

material culture was only collected by the Peranakan Buddhist Chinese in Indonesia in the mid-1930s. To illustrate, a letter from Narada to Visakha Gunadharma mentioned that five Buddha statues had been sent to Java for the Buddhist community in Batavia via Soedjijono, a Buddhist from Batavia who visited colonial Singapore.⁵⁹ This was confirmed in a publication indicating that the statues had been distributed to some Buddhist centres.⁶⁰

The above discussion highlights the fact that the Buddhist community in Indonesia adopted new material objects related to Buddhism in the form of Buddha statues from their inter-Asian networks rather than their Western/European networks. This reinforces the idea that European Buddhists devaluated material objects because they signified idolatry and were thus contrary to modernity.⁶¹

In addition to the Buddha statue, the Buddhist flag was another crucial addition to the Buddhist modern symbols that arrived in Indonesia. Thus, the Buddhist flag is discussed here as an important feature in the participation of Indonesian Buddhists in the spread of Southern Buddhism through the use of conventions devised at the time.

Figure 6.3 depicts the Buddhist flag. The flag is made up of six different strips of cloth, each of which is in a colour that is believed to have been exhibited in the aura of the Buddha. From left to right, these colours are blue, yellow, red, white and orange, with the sixth and last strip being a combination of the five previous colours.⁶²

The flag is a profoundly important object because of its historical significance. It is a modern Buddhist symbol which was created in colonial Sri Lanka in the late nineteenth century around 1885 as a symbol of the unification of the Buddhist nation. As noted by Olcott in his diary, "It was this time that our Colombo colleagues had the happy thought of devising a flag which could be adopted by all Buddhist nations as the universal symbol

59 Unfortunately, there is lack of reference on the detail about Mr. Sudjiono.

60 Bhikkhu Narada, "Letter to Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 7 (April 1935), n. pag.

61 Flemming and Mann, "Introduction," 7.

62 Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij, "Bendera Buddhist", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*, 59 (Augustus 1939), n. pag.; H.S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves 1883-87. The Only Authentic History of the Theosophical Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 2011), 351.

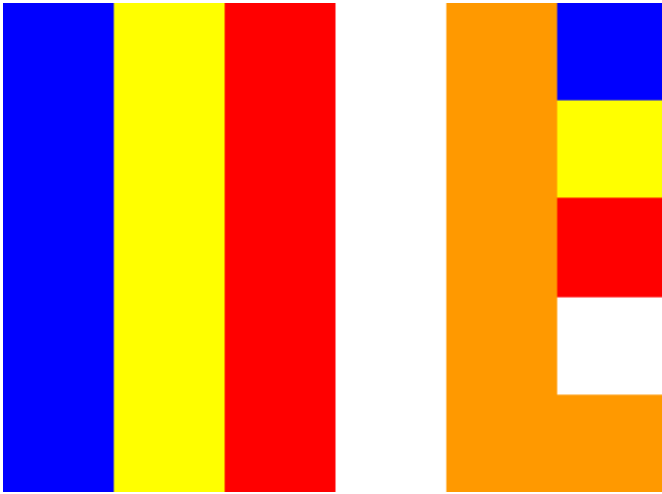


Figure 6.3. The Buddhist Flag. Source: Rendered by Yulianti.

of their faith, thus giving the same purpose as that of the cross does for all Christians.”⁶³

Since the time it was approved and accepted by the chief of the orthodox monks in colonial Sri Lanka, the flag had been raised at the temples and Buddhist residences during the commemoration of the Buddha’s birthday in colonial Sri Lanka and beyond.⁶⁴ Before the flag was acknowledged as the international Buddhist symbol in 1950, it was the exclusive property of the colonial Sri Lankan Buddhists. However, before 1950 the Ceylonese monks had used it as an emblem for Buddhism during their missions abroad. The same had also been done by Theosophists, such as Olcott.

Commenting on the significance of the flag to Buddhists, Olcott noted in his diary that to Buddhist nations, the flag “may be measured with that of giving, say, to the Christians the Cross symbols, or to the Moeslems the Crescent.”⁶⁵ To him as well as to Buddhist activists the construction of the flag coincided with his aspiration to unite the Buddhist world. In addition, Olcott noted that the flag signified “far-reaching potentialities as an agent in

63 Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, 351.

64 Ibid., 352.

65 Ibid., 352.

that scheme of Buddhistic unity..."⁶⁶ and that the flag might also have the potential of dealing with the differences between the Southern (Theravada) and Northern (Mahayana) Buddhism.

In Southeast Asia, Ceylonese monks who conducted missionary work brought the flag along with them. In colonial Singapore, where Ceylonese Buddhist settlers gained stable footing in the region, the Buddhist flag became a part of the decorations for Buddhist celebrations. *The Straits Times* reported that the Buddhist flag had not been known in the region until it was publicly raised in Singapore for the first time on 17 January 1904 at the Buddhist Mission house in Havelock Road.⁶⁷

In Batavia, the flag was raised for the first time in 1939, almost five years after the visit of Narada. The BBA had received instructions from the monk to raise the flag on Vesak Day. In a letter he sent to Visakha Gunadharma in April, a month before the Vesak celebration, Narada gave the following instruction: "Please try to hold a Wezak celebration at one of the strategic regions and then encourage the Buddhists to hoist Buddhist flag...."⁶⁸ Fifteen days after this letter, Narada again addressed the same issue and exhorted the Buddhists in Indonesia to raise the Buddhist flag at their residences.⁶⁹

The practice of flag raising by the Buddhists in Batavia had its origin in a new connection with Singapore Buddhists. It was in May 1939 that the BBA received an invitation from the Singapore Buddhist Association to attend the Vesak celebration in Singapore. The BBA responded by sending Visakha Gunadharma, the BBA's secretary, to the event. At this occasion, Gunadharma became acquainted with the Ceylonese monk Bhikkhu Mahaweera, who gave her the Buddhist flag. At the Vesak celebration in Batavia in the same month, the flag was unfolded for the first time to decorate the main altar in the Klenteng Kwan Im Tong.⁷⁰

From 1939 the Buddhist flag was placed next to the Sam Kauw flag at the

66 Ibid., 351.

67 *The Straits Times*, (January 1904).

68 Bhikkhu Narada, "Letters to Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 56 (May 1939), 35. Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij received two letter from bhikkhu Narada which both of them were sent from Singapore. The first letter dated 10 April 1939 and the second letter dated 25 April 1939.

69 Ibid., 36.

70 Ibid., 35.

Klenteng Kwan Im Tong in Batavia.⁷¹ In a later edition of the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*, it is reported that following the practice of the BBA in Batavia, the Menado Hoed Kauw (Menado Buddhist Association) also raised the flag, though they positioned it differently from the BBA by placing the Buddhist flag between the Dutch national flag and the Chinese flag.⁷² The BBA began to make copies of the Buddhist flag for their own use.

Through the circulation of Buddhist material culture, Buddhists in Indonesia became indirectly linked to global Buddhism, that is, exposure to Buddhist material culture made the Buddhist society in Indonesia aware of Buddhist organizations and movements beyond their own regions. The arrival of Buddha statues, the Buddhist flag and other Buddhist rituals, such as the Vesak tradition were instrumental in continuing the Dhammic mission in the Indonesia archipelago.

In particular, the exchange of Buddhist material culture between Indonesian Buddhists and Ceylonese monks contributed significantly to the future Dhammic connections between the two countries. This explains why Buddhists in Indonesia continued to rely on their Asian Buddhist counterparts for knowledge of Buddhism until the 1950s. The Dhammic connection with Sri Lanka has been a most enduring relationship. Evidence shows that this relationship with the Batavia Buddhist Association was maintained and only temporarily interrupted by the Second World War.

CONCLUSION

The inter-Asian Buddhist connections discussed in this chapter attest to the critical Dhammic connection between Buddhists in colonial Indonesia and other Asian regions in the 1930s. Along with the Western/European Buddhist activists and intellectuals that influenced Peranakan Buddhist society, the Indonesian Buddhists also developed partnerships and productive connections with other Asian Buddhists. In the process, the connection between Asian Buddhists that started in Java strengthened over time, resulting in the transfer of Buddhist material culture into Indonesia, a phenomenon that did not take

71 Ibid., 36.

72 Kwee Tek Hoay, "Dikiberkannja Bendera Buddhist jang pertama di Manado", *Sam Kauw Gwat Po: Orgaan dari Batavia Buddhist Association, Sam Kauw Hwe Batavia, Menado dan Telokbetong*, 74 (November 1940), n. pag.

place during their relationship with Western/Europeans Buddhist activists.

The Dhammic connections between the Peranakan Buddhists in Indonesia and the Asian Buddhist networks persisted through the exchange of Buddhist material culture between them. As a result, the emerging Southern Buddhism became part of global/transnational Buddhism. The Buddhist material culture affirmed the position of Buddhists in Indonesia, who had become part of a wider context of transnational notions of Buddhism. To Buddhists in Indonesia, this was the beginning of a firmer Dhammic network that led to more confidence in the development of Buddhism in post-independence Indonesia. These inter-Asian Buddhist connections served as one of the foundations of the future of Buddhism in Indonesia, particularly in the 1950s when Buddhists in Indonesia officially imported the (Southern) Theravada Buddhism lineage by performing the Bhikkhu ordination.

Chapter 7

Continuity and Change in 1950s Indonesia: People, Practice and Networks

This chapter addresses the notion of continuity and change in the Buddhist world of post-independent Indonesia during the 1950s in order to discover the position of Buddhism and its place in the newly formed nation state. It will analyze three fundamental aspects, namely (1) the Peranakan Chinese Buddhists' practice of their religion in the 1950s with a focus on the extent to which Buddhism remained relevant to them and the ways they practiced it in the new nation state, (2) the efforts and struggles of Peranakan Chinese Buddhist women in seeking a place within this developing Buddhist society in order to explain how Buddhist women chose to represent themselves; and (3) the development of inter-Asian Dhammic connections and networks and how they contributed to the establishment of Buddhism as an institution.

Kitagawa, an eminent scholar of Japanese religions, states that Buddhism enjoyed a vibrant environment after the Second World War. As many Asian regions became independent states, the status of religions vis-à-vis the state became more stable and their adherents gained prominence. Burma showcased its religious heritage by organizing *Chattha Sanghayana* or the two year-long Sixth Great Buddhist Council (1954-1956).¹ The Sri Lankan state highlighted the “greatness” of Buddhism in 1956 by establishing the Buddha

1 J.M. Kitagawa, “Buddhism and Asian Politics,” *Asian Survey* 2, 5 (July 1962), 6.

Jayanti, a commemoration of the 2,500th year of Buddhism, which became an international event celebrated by Buddhists across Asia, including those in Indonesia.

This decade also witnessed what is often referred to as the institutionalization of Buddhism across Asia. It was marked by the establishment of the World Fellowship of the Buddhists (hereafter the WFB) in 1950 in Colombo, Sri Lanka² as a platform “to unite and coordinate all important Buddhist activity throughout the world.”³ This objective was, to some extent, synonymous with the dream of the Buddhist activist and founder of the Theosophical Society, Henry Steel Olcott, to form the Buddhist Union which was discussed in Chapter Two.

The institutionalization of Buddhism in this decade not only focussed on forming the WFB’s organization and showcasing of Buddhist events. It also focussed on institutionalizing Buddhist material culture and symbols. For example, the WFB adopted the Buddhist flag to be the international symbol of Buddhists in 1952 during the World Buddhist Congress, which was held in Japan.⁴

Buddhist activism in Indonesia grew after the Second World War. At that time, the Buddhists in the country were seeking an identity which was in accordance with that of the new state. As Kitagawa points out, many newly independent states displayed the spiritual vitality of religious identity through religious performance and (re)discovering spiritual resources in its own religious roots.⁵ For example, Buddhists in Indonesia wanted to adopt Buddhist practices dating from the Majapahit kingdom like *upasampada* (ordination into monkhood). Thus, it is arguable that religious heritage tends to be shared among Indonesians as it is truly deeply rooted within the culture.

Indonesians use the word *agama*, a borrowed term from Sanskrit, to refer to religion. According to Jane Atkinson who studies minority religions in Indonesia, the term had been in use since Indonesia became part of a trade network that connected China, India and the Near East.⁶ Atkinson points out

2 Ibid., 6.

3 Ibid., 6.

4 Ibid., 6

5 Ibid., 6.

6 J.M. Atkinson, “Religion in Dialogue: The Construction of an Indonesian Minority Religion,” in R.M. Kipp and S. Rodgers (eds), *Indonesian Religions in Transition* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987), 175.

the changing notion of agama over time. In the fifteenth century when Islam came to Indonesia, the notion of agama referred to wealthy, cosmopolitan persons. By the sixteenth century, when Christianity was introduced in Indonesia by the Portuguese and later by the Dutch, agama was associated with foreign powers, education, internationalism, political privilege and education.⁷ Most importantly the notion of agama came to refer to the “backwardness” of traditional Indonesian beliefs and values as opposed to the “progressiveness” of Dutch beliefs and values.⁸ Atkinson points out that Muslim and Christian Indonesians living under the Dutch regarded their respective religions as conferring on them the status of being modern and progressive and not being backwards.”⁹ Indeed, Indonesian nationalists in post-independent Indonesia continued to project the notion of “backwardness” on minority religious.

In the 1950s, Indonesia’s Ministry of Religion introduced a new distinction between “religion” and a “current belief” (*aliran kepercayaan*) under K.H. Wahid Hasyim.¹⁰ Ministry of Religion Regulation No. 9/1952/Article VI defined current belief as “a dogmatic opinion, which is closely connected to the living tradition of several tribes, especially of those that are still backward. The core of their belief is everything which has become the customary ways of the life of their ancestors over time.”¹¹ Opposed to the definition of current belief was the definition of religion which was very much influenced by the nature of the Abrahamic religions or the Judeo-Christian-Muslim religion. Accordingly, for a “belief” to be considered a religion, it must not only share the common element of monotheism, but it must also be internationally recognized.¹²

According to Martin Ramstedt, whose research area is on transnational

7 Ibid., 175.

8 Ibid., 175.

9 Ibid., 175.

10 Hasyim was one of the prominent leaders of an Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Ulama, and also a member of the Muslim party, Masyumi, who had previously supported the implementation of the Islamic law or *syariat* in the Indonesian constitution of 1945. M. Ramstedt, “Introduction: Negotiating Identities -- Indonesian Hindus between Local, National, and Global Interests,” in M. Ramstedt (ed.), *Hinduism in Modern Indonesia: A Minority Religion Between Local, National and Global Interests* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 8-9.

11 The translation of this regulation is an adaptation from the version found in Ramstedt, *Hinduism in Modern Indonesia*, 9.

12 Ibid., 9.

Chinese religious networks, the newly introduced regulation posed a new problem for non-Abrahamic religious groups. This new definition classified the Javanese kebatinan and other local beliefs as current belief,¹³ which created a state of unease for followers of religions and belief systems that did not exhibit the defining characteristics of Judeo-Christian-Islamic religions.

Aliran kebatinan or Javanese spirituality was a particular target of discrimination and harassment. Evidence of this is a letter written by R. Kusumodewo, the chairman of Agama Buddha Djawi/Wisnu,¹⁴ to the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In his letter, Kusumodewo protested the removal of a plaque symbolizing the religion in Surabaya, East Java.¹⁵ This disagreement escalated and eventually led to the formation of the Pengawas Aliran-Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat (PAKEM, or Monitoring “Current Beliefs” in Society) in 1954. This institution monitored the development of new religions and local beliefs¹⁶ under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In this position, according to Niels Mulder, the PAKEM became a watchdog of all religions

13 Ibid., 9.

14 Buddha Djawi/Wisnu is an indigenous religion whose rituals and beliefs retain the traditions from the religion of the Majapahit kingdom. Hence, the founder of Buddha Djawi/Wisnu, Resi Kusumodewo, claimed it is a religion of Indonesia origin. (This definition is based on the document written by Resi Kusumodewo, “*Pandangan dan pendapat Resi Buddha Djawi Kusumodewo, Pusat pimpinan agama Buddha Djawi/Wisnu Indonesia, guna menjangkal tentang penerangan2 dari Sdr. Samadikun, bapak Gubernur Djawa Timur dan penerangan dari Sdr. Sosrodanukusumo, Ketua PAKEM*”). National Archive of Indonesia. The translation of the definition is my own version. Although the word, Buddha, in the above document does not refer to a particular school of Buddhism, other authors suggest that Buddha Djawi/Wisnu was influenced by Vajra Tantrayana Buddhism that developed during the Majapahit era. For more detailed information about this indigenous religion see N. Kuswantin. *Senjata Cakra Atap Wihara: Sinkretisasi Pasca 1965 di Tirtaorung* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Wiwara Yogyakarta, 2017).

15 A letter sent to ministry of religious affair. Letter number; Kp/Bd. no. 104/55 (11 May 1955). The letter was written as a protest sent to the governor of East Java (no. letter: H/I/669/Rhs.; dated 25 November 1954). The debate was conducted through a series several back-and-forth letters with the Ministry of Religious Affairs which resulted in the plaque being remounted again.

16 N. Mulders, *Kebatinan dan Hidup Sehari-Hari Orang Jawa: Kelangsungan dan Perubahan Kulturil* (Jakarta: PT. Gramedia, 1983), 5; T.S. Sutanto. “Politik kesetaraan,” in E.P. Taher, *Merayakan Kebebasan Beragama: Bunga Rampai Menyambut 70 tahun Djohan Effendi* (Jakarta: Kerjasama Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace [dan] Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2009), 381.

or strands of belief that were considered anti-Islam.¹⁷

Another example of how this policy adversely affected non-Abrahamic religions was the requirement that both Hindu and Buddhist leaders seek international legitimization and support in order to maintain their status as religions in the eyes of the state as well as to avoid persecution. Ramstedt shows that in 1952 Hinduism in Bali was classified as a “current belief” and its followers as “people without religion” which subjected them to Christian and/or Muslim proselytizing.¹⁸ To resolve the issue, the Bali local government turned to India in order to redefine the religion of Agama Hindu Bali. Additionally, some young Balinese intellectuals were deployed to study at the Visva-Bharati University in India.¹⁹ The effort was eventually successful, and Agama Hindu Bali was finally recognized by the government as a religion.

Given this situation in Indonesia in the 1950s, this chapter argues that the development of Buddhism in Indonesia during this period was very much influenced by the national government’s distinction between “religion” and “current belief.” During this period, Buddhists in Indonesia were questioned regarding their legitimacy as citizens of a new nation state. As explicitly stated in the regulation of 1952, in order for a person to be deemed a citizen of Indonesia, that person’s religious identity must comply with the regulation of 1952. Embedded in this regulation was the notion that if one’s religious identity was solely based on “current belief” (*aliran kepercayaan*), it was not sufficient for one to be considered a citizen of Indonesia because some form of international recognition was still required. Thus, in order to be recognized as legitimate citizens of Indonesia, Buddhists tried to show that the notion of Dhammic connection was a sound basis for establishing international recognition for Buddhism.

7.1. PERANAKAN CHINESE AND EMERGING MULTI-ETHNIC BUDDHISTS

Buddhism showed a drastic turn in 1950 after Indonesia gained its independence. As described in an article in the *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha* magazine, the first Vesak celebration held in post-colonial

17 Sutanto, “Politik Kesenitaraan,” 381.

18 Ramstedt, “Introduction: Negotiating Identities,” 10.

19 Ibid., 10. The university was founded by Rabindranath Tagore in 1921.

time was in the Borobudur and it was attended by several thousand Buddhists and sympathisers.²⁰ Although there were not necessarily many Javanese Buddhists at this time, sources indicate that many Buddhist activists were Javanese as well as Balinese. Records indicate that the inter-Asian Buddhist population at this time numbered approximately 5,000,000 of which 3,500,000 were indigenous people and 1,500,000 were Peranakan Chinese as well as other groups of Chinese. The total figure does not include the number of people who were followers of Siwa-Buddha from Bali, which was estimated to be around 1,500,000.²¹

In 1950, Peranakan Chinese intellectuals began to re-establish Buddhist organizations and institutions which had been curtailed during World War Two and the fight for independence against the Dutch in the late 1940s. These intellectuals reorganized the Sam Kauw Hwee (SKH) in Jakarta (formerly known as Batavia) and named the new organization the Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia (GSKI or the Federation of Three Religions Association) on 22 February 1951.²² Sources indicate that the membership of this new organization consisted of a broad array of Chinese spiritual organizations, such as the Kong Kauw Hwee (KKH or Association of Confucianism) and Buddhist organizations, such as the Persatuan Buddhist Tengger (Association of Tengger Buddhists) and the Persatuan Buddhist Denpasar (Association of Denpasar Buddhists).²³ Willmott, who researched on the Chinese in Semarang, recorded that there were at least thirty Sam Kauw Hwee branches who joined this federation in 1955.²⁴ The GSKI's objective, however, remained

20 Anonymous, "Editorial: Sejarah adalah kenjataan", *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 3-4 (April 1958), 1.

21 The number of Buddhist here is solely based on the above source. While the data provides interesting information, it is important not to treat its source as completely reliable because it was only in 1961 that Indonesia carried out a census. Nevertheless, the *Djawatan Penerangan Agama* (the Division of Information on Religion) stated that there were around 1,500,000 Sam Kauw followers in Indonesia. See, *2500 Tahun Buddha Jayanti*, (Djakarta: Kementrian Agama bagian penerbitan, 1957), 4.

22 Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij, "Gabungan Sam Kauw masuk usia 3 tahun (Feb. 22 1951-1954), *Tri Budaja: Madjallah Bulanan dari Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia*, 1 (February 1954), 3.

23 Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij, "Dewan pengurus gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia 1954-1955, Imlek 2505-2506", *Tri Budaja: Madjallah Bulanan dari Gabungan Sam kauw Indonesia*, 1 (February 1954), n. pag.

24 D.E. Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang: A Changing Minority Community in*

the same as the SKH in pre-independence times, namely, to unify and promote Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism.²⁵ Many key events regarding Buddhism were reported in the GSKI publication -- the *Tri Budaja: Madjallah Bulanan dari Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia* (1954-1966) -- which disseminated information about events, issues and teachings involving the three religions.

It is evident that Peranakan Buddhist Chinese played a central role in establishing the GSKI. Buddhists who were previously involved with the Batavia Buddhist Association (BBA) became board members of the GSKI. For example, Visakha Gunadharma, who was formerly the secretary of the BBA, became the chair of the monthly journal, *Tri Budaja: Madjallah Bulanan dari Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia*. She remained an active representative of Buddhism along with the new Buddhist members of the GSKI.

Thus, the 1950s witnessed the emergence of a new Peranakan Chinese Buddhist leadership. Among the leadership were Tee Boan An, who was later ordained as a Buddhist monk and is better known as Ashin Jinarakkhita;²⁶ Visakha Gunadharma, who became the chairperson of the monthly journal, *Tri Budaja: Madjallah Bulanan dari Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia*²⁷ and Ong Tiang Biaw, who in 1955 established the first Buddhist school, Sekolah Sariputra (1955-2007), in Jakarta and who was the first Peranakan Chinese to receive Theravada Buddhism's highest ordination, Bhikkhu Jinaputta, in Indonesia.²⁸

Before the 1950s, most Buddhists came from Jakarta and the neighbouring areas. After independence, however, Buddhists were active in other regions such as Bali, Surabaya, Malang, Solo and Semarang.

This section of this dissertation focuses on Tee Boan An (1923-2002), who is recognized for his vigorous promotion of Buddhism. Tee's interest in Buddhism and its organization is very similar to that of Kwee Tek Hoay, the Buddhist Peranakan Chinese whose contribution to the spread of

Indonesia (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 251.

25 Ibid., 251; A.J. Abalatin. "A Sixth Religion? Confucianism and the Negotiation of Indonesian Chinese Identity under the Pancasila State," in K.M. George and A.C. Willford (eds), *Spirited Politics: Religion and Public Life in Contemporary Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 126.

26 Being considered one of the key figures in this section, Ashin Jinarakkhita's life will be briefly described later in this section.

27 Mrs. Tjoa, "Dewan pengurus gabungan Sam Kauw", n. pag.

28 Details of higher ordination will be discussed later.

Buddhism was explained in Chapter Three.²⁹ Like Kwee, Tee grew interested in Buddhism through the Theosophical Society. He was a young intellectual from Bogor³⁰ who received his education from the Hollands-Chinese School (HCS) and later studied science and engineering at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen in the Netherlands.³¹ While in the Netherlands, he joined the Theosophical Society and became acquainted with the Pali language as well as Sanskrit.³²

In 1951, Tee returned to Indonesia without completing his degree in the Netherlands. In Indonesia, he continued to pursue his spiritual interests by joining the GSKI as well the Pemuda Theosophy Organization (Young Theosophists Organization). His growing influence in the organization led to his appointment as the chairperson for the GSKI and later as vice-president of the organization.³³ Edij Juangari, author of *Menabur Benih Dharma Di Nusantara Riwayat Singkat Y.A. Mns Ashin Jinarakkhita*, notes in this book that on Tee's return to Indonesia, he decided to take a Buddhist religious vow in order to fully commit to Buddhist practice, although he remained a layman and unmarried, a status which Buddhism refers to as *anagarika*.³⁴ He was

29 Kwee Tek Hoay passed away in 1952. V. Gunadharma, "Riwayat Hidup Kwee Tek Hoay," in M. Sidharta (ed.), *100 Tahun Kwee Tek Hoay: Dari Penjaja Tekstil sampai ke Pendekar Pena*. (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1989), 168.

30 This section focuses on Tee Boan An's (aka. Ashin Jinarakkhita's) fundamental role shaping Buddhism as a religion in postcolonial Indonesia. However, fuller versions of his life can be found in J.M. Chia, "Neither Mahayana Nor Theravada: Ashin Jinarakkhita and the Indonesian Buddhayana Movement," *History of Religions* 58, 1 (2018), 24-63 and in E. Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma di Nusantara: Riwayat Singkat Y.A. MNS Ashin Jinarakkhita* (Jakarta: Yayasan Karaniya, 2016).

31 He never completed his university studies and instead he immersed himself in the study of spiritualism with Theosophical Society in the country. One influence was Dr. Van Der Stock. For fuller details, see *Mengenang Seorang Abdi Buddha: Y.A. Mahabbikkhu Ashin Jinarakkhita Mahasthavira*, (Sangha Agung Indonesia dan Majelis Buddhayana Indonesia, 2012), 16.

32 Ibid., 16.; E. Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma di Nusantara: Riwayat Singkat Y.A. MNS Ashin Jinarakkhita* (Jakarta: Yayasan Karaniya, 2016), 42.

33 This information was taken from Tee's photo which was part of an exhibition that commemorated the thirteenth year of his passing and marked the opening of the Prasadha Jinarakkhita Buddhist Institute dedicated in Jakarta on 22 May 2015. (The translation is my own).

34 Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma*, 48. Note that the term, Anagarika, should not be confused with Upasaka. While both of them refer to Buddhist laymen,



Figure 7.1. Anagarika Tee Boan An leading the ritual during the celebration of Vesak held at the Klenteng Kim Tek Le in Jakarta. Source: *Waisak Acadha* 2496 B.E./ 1952 C.E. Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia, Jakarta.

renowned for being the first anagarika and became known as Anagarika Tee Boan An.³⁵ (Hereafter, he is referred to as Anagarika Tee.)

In 1952, the GSKI, led by Anagarika Tee, launched the organization's first undertaking -- initiating celebrations of Vesak and Asadha in Jakarta (see Figure 7.1). It is easy to imagine that Anagarika Tee had started to plan how Buddhism would be recognized as a religion in a young, independent Indonesia. He strove to ensure that the Vesak celebration received the Indonesian government's attention and legitimization. His efforts were realized when, upon invitation, the deputy of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Republic of Indonesia attended the event.³⁶

the Anagarika abandon household life while the Upasaka do not do so.

35 As far as my sources are concerned, Tee Boan An was also the first Indonesian lay Buddhist who declared himself as an Anagarika. Another example of layman who fully committed himself to Buddhist practice as an Anagarika was Anagarika Dharmapala from Ceylon. It is not sure whether Anagarika Tee was inspired by the work of Anagarika Dharmapala, but his involvement with the Theosophists may have led him to eventually want to become an Anagarika.

36 Anagarika Boan An, "Arti dan penjembaran bunga", *Waisak Acadha* 2496 B.E./

Anagarika Tee also invited to the Vesak celebration officials from the Ministry of Religious Affairs as well as the ambassadors of neighbouring countries with majority Buddhist populations, such as Burma, Sri Lanka and, Buddhism's birth-country, India, although he never explicitly disclosed the reason for doing so. However, his decision might have been influenced by the Regulation 1952's definition of a "legitimate religion" in Indonesia as being internationally recognized. The attendance of high-profile public officials at Vesak and Asadha may have assisted in paving the way for not only for Buddhism to be recognized as a legitimate religion, but for Vesak and Asadha celebrations to become nationally recognized events. In effect, by inviting the above-mentioned officials and ambassadors the Peranakan Chinese Buddhists symbolically presented Buddhism as an internationally recognized religion.

Figures 7.2 and 7.3 show pictures taken during the event. The modernity of the Buddhists is seen in the attire of the dignitaries. The country representatives and male members of the audience are wearing Western suits and ties for the occasion. Henk Schulte Nordholt, a Dutch historian, notes that Western suits and ties were commonly worn by nationalist leaders as well as politicians during the early post-colonial period as a sign of their progressiveness and modernity.³⁷ Elizabeth Wilson, whose research focuses on the social and cultural history of fashion and modernity, points out that while men "join" modernity by wearing Western clothing, women tend to continue wearing traditional attire.³⁸ Additionally, the choice of wearing traditional attire, according to Wilson, is a statement of "what is authentic, true to their own culture, in opposition to the cultural colonization of imperialism."³⁹ Wilson's analysis of women's fashion is useful in understanding the significance of the women's dressing style as it is seen in the Figure 7.2, where some women are seen wearing traditional dresses, such as the *kebaya* (wrap around skirt and long-sleeved blouse). More importantly, the picture provides evidence of the participation of Buddhists -- both male and female -- in the discourse of modernity that developed during the post-colonial period.

1952 C.E. (Djakarta: Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia, 1952), 14.

37 H. Schulte Nordholt, "Introduction," in H. Schulte Nordholt (ed.), *Outward Appearances: Dressing State & Society in Indonesia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997), 12.

38 E. Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 14. Also see Schulte Nordholt, "Introduction," 12.

39 Wilson, *Adorned in Dream*, 14.



Figure 7.2. Invited guests at the Vesak celebration in Jakarta. (Sitting on the front row, from left: the representatives from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, and the ambassador of Sri Lanka. Sitting on the back row, from left: the ambassador of India, and J.M. U. Mya Sein, the Charge de Affaires Ad. Int. Union of Burma with his wife.) Source: *Waisak Acadha 2496 B.E./ 1952 C.E.* Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia, Jakarta.

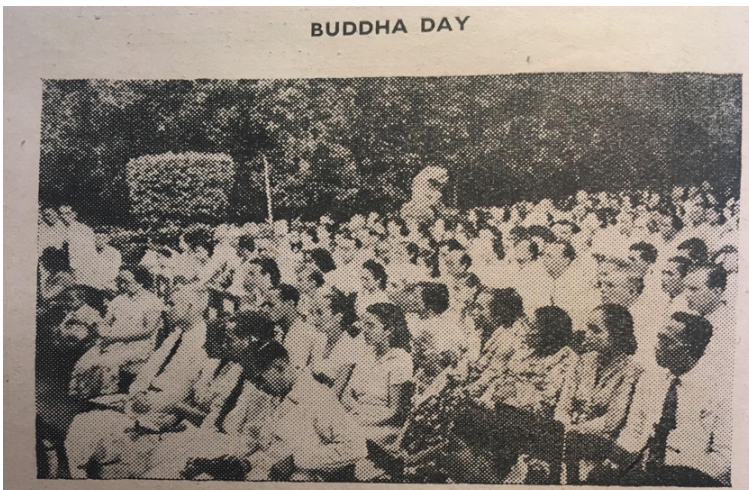


Figure 7.3. Vesak at Klenteng Kim Tek Le, Jakarta (1952), when about 500 people of many nationalities reportedly attended the event. Source: *Waisak Acadha 2496 B.E./1952 C.E.* Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia, Jakarta.

In his capacity as the leader of the GSKI, Anagarika Tee's efforts to solidify Buddhism's position in the young Republic of Indonesia became even more daring in the following year when he organized the first grand Vesak celebration at the Borobudur. The celebration was monumental because it was the first of its kind in the independent state of Indonesia. The public's enthusiasm for the event was exceptional and it attracted at least three thousand people.⁴⁰

Vesak continued to be celebrated at the Borobudur after it gained recognition as a national archaeological site. Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff, Dutch cultural historians, argue that the Borobudur came to play a fundamental role in the ongoing discourse regarding the legitimization and political identity of the newly independent state of Indonesia. As an archaeological site, it not only captured the interest of nationalists but also the enthusiasm of various local, trans-Asian and international groups who felt a connection to the site.⁴¹

Bloembergen and Eickhoff's analysis regarding the extent to which Buddhist activists viewed the Borobudur is further underscored in the light of Anagarika Tee's comments pertaining to the potential for the Borobudur to unite the Buddhist community and what the Vesak celebration of 1953 meant to him. Anagarika Tee stated, "The celebration of Vesak in 1953 was considered 'shock therapy' to awaken people to the fact that the Teaching of the Buddha was once alive in this land and that now people shall know that the Teaching of the Buddha still exists in Indonesia."⁴²

It is apparent that Buddhists in Indonesia were finding a foothold that enabled them to connect with Buddhist objects, which were inherently Indonesian. As such, the Vesak celebration at the Borobudur was a holy festival with which nearly all Indonesians were able to share an emotional connection. At the same time, the Peranakan Chinese Buddhists were also acutely aware of the importance of gaining international legitimization for their existence within Indonesia. Thus, they began to establish a connection with the Buddhist world by way of establishing connections with government

40 Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma*, 46.

41 M. Bloembergen and M. Eickhoff, "Conserving the Past, Mobilizing the Future: Archaeological Sites, Regime Change, and Heritage Politics in Indonesia in 1950s," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 167, 4 (2011), 410.

42 Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma*, 51. (The original text is in Bahasa Indonesia which I have translated.)

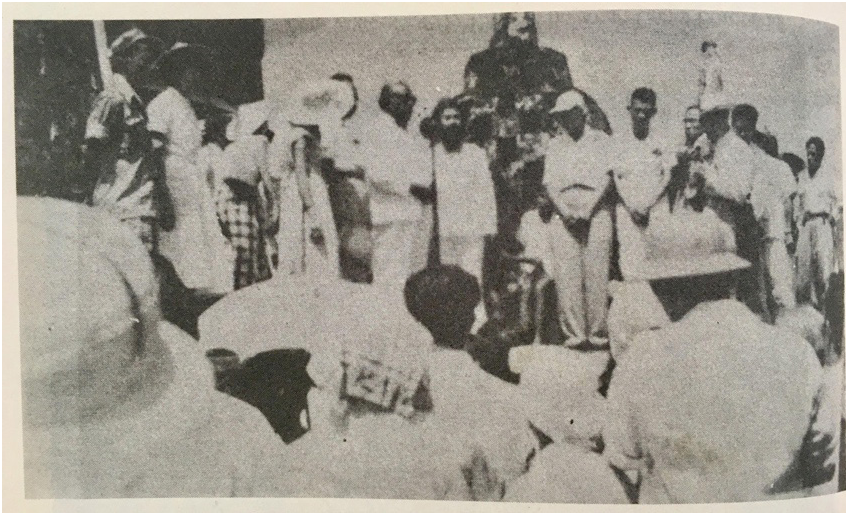


Figure 7.4. Sri Lankan ambassador giving a speech during the Vesak celebration at the Borobudur temple in 1953. Source: *Pengasuh: 30 tahun pengabdian suci Y.A. Maha Nayaka Sthavira Ashin Jinarakkhita*. (Bandung: Panitia HUT Y.A.M.N.S.A Jinarakkhita, 1982). (Photo: collection of Parwati)

representatives from countries which had a substantial Buddhist population, such as by inviting representatives from Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, India and Singapore to the Vesak celebration (Figure 7.4).⁴³

The zeal of the Peranakan Chinese for advancing Buddhism is also well captured in Anagarika Tee's work. Having successfully organized Buddhist events in 1952 and 1953, Anagarika Tee began to meet with various notable Buddhist teachers who inspired him to advance in his personal practice of Buddhism and motivated him to have Buddhism recognized as a legitimate religion in post-Independent Indonesia.

One of Anagarika Tee's most prominent teachers was Venerable Pen Ching, a Mahayana Buddhist monk and the resident monk at Klenteng Kong Hoa Sie in Jakarta.⁴⁴ Soon after the Vesak celebration at the Borobudur,

⁴³ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 53. For more details, see J.M. Chia, "Neither Mahayana Nor Theravada," 35 and *Diasporic Dhamma: Buddhism and Modernity Across the South China Sea* (PhD. Dissertation: Cornell University, 2017), 65-66. In these two sources, Chia describes the origin of Venerable Pen Ching and the origin of the Klenteng Kong Hoa Sie. Klenteng Kong Hoa Sie was a branch of the Putian South

Anagarika Tee was ordained as a novice (*samanera*) in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition and received the monastic name of Ti Chen (Tizheng).⁴⁵ This marked his first encounter with the Buddhist monastic tradition. Although Anagarika Tee had embarked on his spiritual journey as a novice, he continued in his efforts to have Buddhism recognized as an official religion by the Indonesian government. Thus, Anagarika Tee is credited for having the Peranakan Chinese Buddhism recognized as an established Buddhist tradition on the international stage.

Not very long after becoming a samanera, Anagarika Tee (now called Ti Chen) left for Burma to receive full ordination as a Southern/Theravada Buddhist monk, through which he received a new name for becoming an *upajjaya* (a preceptor in higher ordination) -- Ashin Jinarakkhita, a name which he used hereafter. During his stay in Burma, and shortly after being ordained as a monk, Ashin Jinarakkhita received a number of letters from Java requesting him to return to Indonesia. Thus, on 15 January 1955, abandoning his meditation and studies in Burma, Ashin Jinarakkhita answered the call to return to Java for the purpose of preaching the Buddhist practices which he had been learning from his teacher in Rangoon (today known as Yangon).⁴⁶

In Java, Ashin Jinarakkhita instantly became recognized as a Buddhist leader. Being the only Buddhist monk in the country, he often received praise from his Buddhist supporters. Just as Bhikkhu Narada was referred to as the first Buddhist monk to visit Indonesia after the fall of Majapahit, Ashin Jinarakkhita was often referred to as the first Indonesian Buddhist monk after the Majapahit period.

Having been trained in the practices of Burmese Theravada/Southern Buddhism, Ashin Jinarakkhita was very keen to share his knowledge of these practices with his followers in his homeland. This is most notably indicated in *Buddhis*, a magazine first published in 1957 by the Surabaya Buddhist Study Club, which was chaired by Go Eng Djan, a Peranakan Chinese monk, who worked under the supervision of Ashin Jinarakkhita. The magazine served as an instrument for the dissemination of Buddhism. The content of *Buddhis*

Mountain Guanhua Monastery in Putian, Fujian Province in China. Venerable Pen Ching was a monk in this monastery who travelled to colonial Indonesia. After the outbreak of the Chinese Civil War he could not return to Putian and decided to stay in Jakarta.

45 Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma*, 54.

46 Ibid., 54.

stressed two topics: Filsafat Dhamma (The Philosophy of Dhamma) and Ruang Meditasi (Meditation Practices).⁴⁷

Additionally, several books on Buddhist philosophy and meditation by Ashin Jinarakkhita's teacher and other Southern/Theravada Buddhist scholars were translated into Bahasa Indonesia and published in the late 1950s. Of these, the most significant are *Ven. Mahasi's 40 Mata Pokok Dalam Meditasi Buddhis* (Ven. Mahasi's 40 Fundamental Elements in Buddhist Meditation) and *Intisari Peladjaran Buddha Dhamma* (The Essence of the Teaching of Buddha Dhamma).⁴⁸

Because Buddhism was important to the Peranakan Chinese, the klenteng became the centre of the Buddhist community, especially for conducting the celebration of Vesak and the Asadha. For instance, the Vesak celebration of 1952 took place in Klenteng Kim Tek Le, which was regarded as the biggest klenteng in Jakarta. The klenteng could accommodate at least 600 people.⁴⁹ It also remained a vital Buddhist centre in Indonesia until 1955, when the first official Buddhist centre, Vihara Buddha-Gaya Watugong, was established in Semarang, Central Java.⁵⁰

The decade of the 1950's also saw the identity of the Buddhist community becoming much more defined in terms of a new religious structure that was made up of several groups, each of which carried out a particular function within the Buddhist community. Upasaka Sadono, the chairperson of the Persaudaraan Upasaka Upasika Indonesia (the PUUI or The Association of Indonesian Upasaka and Upasika), described this new religious structure as divided into a monastic division, of which Ashin Jinarakkhita was the only member at the time, and a lay division. The lay division was further divided into the following *kaum Buddhis* (Buddhists subgroups):

47 *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha* (1957, 1958, 1959).

48 P. Go Eng Djan and A. Jinarakkhita, *Ven. Mahasi's: 40 Mata Pokok dalam Meditasi Buddhis* (Surabaya: "Buddhis" Magazine Press, 1959). P. Go Eng Djan and A. Jinarakkhita, *Inti Sari Peladjaran Buddha Dhamma*. (Surabaya: "Buddhis" Magazine Press, 1957).

49 Kho Tjin Wie, "Hari peringatan Waicak 1952 di Djakarta", *Waicak Acadha* 2496 B.E./1952 C.E., 25.

50 The land for the building was donated by a Peranakan Chinese Buddhist named Goei Thwan Ling. The vihara later became the centre for Buddhist activism in Java as well as the headquarters for the Persaudaraan Upasaka Upasika Indonesia (PUUI -- The Association of Indonesian Upasaka and Upasika), a lay Buddhist organization established in July 1955. Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma*, 62.

- Anagarika -- men and women who abandoned household life and dedicated their lives to Buddhist spiritual attainment;
- Upasaka/upasika -- men and women who had become Buddhists after affirming their allegiance to Buddhism by reciting the Tisarana and Pancasila before a Buddhist monk;
- Mahaupasaka/mahaupasika -- men or women who had taken a step similar to upasaka/upasika but also committed themselves to engaging in Buddhist missionary work (*penjiaran Dhamma*);
- Upasakapandita/upasikapandita -- men or women who were knowledgeable about Buddhism, who were regarded as *guru* or *acharya* and who were committed to carrying out missionary work and performing duties for the Buddhist community, like providing marriage blessings and/or funeral rituals in the absence of a Buddhist monk; and
- Mahapandita -- senior upasakapandita/ upasikapandita who performed similar duties.⁵¹

This development of Buddhist identity also involved the creation of Buddhist names in the Pali language which monks gave to people when they converted to Buddhism or when they took a vow to undertake one of the particular duties described above. These Pali names are usually placed before given names.⁵² For example, see the italicized portions of the following names of the staff and contributors connected with the *Buddhis* -- Pandita Pannasiri Go Eng Djan (the chairperson of the *Buddhis*);⁵³ Upasaka Dharmapanna Mas Ngabei Sudirman (a contributor);⁵⁴ Upasika Karunananda Lie King Nio (a contributor);⁵⁵ and Mahaupasaka Madhyantika S. Mangunkawatja (a contributor to *Buddhis* and a speaker on a Buddhism program presented by the Radio Republik Indonesia [Radio of the Republic of Indonesia or RRI] in Semarang).⁵⁶

51 U. Sadono, "Apakah Sangha itu?", *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 3-4 (April 1958) 2 (January 1958), 22.

52 *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha* (1957, 1958, 1959).

53 P. Go Eng Djan, "Djalan persutjian ke-Nirvana", *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 3-4 (April 1958), 27.

54 D.M.Ng. Sudirman, "Pandangan hidup Buddhis", *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 3-4 (April 1958), 2.

55 K. Lie Kung Nio, "Riwayat hidup Sang Buddha", *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 2 (January 1958), 27.

56 M. S. Mangunkawatja, " *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 3-4 (April

Although there is no detailed record of the number of Buddhists in Indonesia at the time, it is apparent that the Buddhist population was growing in many areas of Indonesia. In his book, Juangari recounts that Ashin Jinarakkhita never stopped preaching about Buddhism. He even organized a tour of Java and other islands,⁵⁷ which he called the *Tour Dhamma* (*Dhammic Tour*).⁵⁸ The success of this missionary work was reflected by the establishment of Buddhist organizations across various regions of Indonesia. The first Buddhist organization -- the Persaudaraan Upasaka Upasika Indonesia (PUUI/ Association of Indonesian Buddhist Brotherhood/Sisterhood) -- was established in July 1955.⁵⁹ As this organization expanded, it became known as Perhimpunan Buddhist Indonesia (PERBUDHI/the Assembly of Buddhist Indonesia) in 1957.⁶⁰ In other regions various Buddhist organizations and Buddhist study clubs were emerging, such as the Buddhist Study Club in Surabaya and Yogyakarta (1957), Persatuan Buddhist Indonesia Parakan (Association of Indonesian Buddhists in Parakan, 1957)⁶¹, Dharmaduta in Wonosobo, Perhimpunan Buddhist Indonesia Madiun (Association of Indonesian Buddhists in Madiun, 1957) and the Indian Buddhist Society in Medan, Sumatra (led by U. Prof. Njoo Hong Hwie, 1957 and which also established a monastery called Vihara Sang Buddha).⁶² In Bali, Dewan PUUI (The Council of the PUUI) was established and chaired by Upasaka Id. Kt. Djelantik.⁶³

1958), 40.

57 Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma*, 64.

58 Ibid., 64.

59 Ibid., 71-72.

60 W. Aryasasano, "Prakarsa Agung Y.A. Maha Nayaka Sthavira Ashin Jinarakkhita dan Tantrayana Indonesia," in Team Penyusun, *Sang Pengasub: 30 Tahun Pengabdian Suci Y.A. Maha Nayaka Sthavira Ashin Jinarakkhita* (Bandung: Panitia Hari Ulang Tahun Y.A.M.N.S.A. Jinarakkhita, 1982), 19; Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma*, 108; Perhimpunan Buddhist Indonesia (PERBUDHI) had branches in many regions in Central Java such as, Pati, Rembang, Kutoarjo, Semarang and also Malang, East Java. See *Buddhis* 2 (1958), 39; S. Sadono, *Buku Peringatan Perajaan Waicak 2503: Sambutan, Peladjaran, Sedjarah, Sutta-Sutta, dan Lain-Lain*. (Semarang: Panitya Pusat Perajaan Waicak, 1959), 35.

61 Anonymous, "Ichtsar aktivitet Buddhis", *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha* 1 (November 1957), 4.

62 Ibid., 4

63 Anonymous, "Ichtsar aktivitet Buddhis", *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran*

Another interesting development in the 1950s was the establishment of the vihara, that is, the residence or quarters of monks and nuns, as the centre of Buddhism in Indonesia. (vihara is sometimes spelled *wihara* in Bahasa Indonesia.) It is particularly crucial to discuss the role of the vihara within debates regarding Buddhist space, since the klenteng had historically been the centre of Buddhist life. The establishment of the vihara in Indonesia occurred at the same time when Ashin Jinarakkhita began his missionary work. Among the first vihara that were established were the Vihara Yasodara in Bandung (February 1955)⁶⁴ and the Vihara Buddha-Gaya (October 1955) in Semarang (Figure. 7.5).⁶⁵ The latter became the headquarters for the PUUI and a meditation centre, where the first congress of the organization was held.⁶⁶ The Vihara Buddha-Gaya also played a major role in the development of Buddhism in that it was turned into a historical site for the revival of Buddhism when a bhikkhu ordination was held there in 1959.⁶⁷ By 1959, fourteen vihara had been established in different parts of Java and Bali.⁶⁸

Additionally, in the 1950s Buddhists in Indonesia were introduced to the elements of the Theravada/Southern Buddhism that typically organized the Buddha's into three parts, namely: *Vinaya Pitaka* (Monk's Rule of Conduct), *Sutta Pitaka* (The Buddha's Sermons), and *Abhidhamma Pitaka* (Analysis of Basic Natural Principles that Govern Mental and Physical Processes). Figure 7.6 presents an example from the Tipitaka Pali, which divides the Buddha's teachings into three parts. Texts like the Tipitaka Pali underscore the fact that Theravada/Southern Buddhism was beginning to take root as an institution in post-independent Indonesia.

Buddhism in the 1950s had become an integral part of the general lifestyle of lay followers, as suggested by the above rites of passage through which the laity entered Buddhism and undertook specific religious functions. Another example of such rites of passage is the implementation of Buddhist marriage blessings around 1957. Ashin Jinarakkhita's blessing of the marriage between Njoo Bwee Ay and Tjoa Tiang Hien, the daughter of Maha Upasaka Dr. Njoo

Buddha, 8 (January 1959), 39.

64 Anonymous, "Ictisar aktivitet Buddhis", *Buddhis: Madjallab Peladjaran Buddha*, 2 (January 1958), 39.

65 Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma*, 70-71.

66 S. Sadono, *Buku Peringatan Perajaan Waicak 2503*, 35.

67 Ibid., 18.

68 Ibid., 37-38.



Figure 7.5. Upasaka and Upasika at Vesak ceremony held at the Vihara Buddha-Gaya in Semarang in 1958. Source: *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 5 (June 1958), 13.

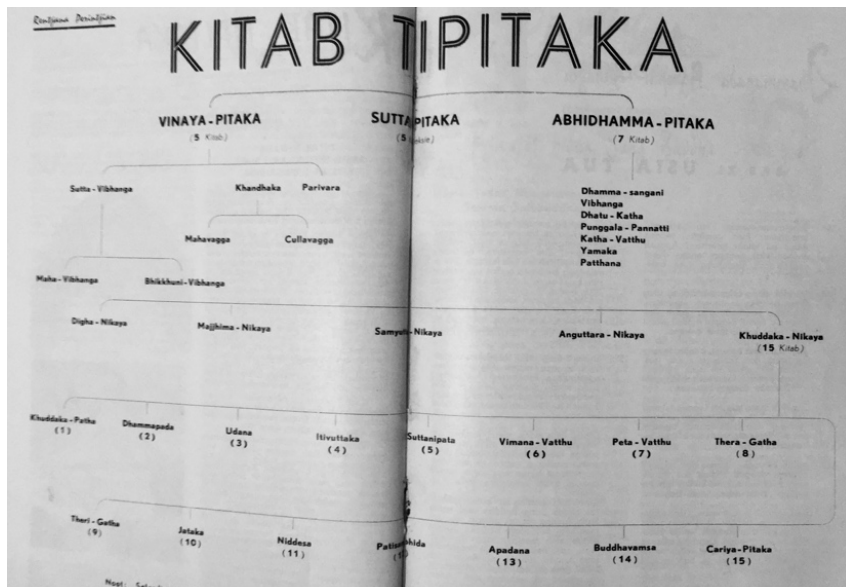


Figure 7.6. Division of Tipitaka Pali. Source: *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 2 (January 1958), 24-25.



Figure 7.7. Buddhist marriage of Liem Ib Nio and Go Hing An in Modjokerto. Source: *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 1 (November, 1957), 13.

Hong Hwie, in September 1957 in Bandung is a notable example, as well as the marriage of Liem Ib Nio and Go Hing An, the daughter of Upasaka Liem Hoo Tiau in Mojokerto (see Figure 7.7).

Furthermore, as discussed earlier in this section, the year 1950 demonstrated a significant shift in trends as well as developments. For instance, followers of Buddhism seemingly appeared to be more diverse in terms of their ethnic backgrounds. Although Buddhism remained a fundamental part of life for many Peranakan Chinese, sources also indicate that there was a wave of new followers who were primarily Javanese and Balinese. The new Javanese and Balinese Buddhists also began working with the Peranakan Chinese at the community level to do missionary work, organize celebrations and more generally structure their communities around a Buddhist framework. Notable figures from this period, whose names often appeared in the source materials for this dissertation, were the following:

- Djan Moeslim Dallid and *Pandita* Dharmapala B. Nirihua from Malang,
- Aris Munandar and R.A. Parwati from Yogyakarta,
- Oka Diputhra Darmeswara from Bali-Yogyakarta,
- Mahaupasaka Madhyantika S Mangunkawatja from Semarang,
- Sariputra Sadono and Ananda Suyono from Solo, and
- Upasaka. Id. Kt. Djelantik and I Ketut Tangkas from Bali.⁶⁹

69 I Ketut Tangkas was ordained as a novice with the name, Jinapiya, in 1959.

Two regional Buddhist organizations were also established in Java and Bali. In East Java, the Persatuan Buddhis Tengger (Association of Buddhist Tengger) was formed; it was chaired by S. Moeljobaroto. In Bali, the Persatuan Buddhist Denpasar Bali (Association of Denpasar Buddhists) was chaired by N.D. Pandit Bhuvan Saraswati.⁷⁰

Sources state that this development was a result of Ashin Jinarakkhita's zeal in working directly with the members of the PUUI, who together held Dhammic missions throughout Java, Bali and other islands. On these missions, Ashin Jinarakkhita and his Dhammic "troops" not only reached urban areas but also rural areas, such as villages in Central Java and the Tengger area in East Java.⁷¹

7.2.BUDDHIST WOMEN

In the early twentieth century, the Buddhist world was dominated by males. In Chapter Three it was noted that Bhikkhu Narada was highly impressed by Visakha Gunadharma's demeanour and spirit of activism. He acknowledged that on one occasion, during his visit to Klenteng Kwan Im Tong in Batavia, Gunadharma acted as a translator for him and that she was the first woman to do so during his time as a missionary in 1934. This acknowledgement demonstrates a shift in the perspective of men regarding the role of women as Buddhist intellectuals and activists; it also helped women to attain upper level positions within Southern Buddhist circles.

The narrative regarding the ever-changing position of women in the historiography of Buddhism dates back as far as the time of the Buddha. One of the earliest accounts is about the heroic and persistent Mahapajapati Gotami, the Buddha's stepmother, who demanded to be admitted into the monastic order.⁷² As the acceptance of women into the monastic order was not a common practice at that time, the admission of Mahapajapati Gotami into the order as a nun marked a change in Buddhist monastic structure as well as in Indian society at large. A similar account pertains to King Asoka

70 Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij, "Dewan pengurus gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia 1954-1955, Imlek 2505-2506", *Tri Budaja: Madjallah Bulanan dari Gabungan Sam kauw Indonesia*, 1 (February 1954), n.pag.

71 Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma*, 66.

72 S. LeVine and D.N. Gellner, *Rebuilding Buddhism: The Theravada Movement in Twentieth Century Nepal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 172.

and his deployment of Bhikkhuni Sanghamitta to Ceylon in order for her to establish an order of nuns on the island.⁷³ Various records from China also demonstrate this shift in the position of women within Buddhism. I-ching, a Chinese Buddhist monk, reported seeing a Buddhist nun in Nalanda, India in his travelogue during a visit to the subcontinent of India from 671 to 695 C.E. Likewise, Hsiin Tsang, another traveller from China to India in the seventh century, noted that he saw a Buddhist nun make an offering at a Buddhist temple.⁷⁴ These records provide evidence that throughout Buddhism's development, female followers had not only engaged in roles which were often historically deemed to be not conventional for women, but that they had even been seen in public acting in such capacities. Barbara Andaya, who has done extensive research on women's history in Southeast Asia, also asserts that Buddhism had a great appeal to women in that they were often able to become members of the monastic order.⁷⁵

Karma Lekse Tsomo -- a Buddhist nun, scholar and founder of the Sakyaditha International Organization of Buddhist Women -- points out that the organization (established in 1987) was the first international Buddhist organization in the post-colonial period.⁷⁶ The organization was designed to "reclaim and revalue the roles of Buddhist women within the multiplicity of Buddhist texts and tradition".⁷⁷ Emma Tomalin, whose work centres on the Buddhist feminist transnational network, recounts the struggle of Buddhist women to regain the right for higher ordination across Buddhist traditions.⁷⁸ This right was successfully revived in modern-day Sri Lanka in 1998.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, the struggle of women within Buddhist orders was rarely discussed and received little attention in the 1950s. While the issue of Buddhist nuns' monastic rights has been addressed, issues regarding the roles of Buddhist lay women have not been dealt with, especially in small Buddhists

73 Ibid., 177.

74 Ibid., 177.

75 B.W. Andaya, "Localising the Universal: Women, Motherhood and the Appeal of Early Theravada Buddhism," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 33, 1 (February 2002), 5.

76 K.L. Tsomo, *Eminent Buddhist Women* (Albany: Suny Press Cop, 2014), 11.

77 Ibid., 11.

78 E. Tomalin, "Buddhist Feminist Transnational Network, Female Ordination and Women's Empowerment," *Oxford Development Studies* 37, 2 (June 2009), 84.

79 Ibid., 91.

communities with only a few followers. This is still the situation in Indonesia now.

Briefly, the activism of Buddhist women in Indonesia was recognized to a large extent through the work of Visakha Gunadharma, who started an initiative for participation through literacy in the early twentieth century. As discussed in Chapter Three, a number of Gunadharma's works were published in the form of articles that were widely disseminated among Buddhist communities. Gunadharma was also active in women-centred organizations as the secretary of the BBA and a board member of the *Sam Kauw Gwat Po* journal, and through her own journal titled *Madjalab Istri*. In her writing as well as in her speeches, she was engaged in broad, yet pertinent philosophical discussions regarding the issues which women faced in the Buddhist community. Thus, she is often regarded as the most prolific writer and preacher in the early phases of Buddhist emergence in the twentieth century.

In the post-colonial period, Buddhist women continued to make strides in the area of literacy. Many became contributors to Buddhist magazines and other types of publications. Around 1950, Buddhist women also became much more vocal regarding their role in the new society. They began to get more actively involved with organizations wherein they increasingly played the same roles as their male counterparts. The development and progress of Buddhist women in the infancy of Indonesia as a nation-state is brought to light in Elizabeth Martyn's work. A researcher of the women's movement in postcolonial Indonesia, Martyn argues that women took the opportunity to act as citizens of new nation-state during the early independence period.⁸⁰ She stresses that during this transition period, women developed strategies to advance their position in society and to secure a legitimate public space.⁸¹ More importantly, she claims that women during this period were not apolitical, backward nor uneducated.⁸²

Martyn's argument coincides with the notion that Buddhist women's status in society progressively developed in early independent Indonesia. One indicator is the establishment of the PUUI in Semarang in 1955, which played a pivotal role in enabling women to achieve a social position which was

80 E. Martyn, *The Women's Movement in Post-Colonial Indonesia: Gender and Nation in a New Democracy* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 3.

81 Ibid., 4.

82 Ibid., 4.



Figure 7.8. Illustration of Indonesian Buddhists -- men and women -- wearing the Buddhist attire. Source: *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 2 (January 1958). Cover page.

arguably equal to that of males in the Buddhist social structure. The name of the organization, which includes the term *upasika* (female Buddhist), explicitly placed women at an equal level with Buddhist men (*upasaka*). In this context, Buddhist women solidified their role in society by sharing the task of coordinating religious services with their male Buddhist counterparts. Furthermore, the use of the Pali term of *upasika* next to *upasaka* represents the idea that keeping the role of women and men equally visible is fundamental. In speaking about the role of women in power sharing, Frances Gouda, a researcher on gender and (post)colonial history, agrees that language can be used as an instrument that affect the distribution of power.⁸³

The participation of women in Buddhist society can also be seen in the new social structure of Buddhist society wherein women shared the same religious duties as Buddhist men. This was reflected in their titles, like *mahaupasika* (advanced female devotee), *upasikapandita* (female priest) and *mahapandita* (senior female priest).⁸⁴ The best illustration of this equality can

83 F. Gouda, *What's to be Done with Gender and Post-Colonial Studies?* (Amsterdam: Vossiuspers, 2001), 6.

84 Sadono, "Apakah Sangha itu?", 22.

be seen in the fact that Buddhist men and women performing the same duties during religious rites dressed in the same manner (see Figure 7.8).⁸⁵

The steady progress of women in the 1950s can also be attributed to the fact that the women, like the men, were citizens of a new independent country. Susan Blackburn argues that although women had an uncomfortable relationship with the state due to Regulation 1952, Indonesia's democratic system gave women a wider scope for pursuing their interests, which included participating in political and religious organizations.⁸⁶

Religion became one area for women to express their intellectuality and interest. Apart from performing religious rites with men, providing social services to their communities with men and having titles that indicated equal status with men, Buddhist women visibly engaged in publication. Buddhist women with the title of *upasika* were active contributors to Buddhist journals. Much in the same manner as Buddhist men, the women were also contributing articles about philosophical debates and various topics about Buddhism. The Buddhist women who were active in this period were not only Peranakan Chinese women but also Javanese women, as the photos and names of the contributors to each issue of the *Buddhis* showed. This can be illustrated by the following examples.

Upasika Arminiati was a Peranakan Chinese from Surabaya who raised a philosophical question in an article titled "Dapatkan Wanita Mentjapai Ketenangan dalam Buddhis?" (Can Women Attain State of Enlightenment in Buddhism?). She started the opening paragraph of her article with the following: "In Buddhist countries, the numbers of Buddhist women are not lesser than the number of laymen followers. In some cases, the number of Buddhist women could actually exceed the numbers of men. This is because Buddhism appeals to the women's perspective...."⁸⁷ In her article she pointed out that in Buddhism men and women possess an equal opportunity to develop themselves to the highest spiritual attainment. According to her, this

85 As far as the sources concern, it is unclear how the white gown became a part of the tradition. However, it could be that the society's gown could have been inspired by the similar items of ceremonial dress used by other Buddhist societies.

86 S. Blackburn, "Women and Citizenship in Indonesia," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 34, 2 (1999), 199.

87 Upasika Arminiati, "Dapatkah wanita mentjapai ketenangan Buddhis?", *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 2 (January 1958), 3. (translated from Bahasa Indonesia by Yulianti)

must also apply to other aspects of life so that women would be encouraged to advance in their spirituality.⁸⁸

Upasika Karunananda Lie King Nio wrote about “The Life of the Buddha,” “Gelisah” (Restlessness) and “Kisah Sumana Dewi: Barang Siapa Berbuat Kebajikan Dia akan Bahagia” (The Story of Sumana Dewi: The Doer of Goodness Will Reap Happiness).⁸⁹ Other women contributors also showed interest in educating Buddhist children through stories. An example was Christina Albers, who in collaboration with Upasika Gunasili Martin, contributed children stories, like “Kisah Seorang Puteri dan Raksasa” (The Princess and the Ogre) and “Teratai Biru” (Blue Lotus).⁹⁰

Additionally, there were some Javanese educated women who were active Buddhist writers. One of the most famous writers was Upasika Pandita Metta Pannakusuma Parwati, (hereafter called Upasika Pandita Parwati) (1932-2016). Upasika Pandita Parwati became a Buddhist in 1950 under the guidance of Ashin Jinarakkhita. Known by Ashin Jinarakkhita as Srikandi from Solo, Parwati was an active member of the PUUI. Juangari writes that during the Dhammic tour to Tengger region in East Java, Upasika Pandita Parwati was the only female follower who joined the mission as a Javanese translator.⁹¹ Upasika Pandita Parwati’s devotion to Buddhism and also to Ashin Jinarakkhita seems to have stemmed from the fact that, like Ashin Jinarakkhita, she also began her spiritual journey as a member of the Theosophical Society.

In a 2014 interview with Upasika Pandita Parwati, she commented on the progress of women. She referred to the creation of Buddhist women as *ulama* (upasika).⁹² She recalled that one of the contributing factors to the progress of women was Ashin Jinarakkhita’s perspective on women’s progress -- women and men are granted equal roles to develop Buddhism

88 Ibid., 4.

89 Lie Kung Nio, “Riwayat hidup Sang Buddha”, 15.

90 ACH. Albers and Gunasili Martin, “Tjerita Budhis untuk anak-anak: kisah seorang putri dan raksasa”, *Buddhis*, 6 (September 1958), 25-28; *Buddhis*, 8 (January 1959), 30-38.

91 Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma*, 74.

92 My interview with her took place on 21 and 23 July 2014 at her house (She actually lived at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society Bandung on Jl. Banda. The term *ulama* is derived from Arabic word which means “to know” or “one who has general knowledge on particular field.” See, N. Ismah, “Destabilising Male Domination: Building Community-Based Authority among Indonesian Female *Ulama*,” *Asian Studies Review* 40, 4 (2016), 493.

in Indonesia -- or what she referred to as a “serious mandate” (*tugas serius*), which is unlike the conservative and domestic roles that are often accorded to women. However, women in Buddhist communities were given revolutionary roles that included leading religious rituals and becoming members of the boards of trustees for newly established vihara. According to Upasika Pandita Parwati, these leadership roles helped Buddhist women to become strategically positioned in society.⁹³ She also emphasized that women’s progress was part of a greater women’s emancipation movement that developed at the time when many women were claiming strategic leadership positions in organizations. Taking herself as an example, she pointed out that she was a board member of Persatuan Warga Teosofi Indonesia (Perwathin or the Association of Theosophists of Indonesia).

To summarize, Buddhist women’s activism considerably increased in 1950s Indonesia. The fact that women were also citizens of a new nation state allowed them to express their interests and to legitimize their adoption social roles previously done only by men. Although no independent women’s Buddhist organization was established in this period, their activism was crucial for the emergence of Buddhist women leaders in contemporary Indonesia and it led to the establishment of the Wanita Buddhist Indonesia (the Indonesian Buddhist Women organization) in 1973, which became part of the Kongres Wanita Indonesia (KOWANI or Indonesian Women Congress) in 1987.

7.3. THE INTER-ASIAN CONNECTION REVISITED: THE BIRTH OF THE SANGHA

In the 1950s, Indonesian Buddhists built on their work from the previous decades to forge an impressive network of inter-Asian connections with Buddhists in South and Southeast Asia. The connections between Indonesian Buddhists and the Sri Lankan monk, Bhikkhu Narada, revived and reformed Buddhism in the 1930s. The 1950s saw the building of new connections with the Southern/Theravada Buddhist world that further restructured Indonesian Buddhism. This restructuring began in the 1950s when the Peranakan Chinese transformed SKH into the GSKI and continued because of the joint efforts of prominent monastic and lay Buddhists from Indonesia and prominent

93 *Sang Pengasuh: 30 Tahun Pengabdian Suci Y.A. Mahanayaka Sthavira Ashin Jinarakkhita* (Bandung: Panitia H.U.T.Y.A.M.N.S.A Jinarakkhita, 1982), 8.

religious leaders from other Buddhist countries.

The very first international engagement with leaders from other Buddhist countries happened during the 1952 Vesak celebration. Apart from being attended by the Indonesian Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs, the event was also attended by the ambassadors of Sri Lanka, India and representatives from the government of Burma, which made the occasion both national and international in nature.⁹⁴ Aside from being the first international Buddhist event to be held in post-colonial Indonesia, it was also the first Dhammic connection with Southern Buddhism since the Second World War.

Another important encounter between Indonesia and Burma took place on 23 January 1954 when Ashin Jinarakkhita, the chairperson of the GSKI and head of the Young Theosophist, received full ordination as a Southern/Theravada Buddhist monk in Burma. This was the first engagement between Indonesian Buddhists with the monastic lineage of the Southern Buddhism in Burma. The ordination of Ashin Jinarakkhita into the Southern/Theravada Buddhist school in Burma not only initiated a new connection with Southern/Theravada world in Indonesia, it also marked a new phase of growth for Southern/Theravada Buddhism in Indonesia which would continue beyond the twentieth century.

Ashin Jinarakkhita's full ordination as a Southern/Theravada monk proved to crucial part to the development of Buddhism in Indonesia for several reasons. First, despite his former status as a samanera in the Mahayana tradition, Ashin Jinarakkhita sought knowledge of Buddhism from Southern/Theravada tradition in Burma because he was unable to travel to mainland China.⁹⁵ This had also happened during the colonial times when Peranakan Chinese attempted to pursue Buddhist studies in mainland China.

Second, Indonesian Buddhists already had a Dhammic connection with Burmese Buddhism which had been initiated by Willem Josias van Dienst in colonial times, as explained in Chapter Two. Therefore, in a sense Ashin Jinarakkhita's ordination was a continuation of the Dhammic connection between Indonesian and Burmese Buddhists. However, the connection was different as well because Ashin Jinarakkhita's visit to Burma was the first

94 *Waisak Acadha*, 2496 B.E./1952 C.E., 14.

95 Juangari states that Burma was chosen over mainland China because of the lack of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and China. However, this may not be the case as the two countries had had ongoing relations since 1950. Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dhamma*, 55.

time that a Peranakan Chinese Indonesian had come to Burma to acquire knowledge of Buddhism from a Burmese teacher.

Third, Ashin Jinarakkhita's entry into Southern/Theravada Buddhist monkhood was a tacit acknowledgement of Indonesian Buddhism's alignment with Southern/Theravada Buddhism in the 1950s.

Ashin Jinarakkhita was ordained by and studied Buddhism under the renowned meditation master, Ashin Sobhana Maha Thera, who was widely known as Mahasi Sayadaw. The ordination of Ashin Jinarakkhita was special in that it was witnessed by two prominent monks -- Balangoda Ananda Metteyya from Sri Lanka and Venerable Chaokun Bimoldam from Wat Mahathat, Thailand.⁹⁶ Ashin Jinarakkhita's contact with these monks was also his first exposure to transnational Buddhist networks. In conjunction with this, the World Fellowship of Buddhist (WFB) held a conference in which Ashin Jinarakkhita gave a speech about Buddhism to an international forum for the first time. This occasion was probably the beginning of Ashin Jinarakkhita's future international connections with the Buddhist world.

Another important connection established by Indonesia Buddhists occurred during the 1956 celebration of Buddha Jayanti, which commemorated 2,500 years of the existence of Buddhism. Buddhists celebrated Buddha Jayanti around the world, including Indonesia.

The organizing committee of the Buddha Jayanti Indonesia, which was led by Mahaupasaka Mangunkawatja, invited heads of state and Buddhist leaders to the event in 1956. Among them were Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India; G.P. Malalasekera, the President of the WFB; and B.F.H.B. Tayabji, the Indian ambassador to Indonesia. The event also received attention from the minister of the Union of Burma, U Nu, and the prime minister of Sri Lanka, Sir John Kotelawala, both of whom sent congratulatory messages to the Committee of the Buddha Jayanti.⁹⁷

Indonesia's religious policy and regulations explain why Indonesian Buddhist leaders invited political leaders to the 1956 Buddha Jayanti celebration. The Indonesian Buddhist leaders were not only concerned about renewing past international Dhammic connections; they were also concerned about the uncertain position of Buddhism in the new nation state. The religion regulations of 1952 specified that the international recognition

96 Ibid., 64.

97 *2500 Buddha-Jayanti*, (Semarang: Persaudaraan Upasaka dan Upasika Indonesia, 1956), 7, 10-11, 13-15.

of a given faith was a basic criterion for regarding it as an “official” religion of Indonesia; hence, the drive to demonstrate international Dhammic connections by putting Buddhist leaders from different countries on display to strengthen their bargaining power to the Indonesia authorities.

Sources indicate that the celebration not only involved Buddhists in Indonesia but also Indonesian government officials, which signalled the government’s implicit recognition of Buddhism as an official religion in Indonesia. In a report about Buddha Jayanti in 1956, the Ministry of Religious Affairs included an 18-page response to the Buddha Jayanti invitation from the government of India.⁹⁸ In 1957, the Indonesian government sent a delegation to India which comprised the following: Visakha Gunadharma (a Buddhist from the Sam Kauw Society); Pedanda Ida Made Kumenah (a Hindu from the Hindu Bali Mission); R. Ng. Poerbatjaraka; and K.R.H. Asnawi Hadisiswanja (the head of the Department for Faith and Religious Movement in the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kepala Bagian Aliran dan Gerakan Agama pada Kementrian Agama Republik Indonesia)).⁹⁹ Hadisiswanja delivered a speech about the number of the followers of Buddhism in Indonesia.¹⁰⁰ The speech also affirmed that Buddhism in Indonesia was protected by the Indonesian constitution.¹⁰¹

Dhammic ties with Buddhists in Singapore were also again resumed by Ashin Jinarakkhita in 1956. During the occasion of Buddha Jayanti, the Singapore Buddhist Association invited Ashin Jinarakkhita to represent invited Buddhists of Indonesia. He remained in Singapore for two weeks helping the completion of Vihara Jayanti at Sri Lankaramaya Buddhist complex.¹⁰² This (re)connection with the Singapore Buddhist Association was thus a continuity of former connections made by Visakha Gunadharma back in 1936.

The progress of Buddhism in the 1950s was driven by the connection with Southern/Theravada Buddhism which had been established in the

98 *2500 Tahun Buddha Jayanti*, (Djakarta: Kementrian Agama bagian penerbitan, 1957).

99 *Ibid.*, 8.

100 Hadisiswanja put the number of Buddhists in Indonesia at least 1,500,000 people including the followers of Sam Kauw (Three Religions). *Ibid.*, 7-18.

101 *Ibid.*, 15.

102 *Mengenang 10 Tahun Wafatnya Y.A. Mahabbhiksu Ashin Jinarakkhita Mahasthavira* (n.p., 2002), 28.

previous generation. Narada visited Java for the first time after Independence in 1955. However, the visit was very brief due to the Indonesian government's refusal to allow him to deliver sermons.¹⁰³ He returned to Indonesia in 1958 and he was received with great enthusiasm by the Indonesian Buddhists. During that visit, he revisited the Borobudur. The positive situation of Buddhists in Indonesia led him to visit other places outside Java. One of these places was the Vihara Buddha-Gaya in Semarang, the centre for Buddhist learning. Later, accompanied by Ashin Jinarakkhita, Narada visited Bali where he preached and most importantly presented the relic of the Buddha to Balinese Buddhist priests (see Figures 7.9 and 7.10).¹⁰⁴

The culmination of the inter-Asia connection in Indonesia occurred in 1959 with the Indonesian Buddhist adoption of Southern/Theravada Buddhist lineage. The event represents two historical milestones to Buddhism in Indonesia. The first milestone was the establishment of the first international *sima*¹⁰⁵ at the Vihara Buddha-Gaya in Semarang. The second milestone was the ordination of two monks performed in the Theravada way. Ong Tiang Biaw, a Peranakan Chinese from Jakarta, who founded the previously mentioned Sariputra School, joined the monastic order, thus becoming the first Theravada Buddhist monk ordained in Indonesia. Thereafter, he was named Jinaputta.¹⁰⁶ Ong's ordination was followed by the novice ordination of a Balinese Buddhist, I Ketut Tangkas, later known as Samanera Jinapiya.¹⁰⁷ He later received full ordination in the same month and he was known as Bhikkhu Jinapiya.¹⁰⁸

Several prominent Southern Buddhist monks from South and Southeast Asia attended the occasion and performed the ordinations.¹⁰⁹ Many of them

103 Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma*, 67.

104 Pannasiri, "Saat jang bersedjarah", *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 3-4 (April 1958), 14.

105 *Sima* is the consecrated territory or boundary in which the full ordination of a monk must be held for the ordination to be valid.

106 Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij, "Tadjuk pertama: Tahun baru 1959", *Tri Budaja: Madjallah Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia*, 60 (January 1959), 2; Bhikkhu Narada, "Pidato ven. Narada Maha Thera pada penahbisan Samanesa Jinnaputta Ong Tiang Biaw", *Tri Budaja: Madjallah Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia*, 65 (June 1959), 3; Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma*, 124.

107 Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma*, 124.

108 Ibid., 128.

109 Narada, "Pidato ven. Narada Maha Thera", 3.



Figure 7.9. Bhikkhu Narada delivered the relic of the Buddha to Ashin Jinarakkhita at Vihara Buddha-Gaya, Semarang, in front of at least 1200 Buddhists. Source: *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 3-4 (April 1958), 14. (Photo: U Jivaka)



Figure 7.10. Bhikkhu Narada and Ashin Jinarakkhita presenting the relic of the Buddha to Buddhists in Bali. Source: *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 3-4 (April 1958), 14. (Photo: Pannasiri)



Figure 7.11. Eight of the fourteen monks who attended and performed higher ordination in Semarang in 1959. Source: The picture was originally posted in *Sin Po* and reproduced in *Tri Budaja: Madjallah Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia*, 65 (June 1959).

were prominent monks, such as Bhikkhu Narada, Bhikkhu Mahanama and Ven. Piyadasī. From colonial Sri Lanka came Venerable Satthisara, Venerable Ariyavamsa, Venerable Saranapala and Venerable Thera Kavivorayan. From Burma, there were Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw and Agga Maha Pandita, and from Thailand, there were Venerable Maha Samroeng, Venerable Visal Samanagung and Venerable Thera Kru Champirat. Finally from Cambodia, there were Mahathera Candavauno and Mahathera Somdach Choun Nath.¹¹⁰ Figure 7.11 shows eight out of these fourteen monks who attended the event.

On some important occasions, Buddhists in Indonesia showed their good relations with Buddhist country leaders to affirm their connection with their country as well as to seek support for their existence in that country. For instance, Ashin Jinarakkhita established connections with India through the Indian consul to Indonesia (Figure 7.12).

Additionally, the portrayal of the Borobudur as a shared Buddhist heritage has helped to establish connections between (inter)national Buddhist leaders and the Indonesian Buddhists. In this regard, some sources have

¹¹⁰ Mrs. Tjoa Hin Hoeij, “Indonesia kedatangan tamu-tamu agung Buddhis”, *Tri Budaja: Madjallah Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia*, 65 (June 1959), 5; Juangari, *Menabur Benih Dharma*, 122.

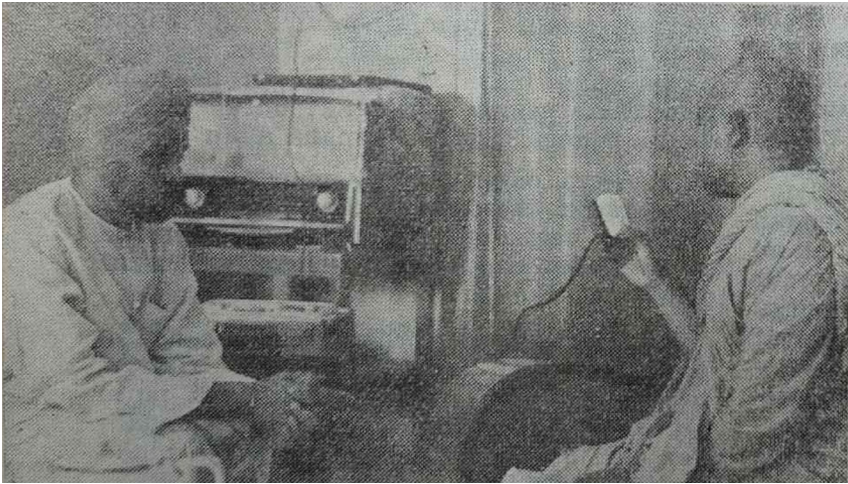


Figure 7.12. Ashin Jinarakkhita visiting the Indian consul, H.E. Sampuran Singh, in Surabaya in 1958. Source: *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 7 (October 1958), 20.



Figure 7.13. Ho Chi Minh, the President of Vietnam, visited the Borobudur in 1959. Source: *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 10 (May 1959), 26.



Figure 7.14. Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia performing a Buddhist prayer during his visit to the Borobudur. He is accompanied by Upasaka Pandita Vira Kresmanto. Source: *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 10 (May 1959), 26.

reported visits to the Borobudur by guests from other Buddhist countries. For example, Ho Chi Minh, the President of Vietnam, visited the Borobudur in 1959 (Figure 7.13). While there, he performed a Buddhist ritual and concluded it by offering flowers in front of the Buddha statue. Several Upasaka Pandita accompanied him throughout his visit at the site. A similar event was the visit of Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia (Figure 7.14).

Unfortunately, there is limited information about such visits, indicating the need for further research. Nonetheless the picture indicates an interesting interaction that could contribute to the debate about the role of Buddhist sites in Indonesia in establishing a connection with leaders from countries in Asia within the national context.

Finally, although there are many sources noting the Dhammic connection among Asian countries which suggest that these connections continued to develop, there are very few sources which indicate what happened to Indonesian Buddhists' connections with European Buddhists. Figure 7.15 presents an illustration which suggests that Western Buddhists remained interested in participating in Buddhist events in Indonesia, but only through the mass media.



Figure 7.15. “Participating” in Vesak celebration abroad through television. Source: *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 5 (June 1958). (Illustration: Gunasili Marten, Surabaya; concept: Cherepanov).

CONCLUSION

Indonesian Buddhism in the 1950s was influenced by Indonesia’s status as a new independent nation state. The reformation of Buddhism remained central to the Peranakan Chinese community as it had in the 1930s. However, Buddhism grew in the 1950s in ways largely unanticipated in the 1930s. For instance, Buddhism became an “officially” accepted religion by the Indonesian government, there was an influx of Javanese and Balinese adherents to Buddhism and there were structural changes to the way Buddhist communities were organized.

Of particular note is the way that Buddhist women were able to gain an equal footing with men in the new Buddhist communal structure. Independence had opened new spaces and opportunities for women to explore their interest. This seems to have created the possibility for women to carry out rituals and perform key duties in Buddhist communities like their male coreligionists. Most importantly, Buddhist women were no longer seen as ordinary members in the Buddhist community who merely revered monks; rather, they were regarded as active agents contributing to the development of Buddhism.

Finally, inter-Asia Dhammic networks and Dhammic connections among Asian Buddhists were visibly strong and vibrant in the 1950s and this led to the adoption of the ordination of monks trained in Southern/Theravada Buddhist practices in 1953 and 1959. The 1959 ordination is regarded as the pinnacle of the (re)emergence of Buddhism in Indonesia. The connection between Indonesian Buddhists and the political and religious leaders from other Buddhist nations also helped the Indonesian Buddhist leaders to convince Indonesian government officials to recognize Buddhism as an official religion in Indonesia, which in turn gave Buddhists in Indonesia a vibrant environment of freedom.

Conclusion

This dissertation concludes that the history of Buddhism in colonial and early independent Indonesia is classified in three different stages. The first stage represents the years of the “silent existence” of Buddhism in colonial Indonesia from the 1900s to 1929 which refers to an absence of connections between European Buddhists living in Indonesia and Indonesian Peranakan Chinese Buddhists. The second stage involves the years of “the meeting between Southern and Northern Winds” from 1929 to 1941 when European Buddhists (followers of Southern/Theravada Buddhism) and the Peranakan Chinese in Batavia (followers of Northern/Mahayana Buddhism) formed connections and partnerships. Finally, the third stage is the years of “the birth of *Sangha*” (higher Buddhist monkhood) in the 1950s which saw Indonesian Buddhism aligned with Southern/Theravada Buddhism. It should be noted that the years of the Japanese occupation and the Indonesia national revolution from 1942 to 1949 was a time when the activities of Buddhist associations were curtailed. Based on this historical timelines, the making of Buddhism in Indonesia was signified by mainly two components. The first component was the presence of various Buddhist networks in the country. The second component, as a result of the first element, was the introduction of new Buddhist tradition and practices.

First the European network existed during the first stage and throughout the second stage. Particularly during the years of “the meeting between the Southern and Northern Winds” in colonial Indonesia, European Buddhists living in the country introduced Southern/Theravada Buddhism to the country and developed new Buddhist ceremonies, traditions and practices. These European who came to colonial Indonesia in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries established Theosophical Society and international Buddhist organization called the Java Buddhist Association (JBA) in 1929.

Their role became more apparent when they actually interacted with the Buddhist intellectuals in Batavia and the Peranakan Chinese of the Northern “wind” of Buddhism. The interactions between and partnership of these two groups suggests a cosmopolitan ideological space in which European Buddhists, Peranakan Chinese Buddhists and Javanese intellectuals interested in Buddhism worked together to curate Buddhism. During the second phase, these interactions started to shape a transnational Indonesian Buddhist network that offered important sources of knowledge about Buddhism and Buddhist practices for in particular Peranakan Chinese Buddhists who wished to reform their *klenteng* (shrines and temples) as part of an effort to maintain their Chinese identity in the 1930s. These years of “the meeting between the Southern and Northern Winds” revolved around a gradual merging of the Peranakan Chinese Buddhists’ practices which reflected Northern/Mahayana tradition of Buddhism with the practices of the European Buddhist residents in Indonesia who followed Southern/Theravada Buddhism. This dissertation argues that the Peranakan Chinese Buddhists developed and curated Buddhism into a living practiced religion not from a desire to revive Buddhism alone but from their participation in the Chinese Cultural Movement which swept through China and Southeast Asian Chinese communities. It was an effort to maintain their *ketionghoaan* (“Chineseness”) in the context of increasing pressures exerted by the Dutch colonial authorities as well as the Christian mission. The response of the Chinese in Indonesia was, in part, to revitalize the *Sam Kauw* (three religions) -- Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism -- which were seen as traditional Chinese practices. To maintain their Chinese identity, leaders in the Peranakan Chinese community focused on reforming the *klenteng* based on Southern/Theravada Buddhist ideas and practices that they had developed as a result of their long association with the Theosophical Society, Southern Buddhist monk, and the JBA.

The years of “the meeting between the Southern and Northern Winds”

also saw the growing participation of women in reforming the *klenteng* and producing knowledge about Buddhism, which stemmed from core ideas of Southern/Theravada Buddhists about the equality between Buddhist men and women in performing Buddhist rituals. This dissertation points to Visakha Gunadharma whose activities as a layperson during the 1930s (and afterwards) challenged the male and monastic dominated historiography of Buddhism. As the first laywoman who took a leading role in a male-dominated space, Gunadharma engaged in Buddhist activism as an organizer of Buddhist associations and in the production of knowledge about Buddhism. In effect, Gunadharma confronted the conventional pattern of Buddhist society in South and Southeast Asia where monks and laymen took the front line in the Buddhist revival movement and became a role model of female emancipation -- a notion that Peranakan Chinese women at the time were beginning to explore and discuss. The female participation here arose from her family's influence. Gunadharma's participation cannot be separated from being the daughter of Kwee Tek Hoay, a prominent Peranakan Chinese writer and founder of *Sam Kauw*, who nurtured her interest in writing and had her educated that so she could pursue a career in writing, education, and publishing.

Furthermore, "The meeting between the Southern and Northern Winds" stage was empowered by the third Buddhist groups, the South and Southeast Asian Buddhists. This network consisted of Ceylonese Buddhist monks and the Singaporean Buddhist community. The Ceylonese Buddhist monk, Bhikkhu Narada, whose visit to Batavia in 1934 made him the first Southern/Theravada Buddhist monk to come to modern Indonesia. His presence reinforced the idea among the Peranakan Chinese that, despite the fact that they had traditionally followed Northern/Mahayana Buddhism, Southern/Theravada Buddhism could provide a pathway to successfully reforming the *klenteng* and building vibrant Buddhist communities within the larger Peranakan Chinese community. For all intents and purposes, the Peranakan Chinese became a part of the Southern/Theravada Buddhist network because of Narada's 1934 visit and his numerous visits thereafter.

Although Narada's visits were central to the Peranakan Chinese's acceptance of Southern/Theravada Buddhist, there were two other contributing factors: the role of the Singapore Buddhist community and the Javanese intellectuals' participation in Buddhist organizations.

The presence of the Southeast Asian Buddhist network in colonial Singapore helped to make Narada's visits to colonial Indonesia possible.

Previous research has neglected the role of colonial Singapore in bringing Southern/Theravada Buddhism from colonial Sri Lanka to colonial Indonesia; however, this dissertation has shown that colonial Singapore was not merely a stopover for changing ships between colonial Singapore and Batavia, but it was also a major stepping stone between colonial Sri Lanka and colonial Indonesia for Buddhists bringing Southern/Theravada Buddhism to colonial Indonesia.

As part of the British Empire, many Ceylonese Buddhists had been able to migrate and settle in colonial Singapore, which allowed them to build a strong Buddhist society in the region. It was this Ceylonese Buddhist community in Singapore that later supported Narada's journey to Java by funding his travel expenses there. It was also part of a string of networks from which Peranakan Chinese Indonesia collected Buddhist material culture, particularly after the visit of Bhikkhu Narada. Seeing colonial Singapore as part of the South/Southeast Asian Buddhist network helps to explain the importance of Southeast Asia for the development of Buddhism in colonial Indonesia.

There was also a small group of Javanese intellectuals who belonged to the Batavia Buddhist Association (BBA). Their presence in the BBA reinforces the idea that the Indonesian Buddhist network had grown beyond the Peranakan Chinese to include people from other ethnic groups with an interest in Buddhism. It is evident that the Peranakan Chinese and Javanese intellectuals had formed partnerships, collaboration and connections since the 1930s.

The influence of Southern/Theravada Buddhism on the development of Buddhism in Indonesia is clearly demonstrated by (1) the invention of new Buddhist traditions and (2) the reclamation of the Borobudur and the Chinese klenteng. Accordingly, a new Buddhist tradition called Vesak was introduced. From a larger perspective, it affirmed the position of colonial Indonesia as part of the global Buddhist society. Other than Vesak, the BBA also encouraged the display of Buddhist symbols, such as the international Buddhist flag and the Buddha's image. In this regard, Buddhist in Indonesia demonstrated the characteristics of modernity shared by global Buddhist community. Even further, in order to serve their goal Buddhists in colonial Indonesia established modern organizations and Buddhist centers. Accordingly, some Chinese klenteng became Buddhist enclaves and centres for producing knowledge about Buddhism, particularly after the establishment of the BBA. The Borobudur temple became a central symbol of Buddhist material culture and heritage after it was chosen to be the main site for celebrating Vesak in 1929.

The years of "the birth of Sangha" in the 1950s emerged from a need to fit

Buddhism into post-independent Indonesia. Unlike in the earlier stages, this period saw the involvement of state actors. This need stemmed from a process of decolonization that resulted in most of the pre-World War Two resident European Buddhists leaving Indonesia and being replaced by intra-Asian Buddhist networks. The Indonesian Buddhists instigated new relationships with the state, particularly with the officials of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. They also tried to meet the new nation's regulation regarding religious matters. Contact with representatives from inter-Asian Buddhist networks in Sri Lanka and mainland Asia allowed Indonesian Buddhists to demonstrate to the Indonesian state officials that Buddhism fulfilled a newly implemented regulation that only belief systems recognized by international authorities would be considered state-approved religions in Indonesia.

The most significant milestone in the making of Buddhism in this period was when the first Indonesian was ordained (*upasampada*) into the Sangha in the 1950s. This ordination marked the official adaptation of Southern/Theravada Buddhism into Indonesian Buddhism in 1959. During this occasion, the Buddhist networks present were only those from South and Southeast Asia countries. Additionally, in the 1950s more Buddhist women in the new nation state redefined their position and role within the Buddhist society. This resulted in women being recognized as equal to men in carrying out the same religious rites and duties within Buddhist communities. Their redefined positions were formalized by religious titles such as *Mahaupasika* and *Upasikapandita* and having their equality confirmed by the *Persaudaraan Upasaka-Upasika Indonesia* (PUUI). Given the growing interest of people from different ethnics in Buddhism in this period, Buddhists in Indonesia established *vihara* as a new Buddhist center that exclusively Buddhist. At this stage *klenteng* was not longer the only Buddhist center in Indonesia.

To conclude, the emergence of Buddhism in Indonesia is a product of modernity. This dissertation has shown that modern Buddhism in colonial Indonesia was built through the agency of both Asian and European transnational Buddhist networks. It has also shown that although the emergence of Buddhism in colonial Indonesia can only be understood in terms of the development of Southern/Theravada Buddhism in the neighbouring regions of Singapore, mainland Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka, the historiography of Buddhism in colonial and post-colonial Indonesia is exceptional in several ways. The concepts of Modern Buddhism as they were developed in Buddhist majority South and Southeast Asian countries

cannot be uniformly applied to explain how Southern/Theravada Buddhism was adopted by Indonesian Buddhists. In Indonesia, modern Buddhism was shaped by transnational networks, involving both European and Asian Buddhists. It was also a result of the meeting of two major traditions, namely the Northern and Southern “winds” of Buddhism. The invention of new practices and traditions of Southern Buddhism was not solely rooted in the spirit of reviving Buddhism itself, but rather rooted in the spirit of reviving Chinese religions. Accordingly Buddhists in Indonesia adopted Buddhist material cultures and modern symbol of Buddhism. The last prominent characteristic to of modern Buddhism in Indonesia was the involvement of laywomen. Women played a leading role in Indonesian Buddhist institutions makes it distinct from other majority Buddhist countries in South and Southeast Asia. The development of Buddhism was almost fully driven by laypeople, both men and women. In the post-colonial period, Buddhist society was made up of diverse ethnic groups that contributed to restructuring a new Buddhist society.

Glossary

Buddhism/Religion

Acharya	: teacher
Anagarika	: celibate lay Buddhist
Asadha	: Buddhist festival to commemorate the first delivery of the Dhamma by the Buddha.
Bhikkhu	: Buddhist monk
Bhikkhuni	: Buddhist nun
Bodh Gaya	: a destination for Buddhist pilgrims which is believed to be the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment
Borobodur	: ninth century Buddhist temple or monument in Java, Indonesia
Buddha-sasana	: teaching of the Buddha
Chattha Sanghayana	: the sixth Buddhist council
Confucianism	: one of the Chinese religions
Dayaka	: a lay Buddhist who attends to the monks' needs

Dhamma	: the teaching of the Buddha
Dhammaduta	: a Buddhist missionary
Guru	: teacher
Hana matsuri	: flower festival in Japan
Hwesio	: a Mahayana Buddhist monk
Id al adha	: the day of sacrifice
Id al fitri	: the concluding day of the Islamic fasting month
Imlek	: Chinese new year festival
Isra mi'raj	: Islamic festival of the ascension of the Prophet
Kamma/karma	: a fundamental concept in the teaching of Buddhism
Kebaya	: Javanese traditional attire for women which consists of a wrap around skirt and a long-sleeved blouse
Mahapandita	: a senior priest in the Buddhist community in Indonesia
Mahayana	: literally means "Great Vehicle." It is a branch of Buddhism which is prominent in North Asia.
Nikko	: a Mahayana Buddhist nun
Northern Buddhism	: (See Mahayana)
Pali	: language used in the Theravada Buddhist canon
Pancasila (Buddhism)	: the five rules of Buddhist moral conduct
Pandita	: a Buddhist priest
Patidana	: a Buddhist ritual that denotes the transfer of merit to the deceased relative or family
Pradakshina	: a clockwise circumambulation
Sam Kauw	: the three religions of the Chinese, namely, Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism
Samanera	: a novice monk
Sangha	: a community of Buddhist monks

Sangharaja	: Buddhist royal high priest
Sima	: a consecrated area required for a full ordination of a monk to be valid
Southern Buddhism	: (See Theravada)
Tantrayana	: Buddhist sect developed since ninth century Java
Tathagata	: another term used to refer to the Buddha
Thatanabaing	: a Burmese Buddhist patriarch
Theravada Buddhism	: literally means “doctrine of the elders.” It is a branch of Buddhism that is practiced by Buddhistis in the South and Southeast Asian regions.
Tisarana	: Three refuges in Buddhism that consist of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha
Tjengbeng	: Tomb Sweeping Day
Tjiagwee Tjapgauw	: Thi Kong ritual
Toapekong	: a Chinese deity
Upajjaya	: the preceptor for the ordained monk in Buddhism
Upasaka	: Buddhist laymen
Upasakapandita	: a male Buddhist priest
Upasampada	: higher ordination/monk ordination
Upasika	: Buddhist laywomen
Vesak	: a main Buddhist festival to commemorate the life passages of the Buddha
Vihara	: a Buddhist shrine

Indonesian/Malay

Agama	: religion
Aliran kepercayaan	: current belief
Bumiputera/pribumi	: son of the the soil; native Indonesian

Bupati	: regents
Kebatinan	: spirituality
Klenteng	: Chinese shrine
Majapahit	: 13th-16th century Hindu-Buddhist empire in Java
Njonja	: title for a married woman, i.e. Mrs.
Penghulu	: village headmen
Peranakan	: descendant
Studieklas	: discussion forum
Tionghoa	: the Chinese
Totok	: unacculturated Chinese
Ulama	: a religious leader
Wayang	: Javanese shadow puppet

Dutch

Hoofdbestuur	: central administrators or the mainboard
Jaarverslagen	: annual report
Lezing	: lecture
Societeit	: private club house
Staat van beleg	: a state of siege
Verslag	: published records
Volkstelling	: population census
Voorzitter	: chairperson
Vreemde Oosterling	: foreign oriental

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Summary

This dissertation focuses on the actors and agencies in the transnational Buddhist networks that were involved in the making of Buddhism in Indonesia from 1900 to 1959. Using the framework of transnational networks, this dissertation endeavours to understand how Buddhism gradually secured a place in Indonesian society. By viewing the late-colonial and early post-colonial period as a continuum in which Buddhism continued to take root, it connects developments that have thus far been treated as separated by the demarcation line of Indonesian independence.

My dissertation argues that modern Buddhism in the Indonesian archipelago developed as a result of global and regional religious transformations. Particularly important was the spread of Theravada Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia. Especially, the dissertation investigates the dominant roles of lay people, Buddhist missionaries and intellectuals who were living in and travelling to colonial Indonesia. The findings here also show that from the 1920s onwards, non-state actors played a pivotal role in establishing connections between people involved in the spreading of Buddhism in colonial Indonesia, in South and Southeast Asia, and beyond.

In Indonesia, the Peranakan Chinese were the primary local actors in this process because of their pivotal role in the making of modern Buddhism

from the beginning of the period under consideration until the post-independence years. The Peranakan Chinese community can be seen as a “place” where people from various backgrounds who were interested in Buddhism articulated their ideas about Buddhism and interacted with others. The Peranakan Chinese were the main community that originally adhered to the Buddhist community of the Northern Tradition (Mahayana Buddhism) in Indonesia.

The meeting between transnational Buddhist networks stemming from South and Southeast on the one hand and the Indonesian Peranakan Chinese on the other hand, had a major impact on the making of modern Buddhism in Indonesia. Their encounter reflected the meeting of two different ‘winds’ of Buddhism: the Southern (Theravada) and the Northern (Mahayana) winds respectively. These interactions between the two winds generated the complexity and peculiarity that was characteristic for the making of modern Buddhism in Indonesia in the early twentieth century.

Several kinds of actors were instrumental to this process that lasted from at least the late colonial period until 1959. First, the Europeans that belonged to international organizations which belonged to or were connected with Theravada Buddhism, such as the Theosophical Society. Second, the Europeans that exclusively established the international Buddhist organization called the Java Buddhist Association. Third, the South and Southeast Asian Buddhist missionaries from Sri Lanka and Singapore. Finally, the local Indonesians, namely the Peranakan Chinese who adhered to Mahayana Buddhism.

The focus of this dissertation then shifts to the question of how Buddhism, as a practiced religion, came into public spaces in Indonesia. It demonstrated the crucial roles of the *klenteng* (Chinese places of worship) and the Borobudur in establishing the public presence of Buddhism. Some *klenteng* and the Borobudur became central venues for activities organised by Buddhists, particularly from the 1930s onwards. These sites attracted a variety of groups of the Indonesian Buddhist community and those associated with it. The interest of the Europeans and the Theosophists specifically revolved around the Borobudur and this greatly influenced the process of reclaiming the neglected religious meaning of the Borobudur as a temple. This reclamation was effected by re-establishing Buddhist religious performativity such as the celebration of Vesak at the Borobudur, which first took place

in 1927. The klenteng, on the other hand, became the meeting place of the Peranakan Chinese Buddhists and a centre of Buddhist intellectual and religious activity.

A further outcome of this dissertation research is demonstrating the emergence of partnerships and Dhammic connections between Indonesian Buddhist society and other Asian regions, which were created from the colonial times onwards. The connections with Buddhists from colonial Srilanka and colonial Singapore resulted in the transfer of Buddhist material culture to Indonesia, a phenomenon that did not take place during the establishment of relationships of Indonesian Buddhists with Western/European Buddhist activists. These Buddhist material cultures and modern Buddhist symbols included the adoption of the Buddhist flag, Buddha's statues, and also the planting of the Bodhi tree.

The introduction of Buddhist material cultures affirmed the position of Buddhists in Indonesia, who had become part of a wider context of transnational notions of Buddhism. To Buddhists in Indonesia, this was the beginning of a firmer Dhammic connection that led to more confidence in the development of Buddhism in post-independence Indonesia. These inter-Asian Buddhist connections served as one of the foundations of the future of Buddhism in Indonesia, particularly in the 1950s when Buddhists in Indonesia officially imported the (Southern) Theravada Buddhism lineage by performing the Bhikkhu ordination.

After Indonesia had become an independent state, the Buddhist community showed a different dynamic. The most recognizable change was the absence of European agents in the Buddhist activity and community. There was also an influx of Javanese and Balinese adherents to Buddhism and there were structural changes to the way Buddhist communities were organized. Following ethnic diversity of Buddhists, a new place of Buddhist centre called vihara emerged in Semarang, Central Java in 1955. This new Buddhist center, Vihara Buddha Gaya Watugong, became vital Buddhist place for Buddhist activities aside from klenteng. In contrast to colonial times, independence had opened new spaces and opportunities for women to explore their interests. During this period Indonesian Buddhists also instigated new relationships with the state, particularly with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Inter-Asia Dhammic networks and Dhammic connections among Asian Buddhists were visibly strong and vibrant in the 1950s and this led

to the adoption of the ordination of monks trained in Southern/Theravada Buddhist practices in 1953 and 1959. The 1959 ordination is regarded as the pinnacle of the (re)emergence of Buddhism in Indonesia. The event was held in Semarang, Central Java. It was attended by distinguished monastic members or bhikkhu Sangha from South and Southeast Asia countries.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift richt zich op de *actors* en *agencies* in de transnationale Boeddhistische netwerken die een rol speelden in het vormgeven van boeddhisme in Indonesië in de periode 1900-1959. Gebruikmakend van transnationale netwerken als raamwerk, heeft dit proefschrift ten doel om te begrijpen hoe boeddhisme geleidelijk een plaats in de Indonesische samenleving veiligstelde. Door de laat-koloniale en vroeg-postkoloniale periodes als een continuüm te zien waarbinnen het boeddhisme zich wortelde in de Indonesische samenleving verbindt het proefschrift ontwikkelingen die tot nu toe behandeld zijn alsof zij door een breuklijn – de Indonesische onafhankelijkheid - van elkaar gescheiden werden.

Dit proefschrift bepleit dat het moderne boeddhisme dat zich ontwikkelde in de Indonesische archipel een product was van wereldwijde en regionale religieuze transformaties. Van bijzonder groot belang was hierbij de verspreiding van het theravada boeddhisme van Zuid- naar Zuidoost-Azië. In het bijzonder onderzoekt dit proefschrift de dominante rol van leken, boeddhistische monniken en intellectuelen die woonden in en reisden naar koloniaal Indonesië. De bevindingen tonen aan dat vanaf 1920 niet-statelijke actoren een cruciale rol speelden in het tot stand brengen van connecties tussen de mensen die betrokken waren bij de verspreiding van het boeddhisme in koloniaal Indonesië, Zuidoost-Azië, Zuid-Azië en daarbuiten.

In Indonesië waren de *peranakan*-Chinezen de primaire lokale *actors* in dit proces. Hun rol was cruciaal vanaf het begin van de bestudeerde periode tot en met de jaren volgend op Indonesische onafhankelijkheid. De *peranakan*-Chinese gemeenschap kan gezien worden als een “plaats” waar mensen van verschillende achtergronden, die interesse hadden in het boeddhisme, hun ideeën over boeddhisme konden articuleren en met anderen konden communiceren. De *peranakan*-Chinezen waren de voornaamste gemeenschap die van oorsprong de noordelijke traditie (mahayana) van het boeddhisme aanhingen in Indonesië.

Het samenkomen van transnationale boeddhistische netwerken enerzijds en de Indonesische *peranakan*-Chinezen anderzijds had een grote impact op het vormen van boeddhisme in modern Indonesië. Hun treffen was een samenkost van twee verschillende ‘winden’ van het boeddhisme: respectievelijk de zuidelijke (theravada) en de noordelijke (mahayana) winden. De interacties tussen de twee winden genereerde de complexiteit en de unieke kenmerken die karakteristiek waren voor de ontwikkeling van het modern boeddhisme in Indonesië in de vroege twintigste eeuw.

Verscheidene soorten *actors* waren van groot belang in dit proces dat duurde vanaf de late koloniale tijd tot aan 1959. Ten eerste, de Europeanen die behoorden tot internationale organisaties, die aanhangers waren van of verbonden waren met het theravada boeddhisme, zoals de Theosofische Vereniging. Ten tweede, de Europeanen die de internationale boeddhistische organisatie ‘Java Buddhist Association’ oprichtten. Ten derde, de Zuid- en Zuidoost-Aziatische boeddhistische zendelingen uit Sri Lanka en Singapore. Ten slotte, de lokale Indonesiërs, voornamelijk de *peranakan* Chinezen, die het mahayana boeddhisme aanhingen.

De focus van dit proefschrift verschuift vervolgens naar de vraag, hoe de uitoefening van boeddhisme een plek kreeg in de publieke ruimte in Indonesië. Hierin waren de *klenteng* en de Borobudur van cruciaal belang, omdat sommige *klenteng* en de Borobudur een verzamelplaats werden voor door boeddhisten georganiseerde activiteiten, in het bijzonder vanaf de jaren 1930. Deze plekken trokken verschillende groepen aan uit de boeddhistische samenleving en degenen die zich met hen associeerden. De interesses van de Europese gemeenschap en de theosofen draaiden specifiek om de Borobudur en dit had grote invloed op het proces van het herwinnen van de verwaarloosde religieuze betekenis van de Borobudur als tempel. Dit herstel werd met name bereikt door boeddhistische religieuze performativiteit tot stand te brengen bij

de Borobudur, zoals de viering van Vesak, wat in 1927 voor het eerst plaatshad. Aan de andere kant werd de klenteng de centrale plaats voor boeddhistische activiteiten van de *peranakan*-Chinezen.

Een verdere uitkomst van dit promotieonderzoek is het aantonen van de opkomst van partnerschappen en dhamma-connecties tussen de Indonesische boeddhistische samenleving en andere Aziatische regio's, die gecreëerd werden vanaf de koloniale tijd. De verbindingen met boeddhisten uit koloniaal Sri Lanka en Singapore resulteerden in de overdracht van boeddhistische materiële cultuur naar Indonesië, een fenomeen dat niet plaatsvond bij het creëren van banden tussen Indonesische boeddhisten en Westerse/Europese boeddhistische activisten. Deze aanname van boeddhistische materiële cultuur en moderne boeddhistische symbolen bestonden onder meer uit het overnemen van de boeddhistische vlag, boeddhistische standbeelden en het planten van de *bodhi* boom.

De introductie van boeddhistische materiële cultuur bevestigde de positie van boeddhisten in Indonesië, die hiermee onderdeel waren geworden van een bredere context van transnationale opvattingen van het boeddhisme. Voor Indonesische boeddhisten was dit het begin van sterkere dhamma-verbindingen die leidden tot meer vertrouwen in de ontwikkeling van boeddhisme in postkoloniaal Indonesië. Deze inter-Aziatische boeddhistische connecties vormden één van de fundamenteën voor de toekomst van het boeddhisme in Indonesië, in het bijzonder in de jaren 1950 toen boeddhisten in Indonesië officieel het theravada boeddhisme importeerden door de Bhikkhu-ordinantie uit te voeren.

Nadat Indonesië een onafhankelijke staat was geworden, toonde de boeddhistische gemeenschap een andere dynamiek. De meest zichtbare verandering was de afwezigheid van Europeanen in boeddhistische activiteiten en de boeddhistische gemeenschap. Er vond bovendien een instroom plaats van Javaanse en Balinese aanhangers van het boeddhisme en structurele veranderingen vonden plaats in de wijze waarop boeddhistische gemeenschappen georganiseerd waren. Als gevolg van de etnische diversiteit van de boeddhistische gemeenschap, ontstond een nieuwe plaats van samenkomst in 1955 in Semarang, Midden-Java, namelijk de vihara. Dit nieuwe boeddhistische centrum, Vihara Buddha Gaya Watugong, werd een cruciale plek voor boeddhistische activiteiten buiten de klenteng. Daarnaast schiep onafhankelijkheid, in tegenstelling tot de koloniale periode, nieuwe ruimtes en nieuwe kansen voor vrouwen om hun belangen na te streven.

Tijdens deze periode initieerden Indonesische boeddhisten eveneens nieuwe relaties met de staat, in het bijzonder met het Ministerie van Religieuze Zaken. Inter-Aziatische dhamma-netwerken en dhamma-verbindingen tussen Aziatische boeddhisten waren zichtbaar sterk en levendig in de jaren 1950, en leidden tot het in 1953 en 1959 in Indonesië inwijden van monniken die opgeleid waren in het theravadaboeddhisme. De ordinantie van 1959 wordt gezien als het toppunt van de (her)opleving van het boeddhisme in Indonesië. Het evenement werd gehouden in Semarang, Midden-Java. Het werd bijgewoond door hooggeplaatste monniken of bhikkhu Sangha uit Zuid- en Zuidoost-Aziatische landen.

Ringkasan

Disertasi ini berfokus pada aktor dan agensi dalam jejaring Buddhis transnasional yang terlibat dalam pertumbuhan agama Buddha di Indonesia antara tahun 1900 dan 1959. Dengan menggunakan konsep jaringan transnasional, disertasi ini berupaya memahami bagaimana agama Buddha secara bertahap mendapatkan tempat dalam masyarakat Indonesia. Dengan melihat periode akhir masa kolonial dan pasca-kolonial sebagai sebuah kontinum di mana Buddhisme terus berakar, penelitian ini berupaya menghubungkan perkembangan agama Buddha yang sering terputus pada periode kemerdekaan Indonesia.

Argumen utama disertasi ini adalah bahwa agama Buddha berkembang sebagai hasil transformasi global dan regional, khususnya dikarenakan menguatnya Buddhisme Theravada dari Asia Selatan dan Asia Tenggara. Secara khusus, penelitian ini menyelidiki peran dominan orang awam (*laypeople*), misionaris Buddha, dan intelektual yang pada masa itu tinggal dan melakukan perjalanan misi atau ziarah ke wilayah kolonial Indonesia. Dijelaskan dalam disertasi ini bahwa sejak tahun 1920-an, orang sipil (*non-state actor*) memainkan peran penting dalam membangun hubungan antara tokoh-tokoh yang terlibat dalam penyebaran agama Buddha di Indonesia pada masa kolonial, di Asia Selatan, Asia Tenggara, dan lainnya.

Orang Tionghoa Peranakan merupakan agensi lokal utama dalam pertumbuhan agama Buddha modern dalam periode kolonial dan periode setelahnya. Komunitas Tionghoa Peranakan merupakan “tempat” orang-orang dari berbagai latar belakang etnik dan negara asal yang tertarik dengan agama Buddha mengartikulasikan ide-ide mereka. Pada periode yang diteliti ini, komunitas Tionghoa Peranakan merepresentasikan agama Buddha tradisi Utara (Mahayana Buddhisme).

Pertemuan antara jaringan Buddhis Transnational dan Tionghoa Peranakan Indonesia memiliki dampak besar pada pertumbuhan agama Buddha pada masa Indonesia modern. Pertemuan mereka adalah representasi pertemuan dua “angin”: Angin Utara (*Northern Wind*) dan Angin Selatan (*Southern Wind*). Angin Utara menjadi representasi dari Buddhisme tradisi Mahayana dan Angin Selatan sebagai representasi dari Buddhisme tradisi Theravada. Interaksi dari kedua angin ini mengandung kompleksitas dan kekhasan kurasi awal Buddhisme di Indonesia. Beberapa agen yang krusial dalam kurasi Buddhisme di Indonesia adalah orang Eropa yang menjadi anggota organisasi internasional yang secara tradisi berasal dari Angin Selatan seperti organisasi Teosofi (Theosophical Society); orang-orang Eropa yang mendirikan organisasi Buddhis internasional yang disebut Asosiasi Buddhis Java (Java Buddhist Association); misionaris Buddhis Asia Selatan dan Tenggara seperti Sri Lanka kolonial dan Singapura kolonial, dan Tionghoa Peranakan yang mewakili Angin Utara Buddhisme.

Selanjutnya, fokus disertasi ini berlanjut ke bagaimana Buddhisme masuk ke ruang publik dalam bentuk praktik keagamaan pada masa kolonial. Hasilnya adalah beberapa klenteng di Jawa dan Candi Borobudur menjadi tempat sentral untuk kegiatan yang diselenggarakan oleh komunitas Buddhis. Dua situs tersebut menarik para intelektual dan komunitas Buddhis dengan beragam latar belakang. Orang Eropa dan para teosof secara khusus memiliki ketertarikan pada Candi Borobudur dan memiliki peran besar pada proses revitalisasi makna religiusitas atas Borobudur. Untuk mendukung usaha itu, agensi Eropa ini mengkurasi pelaksanaan Waisak tahunan di Candi Borobudur, Waisak pertama diselenggarakan pada tahun 1927. Sedangkan klenteng menjadi tempat sentral bagi Tionghoa Peranakan dan pusat kegiatan Buddhis.

Hal lain yang menonjol dari penelitian ini adalah munculnya kemitraan (*partnership*) dan *Dhammic connection* antara komunitas Buddhis Indonesia dan Buddhis di wilayah Asia lainnya sepanjang akhir masa kolonial dan

setelahnya. Koneksi dengan Buddhis dari Srilanka kolonial dan Singapura kolonial menghasilkan transfer budaya material (*material cultures*) ke Indonesia. Budaya-budaya material Buddhis dan simbol simbol Buddhis modern di antaranya adalah bendera Buddhis, patung-patung Buddha, dan pohon Bodhi.

Pengenalan budaya material Buddhis menegaskan bahwa komunitas Buddhis di Indonesia menjadi bagian dari transnational Buddhisme. Bagi Buddhis di Indonesia ini adalah awal dari *Dhammic connection* yang lebih kuat dan menumbuhkan optimisme terhadap perkembangan Buddhisme di Indonesia pasca-kolonial. Jaringan antar-Asia ini menjadi salah satu landasan kuat bagi masa depan Buddha di Indonesia, terutama pada tahun 1950-an, yaitu pada saat Buddhis di Indonesia secara resmi mengadopsi tradisi Buddha Theravada dengan penahbisan seorang bhikkhu.

Setelah Indonesia menjadi negara baru (*new state*), Buddhis Indonesia menunjukkan dinamika yang berbeda. Dari sisi agensinya, hal yang paling menonjol adalah tidak adanya agen Eropa yang terlibat dalam aktivitas komunitas Buddhis. Kemudian adanya diversitas etnik dalam komunitas, yaitu munculnya orang Jawa dan Bali dalam komunitas Buddha. Mengikuti keberagaman etnis pengikut agama Buddha muncullah tempat baru sebagai pusat kegiatan Buddhis yang disebut vihara di Semarang, Jawa Tengah, pada tahun 1955. Vihara bernama Buddha Gaya Watugong ini menjadi tempat vital baru selain klenteng. Pada era ini, terlihat juga adanya perubahan struktural dalam tubuh komunitas Buddhis. Masa setelah kemerdekaan telah membuka ruang dan peluang baru bagi perempuan untuk mengeksplorasi kapasitas mereka dalam kelompok keberagaman. Hal ini terlihat dari munculnya banyak nama perempuan menjadi kontributor pada majalah Buddhis. Perubahan lain adalah bahwa pada periode ini Buddhis Indonesia secara eksplisit terlihat menjalin hubungan dengan negara, terutama melalui Departemen Agama. *Dhammic networks* antar-Asia dan *dhammic connection* antara Buddhis di Asia terbukti kuat pada tahun 1950-an. Puncaknya adalah pengadopsian tradisi monastik Buddhisme Selatan atau Buddhisme Theravada pada tahun 1953 dan 1959 oleh Buddhis Indonesia. Penahbisan menjadi bhikkhu (*upasampada*) beberapa orang Indonesia dihadiri oleh anggota Sangha (*bhikkhu*) dari negara-negara Asia Tenggara dan Asia Selatan pada tahun 1959.

Curriculum Vitae

Yulianti was born and raised in Indonesia. She received a B.A. in Buddhist Studies from the International Buddhist Missionary University in Yangon, Myanmar in 2005. In 2008, she received an M.A. in Religion and Cross-Cultural Studies from Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia. She received her second M.A. in Religious studies from Florida International University where she was a Henry Luce Foundation Exchange Fellow. In 2012, she was awarded an Encompass scholarship to Leiden University. After the Encompass program, she became one of the Ph.D. researchers in the joint research of Cosmopolis Project between Universiteit Leiden and Universitas Gadjah Mada funded by the Leiden University Fund.

Propositions

1. Buddhism in modern Indonesia emerged as a result of transnational networks consisting of a diverse range of religious agents.
2. This transnational Buddhism was a manifestation of a mode of modernity and cosmopolitanism, which developed within the Buddhist world in the early twentieth century.
3. The agency of laypeople is one of the key characteristics of modern Buddhism. In Indonesia's case of (re)emergence of Buddhism, lay people worked for the most part in curating the new practice of Buddhist traditions.
4. The involvement of laywomen in the making of modern Buddhism indicates progressive momentum in the Indonesian Buddhist community.
5. Studying Buddhism is important for Indonesian history as it sheds light on the history of a large but under-recognized religion community in the country.
6. Combining microhistory with the study of global processes is a highly fruitful approach for historians, as it allows scholars to deeply contextualize and holistically understand a community that undergoes fundamental changes, while being mindful of the people, events and ideas that connect it to the wider world.
7. The historical study of religion shows that claims of religious authenticity are futile, as religions consist of elements that continually change and adapt to new social contexts. Societal debates on religion should focus less on seizing the moral high ground of authenticity and more on finding ways for people of different religious beliefs and practices to co-exist.
8. Religious studies needs to incorporate more historical methodologies by focusing on change over time to the social contexts in which religions exist, while historians should borrow from the conceptual strengths of religious studies. Their merger is the key to methodological improvements for both fields.
9. 2020's coronavirus pandemic has created a worldwide shared experience, a universal coronatime in which all sense and perception of time is distorted.
10. The most important prerequisites for completing a PhD are strong will, patience, and an unrelated hobby.