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

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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.

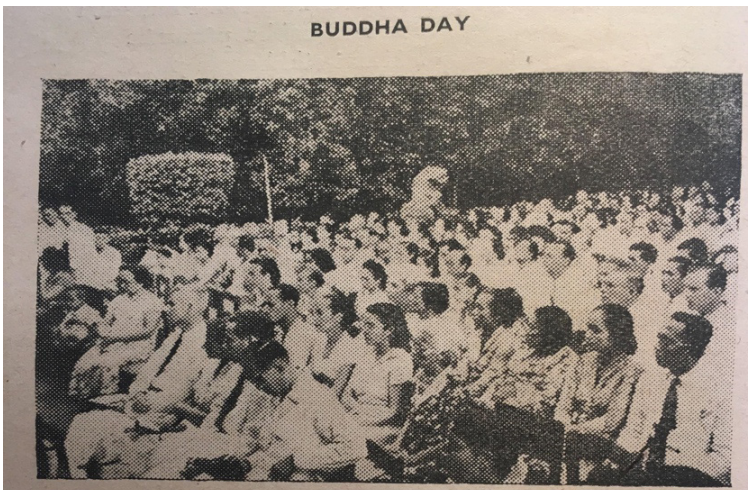


Figure 7.3. Vesak at Klenteng Kim Tek Le, Jakarta (1952), when about 500 people of many nationalities reportedly attended the event. Source: *Waisak Acadha 2496 B.E./1952 C.E.* Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia, Jakarta.

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.)

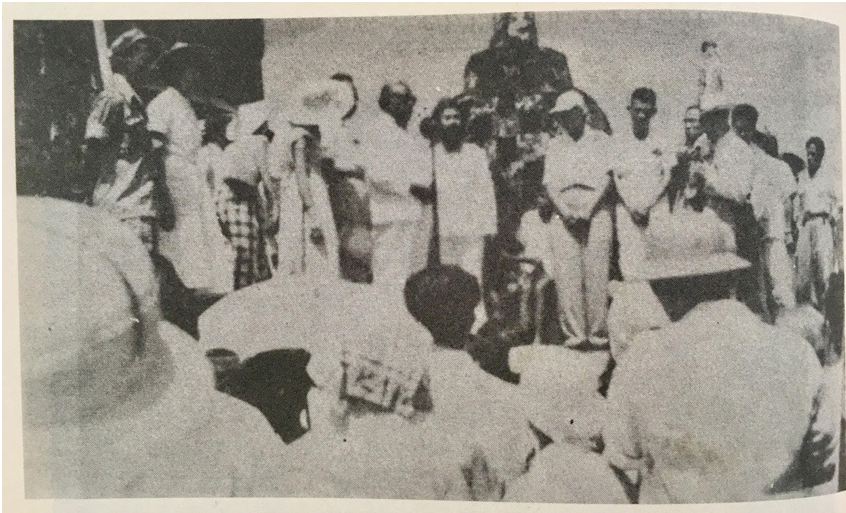


Figure 7.4. Sri Lankan ambassador giving a speech during the Vesak celebration at the Borobudur temple in 1953. Source: *Pengasuh: 30 tahun pengabdian suci Y.A. Maha Nayaka Sthavira Ashin Jinarakkhita*. (Bandung: Panitia HUT Y.A.M.N.S.A Jinarakkhita, 1982). (Photo: collection of Parwati)

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 Guanghai 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 Ruangan 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: Madjallah 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.

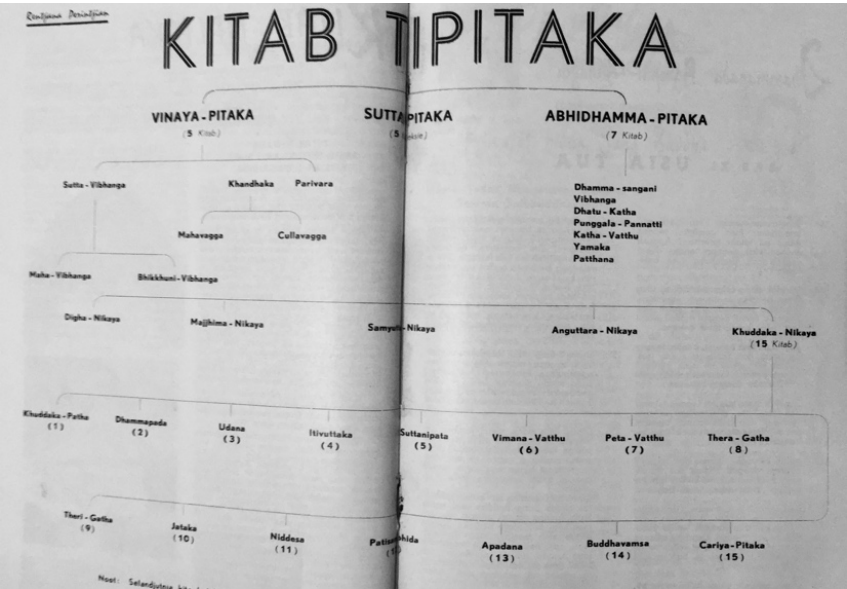


Figure 7.6. Division of Tipitaka Pali. Source: *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 2 (January 1958), 24-25.



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. Mahabbiksu 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.

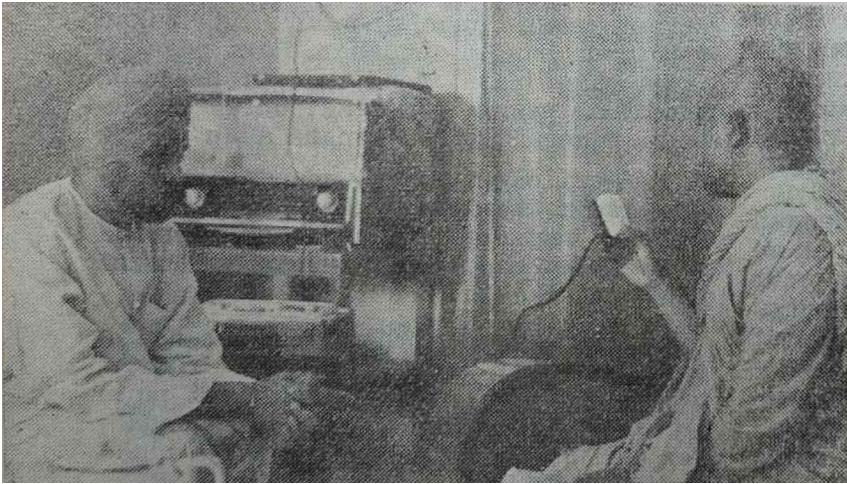


Figure 7.12. Ashin Jinarakkhita visiting the Indian consul, H.E. Sampuran Singh, in Surabaya in 1958. Source: *Buddhis: Madjallah Peladjaran Buddha*, 7 (October 1958), 20.



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.