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# INTRODUCTION

## A BUDDHIST CROSSROADS: PIONEER EUROPEAN BUDDHISTS AND GLOBALIZING ASIAN NETWORKS 1860–1960

**Alicia Turner, Laurence Cox and Brian Bocking**

### **A cacophony of voices in the making of modern Buddhism**

The period from the later nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth centuries—roughly between the Indian Revolt of 1857 and the withdrawal of most European powers from direct rule in Asia—was one of immense change across Southeast Asia and the Buddhist world. This century saw the emergence of the elements that we now take to constitute modern Buddhism, or the multiple modern Buddhisms: the rise of the laity as practitioners and organizers (including meditation movements), new roles for women, for scholars and indeed for monks, the development of national sanghas and ethno-nationalist Buddhist discourses, and the association of Buddhism with a de-mythologized rationalist and scientific discourse. Moreover, the period saw the creation of new Buddhist institutional structures across Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka and multiple ‘Buddhist Revivals’ (late nineteenth century, turn of the twentieth century and, finally again, around 1956 with the Buddha Jayanti). It also saw the culmination of colonial empires (British, French, Japanese) and nationalism, decolonization and the creation of multiple Buddhist nation-states. It was the formative century for Buddhism, Asian modernity and their various hybrids.

The histories of modern Buddhism have, with some recent exceptions (Blackburn 2012; Jaffe 2004, 2006; Kirichenko 2012; Tweed 2011) tended to be insular—focused on the unfolding of Buddhism and modernity in a single country, perhaps unconsciously moulded by ideas of Buddhism as a national entity that came to dominate the twentieth century. Yet, as we showed in an earlier special issue of *Contemporary Buddhism*, this is to write history backwards, taking the

institutions and approaches which eventually became dominant, refining their own origin myths and drawing on their texts and archives. These histories are too often written *about* the winners, even if not always from supportive standpoints, despite the possibility of returning to contemporary sources and showing a very  
 45 different picture. What global Buddhism had become by 1960, on the eve of its mass export to the West, was not at all that which was dominant in 1860. Buddhist modernism had to be *made*; the process whereby it became largely accepted by most of the surviving groups, as at least normative and an adequate self-representation to the outside world, was a long and winding road and the  
 50 institutions and ideas characteristic of this final phase of establishment were not necessarily either those which started the process or those which appeared most significant at the time.

The more closely one investigates the changes enacted, the more it becomes clear that the creation of modern Buddhisms was not set mainly on a  
 55 national stage, nor was it the product of local conversations alone. Instead, it was the fruit of extensive interactions and interconnections across a wide variety of national, ethnic, cultural and colonial boundaries. As Richard Jaffe has encouraged us to understand, modern Buddhism was made and remade through a dizzying array of interactions and connections across Asia. The diverse modern  
 60 constructions of Buddhism:

involved a wide variety of Indians, Thais, Sri Lankans, Japanese, Koreans, Tibetans, and Chinese who listened and responded not only to what Europeans and Americans said about Buddhism, but who also talked among themselves . . . .  
 65 Consideration of these exchanges in Asia reveals the emergence of a tightly linked global Buddhist culture in the late nineteenth century and illuminates the diverse ‘complex global loops’ through which ideas were transmitted. (Jaffe 2004, 67)

The more we come to understand the significance of these conversations and interconnections, the more the stories of those who crossed boundaries becomes  
 70 important.

The articles gathered in this issue of *Contemporary Buddhism* shed light on such global loops. They are stories of unusual Buddhist figures who operated across boundaries to create their own hybrid interpretations of modern Buddhism. These stories complicate the picture of Buddhism in its modern modes by asking  
 75 us to consider voices and conversations outside of the standard histories. They embody stories of Buddhism from the margins, but more than this, they represent the invention and imagination of modern Buddhism as a highly mobile, global, interactive and interpretative process.

### 80 **Starting from the margins?**

The papers collected here offer an alternative way to explore the making of modern Buddhisms. This alternative approach by no means provides a total picture (nor would it help to substitute one over-canonical account with another),

but rather highlights a series of dimensions of 'Buddhist Revival', variously construed, wherein a new exploration of sources can offer a different and perhaps more adequate perspective.

85 Firstly, the authors in this issue approach Southeast Asia (and by extension South and East Asia) in this period as a dynamic 'Buddhist crossroads'. Frequently seen by westerners and by some Asian reformers as the locus of the 'original' teachings, lacking the academic and industrialized resources of the emerging Japanese empire and fragmented between British, French and independent states, Southeast Asia was a particular if diverse centre for *interactions* between  
90 different interpretations, organizations, individuals and agendas, interactions which proved fertile in the development of a 'global Buddhism' not controlled by any particular sect.

95 Secondly, in a period marked in turn by conquest, direct colonial rule, anti-colonial struggle and decolonization, *encounters* between European would-be Buddhists and Asian Buddhist networks (including financial sponsors, lay Buddhist organizations, monastic institutions, teachers and popular audiences) were—as several articles in this issue demonstrate for the first time—key elements in the formation of this new Buddhism.

100 Thirdly, however, with the emphasis on *pioneer*, those Buddhists—Asian, as well as European—who explored new possibilities were often correspondingly lacking in institutional resources (and hence reliant on such networks in their search for a base). Often they struggled for legitimacy and recognition from both Asian and western audiences, were at times isolated or seen as eccentric and often did not personally reap the benefits that those familiar with the later institutionalization and  
105 'mainstreaming' of the new forms of Buddhism might expect.

The stories told here are less teleological and less rounded than is usual, in that many of the individuals involved were lost to history and the organizations (if any) they founded did not survive. Here, asking the question *why* they were forgotten can tell us much about those forms of contemporary 'global Buddhism' which have persisted. The story is also far more diverse and complex than when  
110 written 'backwards' from today's Buddhist high ground. Rather than project the winners of the present back into the past, the articles in this issue highlight the opening of moments of possibility, particularly in the period *before* the new Buddhism became established in lay and monastic contexts, showing the contested nature of the outcome to be something far more than a predestined  
115 conflict between 'tradition' and 'modernity'.

### Failures and possibilities

120 On one level, the stories gathered here are studies in Buddhist failures. Most of the 'pioneer' figures and their stories documented here, in many cases for the first time, did not achieve success in conventional terms; at the simplest level, they have not been remembered. Any lineages they founded quickly died out. Their organizations became defunct. Most of their often ambitious projects appear in

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neither international nor local histories. And yet, their lives and their campaigns are significant for understanding Buddhism as it developed over this period of a century.

125 The Buddhist figures gathered here offer not simply examples of paths not taken, prospects rejected or options that dwindled away in the history of global and networked Buddhism. Instead, they stand as exemplars of what it was possible to imagine and attempt at different points in Buddhist colonial and transnational history. They represent avenues that have since been closed and abandoned in the Buddhist *imaginaire*, and they tell us something important  
130 about the potential that Buddhism was thought to have for cross-cultural understanding and, at times, world historical change. For Dhammaloka, Buddhism was imagined to have the potential to overcome colonialism; for Lokanatha, it had the potential to bring world peace; for Pfoundes it could temper the arrogance of the West. For some of the myriad subaltern whites in South and Southeast Asia,  
135 Buddhism offered an alternative culture and belonging. For McGovern, Utsuki and Kirby it offered a new identity. The hybrids of interpretation that these pioneers and border-crossers produced offer a glimpse of the wide potential that Buddhism represented over this century.

140 In the conclusion to his recent book, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk*, Justin McDaniel begins to reflect on failures as a theoretical lens for Buddhist studies. Referencing the metaphor of a museum that collected hoaxes and failed projects, he reflects on the possibilities entailed in refusing to create 'an ideal or comprehensive gallery of features.' The downside to this effort is that his examples, like the stories assembled here, refuse easy and systematic theorization.  
145 He writes, 'There are too many exceptions, idiosyncrasies, too many monasteries, too many agents, too many points to sight. I never have enough tools of analysis in my bag' (McDaniel 2011, 223). What McDaniel produces instead is an insightful picture of the diversity, embraced contradictions and idiosyncrasies of contemporary Buddhism in Thailand.

150 The stories collected in this issue of Euro–American–Asian and cross-Asian Buddhist encounters and their 'failures' constitute a body of work that can start to produce an equally complex representation of global Buddhism as a persistently shifting, interactive, irreducibly complex concatenation of creative *failures*. The stories of these 'pioneer' figures and their remarkable methods of crossing boundaries do not in themselves rewrite the history of Buddhist modernity. The  
155 figures involved are remarkable, for the most part, precisely because they are *not* representative of mainstream narratives, particularly of the sectarian and nationalistic kind; instead they formed their own 'crossroads'. They highlight unusual and otherwise forgotten perspectives and experiences in the cacophony of voices that made up 'Buddhism' between 1860–1960. In foregrounding the  
160 unusual, the marginal, we might even pose the question of whether these remarkable figures were only consigned to the past because in some ways they were ahead of their time. Can the sometimes extraordinary, yet forgotten, Buddhist lives discussed in this issue help us not only to rethink the global Buddhist past but

also point us towards the unenvisaged and unrepresented voices present in the diversity of contemporary Buddhism?

This raises a general problem around mainstreaming and retrospective legitimacy. The figures discussed here were often able to be ‘ahead of their time’ because they were unusual, marginal, caught between worlds and so freer not only to see possibilities which were being opened up by the forces of social change but also to act on them. Yet, as we know, it took only a few decades for some of the approaches developed by such characters to become thoroughly ‘mainstreamed’. Buddhist revival, and indeed anti-colonial nationalism, are in part at least a history of how what were once the strange ideas of marginal or outside eccentrics became the ‘common sense’ (Gramsci 1971) of whole populations and were adopted by traditional sangha hierarchies and the urban middle class. As such positions became ‘respectable’, of course, those who had first experimented with them often became something of an embarrassment (particularly if they did not fit into newly-dominant ethno-nationalist narratives), or simply became forgotten as the institutional memories of established Buddhist traditions or the new mass lay movements acquired the power to privilege their own origin stories (Turner, Cox and Bocking 2010). We might almost say that some of these figures were disposable and deniable: if their experiments proved effective, the ideas could be taken up but their originators discarded. If an experiment failed and could be forgotten, established organizations therefore lost nothing in legitimacy.

The methodological issues around such figures go beyond the politics of memory, however. They also raise the question of representativity. The figures discussed here often existed on the margins of what is now visible: unusual in their own time and not central to the ‘means of intellectual production’, albeit with some notable exceptions (Ober 2013). We regard them as of interest *both* because they are unusual and contradict received accounts *and* because they are sufficiently visible (because of their extraordinary efforts) that we can say something about them. U Dhammaloka, the unwitting progenitor of this particular research agenda (Turner, Cox and Bocking 2010), is exemplary in this respect.

Hence, in most cases, we are not talking about figures who were sufficiently embedded within the mainstream Buddhist organizations of their day for their perspectives to be amplified then or now as authoritative pronouncements; ‘representative’ in a political sense. Nor are we addressing the larger numbers of those whose involvement made the ‘Buddhist crossroads’ possible, as sponsors, organizational members, disciples, audiences, organizers and the like (Turner 2011, Cox 2010)—who could be considered ‘representative’ in the social sense. Rather, we feel, we present figures who offer us a window into worlds that would otherwise remain hidden; worlds whose existence we can demonstrate (Cox 2013) but where it is only the figures who stand in the margins between those worlds and the worlds of power and legitimacy who can readily be grasped. It is perhaps in this light that they are best understood and the specifics of these stories best read; they tell us something about sets of *relationships*; about social groups attempting to become subjects in the public world; about visions of Buddhism

attempting to become normative among the wider population and about organizational structures attempting to find a purchase in reality.

[Q7]  
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### In this issue

The articles collected in this issue cover a wide range of topics, all bearing in one way or another on the issues discussed above.

[Q8]

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*Brian Bocking's* article (2013) draws on previously unseen archival sources to offer first a biography of the early and unjustly neglected interpreter of Japanese Buddhism, the Irishman Charles Pfoundes/'Omoie Tetzunostzuke' (Ireland–Australia–Siam–Japan–UK, 1840–1907) and then focuses on the final period of Pfoundes' life, in Japan, showing how his attempts to establish himself as both an academic and religious authority engaged him in the new world of giant exhibitions, congresses and conferences which, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, formed an increasingly important material structure underpinning religious and scholarly (including Buddhist) networking. The best-known example was the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, for which Pfoundes reportedly served as an advisor. Pfoundes' scholarly and personal engagement with Buddhism anticipates contemporary participant-observer approaches.

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[Q9]

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*Tilman Frasch's* article (2013) asks how new the Buddhist internationalism of the nineteenth to twentieth centuries really was, in the longer historical perspective. Examining more than two millennia of Buddhist travel in the wider Southeast Asian region, he focuses in particular on the councils and synods, noting their historical importance and yet variable standing within particular Buddhist histories and their relatively fixed dual function of standardizing the canon and purifying the sangha. Frasch shows how the 'modern' synods of the period covered in this special issue in Burma and Thailand were indeed innovative, for example in their methods of fixing the text of the Pali canon and in their reaching beyond Theravada.

[Q10]

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*Yoshinaga Shin'ichi* (2013) begins from a recently-discovered cache of temple documents from the early twentieth century which he and his colleagues saved just in time from destruction, to explore a hitherto unknown but significant episode in Japanese Buddhism, the early twentieth century 'Mahayana Association' in Kyoto which brought together William McGovern (US–Philippines–Japan–Taiwan etc., 1897–1964), Utsuki Nishu (Japan–USA–UK–Japan, 1893–1951) and Mortimer T. Kirby (UK–Canada–Japan–Ceylon, 1877–?). Yoshinaga explores the Association's publications, ideas and extensive network of high-level scholarly contacts, its role in disseminating the ideas of D. T. Suzuki and its links to the later Kyoto Theosophical lodge and subsequent Japanese–Western Buddhist networks, offering fresh insights into the modern history of global Japanese Buddhism.

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[Q11]

*Alicia Turner's* article (2013) discusses the 'politics of friendship' within which European–Asian Buddhist connections resisted colonial power, in relation to U Dhammaloka (Ireland–US–Burma etc., ?1856–?1913). Exploring Dhammaloka's

analysis of colonialism as ‘the Bible, the bottle and the knife’, Turner shows how this familiar trope was deployed by Dhammaloka in a different context and how it informed both Dhammaloka’s career and his activist programme. Turner asks why religion—in the form of resistance to missionaries and the defence of a ‘lived’ form of Buddhism—played such a central role, arguing that it enabled Dhammaloka to make authentic connections across the colonial divide. This marks Dhammaloka out from the majority of European and Asian anti-colonialists whose efforts to emancipate the oppressed all too often unwittingly reinforced the dividing categories of colonizer-colonized.

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[\[Q12\]](#) *Elizabeth Harris* (2013) re-examines, in light of recent discoveries of a number of plebeian early Western Buddhist monastics, the complex figure of Allan Bennett/Ananda Metteyya (UK–Ceylon–Burma–UK, 1872–1923), the Englishman who for almost a century has been represented as the ‘first’ Western Buddhist monk. Harris argues that far from being a ‘gentleman scholar’, Bennett’s life exemplified a series of real tensions around respectability and the role of esotericism which were central to the western reception of Buddhism in the early 1900s. Bennett’s activities included not only Buddhist missionary activism but also opposition to Christian missionaries and an anti-imperialist politics which position him as an early ‘engaged Buddhist’.

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[\[Q13\]](#) *Phibul Choompolpaisal’s* article (2013) focuses on the Yannawa (formerly Ban Thawai) area of Bangkok. Nowadays the central banking and business district in the sprawling city but in the 1900s home to a distinctively multi-ethnic and multireligious population ruled under Siamese–British–French treaty jurisdiction which guaranteed religious freedom. The area was packed with Western churches, clubs and consulates (precursors of the major embassies located there today), as well as Buddhist temples serving different ethnic groups. It was here in 1903 that the ‘Irish Buddhist’ U Dhammaloka opened the first Buddhist bilingual (English–Thai) school in Siam. Remarkably, that bilingual school still exists, though Dhammaloka appears nowhere in modern Thai accounts. Choompolpaisal analyses the complex and wide-ranging colonial configurations that made Wat Ban Thawai, rather than any other monastery, the obvious strategic base for an activist European monk from the Tavoy monastery in Rangoon.

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[\[Q14\]](#) *Laurence Cox’s* article (2013) on ‘other Buddhists’ in colonial Asia situates lesser-known European monks such as U Dhammaloka in a world of ‘poor whites’ needed and discarded by Empire. By ‘going native’ across race boundaries in a period of increasing closure and by developing ‘dissident Orientalisms’ intended as critiques of imperial capitalism, these individuals formed fragile alliances with Asian networks. Cox suggests that we can see the history of early European conversions to Buddhism as a creative subaltern response to empire; a secondary but by no means irrelevant part of the process of anti-colonial Buddhist revival.

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[\[Q15\]](#) *Douglas Ober* (2013) explores the transnational activity of colonial-period Indian Buddhist pioneers, in particular Rāhul Sāṅkrtyāyan (India–Ceylon–Burma–US, 1893–1963) and Dharmānand Kosambī (India–Ceylon–Tibet–Europe, 1876–1947). Both wrote in the vernacular to highlight the rational and progressive or



socialist potential of Buddhism, while being themselves connected to a global Buddhist sphere as well as to Indian elites. Their dual outlook generated creative tensions and led to an extensive literary output, as well as presenting a culturally appealing version of Buddhism.

[Q16]

*Andrew Skilton* (2013) discusses the early British (and first Black British) bhikkhu George Blake/Vijjavaddho (Jamaica–Britain–Thailand–Canada, 1926–) in relation to the failure of the late 1950s attempt to form an independent sangha in England. The cross-cultural encounter of British bhikkhus with Thai monastics in Thailand highlights the tensions and complexities of Buddhism’s journey to the west. The previously untold events in which the youthful George Blake/Vijjavaddho was embroiled were to have a significant impact on the development both of meditation techniques and of Theravada monasticism in the west.

[Q17]

*Philip Deslippe* (2013), finally, offers a biography of the extraordinary Italian-American Buddhist monk Salvatore Cioffi/Ven. Lokanatha (US–Italy–Burma–India etc., 1897–1966) and his dramatic missionary activities in pursuit of Buddhist conversions, love, peace and vegetarianism in India, Italy and the United States, including his involvement with Dr B. S. Ambedkar. Deslippe’s paper highlights Lokanatha’s changing roles in different periods, cultures and contexts, notably the racialized and sensationalist nature of his media reception in the US, and examines why a figure as committed, devout, energetic and well-publicized (in his time) as Lokanatha was excluded from the conventional canon of western Buddhist history.

### Empirical findings

From these papers we can derive a number of empirical findings about the ‘Buddhist crossroads’ of Southeast Asia and indeed more widely in the period 1860–1960, when ‘modern Buddhism’ was being shaped.

Firstly, and perhaps least surprisingly, the interactions and interconnections between Asian and western Buddhist modernists—and connections between Asian Buddhists from different countries and cultures—stand out as central, though as Frasch’s article makes clear, Buddhist interactions of different kinds long predated the nineteenth century. As Anne Blackburn (2010) and others have highlighted, international and intercultural connections between Buddhist polities were important for the construction of local authority and Buddhist modernities. Yet more and more we are coming to see that far broader and more diverse sets of interactions played a key role in this period.<sup>1</sup> As the figures and their itineraries mentioned above indicate, many of the people engaged in the construction of modern Buddhism were inveterate travellers, moving not only between East and West but within both, and it is of course precisely this process which made it possible to ‘disembed’ Buddhism from (some of) its traditional, ‘taken-for-granted’ features—social context, life course, cultural meaning, ritual, practices, texts—and to construct forms of Buddhism which (to a greater or lesser extent) ‘worked’ in this wider context.

Secondly, India and Japan appear centrally for very different reasons. Japan from the mid-nineteenth century became a rapidly-modernizing independent

Asian imperial power, its egregious success in comparison with other Asian regions symbolized above all by its victories in the 1894–1895 Sino-Japanese conflict and 1904–1905 Russo-Japanese war. Japanese Buddhists, struggling to stay abreast of galloping modernity in Japan, sought to reform Buddhism within while simultaneously launching a ‘Buddhist mission’ to the West (Bocking 2013; Yoshinaga 2013), while their secular rulers saw Buddhism largely as a means of positioning Japan as the natural leader of its Asian neighbours. India, for its part, was the fulcrum of British imperial power in Asia and marked by the development of new social classes who looked to Buddhism (and to socialism) as viable alternatives to both Christianity and capitalism (Cox 2013; Ober 2013). Moreover, by the end of the nineteenth century, India was being re-discovered and re-imagined as the birthplace of Buddhism and a necessary nexus for international Buddhist connections (Frasch 2013; Jaffe 2004). This is not to say that other countries were absent—*vide* the role of independent Thailand (Choompolpaisal 2013; Skilton 2013) or that of newly-conquered Burma, resistant to its absorption within imperial India (Turner 2013; Harris 2013; Deslippe 2013). Rather, we expected that in studying the Buddhist crossroads of Southeast Asia the imperial powers, particularly Britain, would bulk large. We did not expect that in these articles India and Japan would appear so active as they do.

Thirdly, as the papers by Bocking (2013), Frasch (2013) and Yoshinaga (2013) in particular make clear, we need to identify and take full account of the fast-changing *material* basis for international Buddhist networking and innovation. In this period, new modes of travel were becoming widely available—indeed a map of the places and journeys mentioned in this volume would be largely a map of steamship and railway lines—and such things were becoming accessible enough that, for example, the ordinary traveller’s journey from the Shan state to Bangkok had by the early 1900s been reduced from three months to one day—with no identity checks for monks (Choompolpaisal 2013). A friendly railway guard could slip U Dhammaloka’s casual acquaintances onto a train in 1905 and Dhammaloka himself could be offered a steamship ticket from Burma to Ceylon in 1909 by the Maha Bodhi Society and even tour Australia alone in 1912. Travel, above all, became more *routine*, something around which it was possible to build viable organizations and networks.

We see too the widespread development of printing presses. Dhammaloka could churn out ‘hundreds of thousands’ of his pamphlets in Asia as across the world. This spawned a whole ecology of colonial newspapers, missionary and other periodicals, as well as, increasingly, Asian-language papers. All of these could reflect and amplify the activities of such figures, be it by reprinting their own publicity pieces or criticizing their behaviour. It is this same amplification through print media that has made it possible now for us to recover histories which would previously have been lost, as Deslippe (2013) discusses. Along with mass publication went the widespread adoption of new *lingua francas*—most notably English and French—and the development of South and Southeast Asian vernaculars as Buddhist languages in their own right (Frasch 2013; Ober 2013), all

of which made a new kind of Buddhist revival possible, scattering copies of the same books and periodicals across the continent(s). This inevitably took scriptural and other knowledge out of the exclusive possession of monks and made it more widely available to the educated laity, whose organizations would become

365 increasingly central to modern Buddhist networking.

Not all of the above are new observations, but the articles gathered here serve as a useful counterpoint to histories of Buddhist modernity that emphasize texts and ideas, by demonstrating that the kinds of debates which could be pursued were shaped and indeed made possible by the practical ability of

370 multiple participants to have access to texts, printed cheaply in a language they understood, and widely distributed. Furthermore, without the ability to travel, recruitment to organizations, meet one's peers at congresses, exhibitions and similar 'nodal' locations and thus encounter, at first hand, other Buddhisms and other Buddhist responses to colonialism, such debates could hardly have got off

375 the ground.

### **New research technologies and collaboration**

In a previous special issue of *Contemporary Buddhism* in November 2010 which launched the forgotten figure of U Dhammaloka, we discussed briefly the new twenty first century digital technologies which had enabled us, working collaboratively yet thousands of miles apart, to piece together—from hundreds of fragmentary and formerly 'lost' pieces of information—a fairly comprehensive

380 account of Dhammaloka's public career as a monk between 1900–1913. This research continues and we have recently discovered, for example, that Dhammaloka was ordained in Rangoon in July 1900 (Turner 2013) and that he spent several months travelling in Australia in 1912. Phibul Choompolpaisal's research (2013) has shown that Dhammaloka's efforts in Siam were surprisingly effective and led to the establishment of a pioneering bilingual school still in

385 existence today. What the present special issue of *Contemporary Buddhism* makes very clear is that the methods which have enabled us to recover Dhammaloka from obscurity have the potential to expand the study of Buddhism much more broadly.

Thousands of newspapers, books, personal documents, realia and images

395 from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are now newly available worldwide in digital form, increasingly in a multiplicity of languages and scripts. Individual pieces of digitized material are, of course, often of questionable value as documentary evidence. Dhammaloka, whose own pseudonymous report of his death from *beri-beri* in a Melbourne temperance hotel was widely circulated in the Southeast Asian press in 1912 before he reappeared in Singapore to resume his

400 preaching tours, was particularly well-placed to warn against believing what you read in the papers! However, the more material that becomes available, the greater the chance to check any piece of information against independent sources.

The articles in this issue demonstrate just how much of the conventional narrative about the rise of modern Buddhism has been founded on a limited body of centrally preserved sources. Often, in the pre-digital age, the work required to 'join the dots' between snippets of data was too overwhelming, discouraging the creation of social, plebeian and alternative Buddhist histories of this period. These sources have always been available somewhere (see Yoshinaga 2013 for a remarkable Japanese example), but the technologies that allow for broader and more rapid searches let us build unprecedented connections and value multiple types of evidence in order to write new histories of Buddhism.

The exponential increase in digital sources in a variety of languages makes collaborative research almost an imperative. Any account of Pfoundes, McGovern, Utsuki or M. T. Kirby, for example, relies almost half and half on English and Japanese sources, often hard to interpret even for a native speaker (Bocking 2013; Yoshinaga 2013). With reference to the specific theme of 'Buddhist crossroads', grasping trans-Asian processes and relationships is always likely to require expertise in multiple languages and/or contexts. At the same time, the new wealth of digital data often needs a variety of methodological tools to analyse and interpret adequately; this is another dimension where a single scholar can rarely be expert in all the dimensions needed for such research.

Collaboration raises its own tricky issues of course, especially for early-career faculty, graduate students and others who need to collaborate in order to benefit from multilingual digital resources but may at any point find themselves being judged on what of the research output they can claim as 'their own'. In this respect, scholars in the humanities may have something to learn from colleagues in the material sciences, where publications are routinely issued as multi-authored works, thus avoiding the whole area of the etiquette of acknowledgements. On the other hand, what we have to learn from colleagues in the sciences may also be a hard lesson; that in a team effort the one who really does make a key discovery is not always the one who gets the credit.

Technological issues also raise their head in relation to the problem of organizing and archiving. The new digital research tools enable the rapid generation of vast quantities of data, which readily outstrip the capacities of an individual brain to order or remember. The data is also, often, in a wide variety of formats, making an effective cataloguing system a tall order. Pay walls, copyright issues and institutional access further complicate individual management of digital data.

From the other side, when data collection is primarily a question of digitization by the researcher, as is often the case with obscure religious periodicals for example, the question becomes how best to archive such data for future use and accessibility, not only by the collector but by other researchers. While few will argue that a researcher who has just completed something as labour-intensive as scanning, uploading and cataloguing a whole series of a periodical does *not* have a right to retain it for personal use for a while, most will agree that at some point the researcher should ensure the future survival of the

digital material and its widespread availability to others. Increasingly, open-access conditions attached to research grants are taking this decision away from researchers, making it all the more urgent for the individual or team to exploit as quickly as possible all of the data painstakingly gleaned through the effort of retrieval and digitization—an effort which very often involves much travel, time, and diplomacy in obtaining access to obscure repositories.

As we have found time and again in working on Dhammaloka and other pioneer Buddhists, and indeed as every researcher who uses ‘primary’ documents already knows well, the same raw material may at first glance yield very different insights from those that emerge on subsequent review and in light of further information. It is not just a matter of doing the work on digitized materials ‘properly’ the first time before releasing them to the world. Generating a reliable assessment and understanding of (usually) decontextualized material texts and images is an intrinsically complex, iterative and therefore lengthy process.

A technological question of a different order is raised by our engagement, through the lens of what twenty first century choices have made available in digital form, with the changing technologies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An understanding of shipping routes and the chronology of railway lines, for example, proves important to understanding the strategic importance of some locations for networking. The development of the telegraph and cheap printing underpins the lively ecology of colonial newspapers and small religious and radical periodicals, often reprinting each other’s material across great distances, through which we now grasp the activities of many of the pioneer Buddhists. Digitized guide books, street directories, university yearbooks and the like, in a variety of languages, all become important tools. Maps acquire a crucial importance, particularly in Asian cities ravaged first by war and then by breakneck building booms, where the city of 100 years ago may well prefigure the contemporary geography but has often disappeared from view except in maps. Finally, as we move into studies of events in the mid-twentieth century in particular, we will need to explore how other emerging technologies (photographs, wireless, films, audio recording, television) shaped the transmission of Buddhist ideas and Buddhist lives.

### **Buddhism at a crossroads?**

Early versions of the papers collected in this special issue were among those presented at the conference, ‘Southeast Asia as a Buddhist Crossroads: Pioneer European Buddhists and Asian Networks 1860–1960’ hosted by the Study of Religions department of University College Cork, Ireland, in September 2012. Details of the conference participants and abstracts of papers presented at the conference are available on the conference legacy website (<http://buddhistcrossroads.wordpress.com>).

This innovative conference brought together scholars from around the world working on very different, and in many cases seemingly unconnected, ‘pioneer’ Buddhists and new examples of Buddhist connections and interactions spread

across a period of almost a century. As it turned out, we discovered through three days of stimulating presentations and fruitful and engaged discussion that we had many research themes and questions in common. The conference generated several new lines of individual and collaborative research which are already under way and will undoubtedly bear fruit in future publications.

The 'Buddhist Crossroads' conference concluded with a lively and thought-provoking workshop session which sought to identify and feed back to the whole conference those themes which participants felt were most significant for future research. Many of the themes highlighted in this Introduction, notably the comments on the role of technologies (whether nineteenth or twenty-first century), the significance of failure and the question of representativity stem from that workshop. Hence, the ideas presented in this Introduction are by no means ours alone and we wish to acknowledge the contribution of all the participants in the conference.

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## NOTE

1. In addition to the articles collected here see: Blackburn (2012), Jaffe (2004 and 2006), Kirichenko (2012), Cao and Lau (2013), Tweed (2011).

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