The Oxford Handbook *of* CONTEMPORARY BUDDHISM

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Edited by

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INTRODUCTION
The Buddhist System in Transition

MICHAEL JERRYSON

In Saint Petersburg, Florida, I visited a Buddhist nun at her meditation center, which simultaneously served as her residence. It was the spring of 2013 and the weather was turning hot and humid. After my visit, the nun accompanied me out. On the way, she showed me a dharma wheel affixed to the dashboard of her car. It was a Tibetan Prayer Wheel that spun around through solar energy. This was the first I had seen of such a device, and it prompted me to think of the ways that technology is not only a religious tool, but also exerts influence over religion.

Buddhists have recited "prayers" or mantras for centuries. In early South Asia, Buddhists uttered recitations that were similar to those of Hindus and Jains. For many mantras, the more you recite them, the greater the benefits. The beliefs about these practices persist to this day. For example, in 1999 I visited the famous Buddhist monastery Erdene Zuu in Mongolia with some Mongol scholars. As we circumambulated a *stupa*, the Mongol scholars chanted a mantra three times. They explained that this recitation helped them accrue merit. Similarly, the practice of uttering mantras can be found outside established monasteries and at pilgrimage sites, such as the Sri Dalada Maligawa in Kandy, Sri Lanka. There, local vendors sell Buddhist meditation beads to visitors and Buddhists on pilgrimages. The beads are a mnemonic device to help practitioners track the number of times they have recited a particular mantra.

While the emphasis on repeating mantras has remained continuous throughout the centuries, the manner of recitation has not. In Tibet, Buddhists wrote their mantras on prayer wheels. With each turning of the wheel, they were "reciting" the mantra. In this way, a person could recite the mantra a hundred times in mere seconds. The method of recitation has changed as well in the twenty-first century. In Saint Petersburg, Florida, a new technology allowed the prayer wheel to spin through solar energy instead of the human hand. One could ponder the recipient of the merit from the Tibetan Solar Energy Prayer Wheel's rotations: Was it the nun or the sun?[1]

Philosophical questions, such as ones about the nature of the Tibetan Solar Energy Wheel, are common as Buddhism changes with modernity. Religion is not a static, monolithic category, but a living, fluid, and diverse assortment of people, beliefs, and practices. *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Buddhism* charts these changes, focusing particularly on the colonial and

postcolonial period. Over the last two hundred years, Buddhists have witnessed incredible transformations, and they often have participated in making them. Many of these changes have had to do with the fluidity and transformations of local, national, regional, and global cultures. The loss of monarchies and the advents of print technology, capitalism, socialism, and the nation-state all have had enormous impacts. One example of this is found in Sri Lanka. In 1815, a 2,300-year-old legacy of monarchs ended with the exile of the last native king, Sri Vikrama Rajasinha. The absence of a monarchy yielded a vacuum of political power. Whereas Sinhalese monarchs used to oversee the protection of Sri Lankan Buddhism and the *sangha* (community of monks), the British desired no hand in this. As Matthew Walton notes in Chapter 29, "Buddhism, Nationalism, and Governance," monks began to take more active roles in politics, which in the early twentieth century led to significant changes within Sinhalese Buddhism.

By the 1800s, religious scriptures were no longer solely hand copied, but printed and mass distributed. Gregory Price Grieve and Daniel Veidlinger point out in Chapter 25 of this volume, "Buddhism and Media Technologies," that the oldest extant printed book is not the Gutenberg Bible, but actually a copy of the Buddhist *Diamond Sutra*. Thus, Buddhist scriptures were part of print technologies from the very beginning. The rise in production of Buddhist texts increased the accessibility of Buddhist doctrine; this, in turn, fueled an elevation in lay Buddhist activity. In countries such as Taiwan and Burma, lay Buddhist organizations sponsored new meditation practices and techniques.

In the early twentieth century, lay Buddhists had not only become more prominent; they also had altered the presence of Buddhist traditions in their areas. For example, in mid-twentieth-century Nepal, wealthy and influential lay Buddhists (Uday) turned away from their traditional Newar Buddhist system and instead supported the newly established Tibetan and Theravada Buddhist traditions, thus reconfiguring the operative Buddhist traditions in Nepal (LeVine and Gellner 2005, 40).

Capitalistic markets and the concomitant rise of commercialization have propelled new uses, distributions, and perceptions of Buddhist images. Lawrence Chua in Chapter 23, "Contemporary Buddhist Architecture: From Reliquary to Theme Park," notes the changing Buddhist views of architecture over the centuries. He cites the *Dhammapada*, in which the Buddha addresses the architect not to celebrate him, but to admonish him. While this was an earlier view of architects and their work, it changed in the contemporary period. Buddhists are concerned with reconciling two programs: a monumental program that is focusing on the dissemination of liturgical doctrine through symbolism, and a second program focused on the needs of the lay community.

Political ideologies have had similar impacts on Buddhism. Across Asia, countries including China, Mongolia, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos experienced successful socialist revolutions that quickly turned against the Buddhist monks who had supported their nascent beginnings. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, some of these countries began to appropriate Buddhism in new ways. For instance, Mario Poceski in Chapter 4, "Contemporary Chinese Buddhist Traditions," details the ways in which the Chinese government displayed no compunctions about using Buddhism for its own purposes or to realize internal political objectives. In Chapter 9, "Contemporary Vietnamese Buddhism," Alexander Soucy notes a slightly different adoption of Buddhism in Vietnam. During the 1980s, the Vietnamese communist government enacted their own version of Glasnost in which Buddhism became one of the staples of state rhetoric. Through their work, Buddhism became a principal ingredient in what it meant to be Vietnamese.

While states are rooted in bureaucratic and military infrastructure, the more recent popular component has been imagined à la Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an imagined community. In this manner, nation-states of the twentieth century sought ways to nurture a shared sense of identification with the nation. This was hardly a new phenomenon. States have done this for centuries. As Max Weber explains, "The belief in tribal kinship, regardless of whether it has any objective foundation, can have important consequences especially for the formation of a political community" (1961, 305). Belief is critical to the imagined kinship. For these emerging nation-states in the late nineteenth century, religion became a method of uniting social groups and legitimating their sense of shared national identity.

Although some scholars criticize approaches that focus on the relationship between the nation-state and Buddhist traditions (e.g., Payne 2013), it is a costly miscalculation to ignore or to undervalue national influences on Buddhist traditions in the contemporary period. Dramatic changes have taken place since the seventeenth century; these necessitate an examination into regional and national particularities. One excellent example is the role of language in Buddhist traditions. By the seventeenth or eighteenth century, vernacular-language literatures in Southeast Asia had become more "empire-specific." Historian Victor Lieberman succinctly explains, "While in the Theravada world such works used Burmese and various forms of Tai, especially capital dialects, in lieu of Pali or Sanskrit, in Vietnam demotic writing systems increasingly supplemented Chinese characters" (2003, 59). Hence, although transnational elements such as the languages Sanskrit, Pali, or Mandarin may have helped transmit and spread Buddhist scriptures across Asia, they were replaced by regional and national languages. In fact, such was the case with Buddhist artifacts, beliefs, and everyday practices.

Volume Overview

Over the last two hundred years, nation-states' normative religions have become connected with the nationalized languages, customs, and traditions. For countries that have had a politically strong Buddhist base, Buddhism often becomes treated as the de facto national religion. These examples strikingly demonstrate some of the ways in which nation-state building has dramatically transformed Buddhists and their traditions.

In light of these influences, the volume's Part I, "Regions," contains twenty-one chapters that address Buddhist traditions within particular geographic regions. The majority of chapters in this section are devoted to countries with a long history of Buddhist influence. Some of these countries are known globally for their specific Buddhist traditions, such as Japan, China, and Thailand. Other countries have equally important Buddhist traditions, but they are less known in Western accounts, such as Vietnam and Bhutan. Each of the chapters in Part I briefly reviews the ways in which Buddhism was introduced to the country, and then identifies the changes in Buddhist traditions leading up to the colonial period. After covering this background, the focus is on the Buddhist activity from the colonial period to the present.

Whereas many countries in South, East, Central, and Southeast Asia have had a prolonged history of Buddhist activity, some areas of the world have not had sustained exposure to Buddhism on either a political or a social level. Nonetheless, these regions are important in charting the activity of Buddhists in the contemporary period. For instance, Malaysia has been a Muslim-dominated country for the last six hundred years. However, as Jeffrey

Samuels notes, Malay Buddhists coexisted with their fellow Malay Muslims throughout this period. In Chapter 13, "Contemporary Buddhism in Malaysia," Samuels traces this diversity to the fifteenth century. As late as the fifteenth century, the area was part of the Buddhist kingdom Langkasuka, and the kingdom has archaeological evidence of its activities dating back to the second century C.E.

In a similar fashion, several chapters of this volume discuss Buddhist activity within larger regional contexts. Latin America, Europe, and Oceania may not possess countries with intense Buddhist activity, but as they represent large regional territories, they serve as important locations of change for Buddhists. For example, Michel Clasquin-Johnson explains in Chapter 18, "Buddhism in Africa," that while Buddhists had been on the African continent as early as the 200s C.E., due to a lack of state support the Buddhist traditions attenuated and died out. However, trends in the twenty-first century indicate new developments for Buddhist traditions in Africa. Discussing Latin America in Chapter 15, Cristina Rocha provides completely new territory for the study of Buddhism. She describes how, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Cuban government turned to the Japanese Buddhist organization Soka Gakkai International for support. As a result, today Soka Gakkai of the Republic of Cuba (SGRC) is the only Buddhist organization with legal status in Cuba.

While some Buddhist activities have been heavily impacted by national and regional interests, there are Buddhist activities that transcend the nation-state and regional interests. The last two chapters in "Regions" address Buddhism's transnational and global framework. In Chapter 20, "Diasporic Buddhisms and Convert Communities," John Nelson reviews diasporic Buddhist movements and cultural adaptations. In Chapter 21, "Buddhist International Organizations," Brooke Schedneck examines the proliferation of Buddhist organizations over the last two hundred years. Part II of the volume, "Modalities," contains twenty chapters that explicate themes endemic to the study of contemporary Buddhism. The structure of the volume avoids the traditional problems embedded in separating Buddhist traditions based upon doctrine. As recent scholars have noted, such taxonomies provide more complications than clarifications. Stanley Tambiah explains in his treatment of Buddhist relics and images,

> It would seem that when we fully understand the symbolism of Buddhist architecture, myths, rites, and texts as they obtained in the past and obtain today in Southeast Asia, the classic Mahāyāna-Theravāda distinctions become sometimes, if not always, difficult or irrelevant to impose on the complex reality and varying circumstances—either because both traditions have interacted at various times or because they have elaborated similar conceptions. (1984, 205)

Thus, some chapters in "Modalities" track the various ways in which Buddhists engage with tantra, education, business, healing, and death practices. For instance, in Chapter 32, "Buddhist Healing and Taming in Tibet," Barbara Gerke looks at Tibetan Buddhist rituals that enhance the potency of medicines, as well as protect the pharmacy and the people working in it from accidents. Mark Rowe's Chapter 35, "Buddhism and Death," discusses the other end of the spectrum of life-sustaining practices. Rowe explains that Siddhartha's encounter with death is synonymous with the fundamental Buddhist teaching of impermanence. In this way, death serves as both a teacher and as something to be overcome.

Other chapters in "Modalities" look at the ways in which Buddhists interact with important social engagements, such as peace-making and violence, nationalism and governance, ecology, and science. In Chapter 26, "Contemporary Buddhism and Ecology," Susan

Darlington examines the Buddhist discourse on ecology. Darlington untangles the problematic ways in which some Buddhist practices are often perceived as ecologically friendly. Francisca Cho underscores the importance of comparison in Chapter 40, "Buddhism and Science as Ethical Discourse." She notes how recent developments in evolutionary biology, cognitive science, and quantum physics are engendering hope for a new spiritualistic science and recognizes that this approach finds a compatible partner in Buddhism.

Additional chapters in "Modalities" examine Buddhism and identities, such as gender, sexual orientation, and race and ethnicity. The female monk Chao-Hwei is one of the few globally recognized Buddhist monastics who stand up for minority sexual rights. Unfortunately, Chao-Hwei is hardly known in the West because she writes exclusively in Chinese. In Chapter 38, "Buddhism and Sexual Orientation," Hsiao-Lan Hu reviews Chao-Hwei's work and reminds us that the Buddhist doctrine (and the model of the monks) is not directly applicable to lay practice and behavioral norms, particularly in defense of heteronormative agendas. In Chapter 37, "Buddhism, Race, and Ethnicity," Joseph Cheah addresses the problems of normativity with regard to Whiteness. Cheah examines the way Buddhists are categorized in the United States to underscore the racial formations that instruct Buddhist identities.

The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Buddhism covers the dynamic and fluid environments for Buddhists in the contemporary period, as well as the important patterns and themes across Buddhist traditions. Each chapter highlights the history behind Buddhism's transformations and the ways in which Buddhists have adapted their practices and techniques. Buddhism is growing in the twenty-first century. This is largely due to its adaptable and inclusive ideological infrastructure. One effective manner of encapsulating this dynamism and fluidity is by referring to Buddhism as a system.

Conclusion: The Buddhist System

This volume provides one of the most extensive and comprehensive collections of essays on Buddhism in the contemporary period. This is no small feat. Buddhism is an incredibly diverse religion. It is so diverse that scholars have referred to it as "Buddhisms" (Ling 1993, 1) or have treated it in its regional variations as "Buddhist traditions" (e.g., Holt 1991; Schober 1997; Buswell 2005). Indeed, as these chapters demonstrate, there are few shared characteristics that permeate the various Buddhist traditions.

One Western penchant is to chart and distinguish religions based upon their religious scriptures or doctrine. However, there is no closed canon in Buddhist traditions. There are agreed-upon categories for doctrine—in effect, structural similarities. Even in Southeast Asia, which has a collection of scriptures called the Pali Canon, there are regional and local variations of which scriptures are included in such categories. For instance, the Japanese Tendai and Nichiren Buddhists exalt the importance of one particular scripture called *The Lotus Sutra*, but this scripture is largely unknown to Buddhists in Southeast Asia. A common means of discerning a Buddhist identity is to witness a person seeking refuge in the Three Jewels: the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. However, this foundational element in Buddhism also varies. Matthew Kapstein notes that in Tibetan Buddhism, "Often, one's lama, or guru, is added to this universal Buddhist trinity as a fourth refuge" (2006, 216). For Tibetan Buddhists, the lama or guru serves as the gateway to the three other refuges.

Dietary practices also differ among the traditions. In Central Asia, Tibetans and Mongolians believe that eating small animals is wrong because it takes the death of many lives to feed one person. On the other hand, Buddhists in most parts of Southeast Asia and in Sri Lanka argue that it is wrong to eat large animals because the larger the animal, the more they feel pain. In addition, there are Chinese Buddhists, who often commit themselves to a vegan diet.

While many Buddhists venerate *bodhisattvas*—awakened beings—such beings may look different or function differently based upon the region or locality they come from. The variability becomes more prevalent in the veneration of local or regionally recognized monks who have passed. For instance, the bodhisattva of compassion is called Avalokiteshvara and is commonly known throughout Buddhist traditions. While he is often depicted with a thousand arms to help those who suffer, in Chinese Buddhist traditions, the bodhisattva is depicted as a female, Guan Yin. For Tibetans, Avalokiteshvara is their Dalai Lama. This widespread diversity has led some scholars to question the effectiveness of using the terms "Buddhism" or "Buddhisms."

Timothy Fitzgerald remarks on his difficulty to differentiate Buddhism from "indigenous cultural traditions." He posits "This notion that Buddhism is an entity with an essence that can be described and listed with other such entities, the Religions or the world religions, can be described as an essentialist fallacy" (2000, 27). Indeed, any attempts to discover an "essence" would prove difficult among the vast assortment of Buddhist beliefs and practices. Buddhists always have included "indigenous cultural traditions."

Speaking to this point, Alexander Soucy explains in Chapter 9 oncontemporary Vietnamese Buddhism, "This seamless unity between Buddhism and belief in spirits, as well as Buddhism as a way to advance worldly interests, should not be understood as an addition to Buddhism, or even as a degeneration of Buddhism from a pristine original Buddhist tradition." Instead of supporting the premise of an "authentic" or "original Buddhism," Vietnamese Buddhist traditions provide yet another instance of Buddhism *in* culture. Thus, it may work better to see Buddhism as a theoretical construct that becomes "tradition" through the imputation of culture. To disentangle Buddhism from its "indigenous cultural tradition" would be the same as separating a skeleton from its flesh. It would become a dead, abstract quantity, one that cannot shed light on lived and grounded experiences.

The dialectic between religious doctrine and culture aside, there is no mistake about the modern construction of the word "Buddhism." Anne Blackburn addresses this issue head on in her analysis of religion, kinship, and Buddhism: "As the recent work of so-called post-Orientalist historians and anthropologists so clearly indicates, it is no longer possible to ignore the historically conditioned quality of a term like 'Buddhism'" (1993, 15). It was only in the nineteenth century that the Greek suffix "-ism" was coined to mint the term "Buddhism." Indeed, as Nathan McGovern notes in Chapter 41, "The Contemporary Study of Buddhism," Orientalist and more general Western presuppositions about the nature of "religion" shaped the academic trajectory of Buddhist studies in its early inchoation. But all terms have constructed origins, and most contemporary identities come from recent troubled pasts. To disown Buddhists from their rights to call themselves "Buddhists" because of the term's modern construction would be more destructive than helpful.

Although the term "Buddhism" or "Buddhist" is part of people's worldviews in the twenty-first century, it is best to abandon the pursuit of "essences" for more profitable directions. Speaking to this direction, historian of religion Jonathan Z. Smith applies the polythetic mode of classification for the study of religion. He explains, "In this new mode, a class is

defined as consisting of a set of properties, each individual member of the class to possess 'a large (but unspecified) number' of these properties, with each property to be possessed by a 'large number' of individuals in the class, but no single property to be possessed by every member of the class" (1982, 4). One relatively new and fertile approach that works in tandem with Smith's call for a polythetic mode of classification treats Buddhism as a system.

Francisca Cho and Richard King Squier introduce the approach of systems theory and religion in their 2013 article, "Religion as a Complex and Dynamic System." In it, they remark about Clifford Geertz's lasting insights into the study of religion. Because of Geertz's essays "Religion as a Cultural System," and "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," of the 1970s, religious studies scholars have moved toward the examination of particularities and difference. This focus on thick descriptions unfortunately led to the reduction in comparative projects, a primary artery of information for the study of religion. Cho and Squier suggest the use of systems theory to acknowledge boundaries. The systems they suggest are porous, complex, and constantly changing in order to allow for a particularism *with* comparison capabilities. They explain,

> We are concerned instead with the basic premises of systems theory and what they have to say about religion as an object of study. We first look at what systems theory has to say about identifying *boundaries* between religions in order to get past atomistic conceptions. We then look at the idea of *complexity* and the limitations it imposes on our ability to exhaustively describe anything. This encourages us to rethink particularism and resuscitate the pursuit of larger scale analysis based on the identification of patterns. (2013, 361)

Thus, instead of referencing the religion in the singular "Buddhism," or the plural "Buddhisms," or as "Buddhist traditions," the use of the "Buddhist system" would allow us to look at particular Buddhist characteristics and engender comparisons with other religions and ideologies.

In addition to the comparisons present in these chapters, this volume can be placed in conversation with other *Handbooks*, such as *The Oxford Handbook of Theology and Modern European Thought*. Doing so will illuminate important contours and particularities. Such directions will only deepen the incredible contributions these chapters make to the study of Buddhism in the contemporary period.

Note

1. On the Amazon India website for the item, the product description explains, "Scriptures were installed inside the prayer wheel, often turn [*sic*] it may bring peace, auspicious, victory, development, and accumulate immeasurable qualities. A beautiful gift item." http://www. amazon.in/Tej-Gifts-Tibetan-Energy-Prayer/dp/B00L9EKGQO. Accessed August 10, 2015.

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PART I

REGIONS

South Asian

CONTEMPORARY SRI LANKAN BUDDHIST TRADITIONS

MAHINDA DEEGALLE

CONTEMPORARY Sri Lanka, even after enduring nearly three decades of ethnic unrest (1983–2009), civil war, and fierce violence—the worst so far encountered in the 2,500-year-long history of this tiny island nation (of an area of 65,610 sq. km. or 25,330 sq. mi., located in the Indian Ocean)—is still home to a vibrant, forward-looking, ambitious "living" Buddhist tradition. The Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition presents itself as deeply concerned about the survival of its heritage for the benefit of future generations and the welfare of the Buddhist world at large. In fulfilling that historic mission, as late as 1947, the *Kalaniya Declaration of Independence* affirmed the importance of the sangha of Sri Lanka as "the Guardians of the Life and Liberty" and "the Sponsors" of the well-being and happiness of Sri Lankan society (Rahula 1974, 134). In every sense of the term, the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition is a "living" tradition facing a range of challenges posed by modernity, globalization, increasing secularism, demands for alternative forms of governance and separatism, and exposure to the pressures of intruding multinational corporations, in addition to the growing impact and pressure of evangelical movements. In the midst of all of these modern challenges, what makes contemporary Sri Lanka a living Buddhist tradition is that Buddhism still remains an important part of people's lives, whether they are monastics or laypeople. As in the past, Buddhism still continues to shape people's thinking, attitudes toward life, and views on human flourishing.

EARLY HISTORY OF SRI LANKAN BUDDHISM

Reading back to the history of the island, the dominant contemporary Buddhist tradition in Sri Lanka today, Theravada (the school of elders), makes a strong historical claim of being the oldest surviving living Buddhist tradition in the world, tracing its introduction to Sri Lanka in the third century B.C.E. as one of the outcomes of the third council held under the patronage of Emperor Asoka (Sanskrit: Ashoka; r. 268–232 B.C.E.). The chronicle literature supports this claim of authenticity and the historicity of the Buddhist tradition.[1]

As a monastic tradition, the central pillar of the Theravada is the assertion of the importance of the received Buddhist transmission in the form of monastic ordination, identified

as *upasampada* (higher ordination). The monastic lineage of the three existing Sri Lankan Buddhist fraternities is traced back to the time of the Buddha, using the pupillary succession as the link. The tradition holds that the monastic lineage of Theravada in Sri Lanka begins with the patriarch Arahant Mahakassapa and the two chief disciples of the Buddha— Arahant Sariputta and Arahant Moggallana. In the third century B.C.E., during the time of King Devanampiyatissa, Arahant Mahinda passed down that ancient lineage to Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka that lineage has been passed down through higher ordinations performed in the Mahavihara (Great Monastery).[2]

In difficult times when political instability was strong, the monastic community in Sri Lanka was very much concerned with religious purity in terms of protecting and preserving the "word of the Buddha" (Pali: *buddhavacana*). Due to the demand and pressure of the monastic community, on several occasions the monarchy and nobles took steps to reintroduce the pure form of monastic ordination tradition from overseas.

Periods of occupations of the island by invaders from South India and the West had a significant impact on Buddhist monastic practice. To some extent, due to external factors and pressure from outside, the tradition of higher ordination lineage itself was lost on several occasions. The Chola invasions in 993 C.E. and 1070 C.E. led to the shifting of the nation's first capital from Anuradhapura in the dry zone to the east to Polonnaruwa (Rahula 1956). Western colonial occupation of Sri Lanka began with the Portuguese in the sixteenth century (1505 C.E.). From March 15, 1815, to February 4, 1948, Great Britain controlled the entire country. With regard to monastic practices, the chronicles record that at times it was difficult to find even four higher ordained monastics to perform the higher ordination rituals in admitting new recruits for full membership to the sangha.

In the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, the royalty initiated several purification efforts with the support of monastic hierarchy. Both monastic and lay communities were always concerned with monastic practice in order to ensure purity. Reforming the practices of the laity has been a minor concern. While monastic leaders of the time took initial steps for such renewal efforts, the royalty who had established authority over the island were instrumental in realizing the successful implementation of those purification efforts. Among many purification efforts, one of the most outstanding achievements was the purification implemented by King Parakramabahu I (r. 1153–1186 C.E.). The *katikavata*s (monastic laws of code of conduct), compiled much later, from the twelfth to eighteenth centuries (Ratnapala 1971), were the tangible physical evidence of the purification efforts. They contain the laws of the Buddhist sangha in Sri Lanka. The laws were implemented within the monastic community with royal sanctions and patronage.

CENTRAL AUTHORITY OF THERAVADA MONASTICISM AND DIVERGENCE OF BUDDHIST OPINIONS

Buddhist monasticism, which began in its simplest form as an itinerant community in ancient India in the sixth century B.C.E., took firm root in the ancient capital of

Anuradhapura (city of Anuradha) during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa ("Tissa who is beloved by gods," ca. 250–210 B.C.E.) (Rahula 1956).

The post-canonical Pali chronicles of the Sri Lankan tradition—the *Mahavamsa* (The Great Chronicle) and *Dipavamsa* (The Chronicle of the Island), written by the Buddhist monastics in the late fourth to fifth century C.E.—record the arrival of Arahant Mahinda and his sister Arahant Sanghamitta, both considered to be offsprings of Emperor Asoka (Mahanama Thera 1950). As the tradition recalls, the arrival of the mission of Arahant Mahinda was a result of the resolution made by Venerable Mahamoggaliputta at the conclusion of the Third Buddhist Council held at Pataliputra (modern-day Patna) in India. The chronicles claim that missions were sent to eight destinations, and one of these regions was Lanka (Mahanama Thera 1950).

In historical terms, the dispatch of the eight *dhammaduta* (friend of *dhamma*) missions was an important milestone. By laying down basic foundations, it paved the way for Buddhism to become a world religion in the subsequent centuries. Prior to Emperor Asoka, Buddhism was very much limited to the middle region of the Gangetic valley. Efforts of organized dissemination activities of Buddhism through *dhamma* missions with *dhammadutas* were previously unknown, as was the intention of converting new nations to Buddhism. Emperor Asoka's and Venerable Mahamoggaliputta's far-reaching vision of reaching out to new nations was something quite unexpected.

These Asoka missions of the post–Third Council are likely to have generated a global vision for Buddhism. They enabled the spreading of Buddhism to widely different regions of Asia and beyond. On the basis of literary analysis and linguistic study, there are recent claims in Sri Lanka that Buddhism might have reached even far regions such as modern-day Iran and Saudi Arabia.

A number of inscriptions discovered from vastly distant and remote areas of his kingdom testify Emperor Asoka's global vision. When one considers the scattered physical evidence of the Asokan inscriptions, it is surprising to witness Emperor Asoka's eagerness to reach out to diverse people and to communicate with people who lived in distant regions. One of Emperor Asoka's inscriptions, entitled "Against Aggression and Tension Between States: Kalinga Edict II," states,

> Unconquered peoples along the borders of my dominions may wonder what my disposition is toward them. My only wish with respect to them is that they should not fear me, but trust me; that they should expect only happiness from me, not misery; that they should understand further that I will forgive them for offenses which can be forgiven; that they should be induced by my example to practice Dharma; and that they should attain happiness in this world and the next.
>
>   . . . Having instructed you and informed you of my will and my unshakable resolution and commitment, I will appoint officials to carry out this program in all the provinces. You are able to inspire the border peoples with confidence in me and to advance their welfare and happiness in this world and the next. By doing so, you will also attain heaven and help me discharge my debts to the people.
>
>   This edict has been inscribed here so that my officials will work at all times to inspire the peoples of neighboring countries with confidence in me and to induce them to practice Dharma. (Nikam and McKeon 1959, 53–54)

This Asokan edit invokes the power of *dhamma* and its central role in the governance of the Mauryan Empire. Emperor Asoka's commitment to the *dhamma* was extended throughout

the empire by employing ministers to carry out the *dhamma* program. Asoka's unwavering conviction that the *dhamma* has the potential to generate happiness in his subjects is asserted strongly, and clearly illustrates his commitment to reach out to distant regions and people. His innovative strategies, inscriptions, and introduction of the Brahmi script are quite powerful given the time he lived and the effectiveness shown in using them for a productive cause.

On the basis of chronicle accounts, the scholarship in the Sri Lankan tradition has long asserted the importance of Asokan missions for the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka. This assumption maintains that when the Asokan missions arrived in Sri Lanka there were no active Buddhist communities there. The traditional Pali chronicle accounts undergird this view. The overwhelming consensus is that Sri Lanka's history, as well as its development as a nation with the primacy of the Sinhala ethnic group, begins only with the arrival of Buddhism. The chronicles highlight the centrality of the arrival of Asokan missions for the development of Sri Lanka.

Recent archaeological excavations of Sri Lanka's hinterlands seem to contest this traditional opinion and point to a different direction. Field research conducted by Raj Somadeva (2014, 2015) shows the possibility of the historical existence of some knowledge of Buddhism in the island prior to the arrival of Asokan missions. His contention with regard to the notion of Giri Dipa (the name of a territory, literally "the hilly island") is worth scholarly attention (Somadeva 2015). The Pali chronicles maintained that the historical Buddha expelled and confined the native groups to a place called Giri Dipa and preached the *dhamma* to them. An archaeological survey in the deep hinterland areas of the wet lowlands covering the northeastern part of contemporary Sri Lanka raises issues of the presence of pre-Buddhist legacies and knowledge of Buddhism prior to the formal introduction of Buddhism. Sri Lanka's archaeological remains suggest a history extending over 2,500 years. Centuries before the Common Era, hunting humans were transformed into farmers; then they were converted to become Buddhists in the Balangoda region (Somadeva 2014). New archaeological research indicates an extensive history inside Sri Lanka, well beyond what was anticipated by previous historical research.

According to the Pali chronicles, with the arrival of first Buddhist missionaries (Pali: *dhammaduta*) headed by Arahant Mahinda in Mihintale, Buddhism began to spread to other parts of Sri Lanka from Anuradhapura. For nearly thirteen centuries, Anuradhapura remained the fountainhead for Buddhist communities on the island. Being located at the heart of the ancient city of Anuradhapura, the Mahavihara occupied the central position in the history of Theravada Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia.

During the thirteen centuries of its long life span as the Lanka's capital, the city of Anuradhapura remained the home of three prominent Buddhist monastic fraternities: the Mahavihara, Abhayagiri, and Jetavana. These fraternities (or Buddhist brotherhoods), which emerged gradually in the capital city and were identified as *nikaya*s by the Pali chronicles, held unique features both in terms of doctrinal interpretations and liturgical innovations in the development of the Theravada tradition on the island. They were primarily large residential, educational, and liturgical complexes of the Buddhist sangha, with physical spaces dedicated to sacred objects (Sin.: *pujaniya vastu*), such as the Bodhi tree associated with the historical Buddha, which are venerated by the pious even today. Being the earliest monastic establishment in Anuradhapura, tracing its origins to the time of the formal arrival of

Buddhism in the third century B.C.E., the Mahavihara held a privileged position throughout Sri Lankan history in terms of posturing and strengthening the life of the Theravada school. It held both religious and intellectual authority in terms of the practice of Buddhism, lifestyle, and discipline of Buddhist monastics, and the ownership of relics such as the Buddha's tooth and the words of the Buddha as Tripitaka. When the sixth-century Pali commentator Buddhaghosa arrived in Anuradhapura with the intention of composing commentaries to the Pali canon, he had to prove his competency in the task to the Mahavihara monastic authorities before obtaining access to the textual tradition preserved in the Mahavihara tradition (Adikaram 1946).

Political upheaval in the history of Sri Lanka had some negative influences on the activities of Buddhist establishments. The literary and inscription evidence suggests that the Mahavihara's predominant position as the headquarters of Theravada Buddhist life was weakened at certain periods due to political threats of invasions and conquests. Nevertheless, it flourished as the preeminent center in spreading Theravada Buddhist doctrine and monastic practices for a longer period beginning from the third century B.C.E. As the capital city, Anuradhapura had many important Buddhist sacred sites. These major holy sites are identified as *atamasthana* (eight sacred sites). The most prominent sites were Thuparama, Ruvanvelisaya, and Srimahabodhi.

For the first time in its long history, Mahavihara monasticism faced a severe challenge when King Vattagamani Abhaya (r. ca. 89–77 B.C.E.) constructed the Abhayagiri Vihara in the vicinity of Mahavihara. In the monastic lifestyle, this royal donation marked the beginning of offering properties like temples to specific Buddhist monks for personal reasons, in this case for support in exile during the war. This personal donation created a rift between the monks of the Mahavihara and those who moved to Abhayagiriya. Since then, for centuries, Abhayagiriya dominated the religious landscape in the country, rising to prominence by seeking royal patronage and by making liturgical and doctrinal innovations, as well as being liberal and quite open to new ideas such as the worship of the *bodhisattva*s, veneration of relics, and entertaining influential Mahayana views that came from overseas (Mudiyanse 1967; Hettiaratchi and Kulatunge 1993). Petty disputes in the monastic communities of the two fraternities later led to the destruction of the most prestigious Mahavihara by King Mahasena (r. ca. 274–301). After destroying the Mahavihara, King Mahasena built the monastic fraternity Jetavana Vihara within the boundary walls of the Mahavihara. Though public pressure forced King Mahasena to reconstruct the Mahavihara, it never reassumed the preeminent position that it once held until the unification of the three monastic fraternities by King Parakramabahu I (1153–1186) in the Polonaruwa period.

As the Pali chronicles such as the *Mahavamsa* record, the Theravada point of view traditionally represented by the Mahavihara was occasionally challenged, in both doctrinal and social terms, in later years by the growth and formidable influence of non-conservative Theravada views. This was perhaps shaped by South Asian continental philosophical positions, such as those found in the Mahayana (Great Vehicle), which is alleged to have some sympathy and greater reception from the later established rival and competitive monastic fraternity (Pali: *nikaya*) at the Abhayagiri Temple in the vicinity of the Mahavihara (Mudiyanse 1967; Deegalle 1998a, 1998b, 1999). Though the degree and the exact shape of the presence of Mahayana thought at the Abhayagiri Temple are contested, it is affirmed that the central authority of the Mahavihara as the headquarters and fountainhead of the Theravada

as a religious establishment was significantly challenged, first by the rival monastery of the Abhayagiri monks, and then a few centuries later with visible royal support to the Jatavana monastery and an explicit intention of dismantling the Mahavihara.

The Theravada tradition holds that the Mahavihara was faithful in preserving the "word of the Buddha" (Pali: *buddhavacana*) as found in the texts of the Pali canon. In contrast, the latter two fraternities—Abhayagiri and Jetavana—were more liberal in their approach to the Buddha's teachings; they were more receptive to novel ideas and external influences. The dominant tradition maintains that both Abhayagiri and Jetavana, as rival fraternities of the Mahavihara, were ready to embrace foreign influences, in particular, Mahayana religious ideas and tantric popular practices, against the conservative standing of the Mahavihara. As a result of these different religious and philosophical orientations of the three fraternities, a more appealing, cosmopolitan, and popular devotional religiosity was created in Sri Lanka that reached far and wide.

Archaeological excavations carried out at Abhayagiri and Jetavana within the last few decades support the existence of a tolerant and syncretic religious approach. These newer fraternities appear to have incorporated Mahayana sutras such as the *Pancavimsatisahasrika Prajñaparamita Sutra* and the *Kasyapa Parivarta* into their religious literary corpus (Hinüber 1984; Jayasuriya 1988). They also embraced tantric mantras (ritual formulas used in chanting) and *dharani* (mnemonic devices often identified as spells used for protection) into their liturgy. They adopted atypical square-shaped terraced architectural features in constructing stupas that differed from the traditional architectural frames found in Sri Lanka (Prematilleke and Silva 1968; Hettiaratchi and Kulatunge 1993).

The first capital to be established in Sri Lanka was located in Anuradhapura (Mahanama Thera 1950). It was stable and flourished for a longer period, from the fifth century B.C.E. to the mid-eleventh century. Due to foreign invasions from southern India, the ancient capital was forced to move from Anuradhapura to Polonnaruwa, in the southeast of the island. Polonnaruwa was established as the capital in the year 1055 C.E. Unlike Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa was short-lived (1055–1235). With the change of the location of the capital, several important Buddhist monastic centers, such as Alahana Pirivena and Jetavana monastery, re-emerged in the medieval capital Polonnaruwa. Alahana Pirivena, a monastic complex that King Parakramabahu 1 (reigned 1153–1186) established on a cremation ground (thus the name Alahana) served as a monastic educational center. The eight *ayatana*s (large monasteries), which had formal affiliations with the three monastic fraternities (Mahavihara, Abhayagiri, and Jetavana) in Anuradhapura, became prominent in monastic life and education. When the capital shifted from Anuradhapura to Polonnaruwa, the Mahavihara, the first and foremost Theravada Buddhist center, also moved to the new capital. Its prestige as an educational and religious institution extended to Southeast Asia in the medieval period (Sirisena 1978), and its power gradually ascended over the years. With strong associations with the state and kingship of the island, Sri Lankan monastic institutions began to accumulate wealth and monastic property since the second century B.C.E., when Abhayagiriya, the second greatest monastery of influence in the capital, was offered to a single Buddhist monk as a personal gift of gratitude by the king, as noted earlier. The accumulation of wealth brought new developments in the life of the sangha and their relationships with laity (Gunawardana 1979). The loss of monastic wealth and the political instability caused by foreign invasions from South India weakened the life and institutions of the sangha. Monastic rivalry that

existed earlier among the three fraternities in the capital gradually disappeared with the unification of the sangha by King Parakramabahu I under the leadership of Mahavihara. This reunification also generated a tolerant attitude toward each other and assimilation and mutual borrowings from each other's practices and liturgies.

Even after moving to Polonnaruwa, the Mahavihara was able to maintain its scholarly standards and monastic practices because of its strong hold within the indigenous tradition, as well as royal support. In contrast, the Abhayagiri fraternity faced difficulties in maintaining its international contacts, particularly due to unstable political conditions at home and problems of oceanic travel. Receiving inspiration externally from abroad was not possible at that time because Indian Buddhism had been severely weakened. At the very end of the Anuradhapura period, the Chola invasions that occurred in 981 and 1017 caused serious difficulties in traveling abroad. When Magha (r. 1215–1236) invaded Sri Lanka, the political turmoil eroded the sangha's fortunes as well as the healthy survival of Buddhism (Liyanagamage 1968). The fatal blow of those invasions still causes significant suffering to the Theravada tradition. One must bear in mind the fact that these were the unhealthy times that resulted in the complete disappearance of the higher ordination tradition (*bhikkhuni sasana*) for Buddhist female renunciants. Repairing this irreparable destruction to the *bhikkhuni* sangha is still a controversial problem for Theravada Buddhist hierarchies in South and Southeast Asia.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THERAVADA
IN THE KANDYAN PERIOD

Like the rest of Sri Lanka, the Kandyan kingdom fell to British forces on March 15, 1815. Kandy, known locally today as Mahanuvara (Great City), had been the capital for seven kings of the Kandyan Kingdom from 1592 to 1815.

Theravada Buddhism continued to influence people's way of thinking and monastic lives in the Kandyan period. Though Theravada Buddhist monasticism was weakened in unstable political and social situations, the revival of its ordination traditions (i.e., *bhikkhu sasana*) strengthened it. For Theravada monasticism, the valid higher ordination (*upasampada*) tradition is extremely crucial. When enough monks (four fully ordained members) were not found within Sri Lanka to perform the higher ordination, several kings attempted to revive it.

In the Polonnaruwa period, King Vijayabahu I (r. 1055–1110) invited monks from Aramana, Burma; in the Kandyan period (1592–1815), King Vimaladharmasurya I (r. 1591–1604) invited Burmese monks to Kandy to initiate the long lapsed higher ordination rites. External religious support received from the Kingdom of Siam in the eighteenth century was particularly important in reviving Buddhism during the last phase of the Kandyan kingdom. At that time, Buddhist practices had declined sharply, giving birth to the institution of Ganinnanse, a group of half-lay and half-monastic practitioners (Dharmadasa 1991).

During the period of King Kirti Rajasingha (r. 1747–1782), when four fully ordained monks could not be found to perform ecclesiastical activities, a group of Siamese monks,

headed by Venerable Upali, was invited to Kandy to confer the higher ordination on the revivalist Sangharaja Weliwita Saranankara (1698–1777) and other members of the Silvat Samagama (Vacissara 1960; Holt 1996) in May 1753. This was the establishment of the Siyam Nikaya.

The city became the home to the Malvatta and Asgiriya, two major branches of the Siyam Nikaya. Since then, the Siyam Nikaya became the largest of the three existing Buddhist monastic fraternities with wider influence on Sri Lankan society and beliefs. The establishment of the Siyam Nikaya and subsequent revival of Buddhist monasticism dominated the legacy of Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhism into the twenty-first century. In subsequent years, two other monastic fraternities emerged that had links with Burma. On the basis of the city in which higher ordination was received, they came to be known as Amarapura (founded in 1803) and Ramanna (founded in 1864). They also have had a significant impact on the development of Buddhism, with certain emphasis on practice as well as lifestyle.

At present, the monks of Malvatta and Asgiriya take turns in rotation in attending Gotama Buddha's left Tooth Relic, which acquired an unusual symbolic and political importance in Sri Lanka since its arrival during the reign of King Kirthi Sri Meghavarna (r. ca. 301–328), functioning as a sacred object that legitimizes one's right to kingship. With Dalada Maligawa and many historic temples around it, Kandy has become Sri Lanka's active Buddhist monastic center.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE SRI LANKAN BUDDHIST TRADITION

Given the long history of Buddhist monasticism in Sri Lanka, broadly speaking five important scholastic achievements can be identified, as follows:

1. The writing down of the Pali canon on palm leaves seems to be the most important achievement. In the few centuries after the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, monastics had witnessed threats to the oral transmission. They noticed its vulnerability as a means of preservation. As a result, with the support of a local ruler, the monastic community decided to write down the *Buddhavacana* (word of the Buddha) on palm leaves. This occurred in the first century B.C.E. at Alu Vihara, Matale (Adikaram 1946). This change in transmission preserved the scriptural tradition from corruptions to some extent and avoided possible variations as a result of freezing texts to a more tangible and stable form. This early cautious step taken in the preservation of the Buddhist canon was crucial for other pioneering achievements that earned in subsequent centuries.

2. A few centuries later, the remarkable achievement of writing down the Pali canon was followed by the production of the Pali commentaries. In the fifth century, Buddhaghosa Thera, a Chola monk of Brahmin origin from South India, arrived in the Mahavihara with the intention of producing Pali commentaries. Venerable Buddhaghosa lived in the Mahavihara and composed Pali commentaries (*atthakatha*) on the basis of Sinhala sources (Adikaram 1946). While Buddhaghosa's *magnum opus*, the *Visuddhimagga*, established a solid foundation for Theravada interpretation of Buddhism, his successors—Buddhadatta and Dhammapala—continued the commentarial project and enhanced the Theravada

position. These scholastic activities were crucial in reaffirming the unquestioned authority attached to the Mahavihara as a custodian of the pristine teachings of the Buddha and the development of commentarial tradition.

3. With the guidance of Mahakassapa Thera of Polonnaruwa, his pupils composed sub-commentaries (*tika*) to the Pali commentaries in the thirteenth century, marking another milestone in Theravada scholasticism and interpretations.

4. The production of Pali chronicles. The two Pali chronicles—the *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa*—composed from the fourth to fifth centuries C.E. in Anuradhapura became crucial resources in the subsequent centuries in understanding historicity of the Indian tradition in historical terms in the absence of concrete written documents. They enhanced the archaeological excavations and identification of sites in the modern period.

5. The birth of an extensive corpus of Sinhala literature: in the thirteenth century, cosmopolitan Buddhism took an "inward" orientation and gave birth to a localized form of "vernacular Buddhism" based on a vast corpus of vernacular literature written in Sinhala. This *banakatha* literature played an important role in the history of Theravada monasticism in later centuries (Deegalle 2006b).

Sri Lanka's International Buddhist Contacts

As one of the smallest Buddhist nations in the contemporary Buddhist world, one of the visible strengths of Sri Lankan Buddhism has been its ability to connect and cooperate with a number of Buddhist countries, both Theravada and Mahayana, in Asia. In the early history of the country, Sri Lanka was known to the international community as Lanka or Tambapanni, and more recently, with the arrival of the British, as Ceylon. On the basis of Buddhism, early on Sri Lanka had established diplomatic and cultural international contacts with the outside world (Sirisena 1978; Gunawardana 1990). Apart from frequent and constantly intrusive religious and cultural contacts with India, important links appear to have been established with East Asia rather early (Weerasinghe 1995).

In the early stages of Buddhism in China, Sri Lanka was instrumental in dispatching nuns to establish an order of nuns (Gunawardana 1990). Documents both literary and archaeological have been found to support that the Chinese pilgrim Faxian (ca. 337–422 C.E.) visited Sri Lanka in search of Buddhist texts and spent two years there (Legge 1965; Weerasinghe 1995). He seems to have practiced Buddhism at Abhayagiri Temple in Anuradhapura. His travel accounts on the monastic lifestyle at Abhayagiri Temple are evidence for the expansive nature of Buddhist monasticism in Anuradhapura and Abhayagiri's prominence in opposition to the long-established Theravada Buddhist headquarters of the Mahavihara.

In the context of frequent invasions from South India and exposure to colonial powers, Buddhism was challenged on several occasions. This was more visible once the institution of the Sri Lankan sangha as a living, practicing Buddhist community came to almost an extinction; extinction was more apparent when it was not possible to find a quorum of four fully ordained monks (*bhikkhu*s) to confer higher ordinations on novice members. The earliest occasion in which Sri Lanka sought to establish contact with Southeast Asia, in particular

with Burma, appeared during the reign of King Vijayabahu I, who established diplomatic contacts with Burma to receive members of the sangha for performing higher ordination rituals in the capital (Sirisena 1978). In 1679, monks from Arakan (Myanmar) had confirmed *upasampada* on Suriyagoda Rajasundara Thera. In a similar fashion, during the period of King Rajasingha, a group of monks arrived from Siam.

In addition, in the late nineteenth century there were two separate contacts with Burma that resulted in the establishment of two monastic fraternities—the Amarapura Nikaya and Ramanna Nikaya—as alternative monastic lineages in Sri Lanka. They emerged to some extent in the beginning in opposition to the already established Siyam Nikaya, in particularly along the coastal areas of Sri Lanka.

Apart from these establishments of monastic fraternities, there are individual cases of famous monks, such as the Indian monk Vajrabodhi (671–741) who traveled to Sri Lanka on his way to Sri Vijaya (present-day Sumatra) and then to Tang China, and a Theravada nun who visited Tibet to establish Buddhism (Gunawardana 1990). In the modern period with the presence of colonial powers, particularly with initiatives of Anagarika Dharmapala, links were established around the Buddhist world (Deegalle 2008, 2014c; Kemper 2015). Dharmapala's powerful words, "I am resolved to give the remaining years of my life to enlighten the people of England" (Dharmapāla 1965, 662) still expresses the unsurpassed zeal and strong commitment of a Buddhist *dhammaduta* (messenger of *dhamma*). His eagerness to share Buddhism with the Buddhist world led to the establishment of the London Buddhist Vihara (Deegalle 2013, 2014c) and other international networks with Japan and Southeast Asia. Dharmapala's founding of the Maha Bodhi Society (founded in 1891) opened a new chapter in the expansion of Theravada Buddhism outside Sri Lanka. These contacts extended beyond Asia, as far as Europe and North America.

In terms of revising international contacts in post-independence Sri Lanka, the year of Buddha Jayanthi (anniversary) that occurred in 1956 was an important one. According to the Sri Lankan chronology of the Buddhist era provided by the Pali chronicles, the year 1956 marked the 2,500-year anniversary of the Buddha's passing away in Kusinara, India. This was an important landmark event because Theravada Buddhists believe that at that point the Buddhist teachings had passed through half of their life span. On the eve of the Buddha Jayanthi, within Sri Lanka, an important initiative took place with the support of the Sri Lankan government to print the entire collection of the Pali Tripitaka in the Sinhala language for the first time. That collection is today known as the *Buddha Jayanthi Tripitaka* (1956–1990), a series comprising forty volumes (with fifty-seven books) only completed in January 1990.

Another monumental task related to the Buddha Jayanthi was the compilation of an *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* undertaken by the Lanka Bauddha Mandalaya (Buddhist Council of Ceylon, founded in 1954) with the leadership of Professor Gunapala Malalasekere (1899–1973) and the sponsorship of the government of Sri Lanka in 1955. As a comprehensive work, it included all Buddhist traditions with international collaboration. The first fascicle appeared in 1961. Eight volumes in total, each comprising over 800 pages, were completed in 2007.

In post-independence Sri Lanka, lay Buddhist leaders such as Professor Malalasekere sought to unify Buddhists all across the world. In particular, Malalasekere was instrumental in establishing international Buddhist organizations and platforms. On May 25, 1950, in the presence of 129 Buddhist delegates from twenty-seven nations at the inaugural congress held at the Tooth Relic Temple, Kandy, the Buddhist philanthropist, scholar and ambassador

Malalasekere founded The World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB). As the chair, the late Malalasekere requested and led the congress to pass a resolution in adopting the Buddhist flag as the international flag of the Buddhists (Deegalle 2015: 10 –11). Preference for the use of the word "Theravada" (school of elders) rather than the polemical term "Hinayana" (inferior vehicle), which was originally invented by early Mahayana (superior vehicle) Buddhists of the Common Era to identify Buddhists who belonged to pre-Mahayana schools (counted as eighteen in number by the time of Emperor Asoka, out of which only the Theravada schools survives today), came into wider usage from the time of the WFB conference onward. Malalasekere pushed forward the assertion of recognizing Vesak (the full moon of May) as a public holiday for Buddhists internationally (Deegalle 2015b).

Another important Buddhist organization led by laypeople was the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress (founded in 1918). Even before the Sri Lankan government sponsored the *Buddha Jayanthi Tripitaka* Series (1956–1990), the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress had begun to publish the Tripitaka in 1941; by 1967, it had completed publication of ten volumes (Deegalle 2002, 78–79). The Buddhist Information Search Committee, appointed in 1953, investigated the status of Buddhism and Buddhist affairs and completed its report in 1956. This led to the Sri Lankan government's appointment of the Buddhasasana Commission in 1957 to implement the resolutions of the report. In the last decade, a nine-member commission appointed to investigate the issue of "unethical" religious conversions in Sri Lanka produced a hefty report of 348 witnesses in 2009 (Deegalle 2014a).

In post-independene Sri Lanka, Buddhists in Sri Lanka have established strong links with Japan, China, Thailand, Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal, and countries such as Malaysia. The movement to make Vesak an international holiday for Buddhists, recognized by the United Nations, has given Sri Lanka another important platform on which to play a key role in international Buddhist affairs. The International Buddhist conference held in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka on November 8–14, 1998, made an important resolution to put forward to the United Nations General Assembly to recognize Vesak as an international Buddhist holiday. On December 15, 1999, at the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly, the UN officially recognized the celebration of the Day of Vesak.[3] This recognition by the UN led to the birth of annual celebrations in Thailand, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka under the theme of United Nations Day of Vesak (Deegalle 2015b). The Vesak celebration held in Vietnam on May 8–11, 2014, attracted more than 10,000 Buddhists and representatives from ninety-five countries.

Though early international links with Burma and Siam appear to be for the revitalization of the monastic traditions of Sri Lanka, contacts in the modern period, with both Buddhist and non-Buddhist countries, seem to be aimed at formulating an ecumenism that brings all Buddhists to one platform.

Impact of Colonialism on Buddhist Practice

As a small nation in South Asia, Sri Lanka has played a crucial role in the development and preservation of Theravada Buddhist monasticism. Since Sri Lanka's independence from

Great Britain in 1948, Theravada monasticism has undergone many changes. The monastics of the three major *nikaya*s—Siyam (founded in 1753), Amarapura (founded in 1803), and Ramanna (founded in 1864)—have struggled with modernization and increasing secularization. Some monastic members, though definitely not the majority, have become increasingly involved in politics.

Hikkaduve Sumangala (1827–1911) was an important figure who held a leading position in the revival of the sangha under colonial occupation (Blackburn 2010). During the colonial period, there were purification efforts, even within the lay community. Sri Lankan lay Buddhists, such as Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933) and G. P. Malasekere (1899–1973), for example, represented various levels of the purification that was taking place in the Buddhist sphere (Deegalle 2014c). Anagarika Dharmapala initiated purification efforts during the British colonial times (Dharmapāla 1965; Kemper 2015). It was a very antagonistic and confrontational initiative.

At the same time, Migettuvatte Gunananda initiated a defensive strategy to protect Buddhist rights against Christian assertions. G. P. Malalasekere was instrumental in providing academic depth to the revival process by mobilizing elite groups in urban areas for safeguarding Buddhism. The close affinity of Buddhist monastic groups with political parties in Sri Lanka needs some scrutiny. Though there was monastic involvement with left-wing political parties beginning in the early twentieth century (Deegalle 2006a), the youth monastic involvement in politics took a different turn in the late 1960s with the introduction of the Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP; People's Liberation Front).

Buddhist Beliefs and Practices

The teachings found in the Pali canon have strongly inspired the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition. Prominent canonical texts such as the *Dhammapada* have been central in the formation of the doctrinal ethos of contemporary Theravada Buddhism and the practices of monastic and lay communities in contemporary Sri Lanka. Over two millennia, these early Buddhist teachings, however, have been mediated by many centuries of cultural adaptation that took place in Sri Lanka. The *Dhammapada*, in particular, played a critical role in the development of a significant commentarial tradition, leading to a significant vernacular adaptation of the commentary as Dharmasena Thera's *Saddharmaratnavaliya* (The Jewel Garland of the Good Doctrine, ca. 1220–1293) in the thirteenth century, which became popular as a source of learning Buddhism from the late medieval period onward (Dharmasena Thera 1991; Deegalle 2006b). The texts had been adapted to the changing political as well as socio-historical conditions of the land. Buddhist practices related to monastic life and ceremonies of offering robes, such as *kathina* and rain-retreat, were explained using local, familiar examples.

The necessity of responding to religious and cultural ideas that came from outside Sri Lanka became apparent as a result of an encounter with beliefs and practices that already existed in Sri Lanka. Buddhist beliefs and practices found today in Sri Lanka represent the influence of a wide range of cultural and social elements of the country. The contemporary belief structure of Sri Lankan Buddhism is a result of incorporating many dimensions of the ancient Sri Lankan culture, and the practices of contemporary Sri Lankan Buddhists reflect

this reality. For example, after selecting a new land for building a new house or business, traditional rituals are performed to honor the dead and ground spirits. Day-to-day practices adopted as rites of passages and practices such as consulting astrologers for selecting auspicious moments for carrying out important tasks are the result of traditional beliefs of the land and the influence of Indian cultural thinking. They are remnants of some pre-Buddhist beliefs, as well as the influence of the cultural context of Hinduism. The larger world of the Sinhala pantheon is related loosely to the broader Hindu pantheon (Obeyesekere 1963).

The caste system, an important religiously sanctioned feature of the Brahmanic religious ethos of ancient India, though doctrinally rejected in Buddhism as seen in the Pali canonical discourses such as *Agganna Sutta* (Ariyasena 1981; Collins 1993), has been accommodated socially, both in monastic and lay lives of contemporary Sri Lanka (Samuels 2010). This may be a strong indication of the influence of Hinduism and the social structures of India. In the Kandyan period (1592–1815), a Sri Lankan version of a caste system that privileges the farmer's caste (Sin.: *goyigama*) was sanctioned by the royal court as a means of recruiting new members to the monastic order; with the rise of Amarapura Nikaya and Ramanna Nikaya, the recognition of caste has become an important factor in the monastic organization (Malalgoda 1976; Seneviratne 1978).

Though caste-related notions have become limited in scope and influence in contemporary times due to increasing urbanization, with migrations to cities and more opportunities for education and employment, they still remain crucial in finding marriage partners. As advertised even in newspapers,[4] the search for appropriate marriage partners on the basis of caste has become a common fact of life. This caste recognition, though not strictly Buddhist and perhaps to a larger extent due to the influence of Hinduism, has become an important aspect of Buddhist lay life rituals.

It is widely argued that contemporary festivals and practices, such as sending Vesak greeting cards associated with the Buddhist ceremony of Vesak (Deegalle 2015b) and public display of Buddhism through popular rites and rituals, had been strongly influenced by "Protestant Buddhist" tendencies (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988) developed during the British colonial period (1815–1948). Some of these were innovative indigenous responses in combatting Western and Christian influences on the Sri Lankan culture and people's lives. The visible presence of Christianity-related models, for example, evangelical preaching and parades of the Salvation Army, may have intensified the invention of new practices and traditions, such as giving one-hour-long Buddhist sermons (Sin.: *bana*) as creative responses to the dominance of alien paradigms (Seneviratne 1999; Deegalle 2006b). Sending Vesak greeting cards containing Sinhala poems became popular in the latter part of the twentieth century. Imitating Christmas carols and the Salvation Army, Buddhist groups in urban areas began to recite Buddhist devotional songs (*bhaktigita*). Observing development projects and welfare work undertaken by Christian groups, more and more Buddhist monastics and lay people became increasingly involved in providing social welfare programs for Buddhists (Seneviratne 1999).

Important religious beliefs that still shape Buddhist lives today are the notions of rebirth and karma. Along these doctrines, Buddhist moral life is concerned with the practice of precepts (Sin.: *sil*) as well as performing meritorious deeds (Sin.: *pin*). For helping departed relatives and making their own future lives better, a range of ceremonies has developed today in Buddhist communities in the form of alms-giving (*dana*), observing precepts (*sila*), and meditation (*bhavana*).

Contemporary Challenges: The Incorporation of Marxist Ideology in Buddhist Monkhood

Another significant change occurred in the mode of educational provision for Sri Lankan monastics. In addition to the University of Ceylon, two Buddhist monastic schools—Vidyodaya (founded in 1873) and Vidyalankara (founded in 1875)—were elevated to the status of national universities in 1959. Though the national universities were exceedingly instrumental in expanding higher education facilities to a wider sector of Sri Lankan society—in particular, to those who were well-versed in the vernacular—over the years this government effort has been criticized as an effort to destroy traditional Buddhist education in Sri Lanka and to increasingly politicize the Buddhist monkhood and open avenues for rapid changes in monasticism. In 1966, Buddhasravaka Dharmapithaya (University for *Bhikkhu*s) in Anuradhapura was established exclusively for traditional Buddhist studies, with a conservative approach to learning, and limiting the scope of study to classical patterns alone, devoid of modern advances in higher education, perhaps with an objective to correct previous mistakes and misguided political decisions of the state. In recent years, Buddhasravaka Dharmapithaya was elevated formally to a university by its rebranding as Buddhasravaka Bhiksu University. The post-1980s witnessed the birth of several universities with an emphasis on Buddhist education. The first university to be established in Sri Lanka specifically for the purpose of promoting Buddhism was the Pali and Buddhist University of Sri Lanka (founded in 1981, according to the visions of late Venerable Walpola Rahula) with four campuses in four preeminent monastic institutions. The ambition was to renew monastic education and carry out Buddhist studies within a monastic atmosphere. After a few years of trial, the higher education in the four institutions was abandoned by amalgamating them into one. In 1980s, Sariputra Vidyapithaya, Nittambuva, was established to train young monastics to teach in public schools.

All these developments had a positive impact on the educational standards and vocational capabilities of the monastics. As a result, the number of monks who worked as professional teachers in government and monastic schools increased. However, the negative impact is that some monks alienated themselves from their temples, traditional monastic routine, teachers, and lay devotees. The ever-expanding educational and vocational opportunities, combined with changing circumstances, have challenged the basic monastic values, routine, and lifestyle.

Though some have been secularized through education, some monks have assumed more socially productive roles as social workers. Earlier, with the Sri Lankan nongovermental organization (NGO) Sarvodaya ("the awakening of all"; founded in 1958), established by A. T. Ariyaratna (1980), many young monks learned to engage in social welfare activities. Sarvodaya had its social welfare programs in 11,600 villages—undoubtedly the foremost and the most exemplary lay Buddhist movement in post-independence Sri Lanka, with a strong social welfare profile in all ethnic and religious communities (Bond 2003). Basing itself on very solid Buddhist roots, Sarvodaya uplifted the standard of human life both materially and

spiritually. Its key characteristic was donating one's labor (Sin.: *sramadana*) for the welfare of others. It had humble beginnings as an urban youth social work camp in an impoverished, underdeveloped, neglected, untouchable Candala village named Kanatotuva, Bingiriya. The camp aimed to alleviate poverty among the villagers. In 1960s, Sarvodaya recruited young Buddhist monks for short training courses to train them as social workers, which was well received by the Sri Lankan public. These activities empowered many young *bhikkhu*s, who did not pursue higher studies. At present, more and more monks have realized their social responsibility and try to do whatever they can to elevate the standard of living in the communities in which they live. Thus the number of monks participating in social welfare programs of various scales is increasing.

In late 1980s, with the rise of the militant JVP, a number of young monks have become actively involved in the left-wing politics of JVP (Amunugama 1991; Abeysekara 2001) and continue to pose serious threats to the peaceful survival of Buddhist monasticism.

Changes to Buddhist Life

When weaknesses arose in established Buddhist monastic institutions, lay people responded in two ways. Some resorted to becoming self-ordained and tried to follow the ideals depicted in the canon. Others attempted to be exemplary laymen by following the "monastic ideal" and self-proclaimed themselves to be the "persons who are committed to reviving the discipline" (*vinayavardhana*). These lay responses demonstrate signs of renewal within the established Theravada (Kemper 1978).

In Sri Lanka, there is an increasing awareness of the status of Buddhist women. Recently more voices have been raised for re-establishing the higher ordination rites for "women who have taken the ten precepts" (*dasa sil mata*) (Bartholomeusz 1994; Salgado 2013). With political activism, though the potential of the monastic as a peacekeeper is declining, it will be fascinating to see the way Theravada monasticism responds to new developments in the twenty-first century in the midst of the ethnic turmoil that became a building block for the renewal of Buddhist values, both among the monastics and the lay people.

In the postwar period, there are many positive signs with regard to institutional development within Buddhism. Understanding the significance of using modern technology and resources for promoting Buddhism, a number of radio stations and TV channels have been inaugurated in Colombo, as well as in remote regions, to explicate Buddhism. The Buddhist TV in central Colombo and Rangiri Dambulu TV in Dambulla are prominent, and there are also satellite TV channels.

Political Buddhism and the Growth of Radical Movements

There are several visible episodes of the development of the structure of political Buddhism in contemporary Sri Lanka. In the context of Christian hegemony and colonial oppression of

the British government, some Buddhist monks resorted to protest activities. A well-known case often cited today in popular political and religious discourses is the Venerable Variyapola Sumangala, who objected to the surrender of the Kandyan kingdom to British rule on March 15, 1815. In the nineteenth century, there was the case of Venerable Migettuwatte Gunananda (1823–1890), who adopted an aggressive campaign against Christian evangelical expansion.

In the first half of the twentieth century, when Ceylon[5] was still a British colony, Sri Lanka witnessed the growth of politically motivated Buddhist factions, formulating their views of combining Buddhism with nationalism in the hope of achieving political objectives. In the mid-twentieth century, leading educated young monks like Venerable Walpola Rahula (1907–1997) organized campaigns asserting the role of Buddhist monks in society.

The self-perception of the sangha as the guardian of the nation was projected to the past as well as the future as a political rhetoric in published documents demanding freedom for the nation. Politically motivated tendencies and aspirations can be witnessed clearly in published writings such as *The Kalaniya Declaration of Independence*, which appeared barely a year before Sri Lanka's independence from Great Britain.

Unlike other Theravada Buddhist countries in South and Southeast Asia, both Sri Lanka (1815–1948) and Myanmar (1824–1948) were forced to become British colonies for over a century. In that colonial context, Buddhists reimagined having a public holiday on the Vesak day (Deegalle 2015b). Until 1884, the British colonial government in Ceylon forced Buddhists to declare themselves Christian. The situation changed only when the American Buddhist theosophist Colonel Henry S. Olcott (1832–1907) made representations to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London on behalf of Sri Lankan Buddhists.

On January 25, 1884, with the recommendation of Venerable Hikkaduve Sri Sumangala (1827–1911), Olcott was appointed as an honorary member and special delegate of the Buddhist Defence Committee. He was asked to proceed to London as the Chief Agent of the Committee, with full power to represent it under any circumstances (Olcott 1904, 122). In addition, Olcott was granted a special authorization approved by two chief patriarchs in Kandy, together with Venerables Sumangala, Vaskaduve Subhuti (1835–1917), Randombe Dhammalankara, "and other priests of the Maritime provinces," giving him "full powers to represent them in the admission of candidates into the ranks of Buddhism" by taking the five precepts (Malalgoda 1976, 245). The fourth of the four primary objectives of Olcott's visit to London was very much related to the British government's recognition of Vesak as a public holiday. It was stated, "[t]o try and secure an order declaring Wesak—the May Full-Moon day, Buddha's Birthday, and consequently the Buddhist Christmas—a public holiday" (Olcott 1904, 75). Only in the modern period, in a very specific colonial context, had Buddhists in Ceylon rallied to declare the Vesak day a public holiday. Buddhists in Ceylon had lost Vesak as a public holiday in 1770 C.E. during Dutch rule. The British government in Ceylon had not demonstrated any interest in restoring the Vesak holiday. It was only in 1884 that the British government agreed to declare Vesak *poya* (full moon) day a public holiday, recognizing the importance of the historical Buddha for the Buddhist community, as well as the growing pressure from Buddhist communities. The first grand Vesak full moon celebration took place as a public holiday on May 28, 1885, with the newly designed Buddhist flag (Deegalle 2015b).

A group of Buddhist monks who assembled at the city of Kalaniya on January 6, 1947, claimed to represent the Sri Lankan sangha and presented *The Kalaniya Declaration of Independence*, which appears today as a document of a separatist movement that protested

against the British colonial regime. The declaration claims that the sangha as "the Treasurers of the eternal values proclaimed by the Buddha" became "the Guardians of the Life and Liberty as well as the Sponsors of the Well-being and Happiness" of Sri Lankan society (Rahula 1974, 134). The members of the sangha who gathered at the sacred space of Kalaniya, on behalf of the people of Sri Lanka, declared, "Sri Lanka claims its right to be Free and Independent Sovereign State" and resolved to "absolve all allegiance to any other Power, State or Crown. . . . We, the sangha of Sri Lanka . . . pledge ourselves to associate with them in spirit as well as in action in that great and high resolve" (Rahula 1974, 136).

Recent scholarship (Seneviratne 1999) identifies the late Venerable Walpola Rahula, the author of number of popular books, including *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu* (1974), as the architect of the Kalaniya declaration and modern manifestations of political Buddhism that have plagued Sri Lankan politics by giving inspiration to the rise of radical movements within the Sri Lankan sangha and mobilizing the youth.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, with the birth of the leftist political party Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), the political dimensions of Buddhist monks' activism grew with intensity. The participation of young monks in political parades and protests became intensified in subsequent decades. In the youth struggle of 1971, as well as in the insurgencies of 1989–1990, a great number of young Buddhist monks, primarily from Sri Lankan universities, participated in protests.

The Sinhala youth rebellion of the JVP against the Sri Lankan government of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party in the southern regions in 1971 and the militant terrorist movement of the LTTE (founded in 1975; Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) that devastated civil governance in the northern regions, terrorizing the region from the late 1970s, rapidly militarized the entire state of Sri Lanka, seriously jeopardizing the nonviolent religious ethos of the Buddhist traditions. The Tamil militant insurgency of the LTTE, which traumatized the island for nearly three decades, consuming many innocent human lives and scarce resources, was forcefully militarily defeated in a crucial military campaign that ended in May 2009. Rapid militarization of the civil society in this South Asian democracy still threatens its peace, stability, and security.

Until the early years of the 2000s, it was very rare to find Buddhist monks contest in elections. In the 2001 elections to select members of Parliament, for the first time a Buddhist monk named Baddegama Samita was elected to the Parliament, representing the Communist Party (Deegalle 2006a). Prior to that, he had been a member of the provincial council in Galle. The elections held in April 2004 witnessed the selection of nine Buddhist monks from the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) political party to the Parliament. This was a watershed event in the history of the development of Buddhism in all Theravada countries of South and Southeast Asia.

The political agenda of the JHU political party is well represented in the twelve-point political manifesto presented to the public just a few weeks before the election (Deegalle 2006a). Two crucial factors seem to have empowered the JHU to enter into politics. The growing intensity of brutal terrorist attacks of the LTTE was the prime factor. The expansion of the growing threats of evangelism within Sri Lanka was the second key factor. These two factors led an urban electorate to elect the Buddhist monks of the JHU to the Parliament. Though the JHU was an independent party within the Parliament for a number of years, in later years it entered into the coalition government of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, headed by President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

Within the government as well as outside it, the JHU has taken a stand against religious conversions (Deegalle 2015a: 74–78). Its bill to proscribe unethical conversions has been shelved. Over the years the JHU became a mainstream minority political party by participation in the coalition government. One of its lay members received a cabinet post in the government of Mahinda Rajapaksa. At a critical juncture, unhappy with the Rajapaksa regime, a key member of the JHU, Venerable Athuraliye Rathana with Champika Ranavaka, stepped out from the government and joined hands with the late Venerable Maduluvave Sobhita (1942–2015) of the Sadharana Samajayak Sandaha Vu Jatika Vyaparaya (National Movement for a Just Society) with a vision of a *yahapalanaya* (good governance) to produce a peaceful and democratic political transition that paved the way for successful victory of Maithripala Sirisena as the elected President on January 8, 2015 and a new government in the general election held on August 17, 2015. The postwar period of reconciliation and reconstruction began in May 2009. While the country needs more effective methods of reconciliation and reconstruction (Deegalle 2014b), the wider society has witnessed expressions of Buddhist activism, some leading to extremism, combined with all forms of nationalism across Sri Lanka. Unresolved issues, such as evangelism, operations of the NGOs, and so on, that had existed in Sri Lanka were manifested again in the postwar period by empowering and becoming an outlet for Buddhist activist movements such as the Bodu Bala Sena (The Army of Buddhist Power), Sinhala Ravaya (Sinhala Echo), and Ravana Balaya (Power of Ravana).

One of the most visible radical movements within the contemporary Sri Lankan sangha is the monastic-led activist movement of the Bodu Bala Sena (Deegalle 2016), whose institutional name has been translated into English as "The Army of Buddhist Power" by paying special attention to the use of the term *sena* (army) in its name. Its recent manifestation in public as an activist movement aimed at reforming and promoting Buddhism (Sin.: *svasamaya abhivrddhi*) can be traced to mid-July 2012. Renewal aspects and purification features of the Bodu Bala Sena have been discussed in detail elsewhere (Deegalle 2016: 121–144). As a reformist organization within the postwar period, it had drawn attention to Five Resolutions, and its renewal and purification objectives were clearly expressed in its inaugural anthem (Deegalle 2016: 128–129). Even before its emergence in public in grand scale as a Buddhist reformist movement, it had serious ideological confrontations with fellow Buddhist leaders, such as the lay preacher Sirivardhana, with regard to the latter's doctrinal misinterpretations and distortions of Buddhism.

These confrontations with fellow Buddhists (both lay and monastic) were strong indications that in the first year of its public profile, the Bodu Bala Sena appeared to be a movement to purify Buddhist institutions from their degraded situations and thus had serious potential to fragment Buddhist unity. Toward the middle of 2013, it shifted its gears to move on a different track and potentially in a negative direction, resulting in confrontations in dealing with issues related to religious minorities, such as the local Muslim population. As a consequence of this particular orientation, by the end of 2013, the Bodu Bala Sena and others like the Sinhala Ravaya and Ravana Balaya appeared in the international media as extremist, militant, fanatical, and xenophobic Buddhist organizations headed by young Buddhist monks. This negative international exposure was largely because of their argumentative and fiery public articulations of waging a war of words against the Muslim minority and their food habits and newly introduced female dress.

Young men who are largely associated with the Bodu Bala Sena and other similar activist organizations express a strong desire to do something productive for the "country and religion." Certain forms of multiculturalism and interfaith concepts that had been invented, popularized, asserted, and imposed on the people from the top—in the context of managing the ethnic unrest and armed struggle orchestrated by the LTTE and as a genuine response to ethnic conflict by leading academics and influential politicians such as the former President R. Premadasa (1924–1993) and most recently by the former Prime Minister D. M. Jayaratna—became very unpopular among a large section of the population. These activist groups appear to reject notions of multi-ethnic, multicultural, and inter-faith dialogues, with a strong sense of fear of ethnic and religious minorities asserting themselves against and over the ethnic and religious majority.

Accusations have been hurled against some Muslim groups as fundraising for jihadist activities and mosque building through drug trafficking and smuggling. Rapidly expanding minority population and territorial claims in the east and north made by Tamils and Muslims are considered as alarming threats to the ethnic and religious majority. These concerns have generated exclusivist nationalist sentiments and public articulations in the form of fiery speeches by some spokespersons for these activist groups, as seen in the events leading to the Aluthgama incident on June 15, 2014. Threats of Islamism and Islamophobia remain important facets in their nationalist and activist agendas. A range of anxieties is expressed, focusing on ethnic and religious minorities; global and international anxieties focusing on terrorist groups such as the Al-Queda and ISIS are localized in political discourses. Global networks, including international NGOs and terrorist groups, are seen as serious potential threats to both Buddhism and the nation.

In the case of the Bodu Bala Sena, a key issue that drew international attention was the sale of halal food certification beyond Islamic enterprises to non-Muslim businessmen. This halal food discourse shaped the international perception of the Bodu Bala Sena as an extremist religious group. As demonstrated elsewhere (Deegalle 2016: 122–129), in its origin, as an organization that stood for Buddhist concerns, it was more concerned with introducing purification methods to Buddhist institutions and empowering them, rather than projecting itself as standing against ethnic and religious minorities.

In contemporary Sri Lanka, the Bodu Bala Sena is not the only activist Buddhist group. Ravana Balaya and Sinhala Ravaya have equally controversial standpoints with regard to activities of the government and minority issues. Along with the Bodu Bala Sena, they also have sought media coverage with protests against cow slaughter and raising issues of preserving sacred sites.

The manifestation of Buddhist activist organizations such as the Bodu Bala Sena in the postwar period marked the growth of radical movements in a different and negative direction, compromising the traditional image of tolerant Buddhism and jeopardizing the pluralist ethos of the Sri Lankan society. Along with like-minded groups such as the Ravana Balaya and Sinhala Ravaya, Buddhist monastic and lay practices have been tested and challenged by these radical groups to a devastating and unprecedented degree. The Bodu Bala Sena's controversial stand on minorities, in this case with regard to Muslims, has been perceived as very aggressive and militant by internal and external observers. The Bodu Bala Sena's public articulations and fiery comments on the use of halal food by non-Muslims and the politics of economy associated with halal are seen by superficial observations as serious attacks on Muslims and Islam.

Conclusions

By introducing the longest surviving Buddhist tradition in the world, this chapter has outlined specific features of the historical developments of the Buddhist heritage while acknowledging some of the dramatic changes in the tradition in response to unexpected political and social challenges. The examination has demonstrated the way Theravada Buddhism has made adaptations during the evolution of the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition. It has taken into account both literary sources in the vernaculars and historical evidence provided by archaeological research. The investigation has illuminated a wide range of perspectives, both doctrinal and socio-political, within the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition. The variety within the Buddhist practice and beliefs can be explained primarily as a result of the incorporation of Hindu deities (Holt 2004) and cultural elements, along with some Mahayana influences felt in the early centuries of the Common Era from India (Holt 1991), and more recently with the introduction of Christianity and the arrival of Europeans, beginning from 1505.

Radical developments in the lifestyle and ideology of the Buddhist monastic community are a result of the exposure to nearly three decades of civil war orchestrated by the LTTE and the proliferation of Marxist and communist ideologies beginning from the early twentieth century and in particular in the form of the left-wing politics of the JVP from the late 1960s onward. The year 2004 marks the beginning of the controversial development of Buddhist clergy entering electorate politics. The rise of Bodu Bala Sena as an activist Buddhist response to the nation-state's ethno-politics, with monks leading it, highlights the most radical development to be noted thus far in the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Notes

1. Prominent chronicles are the *Dipavamsa* (Chronicle of the Island) and the *Mahavamsa* (Great Chronicle), written in the Pali language much later in the fourth and fifth centuries of the Common Era in the capital city of Anuradhapura, several centuries after the formal arrival of Buddhism in the island in the third century B.C.E.

2. Mahavihara was the first Buddhist monastic fraternity to be established in the capital city of Anuradhapura. It became the headquarters of Theravada Buddhism and had significant influence in the expansion of Theravada to South and Southeast Asian countries such as contemporary Thailand and Myanmar in the medieval period (Sirisena 1978).

3. Resolution A/RES54/115, February 8, 2000. http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc. asp?symbol=A/RES/54/115. Accessed April 20, 2015.

4. "Brides," *Sunday Observer*, April 19, 2015.http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2015/04/19/c_ brides.asp. Accessed April 19, 2015.

5. The British colonial period in the entire island of Sri Lanka began on March 15, 1815, and ended on February 4, 1948. Ceylon was the country's name adopted by the British colonial government. It was only after over two decades of independence, in 1972, that the name of the country changed from Ceylon to Sri Lanka with the introduction of the republican constitution. In the ancient literature such as the Pali chronicles, Sri Lanka was identified as Tambapanni ("copper colored leaf") or Lanka. Other popular names of the country include Lakdiva, Lakbima, Lankadipa, Sihaladipa, Heladiva, Ilankai, and Serendib.

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CHAPTER 2

BUDDHISM IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

DAVID GEARY AND SRAMAN MUKHERJEE

From December 2 to 13, 2015, the Light of Buddhadharma Foundation International (LBDFI) organized the eleventh annual International Tipitaka Chanting Ceremony at the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya. This chanting ceremony brings together upward of 3,500 Theravada monks, nuns, and lay followers from ten Southeast and South Asian countries to chant the teachings of the Buddha, as recorded in the Pali Canon. Each country is represented by separate national stalls and simultaneously chants over one another, "giving the impression of diversity and unity of practices encompassed by the Theravadin Buddhist schools" (Pinkney 2015, 149). Although the primary focus is the revival of Theravada Buddhism in India, the event is also inspired by Tarthang Tulku, founder and head of the Tibetan Nyingma Institute in California, through his daughter, chief executive Wangmo Dixey. In 1989, Tarthang Tulku founded the annual Nyingma Monlam, or World Peace Prayer, in Bodh Gaya, which is attended by more than 10,000 Tibetan monks, and now contends with a range of prayer festivals and ritual gatherings that cut across lineages, schools, and nationalities among the Buddhist world.

While Bodh Gaya and other prominent sacred sites associated with the life of the Buddha provide an important anchor and common ground for Buddhist ritual innovation and pan-Asian Buddhist revival, there are also a number of important homegrown centers of Buddhist cultural activity. Inspired by the conversion of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to Buddhism in October 1956, there are now an estimated 7.95 million Buddhists in India, including at least 5.83 million former "Untouchables," or Dalits, from the state of Maharashtra (where Ambedkar was born), who are asserting their place in the public arena, especially through the rise of low-caste politics and their electoral representation as a historically disenfranchised community.[1] At Deekshabhoomi in the city of Nagpur, for example, millions of Dalit Buddhists undertake pilgrimage each year to honor the memory of Ambedkar and his conversion to Buddhism. Prior to the mass-conversion movement, Buddhists in India were largely restricted to smaller communities in Northeastern India (and present-day Bangladesh), such as the Indian Theravada Barua and Chakma Buddhists, and the small Himalayan border populations, such as those in Ladakh (Jammu-Kashmir), Sikkim, and Himachal Pradesh (which later included refugees from Tibet), as well as ethnic Buddhist groups in Nepal such as the Tamang, Magar, Gurung, and Newar.

Due to the important economic and political ramifications of Buddhism in contemporary India, this resurgence of Buddhist activity is also widely promoted by various state and

central government initiatives. As an important source of tourism development, the government of India has taken an eager interest in marketing the sacred topography of ancient Buddhism through the creation of Buddhist circuits, the building of colossal Buddhist images, and the designation of archaeologically restored Buddhist sites as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Related to the contemporary historical reimagining of India's Buddhist past is the revival of Nalanda University. This newly imagined vision of "Asian" education is modeled after the ancient Buddhist monastic-education complex, and the issues surrounding its revival raise important questions about a renewed interest in "pan-Indo-Asianism" at the beginning of the twenty-first century and the role that Buddhism plays in a rising India and an ascendant Asia (Asher 2015; Pinkney 2015).

As is evident in this opening description of events, Buddhism in contemporary India reflects a diverse set of influences and histories. At a collective level, certain elements of Buddhist practice, such as reverence for the religious memory of Gautama Buddha, have a certain universal appeal that transcends national and sectarian divisions, while others are more resonant with India-centric adaptations and forms, such as the social and political empowering of Dalits, Adivasis, and other disadvantaged groups, following the example of B. R. Ambedkar (Pinkney 2015). In order to examine the multiple and overlapping developments that are currently taking place in India, the authors of this chapter have chosen not to write an exhaustive survey of Indian Buddhism that falls neatly within monolithic categories such as Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhism. In fact, the notion of "Indian Buddhism" itself runs the risk of reinforcing distinct ethno-national formations and stereotypes that belie a more complex and nuanced set of historical and social processes that shape contemporary Buddhist practice *in* India. One conceptual framing that is central to our analysis is the recovery and reconfiguration of Buddhist *material objects* as vectors of cultural interchange and the making of ritual connections that extend beyond sectarian and national borders. Visible all over the subcontinent, these material remains of ancient Buddhism provide important anchors for Buddhist communities of practice, as well as catalysts for the Buddhist revival, "ones that are likely to multiply in number and increase in importance and visibility in the coming decades" (Singh 2010, 194). The other conceptual framing we utilize for our discussion is the importance of *reinvention*. Rather than seeing the contemporary Buddhist revival in India as merely derivative of certain Orientalist discourses and practices from the colonial milieu, we draw attention to the complex interests and motivations of a range of Western and Asian actors (Huber 2008) that have played an influential role in reimagining India as the "homeland" of Buddhism. This is not to say that all contemporary forms of Indian Buddhist practice are mere reinventions, but rather to draw attention to a particular social milieu where various adaptations and new developments have taken place.

Indian Historiography and the Decline of Buddhism

Standard historical scholarship on Indian Buddhism provides us with a linear frame of evolution and decline that begins in the fifth century B.C.E. with the birth, "awakening," and teachings of Gautama Buddha, followed by the spread of the sangha within and beyond the subcontinent through vast networks of Buddhist patronage, and its final decline during the

early medieval period (ca. 600–1200 C.E.). Central to this narrative are both the persona and the teachings of the Buddha, as well as the role of the prominent imperial royal patron of Buddhism, Asoka Maurya (dated approximately to the third century B.C.E.).

Since the early nineteenth century, historical scholarship has sought to combine a variety of textual sources and inscriptions to explore Asoka's engagement with Buddhism in the political, ethical, and religious life of the Mauryan Empire. Credited with aggressive military campaigns to consolidate far-flung territories of the subcontinent, colonial and early nationalist historiography had attributed Asoka's later conversion to Buddhism (in the aftermath of the "horrors" of the Kalinga war) both as a personal predilection and as a move toward a different ethics of "nonviolent" and "just" governance. In this analytic frame, the emperor was credited with institutionalizing a centralized proto-welfare state within the political boundaries of the empire, sending Buddhist emissaries to propagate the religion, and building a moral geography of exchange and control throughout South and Southeast Asia and beyond. As an active patron of Buddhism, Asoka was also credited with the reorganization of the sangha, building and rebuilding several Buddhist commemorative structures and stupas, setting into motion a sacred geography bound by material vectors with enormous symbolic potentials (Smith 1901).

While the centrality of Asoka as a "just ruler" has continued to influence pre- and early modern idioms of sovereignty across Buddhist countries in South and Southeast Asia (Tambiah 1976; Strong 1983), recent works by art historians, archaeologists, philologists, and religious historians have pointed out the methodological fallacies of reading Asokan engagement with Buddhism and later Buddhist commemorations of the emperor as simply religious or political acts. For example, in recent years, several scholars have questioned the empirical basis for dating the extant material vestiges of early Buddhism to the antiquity of Asoka and the Mauryas, pointing out discrepancies between temporality and narratives of texts like *Asokavadana* and archaeological evidence. Others have begun to study material remains, texts, and inscriptions, ascribed to the Asokan past—for both their content and form—as sites of shifting identities and multiple memories dating to the post-colonial present (Olivelle et al. 2012). It is this multiplicity of memories, histories, and meanings of Asoka and the Mauryan pasts that disrupts any simple monolithic narrative within Indian Buddhism.

Just as problematic are the explanations for the decline of Buddhism in India (Singh 2010). The most frequently cited reason is the growing Muslim conquest of the Indian subcontinent at the close of the twelfth century, such as the Turkish army under Bakhtivar Khilji, which ransacked and destroyed several Buddhist monasteries, including the famed Nalanda Mahavihara. While there is certainly evidence that Muslims Turks brought destruction to several active Buddhist monastic sites, as Elverskog (2010) shows, far from a violent confrontation, Buddhist-Muslim interactions, especially along the Silk Road, were far more complex than many assume, and they were certainly not responsible for the demise of monasteries in other parts of the country (Singh 2010). Other frequent reasons for the religion's decline, as Singh writes, is that Buddhism was "swallowed up by Hinduism due to its lack of distinctiveness, the 'open frontier' between Buddhism and local cults, 'corruption' by Tāntric influences, a decline in political patronage, and the sangha's loss of material support due to economic dislocation caused by frequent wars" (2010, 193). In other words, although there were likely a variety of reasons for the decline of the Buddhist sangha and laity in several parts of India, this was by no means a "seamless transition," and there is growing evidence to

suggest that several "intra- and inter-site connections" between various monastic Buddhist centers continued in various parts of the country, such as Bengal and the Western and Eastern Himalayas (Ray 2014).

In light of the growing textual, epigraphical, and archaeological data this will provide a much-needed revision of the colonial paradigms and assumptions that have framed the history of Buddhism in the Indian subcontinent. At the same time, this is not to deny that colonial knowledge production, especially with the development of new post-Enlightenment disciplines such as archaeology and history, has played a pivotal role in the reinvention of Buddhism in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Colonial Configurations in/of the "Land of Origins"

The configuration of India as the homeland of Buddhism owes, at least partially, to certain "modern" framings that date back to South Asia's colonial past. Such framings of India as the "Land of Origins" have been increasingly attributed to dual trajectories that unfolded over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Orientalist textual and text-aided archaeological "discovery" and the reification of the colony's ancient Buddhist past and a concurrent refashioning of Theravada Buddhist practice at the intersection of worlds of scholarship, politics, and devotion.

This intersection involved a complex set of actors, such as specialized Indic scholars, officials of the colonial state, monastic and lay Buddhist leaders, local and nationalist politicians, and prominent transnational spiritualists and intellectuals. These networks of knowledge production, political and sacral exchange, endowments/gifts, and reclamations were by no means restricted to the colony's political boundaries. In other words, colonial framings of British India's Buddhist past and present were shaped by larger intellectual, religious, and political concerns that straddled diverse institutional and cultural locations in metropolitan and colonial spaces across Asia, Europe, and the United States, across the "Occident" and the "Orient."

In many ways, the late 1980s marked a watershed in studies of Buddhism with critical attention to the politics of a Victorian Orientalist anxiety in the European "recovery" of Buddhism in an age of colonial encounters (Almond 1988). Moving beyond earlier textual and/or archaeological quests for ancient Buddhist histories, Philip C. Almond's work situated European encounters with Buddhism within the parameters laid down by Edward Said's powerful formulation of *Orientalism* as the ". . . enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively, during the post-Enlightenment period . . ." (Said 1978, 3–5). Paraphrasing Said's important work, Almond (1988) persuasively argued that the British discovery of Buddhism mirrored more the political and cultural concerns of the Victorian world than its putative object, and that these frames and perceptions congealed together under the larger umbrella category of "Buddhism"—a product of Western imagination and textualization (see also McGovern, Chapter 41 of this volume).

In Victorian England, therefore, Buddhism emerged as a tool that would be used by various individuals and groups to promote certain social, political, or religious agendas that had powerful bearing on Britain's domestic and colonial policies. The anxieties of growing anti-Catholicism in Victorian Britain and the compulsions of an imperial civilizing mission in the British colonies in Asia helped to configure a historic Buddha and mark his transition from a ". . . retrograde heathen god to the most compassionate of religious reformers . . . ," a rational social reformer protesting against the ritualistic excesses of a hierarchic caste-ridden Brahminical social system (Guha-Thakurta 2004).

Following Almond's lead, studies of Buddhism in India have moved in two directions, both emerging as a critique of the earlier textual bias. The first critique was of earlier "Protestant presuppositions" in Victorian Orientalist scholarship that sought to identify the translated, annotated, critically edited canonical texts as the "true" locus of religion, rather than the world of "lived" and "living" practices of Buddhism. Archaeologists like Gregory Schopen, although not quite sharing the same intellectual and political concerns of Almond's engagement, launched a project of dense empirical reconceptualization of Buddhist practices in Asia, focusing on archaeology and material culture of the lived religion as distinct from its prescribed and idealized canonization in texts (Schopen 1997).

The second critique involved a critical deconstruction of the disciplinary and institutional histories of archaeology, art history, museums, and anthropological and religious studies' engagement with objects, artifacts, and structural remains (Leoshko 2003; Guha-Thakurta 2004; Singh 2004; Trevithick 2006; Lahiri 2012; Ray 2014). India's material reconfiguration as the center of the ancient Buddhist world, these works argued, was the product of this particular Orientalist framing, of colonial archaeology's reading of selective Buddhist histories into sites and movable antiquities. At the level of material remains, this would imply reading a priori histories of Buddhism into sites and objects at the cost of marginalizing other sectarian or local associations (Guha-Thakurta 2004). Two nineteenth-century Orientalist texts on Buddhism, the translations of Faxian's and Xuanzang's accounts by Stanislas Julien and Samuel Beal, attained a biblical status in the colonial archaeological project (Julien 1857, 1858; Beal 1884). In the high noon of empirical positivism, these pre-modern texts were read as physical maps and geographical nodes often overlooking the political, cultural, literary ideations, norms, and contexts of their productions and the intended audience of these textual narratives (Asher 2012; Deeg 2012).[2] It was in this quest for an empirically verifiable ancient Buddhist topography of India, as commemorated in Buddhist canonical texts and chronicles, such as the Chinese pilgrim itineraries, that several Buddhist sites, structural remains, and movable antiquities emerged as the major focus for enacting the curatorial drive of the colonial state.

The common theme connecting these diverse antiquarian projects was colonial archaeology's inherent assumption of the deliberate "corruption" and "vandalization" of Buddhism's ancient doctrine and cultural productions by the "ignorant" "native" inheritors of the colony's glorious ancient Buddhist past. Linking it to classical civilizations of Greece, Rome, and the Hellenistic world (Abe 1995), the material traces of India's Buddhist past now provided for the colonizer definitive proof of the colony's glorious past, and more important, a significant empirical register to reiterate a cathartic theme of decline in the face of medieval "Islamic iconoclasm" that helped to legitimize the British colonial intervention in the present (Guha-Thakurta 2004). As pre-modern material traces of ritual and religious practice began their journeys from "sacred traces" to new institutional and disciplinary relocations as

reconfigured antiquities, "works of art," and historic monuments (Leoshko 2003), the same material structures would later become key symbols for the national imaginary.

Thus, within a colonial and national historicist/archaeological ethos, Buddhist material traces emerged as important material signifiers of the colony's ancient Buddhist civilization and came to be collected, preserved, and exhibited for their historic, antiquarian, and aesthetic values. However, it is precisely at this juncture that these remains also emerged as sites of religious reclamations and re-consecrations. Central to this process was the consolidation of transnational Theravada Buddhist reform and revival across British colonies in South and mainland Southeast Asia in Ceylon and Burma, and in the frontier independent Kingdom of Siam, which itself was seen as drawing on "modern" textualized and archaeological reconfigurations of an "authentic" "ancient" Buddhism.

Scholarship and Practice in South Asia

The emergence of reformist Buddhism in the late nineteenth century, first in Colombo and then in other major port cities on the Bay of Bengal network, has been usually studied as a reaction of Buddhist elites to the challenges posed by colonialism, Christian missionary proselytizing, and modernization. The consolidation of a reformist Theravada practice was marked by the rise of new Buddhist associations, schools, and colleges. Institutions like the Maha Bodhi Society (1891), the Bengal Buddhist Association (1892), and the Young Men's Buddhist Association (1898) were characteristic of colonial modernity, intrinsically tied to the imperial network of print capitalism, transport networks of steamship and railways, the spread of Western education, the development of English as the *lingua franca* of empire, the rise of a Western-educated class of elites, and a complex fashioning of nationalist consciousness (see Schedneck, Chapter 21 of this volume; Malagoda 1976; Obeyeskere 1984; Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988; Bond 1988). Often limited in their appeal to the bilingual intelligentsia in the major urban centers, these new media and networks of communication allowed new Buddhist associations and leaders to connect not only to the Theravada Buddhist world of South and Southeast Asia, but also to a wider network of spiritualists like the Theosophists, and to couch their aspirations in a new language of internationalism (Frost 2002). These institutions sought to create an ideal Buddhist citizen, halfway between the status of a monk and a layperson, by returning to an ancient "pure" Buddhism, now fashioned in Orientalist textual and archaeological scholarship as a rational, humanitarian faith.

One prominent transnational Buddhist association, the Maha Bodhi Society, with its offices across Ceylon, India, and Burma, moved the language of reformism in a different direction. Under the leadership of Anagarika Dharmapala, the Society shifted its focus from texts and the canonical Buddhist scriptures to the physical sites and spaces of Buddhist pilgrimage in Ceylon and India. Its agenda moved beyond the search for scriptural purity to demands for the recovery and restitution of ancient Buddhist sites in South Asia. This brought the world of practicing Buddhism into intimate encounters with both the historicist vision of archaeological conservation and the rights of other religious communities, as seen in Bodh Gaya (Guha-Thakurta 2004; Trevithick 2006). In several ways, this process drew on the same authenticating tactics of colonial archaeology that sought to discover an essentially Buddhist past for ancient India by reading into objects and structures a priori histories of

Buddhism. But the Maha Bodhi Society carried it one step further. Now that archaeology had established beyond doubt the "original" Buddhist character of objects and monuments, they were to be returned to their original sacral meanings and associations, to the communities of the reformed practicing Buddhists of which the Society claimed to be the sole representative. In other words, the "scientific" authenticating practices of archaeology opened up monuments and antiquities to a new set of re-sacralization claims and a whole range of religious revivalist politics that spanned the Asian Buddhist world.

Recent scholarship on Buddhism in colonial societies has argued persuasively for a far more nuanced treatment of colonial power relations in the reconfiguration of Buddhism involving colonial scholar administrators—both European and "native"—and lay and monastic Buddhist leaders (Blackburn 2010a). In the context of India, this scholarship has tried to move beyond the dominant narrative frames of Orientalist "discovery" and "reformist" Buddhism to explore the deeply textured lives of Indian Buddhist intellectuals like Kripasaran Mahasthavir (1865–1926), Rahul Sankrityayan (1893–1963), and Dharmanand Kosambi (1876–1941). While their lives as Buddhists and scholars of Buddhism reflect their complex locations within a wider network of transnational Buddhist institutions and Euro-American and Asian scholarship, their negotiations with other Indian elites on questions of language, literacy, caste, religion, and political ideologies present a field of diverse aspirations and fractured visions that dismantle any singular notion of a modern Indian Buddhist (Ober 2013; Sen 2014). To better appreciate these colonial reconfigurations of Buddhism and their fractured frames, we will now revisit some material vectors that emerged as important sites of being and becoming Buddhists in the colony.

Sites and Artifacts

Although the colonial relationships with Buddhist material remains are embedded in larger histories of imperial antiquarian collecting and the subsequent transformation of these objects into artifacts, antiquities, and art (Cohn 1982, 1997; Jasanoff 2006), they also reveal an essentially hesitant nature of colonial state formation in South Asia. While narratives of "native vandalism," "medieval Islamic iconoclasm," and "Hindu misappropriations" continued as the framing principles, with the founding of the Archaeological Survey of India in the 1860s and 1870s, this period witnessed a more systematic drive for off-site collecting of Buddhist material remains.

The journey of the sculpted railings and pillars of the *stupa* of Bharhut from its original site in central India to the Archaeological Gallery of the Indian Museum (Calcutta) epitomizes the spirit of archaeological collecting and museum display of these decades (see also Chua, Chapter 23, and Patterson, Chapter 24 of this volume). The retention of Bharhut's remains and its reconstruction within the imperial archive of the colonial metropole point to a rather different investment of the state as the custodian of the Buddhist past (Guha-Thakurta 2004). This desire and vision for complete custodial control was certainly tied to the reorganization of the Archaeological Survey of India under Director General John Marshall at the turn of the twentieth century. Usually read as a period of immense state investment due to the personal attention by Lord Curzon, viceroy of the colony, this period saw a shift in aesthetics of archaeological practice that pushed for sustained efforts of on-site

conservation of antiquities. Legal enactments in monument preservation, most notably the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act (1904), embodied a vision of centralization in archaeological administration. Structural remains, especially in important Buddhist sites like Sarnath, Sanchi, and Nalanda, now emerged as the domain of legally protected historical monuments and scientifically preserved and displayed historical evidence in fenced-off, landscaped sites and museums all over the colony (Guha-Thakurta 2004; Lahiri 2012; Mukherjee 2013a, 2014).

This transformation from earlier individual/private spoliations to conserved ruins and monuments give the impression of complete hegemonic control of the colonial state over the colony's (Buddhist) material pasts, but the local histories of monuments and objects reveal a far more nuanced realignment of power relations at work than any overarching narratives of colonial domination and authorial control would allow. By way of an example, it will be useful to look at archaeology's interface with reinvented religious associations at the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya and Buddhist corporeal relics unearthed during archaeological excavations in different parts of the colony.

The Mahabodhi Temple: Recreating the Center of the Buddhist World

The Mahabodhi Temple and the adjoining Bodhi tree, as the grounds of Gautama's awakening, had become over several centuries a site of trans-regional Buddhist pilgrimage, religious and political benefactions, and intense building and rebuilding activities. The earliest structures at the site are often attributed to the third century B.C.E. under the powerful royal patron Asoka, the Mauryan emperor. Very few remnants of this oldest structure survive except for the famous *Vajrasana* throne, which the emperor was said to have installed to commemorate the site of Buddha's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. Over centuries the temple complex underwent various building and rebuilding phases, which included support and donations from various royal, monastic, and lay patrons professing different faiths, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. Archaeological and sculptural evidence point to the site's long-standing Vaishnava and Shaiva associations, which never endangered the Buddhist commemorations of Mahabodhi (Barua 1934; Guha-Thakurta 2004; Singh 2004; Trevithick 2006; Lahiri 2012; Geary et al. 2012).

By all accounts, at least since the eighteenth century Bodh Gaya (the town associated with the Bodhi tree and the Mahabodhi Temple) had developed as an active site of Hindu/ Brahminical pilgrimage, being in the neighborhood of Gaya and its complex spatial encompassment within the rituals of the *Gaya Sraddah*. The temple itself and the adjoining lands were under the custodial authority of a particular *Shavite* sect of ascetics—the *Giri-Mahants* of Bodh Gaya. In their self-projection, the Giris traced their legitimacy over the site to sixteenth-century royal grants from the Mughal emperors and its later alleged attestation by the colonial state for the Giris' fabled support of the English East India Company during the uprising of 1857 (Guha-Thakurta 2004; Singh 2004; Trevithick 2006; Geary 2013).

By the middle years of the nineteenth century, more important than these ever elusive certifications of legitimacy was the fact that the Mahants for all de facto purposes were the custodians of Bodh Gaya. They conducted daily worship at the temple and the tree, supervised

the Hindu rituals, and emerged as the recipient of pilgrim donations. In terms of access to non-Hindus, either the occasional Buddhist pilgrimage missions, or the European surveyors, antiquarians, and archaeologists, the Giris had provided no recorded obstacle, a welcome relief for colonial administrators since many of the practicing Hindu sites, like those in the town of Gaya, would be closed off to them. The authority and permission of the Giris would be acknowledged both by the colonial antiquarians and the occasional Buddhist mission, such as those financed by the Buddhist Court of Ava (Inwa/Burma) in the 1870s that provided the grounds for direct intervention by colonial archaeologists (Guha-Thakurta 2004; Singh 2004; Trevithick 2006; Lahiri 2012).

This restoration of the Mahabodhi Temple and its resultant attestation as the center of the Buddhist world would now open up the site to claims of religious repatriation from new transnational Buddhist associations, such as the Maha Bodhi Society under Anagarika Dharmapala, that now ran counter to the customary authority of the Shavite Giri Mahants of Bodh Gaya. From an initial brush-off in 1892, the contestation grew into an elaborate legal battle over ethical and religious custodianship. It is extremely pertinent to remember that the colonial state's stance over the Mahabodhi Temple, whether during the years of restoration or during the long legal battle over the site, remained deeply hesitant and cautionary. While there were moments, especially in the early twentieth century, when the state would be seen as being "sympathetic" to the "Buddhist" cause, its larger position would be one of conscious self-distancing and maintaining an official stance of nonintervention in matters of faith, especially of contending faith and worship of the subject population (Guha-Thakurta 2004; Trevithick 2006). This self-projection of commitment to religious neutrality of the colonial state dates back to one of the enshrining principles of the Royal Proclamation of 1858 by which the administration of the colony passed from the authority of the English East India Company to the British Crown in the aftermath of the revolt of the Company's native infantry in 1857.[3]

In line with these legal parameters, the Mahabodhi Temple never acquired the status of a "protected monument," nor were the legal claims of authority and control decided definitely in favor of any contending party (Guha-Thakurta 2004; Trevithick 2006). While the Mahabodhi Temple offers a case for archaeology's and colonial state's negotiations with multiple "pre-modern" and "modern" claims for custody, propriety, and religious reclamations, Buddhist corporeal relics unearthed during archaeological excavations point to a different production of "sacrality," one that was shaped by the limits of colonial legal controls, anxieties of imperial diplomacy, and regional, national, and transnational networks of reclamations.

Relics: Ancient and Modern Embodiments

As potent embodiments of the Buddha or prominent Buddhist monks, Buddhist relics, more specifically corporeal relics, had played a major role in the "lives of Southern Asian polities," both during pre-colonial and early colonial times, across South and mainland Southeast Asia, as material registers of legitimization of state and dynastic sovereignty, and as symbols of protection and authority during times of heightened military and political engagements (Blackburn 2010b).[4] In sharp contrast to these earlier rituals of sovereignty, colonial engagements with Buddhist relics in India, such as those uncovered

in Sarnath, Sanchi, Sonari, and Satdhara, during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were marked by narratives of accidental discoveries, "ignorant native spoliations," amateur European private antiquarian collecting, and finally off-site relocations in museums in metropolitan centers in Europe (Brekke 2007; Mathur 2007; Guha-Thakurta 2013; Mukherjee 2014; Ray 2014). While the earlier relic journeys were marked by a vision of historicism and museumization, the journeys of relics and relic caskets in the early twentieth century reflect an uneasy transition and shifting identities in the material lives of these objects.

While retracing the rich and diverse individual journeys of these relics lies beyond our present space or scope, it might be of some interest to tease out certain common threads that bind these journeys. In 1898 relics unearthed from the site of Piprahwa Kot were presented to the king of Siam, Chulalongkorn (Rama V), who in turn distributed these relics to Buddhists of Siam, Ceylon, and Burma. In 1910 relics discovered from the site of Shah-ji-ki Dehri (near Peshawar) were also presented to Burmese Buddhists to be enshrined in a new pagoda in the erstwhile royal capital of Mandalay. Such presentations of relics to Burmese delegates and the king of Siam represented acts of frontier and foreign diplomacy of the colonial government. Whereas the presentation of the Piprahwa relics to King Rama V of Siam reflected British anxieties to increase their political influence over Siam as a crucial geopolitical buffer between the British and French colonial interests, the presentation of Shah-ji-ki Dheri relics to Burmese Buddhists was intended as a symbolic gesture to consolidate the newfound British political hold over Burma. In the latter, the relics were specifically designed as compensation to Burma after its political and economic subjugation in the late nineteenth century following three bloody Anglo Burmese wars and in the aftermath of the embargo placed by the colonial government on the Burmese mission to restore the temple of Bodh Gaya. In the 1920s and 1930s Buddhist relics unearthed from Bhattiprolu in southern India and from Mirpur Khas (in Sind) in the colony's North-West frontier were also presented to new Buddhist associations in the colony, such as the Maha Bodhi Society and the Bengal Buddhist Association, to be enshrined in new relic temples built for their enshrinement across Calcutta and Sarnath.

While each and every case of relic presentation involved protracted negotiations between administrators, scholars, religious leaders, and intellectuals, what binds these narratives is the fact that in each and every case the colonial state and its institutions of archaeology and museums retained custodial authority over the ancient inscribed relic caskets, classifying them as objects of aesthetic and historic preservation in the space of public museums. Only bare corporeal relics, perceived as devoid of aesthetic and historic registers, were allowed to travel out for ritual re-enshrinement in new relic caskets designed and inscribed with the authorship of the colonial state (see Maud, Chapter 22 of this volume, and Asher 2012; Mukherjee 2013b, 2014, 2015; Ray 2014).

While the separation of corporeal remains from ancient reliquaries led to constitutive shifts in the material lives of these objects, their journeys from sites to museums and new Buddhist temples and monasteries often reflect uneasy passages marked by multiple scholarly, religious, national, and transnational pulls that produced new orders of sacredness and new notions of the past around Buddhist material vectors. The context of political decolonization, postcolonial state formation, and heritage repatriation now provided the grounds for a fresh engagement with India's Buddhist past and present, to which we now turn.

Symbols, Events and National Reconfigurations of a Buddhist Past

Following independence from British colonial rule in 1947, India's ancient Buddhist heritage was central to the project of nation building, as well as giving rise to new Indic adaptations, especially during the 1950s. This was a period of considerable internationalization and networking among a broad spectrum of Asian Buddhist actors and communities, including the World Fellowship of Buddhists (founded in 1950) and the World Buddhist Sangha Council (founded in 1966). Among the key nationalist modernizers who were sympathetic to Buddhism was the first prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), who looked to the historical Buddha as one of India's greatest sons. For many of India's secular-leaning politicians, the Buddha provided them with an "all-India inclusive ethic" and a "symbol to declare that India's civilization was noble, culturally variegated, and intellectually respectable" (Holt 2004, 23). Following a precedent from the British colonial era, this idealized view of the historical Buddha as a rational and critical thinker became hallmarks of India's own secular, liberal, and pluralist society, as well as a key symbol of national unity in the aftermath of the violent Partition.

As illustrated in his earlier writings, such as *Glimpses of World History* and the *Discovery of India*, Nehru had a deep sense of historical consciousness and looked to India's past as a reservoir for an integrated vision of the nation and for reclaiming its position on the international stage. Although this was a more complex process of public debate and consensus at the national level, rather than individual choice per se (Ray 2015), many of the historical references adopted by the Indian National Congress rested on a construction of India's glorious past, allied with the ancient Buddhist emperor Asoka. Shortly after the 1947–1948 exhibition "Masterpieces of Indian Art" (Guha-Thakurta 2004), the lion capital that was originally placed atop the Asokan pillar at the Buddhist site of Sarnath was adopted as the official emblem of India in 1950. Carved from a single block of polished sandstone, it features four lions standing back to back, with a lower frieze comprising various sculptures separated by intervening chariot-wheels. These twenty-four-spoked chariot-wheels (or *dharmachakras*) that map the Buddhist universe and represent the Buddhist dharma, or law, were also adopted as the central motif that adorns India's national flag.

As Brown (2009) discusses, there are several reasons that the new Indian leaders chose the Mauryan past and incorporated Buddhism into the new nation's iconography. First, the leader Asoka and his Mauryan court provided an important model of imperial unity for the subcontinent that was simultaneously Indian and yet neither Hindu nor Muslim, and therefore could bridge the volatile religious and political sensibilities. Second, Asoka's Buddhist state offered a rich set of concepts in political philosophy, such as *dhammavijaya*, or victory/rule through dharma, that resonated with the ethos of Gandhi's nonviolence that had been central to the struggle for independence. As a marker of Indian political identity in the 1950s, "connecting India's national independence struggle to an ideal vision of this ancient time of peace reinforced the continuity of nationhood and the self-imagery of India as peaceful yet-strong" (Brown 2009, 300). Finally, the reign of Asoka also provided a model for international relations and diplomacy that foreshadowed Nehru's own construction of the nonalignment movement.

Asoka's patronage of the Buddha *dharma* and his far-flung ambassadors of peace and culture had spread the teachings beyond the subcontinent; associating the modern state with the Mauryan era helped create a pan-Indo-Asian image of the nation as a center of cultural power and influence.

Another example of the intermeshing of the nation-state ideology with the re-emergence of a pan-Asian Buddhist movement was the widely celebrated 2,500th Buddha Jayanti held in 1956. The Buddha Jayanti celebrations were part of a year-long "cultural" (not religious) program held at several Buddhist sites throughout the country, as well as in several Asian countries (Geary 2014). In retrospect, this commemorative event, which marked the 2,500th anniversary of the birth of the Buddha Shakyamuni (based on a Theravada chronology), was a historical landmark for the revival of a Buddhist sacred geography in India and helped to stimulate inter-Asian networks and connections. According to Bond (1992), the event was particularly auspicious among Theravada Buddhist communities, because the Buddha is believed to have prophesied that his *sasana* would endure for five thousand years, and at the mid-point of that period would undergo great renewal and resurgence.

In preparation for the 2,500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations, a number of sites also received a significant makeover, and considerable work was done to enhance the beauty and grandeur of India's cultural heritage, as well as to make them more accessible to pilgrims and visitors. For those Asian Buddhist elites who were officially invited to attend the international celebrations, an accompanying book entitled *2500 Years of Buddhism* was produced by the government of India, which served as a pilgrimage guidebook that helped to reinforce the "universal significance for modern, international Buddhism" (Huber 2008, 33). Like the diplomatic exchanges surrounding the redistributions of relics, the government of India also provided rent-free land (at minimum annual cost) in several pilgrimage centers, like Bodh Gaya, to allow Asian Buddhist groups to build temples and rest houses for their Buddhist community (Geary 2014). Not only would the state benefit financially through international pilgrim traffic, but it was envisioned that these sites would once again develop into great centers of Buddhist culture and education, as in ancient days.

B. R. Ambedkar and the New Buddhist Movement

The year of the Buddha Jayanti was also significant in terms of the development of "new Buddhism" or neo-Buddhism, following the writings and legacy of the Dalit political leader "Babasaheb"—B. R. Ambedkar.[5] Much has been written about the highly accomplished low-caste leader Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956) and his program of social reform that culminated in the highly symbolic mass conversion to Buddhism on October 14 in Nagpur, Maharashtra (Zelliott 1992, 2008; Fitzgerald 1999; Omvedt 2003; Jondhale and Beltz 2004). On this occasion, Ambedkar embraced the three refuges and five precepts and then proceeded to convert an additional 400,000 of his "Untouchable" followers—one of the largest mass conversions in modern history. He himself administrated an additional twenty-two

vows, which included an "emphatic repudiation" of Hinduism and Hindu practices, including a rejection of the idea that the Buddha was an *avatara* (incarnation) of Visnu (Singh 2010, 215).

As Beltz (2004) writes, Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism was not a "precipitous occurrence"; his decision to expel Hinduism reaches as far back as 1935 when, on the occasion of the Provincial Conference of the Depressed Classes at Yeola, he publicly declared that while he was born a Hindu, he would not die one. Born into the Mahar caste and growing up in a village in western India, Ambedkar was acutely aware of the stigma and marginalization that was attributed to his social status. But with his father serving in the colonial Indian army, he also became one of the first Untouchables to attend an Indian university and also went on to obtain his MA and PhD at Columbia University, as well as an MSc and DSc in constitutional law at the University of London. During these educational and formative years he became a prominent spokesman for low-caste rights and at times was an outspoken critic of Gandhi's more sympathetic view of the Hindu caste system. Actively exploring other religious alternatives, Ambedkar had spent time in Sri Lanka and Burma, had read various Pali sources, and had been influenced by other Indian Buddhists such as Dharmanand Kosambi and Lakshmi Narasu, a South Indian Buddhist and author of *The Essence of Buddhism.* According to Singh (2010, 195), "A combination of several factors gave Buddhism an edge for being chosen as the religion of salvation for India's oppressed and marginalized millions—the fact that the Buddha's teaching could easily be mined for messages of egalitarianism, rationality, and ethics; its international presence; its deep roots in Indian soil (this was very important for Ambedkar); and the fact that in the mid-twentieth century, there were actually very few Buddhists in India."

Although Ambedkar had made attempts to link this new vehicle with wider networks of international Buddhism, such as his participation in the World Conference of Buddhism, it was also clear that this "new hermeneutics of liberation" (Queen 1996) was directed toward (but not limited to) the Scheduled Castes and combined a strong element of social and political protest, especially against the Hindu religion. In his magnus opus, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, for example, Ambedkar presents a nuanced translation of the Buddha's life and the Pali Canon, incorporating Marxist class struggle into notions of *dukkha* (Queen 1996) and asserting that the morality and scientific rationality of the Buddha could be used to "reconstruct society, and to build up a modern, progressive society of justice, equality, and freedom" (Beltz 2004, 4). Part of this reconstruction also involved a new myth of origins for the new Buddhists, claiming that they were the original indigenous inhabitants of India.

Thus, as an agent of Buddhist revival in postcolonial India, Ambedkar had hoped his conversion and writings would be a source of empowerment for the Dalit community, taking them beyond a mere historical appreciation of the Buddha as seen by India's secular leaders (Singh 2010). But his premature death, a few months after his conversion, created a set of challenges for the new Buddhists in India. As Sponberg (1996) writes, "Although Ambedkar stressed the central role of Buddhism within his program for social and spiritual emancipation . . . [he] left no opportunity for him to work out a comprehensive model for applying the Dhammic principles and practice to the particular needs of the new Buddhists of India" (103).

Although the spectrum of influence among the new Buddhists is diverse, including a discrepancy in scholarly literature surrounding the structure of social relations in specific communities, both rural and urban (see Fitzgerald 1994; Kantowsky 2003; Singh 2010), one

key issue that has plagued the new Buddhist movement is the persistence of caste. With regard to the politicization of Buddhism and caste identity, as Beltz (2004) points out, what is remarkable (and paradoxical) about the Ambedkar movement is that the strong anti-caste element has been accompanied by the hardening of caste consciousness among some Buddhists themselves (Beltz 2004, 11). Despite Ambedkar's universalist intentions, the conversion movement has been limited to certain social demographics, such as the Mahars of Maharashtra and the Jatavs of Agra (Lynch 1969); there is a persistence of caste conditioning through endogamous relations and government reservation policies, and there does not appear to be a massive or sustained pan-Indian legacy among all strata of the population. Instead, as Beltz (2004, 11) points out, new Buddhism has largely remained a "religion of Dalit(s)" who reside in various geographic pockets throughout the country. Although there is a small fraction of urbanized middle-class Dalit converts who have achieved a degree of social success and assimilation, according to Sponberg (1996, 110), most have "traded the poverty and exclusion of their ancestral villages for the less discriminatory but equally impoverished slums and hutments of the cities."

Despite the challenges surrounding caste persistence and intra-organizational cooperation, there are a number of developments that have helped to build a new foundation of self-respect and community pride among some of the Dalit Buddhists. This includes the ascendency of the Maharashtra-based organization Triratna Bauddha Mahasangha (TBM; formerly called TBMSG, or Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana) that grew out of connections between Ambedkar, Anand Kausalyayan, and the English-born scholar-monk Sangharakshita (born Dennis Lingwood) from the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO). From the 1990s to present, there also appears to be a growing number of high-profile conversion campaigns taking place in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, parts of South India, and the Punjab (Zelliot 2008; Singh 2010). On November 4, 2004, for example, a ceremony organized by the All-India Confederation of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes Organizations and the Lord Buddha Club took place in Delhi, with an estimated 20,000 people embracing the three refuges and five precepts (Singh 2010, 196). On May 28, 2007, a large rally was also organized by the Republican Party of India at the Mahalaxmi Race Course in Mumbai to commemorate the golden jubilee year of Babasaheb Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism. On the occasion it was reported that roughly 50,000 (100,000 according to other sources) people took *diksha* (an initiation or consecration ceremony by a religious leader) with the majority of them tribals and followers of the influential Dalit writer Laxman Mane, who had been touring the state after converting to Buddhism in October 2006.[6]

Not surprisingly, one area that has proven to be an important source of mobilization that cuts across different sectors of the Indian Buddhist population is the representational power of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Castes among various political parties. Due to the influence of the reservation system that took shape and legitimacy as a result of Dr. Ambedkar's advocacy in the 1930s, this has helped to create a critical mass for the historically disenfranchised communities (Zelliot 2008). As Singh (2010, 197) writes, while many Dalits in their quest for social justice and advancement seek salvation in democratic politics rather than religion, there are examples of growing confluence between the two. The electoral success of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Uttar Pradesh is illustrative of this trend. The BSP was founded by Kanshi Ram in 1984, a highly educated Ramdasi Sikh (and former Chamar) from Punjab, who was succeeded by the charismatic leader Mayawati

in 2003. The party was the third most-voted party in the 2014 Indian general elections and is built on a broad alliance of Scheduled Castes, Other Backwards Castes, and Muslims. In the past, Mayawati has openly stated her intention to formally convert to Buddhism when the political conditions enable her to become prime minister of India.

What is certainly evident among the interactions between international Buddhist networks and the new Buddhists in India, including the recent attempts to "liberate" the Mahabodhi Temple from Hindu control (Doyle 1997, 2003) is a degree of skepticism and uncertainty surrounding this politically charged Indic adaptation of Buddhism. Although places like Nagpur and Pune have a large following of Ambedkar Buddhists, at many of the major Buddhist pilgrimage sites in North India they are a representational minority, even among the Indian Buddhists. Other prominent organizations, such as the All India Bhikkhu Sangha and Bengal Buddhist Society, draw inspiration from other prominent Indian Buddhist leaders and reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These include Mahavir (1833–1919), Iyothe Thass (1845–1914; Tamil founder of the Sakya Buddhist Society), Kripasaran Mahastavir (1865–1926; founder of the Bengal Buddhist Association in 1892), Dharmananda Kosambi (1876–1947), Bodhananda Mahastavir (1874–1952), Rahul Sankrityayan (1893–1963), Anand Kausalyayan (1905–1988), and Jagdish Kashyap (1908–1976). Some of these Indian Buddhists worked in close collaboration with Anagarika Dharmapala and the Maha Bodhi Society, and spent several formative years in Burma, and especially Sri Lanka, at the Vidyalankara Pirivena undertaking Buddhist studies among other prominent Theravada Buddhist teachers. Many of the contemporary Indian Buddhists also have ethno-cultural ties with the Barua and Chakma Buddhists of Bengal and Assam, with limited interaction with the new Buddhists from western India (Ahir 1989, 99).

How will the new Buddhists navigate this multilayered terrain of international Buddhist revival in India? Clearly there is a need for more scholarly research that goes beyond the derivative texts and biographical descriptions of Ambedkar (Kantowsky 2003). Zelliott (2008) suggests that within the last few decades, we are seeing an enlargement of the new Buddhism movement on the international scene, with growing convergences on the rise. Not only is this evident in the leadership of the Nagpur-based Japanese monk Surai Sasai but also in the close ties with the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, the sponsoring of Tipitaka Chanting ceremonies and Bhikkhu training by the Light of Buddhadharma Foundation International, and other events. Many Dalit Buddhists and non-Buddhist Indians have also found Goenka's Vipassana meditation an important conduit for social change and an opportunity to participate in a growing movement that transcends social, political, and religious differences. As Zelliot has suggested, while the majority of the new Buddhist converts remain uneducated and impoverished, through these international networks of Buddhist activity they are able to claim membership in a worldwide Buddhist arena that provides a sense of confidence and legitimacy to the movement.

Pilgrimage and Tibetan Buddhist Revival

Throughout the twentieth century, and especially within the last sixty years, there has been an exponential growth in Buddhist pilgrimage activities that transcends doctrinal differences and cuts across cultural-linguistic divides. Due to its reification by Orientalist scholars,

archaeologists and Buddhist practitioners throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this "revived" geography of Buddhist pilgrimage has become a foundation for the construction of a pan-Asian Buddhist identity. Although Toni Huber (2008) has argued that there is no historical basis for the grouping of eight sites—Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, Kushinagar, Sravasti, Rajgir, Sankassa, Vaishali—into an ancient and traditional network of Buddhist pilgrimage, this pilgrimage schema and the material remains of Indian Buddhism have provided an affectively charged ground for Asian Buddhist restoration. Although many Indian Dalit Buddhists have also created their own sacred geography and pilgrimage sites associated with the memory of Ambedkar, such as Deekshabhoomi in Nagpur, they are also drawn to the ancient Buddhist sites because, as Singh (2010) suggests, it allows them to connect with India's great civilizational heritage "to which they can lay claim, a compensation for the marginalization and low social status they experienced over many centuries" (200) (see also Maud, Chapter 22 of this volume).

One of the most visible changes to the archaeologically restored Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India is the surge of Buddhist architecture that is underway. If Bodh Gaya is any indication of this growing trend, there are currently fifty-four temple/monastery/institutions listed on the Temple Management Committee website and likely a dozen more under construction (Geary 2014). As meeting grounds for culturally diverse Buddhist sects and lineages of different national backgrounds, India's pilgrimage geography is indicative of an inter-Asian Buddhist revival that has far-reaching implications for the development of Indian Buddhism. Given the extra-national reach of Buddhism and the popular appeal of charismatic Buddhist leaders wishing to reconnect with the land of origins, India's Buddhist sites provide an important social laboratory for global Buddhism and a melting pot for the dissemination and exchange of Buddhist ideas, practices, teachers, and institutions.

One Buddhist community that has been particularly active in the restoration and revitalization of India's Buddhist holy sites are the Tibetans. Although there is a long tradition of Tibetans making pilgrimage to India (Huber 2008), the arrival of Fourteenth Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso and over 85,000 refugees in 1959 has had a tremendous impact in shaping the revival of Buddhism in India. The largest numbers of refugees were located in the Lungsung-Samdupling settlement in Bylakuppe, Karnataka, between 1960 and 1974. In Himachal Pradesh, a number of Tibetans also settled in Dharamsala, which became the headquarters for the Tibetan government in exile by way of the Central Tibetan administration and the official residence of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. The persecution and exile of Tibetans has also contributed to a revitalization of the monastic traditions in the northern Himalayan regions such as Lahaul and Spiti (both in the state of Uttarakhand), Ladakh (in the state of Jammu and Kashmir), and Tawang and Bomdila (Arunachal Pradesh), regions where Indo-Tibetan Buddhism has a long history of patronage along trade routes (Zablocki, Chapter 7 of this volume; Singh 2010; Ray 2014).

In addition to building and revitalizing monastic centers and educational institutions, for many of these political refugees, the practice of pilgrimage, or *gnas kor* ("circling around an abode"), has been an important part of rebuilding a new social and cultural identity in exile (Singh 2010). For many Tibetan religio-elites, the "revived" Buddhist geography provides a significant cultural resource that has contributed to both the internationalization of Tibetan Buddhism and the revitalization of many Buddhist sites in India (Huber 2008; Singh 2010; Becker 2014). With several thousand Tibetans taking up residence during the winter season, the draw of the Dalai Lama and other renowned spiritual teachers at various

Buddhist sites provides an opportunity for pilgrims to receive personal blessings, accumulate merit, do prayers and virtuous acts, undertake seasonal work, and reunite with other Tibetans throughout India and the surrounding Himalayan zones (Geary 2014). These heightened ritual occasions are also re-creations or revivals of various rituals that were traditionally performed in villages and monastic communities in the Tibetan plateau (Doyle 1997; Huber 2008).

Among the diverse ecumenical gatherings that now take place at the Buddhist holy sites, the most prominent is the Dukhor Wangchen, or the "Great Kalachakra Initiation," under the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, which has attracted large numbers of Tibetan pilgrims since 1970. As the largest known public Buddhist gathering and an important ritual medium for the revitalization of Tibetan culture and religion in exile, the Kalachakra initiation has been held in Dharamsala (1970), Bylakuppe (1971), Bodh Gaya (1974, 1985, 2003, 2012), Leh (1976, 2014), Dirang (1983), Lahaul and Spiti (1983, 2000), Zanskar (1988), Sarnath (1990), Kalpa (1992), Gangtok (1993), Jispa (1994), Mundgod (1995), Tabo (1996), Salugara (1996), and Amaravati (2006). This initiation into the practice of Kalachakra tantra has become an important part of Tibetan Buddhism, and the Fourteenth Dalai Lama has conducted more initiations, in India and abroad, than any of his predecessors. For these reasons, Tibetan travel to India has remained politically sensitive during these events and sometimes is tightly controlled, with rumors that upward of 1,500 Chinese spies attend the teaching to study and report on the Tibetan leaders and their activities.[7]

What is also important about the staging of the Kalachkara event (and other events, such as the Tibetan monlams), from the viewpoint of Huber (2008), is that they have come "to exemplify a vital symbiosis between Indian interests and exile Tibetan ones" (374). Not only do these heightened ritual occasions contribute to the ongoing, modern revitalization of India's Buddhist sites, bringing a range of economic, political, and cultural benefits for the Indian host communities, but they also provide an important platform that periodically propels the Tibetan refugees into the national and international spotlight (Huber 2008). In Huber's words, "It allows them to be valued as a sought-after partner community with whom others can have beneficial alliances, rather than a marginalized, dependent group that represents a long-term burden to the Indian taxpayer and a potential political embarrassment to Sino-Indian relations" (374).

Due to the ecumenical and international thrust of these ritual gatherings, they have also played an important part in reviving lesser-known ancient Buddhist sites and ruins throughout the country. By way of an example, in her book *Shifting Stones, Shaping the Past*, Catherine Becker (2014) describes how the humble ruins of Amaravati stupa in Andhra Pradesh were transformed into an active site of worship, receiving offerings and witnessing numerous devotional acts during the 2006 Kalachakra. Thus as an important ritualized setting for a whole host of social relations, these large Tibetan gatherings at the Buddhist holy sites provide a crucial arena for the negotiation of a Tibetan cultural and "national" identity in exile and the revitalization of archaeological sites as renewed centers of devotion.

Although the Dalai Lama and other prominent Tibetan leaders have had a tremendous impact on the revitalization of these ancient Buddhist sites in India, this is also a highly charged symbolic arena that requires negotiation with a range of stakeholders. Instead of an "explicit colonization" of sacred space, as Huber (2010, 347) suggests, Tibetan Buddhist actors are one among many Asian Buddhist constituencies that are actively engaged with the physical space of the Buddhist holy land for various religious and socioeconomic benefits.

With the surge of Buddhist architecture (temples, stupas, and images) in prominent pilgrimage centers like Bodh Gaya and Sarnath, this is also giving rise to competition and contestation among host communities and international Buddhist networks. For example, the plans to build a 500-foot image of Maitreya by the Foundation for the Mahayana Tradition on the outskirts of Kushinagar (previously Bodh Gaya) has been met with considerable opposition by Indian farmers and other Buddhists groups (Falcone 2011).

Another example of these divergences is the lack of interaction and cultural divide between two of the most prominent faces of Buddhist revival in India—the Dalit and the Tibetan movements (Singh 2010). While both Dalit Buddhist organizations and Tibetan Buddhists share a history of persecution, as Singh writes, these two Buddhisms "are embedded not only in very different cultural matrices but also in very different political contexts and orientations" (200). Following the example of Ambedkar, for most Dalit converts, Buddhism provides an important critique of Hinduism and the caste system, as well as raising the socio-political status of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes within the Indian public and political arena. Whereas for many Tibetan Buddhist elite, Buddhism is about cultural preservation and revitalization, with a propensity toward internationalism as a means of building a diasporic community as political refugees. At the level of religious belief and practice, there are also significant differences, such as the limited role of monasticism among Dalit Buddhists and suspicion among Tibetans regarding their lack of training in Buddhist doctrine (Singh 2010).

Although the two groups periodically lay claim to the Buddhist holy land and share a platform during international Buddhist celebrations and events, the deep cultural, political, and ideological differences between the Dalits and Tibetan Buddhists constitute a significant barrier to the prospect of pan-Asian Buddhist unity in India (Singh 2010, 200). With some skepticism, Singh (2010, 214) writes, "It remains to be seen whether and to what extent these sites can actually foster a sense of *communitas* among those who visit them, specifically among the Dalit Buddhists, Tibetan Buddhists (and their non-Tibetan adherents and supporters), and East Asian Buddhists. Given the enormous differences between the cultural matrices in which all these Buddhisms are embedded, the potential for this seems fairly limited at present."

CONCLUSION: TOURISM AND HERITAGE DIPLOMACY IN THE NEW ASIAN CENTURY

As we have shown in this chapter, a central theme in our understanding of contemporary Indian Buddhism is the way in which material traces of the past are employed to articulate claims in the present and for the future. Alongside the increased visibility of Buddhist architecture and ritual gathering at the major Buddhist pilgrimage sites are the various initiatives by the Indian government designed to attract tourist potential and lure international investors, especially from other Asian countries that share a Buddhist heritage. As magnets for tourism development and objects of secular-cultural heritage, in recent decades we have seen a growing interface between Asian Buddhist communities and state cultural promotion at the national level—where India's Buddhist heritage has emerged as a key symbol of a wider resurgent Asia. Following on the heels of economic liberalization, the Indian government,

under P. V. Narasimha Rao and successive administrations, has rigorously pursued a "Look East Policy" that aims to cultivate extensive economic and strategic relations with various Southeast Asian nations and to counteract the growing economic influence of China. In this changing geopolitical arena, Buddhist heritage provides a significant cultural resource for foreign diplomatic ties and multilateral relations.

Through the development of Buddhist tourism circuits, for example, the government of India and several state governments have taken an active interest in promoting Buddhist heritage and a transcendent experience through "spiritual tourism" among Buddhist source markets in Asia (Geary 2008). With vast potential for foreign exchange earnings and employment generation, the development of India's Buddhist circuit infrastructure has been targeted for significant financial aid in recent years, including support from larger international agencies such as the World Bank. In a recent publication by the International Finance Corporation (IFC; a member of the World Bank Group), entitled *Investing in the Buddhist Circuit*, $200 million has been proposed by the Indian government and private partners for infrastructure development and investment along the Buddhist Circuit between 2014 and 2018. In terms of positioning and branding the Buddhist Circuit, the IFC and supporting agencies have identified three experience pillars as a way of appealing to potential visitors: "pilgrimage," "ancient heritage," and "mind, body, spirit."

Although the primary focus of the 2014–2018 investments are the main pilgrimage sites that straddle Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, other state governments, such as Orissa, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Andhra Pradesh, have gone to great lengths to market their visual and material traces of the past as potential tourist destinations. For example, despite the fragmentary remains of Andhra Pradesh's Buddhist past, as Becker (2014, 193) illustrates, a number of creative strategies and reconstructions have been employed to transform their ancient Buddhist sites into vibrant tourist attractions and potential pilgrimage destinations for global Buddhist communities. Following on the success of the 2006 Kalachakra in Amaravati, the Andhra Pradesh state government has taken a keen interest in promoting Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda, as well as recently excavated sites Bavikonda and Thotlakonda, to generate new tourist dollars and showcase their "enlightened" stewardship over the past (Becker 2014). In the technologically sophisticated city of Hyderabad, not only has the state government erected the colossal 350-ton Hussain Sagar Buddha, but in the State Museum of Archaeology, a Holy Relics Gallery has been opened where prominent relics from Andhra Buddhist sites are on display. As Singh (2010) describes, "In an interesting departure from orthodox museum practice, visitors/devotees are encouraged to use the room to meditate. The aim is to attract visitors by linking the display with current religious and spiritual concerns" (203–204).

Another important aspect of India's Look East Policy is the promotion of Buddhist heritage for the development of bilateral aid and multilateral initiatives with various Asian governments. In spite of the growing academic interest in the politics of heritage in Asia, the role of international and transnational cooperation in the field of Buddhist heritage conservation in India has received little attention. One example of heritage diplomacy and inter-Asian collaboration that provides a fitting conclusion to our analysis and also raises important questions about the intersection of Buddhist material remains and contemporary revitalization is the new Nalanda University.

As an example of the continuing legacy of nineteenth-century colonial archaeology and knowledge production, the desire for a revived international Buddhist university has gained

considerable traction in the early twenty-first century as it merges with a wider discourse and rhetoric surrounding a "rising Asia." The transnational commitment to the revival of the educational institution, described as an "icon of Asian renaissance," in the North Indian state of Bihar illustrates "how a new interest in 'pan-Indo-Asianism' and a newly imagined vision of 'Asian' education" are "converging to promote Asian interests" (Pinkney 2015, 111). The original Nalanda Mahavihara, or "Great Nalanda Monastery," was an extensive monastic-cum-educational complex that flourished from the fifth to twelfth century under the patronage of the Gupta Empire, as well as emperors like Harsha, and later the rulers of the Pala Empire. Before it was destroyed at the end of the twelfth century, Nalanda attracted Buddhist monks and scholars from other parts of the subcontinent, but also China, Japan, Korea, Sumatra, and other lands with Buddhist-cultural connections.

The new initiative to revive the ancient seat of Buddhist learning as a post-graduate institution first came to light when it was proposed by an Indian delegation at the 2006 meeting of the East Asian Summit (Pinkney 2015, 112). One of the earliest advocates for the project was George Yeo Tong-Boon, Singapore's former minister of foreign affairs, and Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, who became the first chairman of the Nalanda Mentor Group. According to Sen, the aim of the founders of the new Nalanda "was not only to have a first-rate university but to encourage cooperation and interchange of ideas across national borders," reflecting the traditions of the ancient Nalanda and endorsing a "vision" of a new university that would be "open to currents of thought and practice from around the globe."[8] In support of the vision, the Nalanda University Bill was established in 2010, and the university came into existence on November 25, 2010, when the Act was implemented.

In her analysis of the discourse surrounding the new Nalanda project, Pinkney (2015) highlights three key themes. First, she discusses how the contemporary framing of the project "pragmatically both adopts and neglects key elements of the Nalanda Mahavihara's known Buddhist heritage," revealing tensions surrounding a pre-modern religious center and its current embodiment as a secular university that "permits a mosaic of actors to embrace the proposal" (114–115, 121–122). Second, Pinkney highlights that a key stream of discourse surrounding its revival is its "pan-Indo-Asian" character, centered on an "a-cultural Buddhism" and "Asian values" that will contribute to a "new model of spiritual education" and pose a challenge to the dominant Western mode of higher education. Third, the author examines how the Indic framing of Nalanda responds to four specific concerns that are idealistically retooled to fit the interests of the Indian state: "Indian foreign policy goals; Indic educational ideals; alternative Indian models of education; and the unique relationship of Buddhism in India to secularism and low-caste politics" (114–115).

This new model of Asian education has captured a great deal of domestic and international media attention, with several Asian governments, including India, China, Singapore, and Japan, committing significant financial contributions to the project. All of the land for the university has been donated by the government of Bihar, and the campus is situated near the ancient town of Rajgir, a few miles from the old Nalanda ruins. While it is clear that the new Nalanda University captures the imaginations of many, as Pinkney (2015, 135) suggests, "what is not clear is the extent to which these visions are shared." In a recent article entitled "India: The Stormy Revival of an International University" in *The New York Review of Books*, Amartya Sen highlights how this revived center of ancient learning has run into problems with the new elected government of India. Under the new Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and a part of the powerful Hindutva

movement, the new government has opposed Amartya Sen continuing as chancellor of Nalanda University. Fearing academic intervention by the Modi government and the demise of academic independence for public institutions, Sen chose to step down from his post as chancellor (despite unanimous backing from the Nalanda group), and the position was given to George Yeo of Singapore.

Although the presence of intellectuals from other Asian countries on the governing board, says Sen, has helped to insulate Nalanda University from the government's sectarian pressures, the pan-Asian aspirations behind the revival efforts also illustrate the concomitant challenges of building an Asian future when the politics of religion holds a central symbolic place in the national imaginary. As seen with the sectarian violence and persecution of Rohingya Muslims in the Rakhine state of Burma and the retaliatory bomb blasts at the Mahabodhi Temple in July 2013, the pan-Asian aspirations for Buddhist revival in India must come to grips with how the international promulgation of India's Buddhist past also creates its adversaries. As an important symbol of Buddhist revival and pan-Indo-Asian cultural heritage, how the new Nalanda University navigates these political and sectarian pressures, economic interests, and diverse religious sensibilities remains to be seen.

Notes

1. Numbers derive from the 2001 Government of India Census.
2. Xuanzang's *Xiyu ji* (*Si-Yu-Ki*), for instance, was written from memory after his return to China from India and was not a modern survey field note taken on the spot (Asher 2012). Max Deeg's work on *Xiyu ji* has also pointed out the fallacies of relocating a seventh-century Chinese text, intended primarily for an audience in a royal court in China, in an essentially Indic context (Deeg 2012).
3. The issue of formal religious neutrality and nonintervention continued to bind the official parameters of several subsequent legislations in the colony, including the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act of 1904. While providing a centralized vision and legal strictures for antiquity administration, the Act also consciously steered clear of granting "protected status" to any objects or structure in active religious/ritual use (Mukherjee 2013a).
4. Early European (both Portuguese and British) encounters with Buddhist relics, particularly with the Tooth Relic at Kandy (Ceylon), reflect the colonial state's participation in rituals of pre-colonial sovereignty, to legitimize their newfound political control (Strong 2004).
5. According to Zelliott, most of the Indian converts to Buddhism prefer the term "New Buddhism" rather than "neo-Buddhist" because some feel the latter carries negative connotations. Some scholars have also invented new terms such as "Navayana Buddhism," or new vehicle, but this does not appear to have wide recognition. See discussion in Kantowsky (2003).
6. As exemplified through the writings of Laxman Mane, Marathi writing and poetry have become an important medium for developing a new identity. According to Zelliot (1992, 2008), through the Dalit Sahitya, or the literature of the oppressed, Marathi literature has become a national phenomenon and also has inspired literature and poetry in other vernacular Indian languages such as Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Hindi, and Bengali.

7. Over a thousand Chinese spies suspected in Bodh Gaya, by Tendar Tsering, *Phayul*, January 2, 2012. http://www.phayul.com/news/article.aspx?id=30614. Accessed August 15, 2015.

8. "India: The Stormy Revival of an International University," by Amartya Sen, *The New York Review of Books*, August 13, 2015. http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2015/aug/13/india-stormy-revival-nalanda-university/. Accessed August 15, 2015.

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