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**Ceylonese Buddhism in Colonial Singapore:
New Ritual Spaces and Specialists, 1895-1935**

Anne M. Blackburn

Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University, USA and
Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

amb242@cornell.edu

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Asia Research Institute

National University of Singapore

469A Tower Block #10-01,

Bukit Timah Road,

Singapore 259770

Tel: (65) 6516 3810

Fax: (65) 6779 1428

Website: www.ari.nus.edu.sg

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Ceylonese¹ Buddhism in Colonial Singapore: New Ritual Spaces & Specialists, 1895-1935²

INTRODUCTION

During the late 19th century and early years of the 20th century, Ceylonese emigration to British colonial Malaya (now Singapore and Malaysia) rapidly intensified.³ After Singapore entered Crown Colony status in 1867 as part of the Straits Settlements, its administration was transferred to the Colonial Office (Gillis 2005, 6). A separate Straits Civil Service was established (Turnbull 1977, 85). Ceylonese civil servants were increasingly sought in Singapore from the late 1880s. Development of the Malayan Railways, beginning in the 1880s was a further catalyst for Ceylonese migration to the Malayan peninsula and Singapore, since the British Railway Administration of Ceylon recruited locals to the Malaysian Railway (Arseculeratne 1991, 9). Ceylonese were involved in the construction, operation and maintenance of the railway system. Singapore's burgeoning economy attracted other Ceylonese from one island to the other for work in commerce, trade, and a variety of white-collar professions, as well as in the plantation sector. Movement between Ceylon and Malaya was eased by the absence of passport formalities and travel restrictions (Arseculeratne 1991, 10). One famous Ceylonese resident of Singapore, the jeweler B.P. de Silva to whom I refer at length below, was drawn to Malaya on the basis of El Dorado-like stories circulating in Ceylon about the region. Malaya was seen as a place in which to make money quickly (Arseculeratne 1991, 1).

¹ I use the term 'Ceylonese' in this paper to refer to those originating from what is now Sri Lanka, while discussing the era in which the island was widely known as Ceylon. In my usage, "Ceylonese" thus includes those who would have identified themselves, or been identified, as Sinhalese, Tamil, Burgher, etc. On many occasions I also refer to specifically "Sinhalese" groups and persons among the wider Ceylonese population, where that term is used by the original sources to which I refer, or when information about last names or spoken language suggests that particular groups and individuals would likely have considered themselves "Sinhalese" rather than "Tamil" or "Burgher." The period discussed here appears to have been a period of sharpening "ethnic" and linguistic-communitarian definition. Therefore, what it was to consider oneself "Ceylonese," "Sinhalese," "Tamil," "Burgher," etc. was likely quite dynamic during this time. Any sustained investigation of this dynamism, and the hardening of such self-other boundaries, lies beyond the scope of this modest paper. Since this paper is intended partly for a non-specialist readership, I have omitted diacritical marks throughout, though I have included Chinese characters for key terms.

² Research for this paper was conducted under the auspices of a Three-Month Senior Visiting Research Fellowship at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, where I enjoyed a warm institutional welcome and good conversation. With sincere thanks I acknowledge the hospitality and research assistance offered at the following Buddhist temples in Singapore and Malaysia, where I was received with generosity and kindness by the resident venerable monks and lay devotees: Sri Lankaramaya Temple, Singapore; Mangala Vihara, Singapore; Wat Ananda Metyarama, Singapore; The Burmese Buddhist Temple, Singapore; Dhammikarama Buddhist Temple, Penang; Mahindarama, Penang. I am grateful to the following colleagues for conversations related to this paper, temple introductions, bibliographic references, etc.: Jack Meng-Tat Chia, Ai Lin Chua, Lawrence Chua, Ken Dean, Prasenjit Duara, Engeng Ho, Chie Ikeya, Alexey Kirichenko, Pattana Kittiarasa, Paul Kratoska, Christian Lammerts, Hun Lye, Mike Montesano, Ng Zhiru, Jeffrey Samuels, Ben Schonthal, Vineeta Sinha, Hue Guan Thye, and Zhang Wenxue. Interested readers should see further the book-length study of Theravada Buddhism in Malaysia in preparation by Jeffrey Samuels. I wish to express my thanks to the anonymous reviewer for the ARI Working Paper Series for comments offered on an earlier version of this paper, and to Jack Meng-Tat Chia for making available some Chinese-language materials in translation as well as adding Chinese characters to this text.

³ See further Samuels (2011).

Between 1881 and 1891, the Singapore Straits Settlement saw a substantial population growth, rising from 105, 423 males and 33, 785 females to 141, 330 males and 43, 224 females (Report of the Census of the Straits Settlements, 1891, 10). By 1911, the total population was 311, 985, rising to 425, 912 in 1921 (Census of British Malaya, 1921). The 1891 census singled out Siamese and Sinhalese among the "Other Nationalities" characterized by particularly strong growth. During the preceding decade, the Siamese population had increased 71.5% and Sinhalese 254.7%. Yet the total number of Sinhalese in the Singapore Straits Settlement remained small. 159 were enumerated in 1891, and 176 in 1911. By 1901, the number of Sinhalese in the Singapore Settlement had reached 244 according to census reports (Report of the Census of the Straits Settlements, 1901 and 1911). It is harder to discern the size of Singapore's wider Ceylonese population since Ceylon Tamils were submerged within the wider category of Tamils/Indians and Ceylon Burghers fell unmarked within the Eurasian category. Census information for the period does not provide reliable information about religious identification and population.⁴ Ceylonese Buddhists in Malaya appear to have come primarily from Ceylon's southern coastal belt between Galle and Matara (Arseculeratne 1991, 1). During the 19th century, the cities of Galle and Matara, and many smaller towns and villages in between, were sites of Buddhist institution-building, as Buddhists sought a more forceful presence vis-à-vis Christians and foreigners in Ceylon (Malalgoda 1976, Blackburn 2010). The Ceylonese Buddhist population in Singapore was a bachelor community initially, with more settled families forming only in the 1920s (Arseculeratne 1991, 9). Ceylonese Buddhists naturally sought access to Buddhist ritual space and ritual specialists, especially in response to illness and death. Judging from newspaper reports, other non-Buddhist Ceylonese, especially of the professional classes, expressed occasional interest in Buddhist institutions and festivals, perhaps partly as a form of identification with home-country language and cultural style. However, Ceylonese Buddhist institutions were not established quickly in the colony. There was little in the way of ritual space and specialists for them or for other Buddhists -- such as the Siamese and Burmese (including those who might now be referred to in some scholarly circles as Sino-Thai and Sino-Burmese) -- who shared with the Ceylonese an orientation towards Pali-language scripture and ritual. By the late 1930s, however, Sinhalese, Thai, and Burmese Buddhist institutions were more firmly established in Singapore and, moreover, had begun to attract attention from Singapore's Chinese Buddhist population.

In this paper, drawing on temple histories and newspaper records, as well as studies of late 19th- and early 20th- century religious and social life in Singapore and some oral histories, I develop the first detailed account of the development of Ceylonese Buddhism in colonial-period Singapore. In doing so, I attempt to describe and analyze the colonial-period development of Buddhist spaces in Singapore that were oriented towards Pali-language authoritative texts and liturgy, focusing on Ceylonese Buddhism but alert also to the activities of Thai and Burmese Buddhists. In the pages that follow, I frequently use the term "southern Asian Buddhist" as a way of collectively referring to Buddhists who practiced Buddhism according to the forms of Buddhism that characterized the geographical areas we now refer to as the nation-states of Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Sri Lanka. Buddhists in these areas (and Cambodia to a significant extent) were (and are) linked by their shared assent to Pali-language authoritative texts and commentaries (a Buddhist "canon"). From at least the second millennium C.E. onward (and probably much earlier in parts of the region), at least some monastic Buddhists in each of these geographic areas understood themselves to exist within an interactive Buddhist community linked by a shared doctrinal-commentarial tradition, similar ways of

⁴ Religion was first investigated in the 1911 census, and then not as a required category for self-ascription (Census of British Malaya, 1921).

recounting Buddhist histories, and – to at least some extent – monastic lineages that crossed the borders of local polity and local language.⁵

In contrast to Burma and Ceylon, British colonies in which Pali-oriented Buddhists were the religious and cultural majority, Sinhalese, Thai, and Burmese Buddhists in Singapore lived as religious minorities vis-à-vis forms of Chinese Buddhism and other Chinese traditions, as well as Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. While some Thai and Burmese Buddhists likely experienced a greater cultural and linguistic affinity with Singaporean and wider Malayan Chinese worlds, given a history of Chinese migration to, and sustained commercial engagement with, the region and a greater likelihood of familiarity with one or more southern Chinese languages, Ceylonese Buddhists functioned at a greater distance -- linguistically and in terms of cultural style. As spaces for Buddhist ritual conducted in Pali language developed in Singapore, non-monastic Buddhists took the lead. The cultivation of ritual space preceded the presence of monastic ritual specialists, who required the financial backing of lay supporters as well as a network of transport and accommodation in Malaya. Strikingly, in these early years, both lay and monastic Buddhists crossed ethnic and linguistic lines in order to make possible access to Buddhist rituals and sermons. For Ceylon's Buddhists, hampered by small numbers and limited capital, establishing stable Buddhist ritual space and obtaining steady access to ritual specialists was a substantial challenge. This challenge could only be met -- and met precariously -- by shifting alliances and collaborations with other southern Asian Buddhists in Singapore and wider Malaya oriented toward Pali-language texts and ritual, as well as with Chinese Buddhists whose Buddhist heritage owed more to Mahayana Buddhist traditions and Chinese-language Buddhist texts.

I focus on the period between 1895 and 1935 for several reasons. The first substantial references to Ceylonese and Sinhalese Buddhist activities in English-language Singaporean press arise in 1895, by which time Singapore was also established as one of the southern Asian nodal points for Buddhist activists associated with the trans-regional activities of the Theosophical Society and the Maha Bodhi Society.⁶ Moreover, by 1895, the combination of railway, colonial administration and commercial development had drawn more Ceylonese to Singapore. By 1909, the population was large enough to help support A.P. M. Daniel's Lanka Hotel, which opened that year.⁷ 1935 marks the consolidation of Ceylonese Buddhist presence in Singapore and wider Malaya, thanks in large part to the missionary monastic work of Venerable Narada, a monk active in developing Buddhist institutions within the region that became Malaysia and Singapore. In 1934, Venerable Mahaweera, another Ceylonese monk, took up permanent residence in Singapore. Moreover, by 1935 Singapore's Chinese Buddhists began to constitute a substantial presence in Ceylonese Buddhist ritual space. Their presence, and

⁵ It is far from evident that Buddhists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries oriented towards Pali-language authoritative texts and liturgy understood themselves as participants in "Theravada Buddhism." Newspaper articles from the period examined here rarely refer to "Theravada" or "Mahayana" Buddhism. Use of the term "Theravada" to refer to Buddhists and practices oriented towards Pali-language liturgy and scripture likely became more natural from the 1930s onward, as Sinhalese Buddhist institutions in Singapore grew stronger. The terms "Northern" and "Southern" Buddhism, and a distinction between "Theravada" and "Mahayana" Buddhism, became more common in the first half of the 20th century, partly in relation to new international Buddhist fora. On the dynamic history of "Theravada/Theravadin" as a term of reference among Pali-using Buddhists, see Skilling (2009) and Skilling, Carbine, and Ciuzza (2012).

⁶ The southern Asian Theosophical presence dates to 1880 in Ceylon, while the Maha Bodhi Society was established in Ceylon in 1891.

⁷ "'Lanka' is the name of the Ceylonese hotel situated opposite the Tank Road Railway Station which has earned a great reputation for its Ceylon curries and other delicious Indian dishes. Filling a long-felt want when it was started six years ago, it is now a popular resort of assistants, clerks, and others employed at outstations and estates who come into town for the week-end" (*Malaya Tribune*, 1 May 1915).

the internal divisions within Ceylonese Buddhist temple life catalyzed by it, mark the opening of a new chapter in the history of Singapore's Pali-using Buddhist world.

A striking feature of Singapore's Buddhist history during the period examined here, prior to 1935, is the dynamism evident within Chinese Buddhist circles. The 1920s witnessed an increase in the monasticization of Mahayana Buddhism in Singapore, as well as continued reflections on religious "reform" across Chinese Buddhist and Confucian circles. In the early years considered here, Buddhists oriented towards Pali Buddhist texts sometimes collaborated with Buddhists focused on Chinese Buddhist texts in order to secure access to Buddhist ritual and devotional space. By the end of this period, some Chinese Buddhists (including, but not limited to, Anglophone Chinese) sought access to new forms of Buddhist practice via Ceylonese Buddhist monks conversant in English and Malay. The history of Pali-oriented Buddhism in Singapore (and, indeed, in wider Malaya) during the late 19th and early 20th centuries is thus one that reveals interesting forms of institutional collaboration and cross-fertilization across the borders of Mahayana and "Theravada" Buddhism, and Chinese-language and Pali-language liturgical space. In the conclusion to this paper, I note some of the limitations of this article that stem from my lack of access to Chinese-language sources. There I also suggest some new lines of inquiry for historians of Chinese Buddhism interested in the Malayan interactions between Chinese Buddhists and southern Asian Buddhists.

1895-1920: Early Ceylonese Buddhist Ritual Experiments and Alliances

B.P. de Silva, whose jewelry shop in Singapore (and later Penang) gained an attractive reputation and eminent clients during the course of the 19th century, established the Singapore business in 1872 (Arseculeratne 1991, 22). He had reached Singapore with his father, a traveling jeweler. They selected Singapore as their center for commerce in the region (de Silva 1998, 15). De Silva, originally from the Galle District of southern Ceylon, was an important early figure in Ceylonese, Buddhist and Theosophical networks connecting the young Crown Colony with Ceylon and Buddhist Southeast Asia.⁸ Given his growing stature in Singapore's commercial circles, his involvement in Buddhist activities throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries was considered worthy of note by the local press. In April 1895, for the first time in the 1890s, the *Straits Times* announced that de Silva's Singapore shop would be closed for "Sinhalese New Year," a harvest festival observed in Ceylon by Sinhalese and Tamils during the March-April period. There seems to have been no obvious temple space for de Silva to undertake ritual merit-making that might have augmented the central domestic rituals intended to assure harmony and prosperity.

Yet by December 1898 (Hue Guan Thye, personal communication, 3 November 2010), a new Buddhist temple space was envisaged for Singapore, one that would develop at the intersection of Chinese Buddhist and Sinhalese Buddhist interests. As the *Straits Times* noted in the context of an article on Burmese and Ceylonese Buddhist delegates to Bangkok, "...the Singapore Buddhists, having been stirred by the enthusiasm of an ascetic Chinese Buddhist priest [from Fujian (*Singapore: The Encyclopedia* 2006, 74)], Sak Hien [Xian Hui 賢慧,], who had spent six years in Ceylon in meditation,⁹ are going to have a big Buddhist temple erected in Balestier Road." The site, near what is now Jalan Toa Payoh, was in fact reached *from* Balestier Road probably via Kim Keat Road. Fifty-six acres of land had reportedly been donated by Low Kim Pong (Liu Jinbang 劉金榜) of Tanglin (*Straits Times*, 29 December 1899), described by Song as a "Hokkien leader," in collaboration with Yeo Poon

⁸ This is evident from the diaries of the Anagarika Dharmapala who mentions de Silva as early as 1889 (23-24 January 1889, 29 May 1889). The Singapore branch of The Theosophical Society started under the Ceylon branch in that year.

⁹ See also Ong (2005, 43).

Seng [Yan Baoshuang 顏寶雙] (Song 1985, 107). Low Kim Pong was an influential leader of the Fujianese community in Singapore. Starting in the herbal business, he expanded into finance, real estate, and transport to become one of the wealthiest Chinese in the region (Hue Guan Thye, personal communication, 3 November 2010). De Silva supervised construction of the temple and contributed to the building fund (*Straits Times*, 29 December 1899).

According to an inscription erected at the temple in 1920, in the past, Singapore did not originally have a monastery; when it had [a monastery], Liangshan Shuanglin Chan Monastery [蓮山雙林禪寺] was the first. It started from the benevolent intentions of Low Kim Pong [Liu Jinbang 劉金榜], who offered land and donated gold, and invited Chan Master Xian Hui 賢慧 from Mount Songyi [宋怡] Lineage of the Linji [臨濟] [House] to establish the monastery. The master ordained Xing Hui 性慧 into the renowned [dharmic] family. [He] first erected the backyard in the year of Wuxu (1898) in order to [practice] meditation. Thereafter, faithful devotees around the island such as Yan 顏, Qiu 邱, Chen 陳, Lin 林, and others, as well as Ceylonese traders [who were] benefactors from various port cities, equally and joyously donated to the Triple Gems ("An Inscription on the Donation Appeal for the Construction of Lianshan Shuanglin Chan Monastery 募建蓮山雙林寺碑記," translated by Jack Meng-Tat Chia, personal communication, 2 April 2012).

The Balestier Road Temple, as it was often called, and which came to be known also as Shuang Lin Monastery (Shuanglin Chansi 雙林禪寺), Siong Lim Temple, Siang Lin Temple, Low Kim Pong Temple, and Kim Keat Road Temple (Khoon Chee Vihara 2009, 13) was active (though still incomplete) in early 1901 since a "full moon festival" and fireworks were held at the "new Balestier Road temple" in March of that year (*Straits Times*, 7 March 1901).¹⁰ One ritual hall was completed in 1905, while the main image hall -- Mahavira Hall (Daxiong Baodian 大雄寶殿) -- was finished in 1907 (Lian Shan Shuan Lin Monastery pamphlet).¹¹ "The heavy cost of the temple and its furnishings is met out of subscriptions and donations from Ceylon, Siam, Burmah, and China. Rich Chinese residents here have also contributed liberally. A high priest presides over the temple, which has a monastery and nunnery attached" (*Straits Times*, 7 March 1901). This "high priest" was presumably the temple's first abbot, the Ch'an monk Venerable Xian Hui. Xian, and the temple itself, was "affiliated" with Xi Chan Monastery (Xichan Si 西禪寺) in Fuzhou (福州) (Khoon Chee Vihara 2009, 10, 14-17).¹² Xian Hui reached Singapore en route to Fuzhou County, Fujian, with twelve monks and nuns (including members of his own family),¹³ after six years of pilgrimage to India, Ceylon, and Burma (Hue Guan Thye, personal communication, 3 November 2010). After Xian Hui's death in 1901, Xing Hui succeeded as abbot but died soon thereafter. Construction of the temple was completed under the leadership of Xing Hui's student, Ming Guang (明光). In 1917, Venerable Pu Liang (普亮), who had reached Singapore with other Chinese monks in 1912, became abbot of the temple, which was restored and expanded under his leadership (Khoon Chee Vihara 2009, 10, 14-17).¹⁴

¹⁰ This news coverage contradicts *Singapore: The Encyclopedia*, which dates construction of the temple to 1903 (2006, 74).

¹¹ See also, "An Inscription on the Donation Appeal for the Construction of Lianshan Shuanglin Chan Monastery" dated to 1920, translated by Jack Meng-Tat Chia (personal communication, 2 April 2012).

¹² According to the historical plaques at Shuang Lin Temple, Xian Hui had become a disciple of the Xi Chan monastery's abbot before his departure for South Asia, and modeled Shuang Lin temple after Xi Chan while affiliating with it.

¹³ Information presented on historical plaques at Shuang Lin Temple.

¹⁴ This list of abbots is supported by "An Inscription on the Donation Appeal for the Construction of Lianshan Shuanglin Chan Monastery" dated to 1920, translated by Jack Meng-Tat Chia (personal communication, 2 April 2012).

At this time de Silva was surely aware of efforts underway among the Ceylonese of Kuala Lumpur to establish a Buddhist temple in the Brickfields neighborhood of the city, and those Kuala Lumpur developments may have helped stimulate his interest in developing a temple site for Singapore. The foundation stone for the Brickfields temple was laid in 1894, although fundraising and administrative difficulties appear to have delayed construction of the temple itself until the first decade of the twentieth century (de Silva 1998, 40, 96). In addition to ritual needs and interests driving the involvement of the B.P. de Silva family at Shuang Lin temple-monastery, social interests undoubtedly played a role. The family had worked hard to position itself and the company within the upper reaches of Sinhalese, Chinese, and British colonial society. By 1901, for instance, de Silva had received a high-level British honor, appointed Mudaliyar by the Ceylon government (Arseculeratne 1991, 22). Substantial acts of Buddhist and other charitable patronage drew attention to wealth and status in a way that resonated across all the worlds in which B.P. de Silva made his life. Yet it was a particular devotional orientation that made possible this intersection of Ceylonese, Southeast Asian, and Chinese interests at the Shuang Lin temple. Sakyamuni Buddha was given pride of place in the main image hall, flanked by Amitabha and Baisajyaguru Buddhas. Xian Hui's travels in India, Burma, and Ceylon were motivated partly by the wish to gain devotional proximity to lands associated with Sakyamuni Buddha. He was, according to the historical plaques at Shuang Lin temple, filled with the "desire to visit the land the Buddha walked on." In this respect Xian Hui was just one of several Chinese Buddhist monks who sought access to the Indic Buddhist world during this time (Ng Zhiru, personal communication, June 2010), as Japanese Buddhist monks and clerics had done from the late 19th century (Jaffe 2004). The Shuang Lin temple established under Xian Hui's incumbency thus focused on a manifestation of Buddha seen as devotionally and ritually desirable by *both* Xian Hui's Chinese devotees and Pali-using Buddhists of southern Asia. Strikingly, Xian Hui's invitation to Singapore is said to have come from a *Burmese* merchant,¹⁵ Gao Wanbang (高萬邦), who encountered the monk in Ceylon (see note 12).

By 1904 Shuang Lin temple was the center of festival rituals involving Chinese and Sinhalese Buddhists. The *Straits Times* noted that, "[s]pecial services will also be held at the new Chinese Buddhist Temple at Balestier Range. This temple has been specially decorated by Mr. B.P. D'Silva" (28 April 1904). At this time, however, the Shuang Lin temple was not the only one at which rituals connected to the Ceylonese Buddhist calendar seem to have been observed. The "Buddhist New Year" was observed at the Japanese Buddhist Mission based in Serangoon Road, as well as the English Buddhist Mission in Havelock Road established in 1903 by Venerable Dhammaloka, an Irish-

¹⁵ Gao Wanbang is described as a "Burmese" merchant in the historical plaques displayed at Shuang Lin Temple. It is possible that he was not born in Upper or Lower Burma, but rather migrated to Burma from the Chinese mainland or from a Chinese family residing elsewhere in the wider Chinese world of the Southeast-East Asian region. In the conclusion to this paper, I refer to such Chinese networks and migrations at greater length.

American man ordained as a Buddhist monk in Burma.¹⁶ According to the recollections of Song Ong Siang,

[t]his Mission was begun here by an Irishman, who was stated to be the first white man to enter the Buddhist brotherhood, and who was entitled the Lord Abbot Right Reverend U. Dhammaloka. At this time he was quite a familiar figure in the town, attired in a yellow robe, with a clean-shaven head, and walking barefooted (1985, 369).

Like the Shuang Lin temple, Dhammaloka's mission attracted attention across ethnic and linguistic lines, housed in a building made available by Cheang Jim Chuan. B.P. de Silva, whose work as President of the local Theosophical Society (Arseculeratne 1991, 150) had probably exposed him to Dhammaloka and the mission, offered a scholarship for boys attending the school. Other donors included Cheang Jim Chuan, Tan Ban Hau, Cheang Jim Eng, and Tan Teck Soon (*Straits Times*, 20 January 1904). Dhammaloka's mission encouraged "all Buddhists, both European and native" to illuminate their houses in celebration of April's new year celebrations, while the *Straits Times* noted the inauguration of a new Buddhist custom for Singapore. "On Saturday we understand that Mr. B.P. D'Silva will give food to about three thousand poor people. This is the first time in the history of Singapore that a demonstration of this kind has been made here" (28 April 1904).

Despite its collaborative origins and its substantial size, the Shuang Lin temple was not enough to satisfy Singapore's Buddhists who were focused on Pali-language ritual and familiar with southern Asian Buddhist ritual space. This perhaps owed something to the increasing presence of Chinese Buddhist monks at the temple site, which would have made the space less familiar to Buddhists from Ceylon, Siam, and Burma, despite a shared devotional orientation to Sakyamuni Buddha. By 1912 B.P. de Silva was one party to a memorial "to the queen mother of Siam asking her to take the initiative to erect a Buddhist temple in Singapore in memory of Rama V." Other supporters mentioned in the press suggests cooperation between Thais and Sino-Thais: Tao Boo Liat and Luang Phipit were mentioned along with de Silva, singled out by the press as a major financial backer. "The site proposed for the memorial is that of the burial ground at Alexandra Road." The initiative intersected with early signs of interest among southern Asian Buddhists to establish a separate Buddhist cremation ground apart from Chinese burial grounds and the colonial cemeteries. "In this connection the Buddhist communities of Burmah and Ceylon are also praying for permission to bury and cremate their dead on this site, as at present there is no exclusive Buddhist place for the

¹⁶ Dhammaloka presided at a 1904 monastic ordination ceremony that caught the attention of the Malayan press. With the assistance of Rev. Otha, head of the Japanese Mission in Singapore, a former colonial police officer from Pahang, M.T. Courneuve, was given Buddhist novitiate ordination in a ritual involving English and Pali chanting. Courneuve was then sent to the Burmese monastery in Penang for higher studies. (*Straits Echo*, 7 October 1904). See also Song (1985, 369) and Bocking (2010). Given Dhammaloka's apparent connections to the Theosophical Society, it is not surprising that he would have collaborated with the Japanese Mission in Singapore. There were ties between the Theosophists and Japanese Buddhists dating to the 1880s (Jaffe 2004, Trevithick 2006, Blackburn 2010). Dhammaloka's ambitious and chequered career in Singapore, Siam, and Burma has lately received attention. See Bocking (2010), Cox (2010), and Turner (2010). According to McDougall (1956, 44) the Burmese temple in Penang to which Courneuve traveled after his ordination was established in 1839 and its monks spoke Malay in at least some contexts. According to *The Ancient Buddhist Monuments in 22 Countries*, written by the temple's present abbot, the Penang temple dates to 1803 (Pannyavamsa 2010).

disposal of their dead" (*Straits Times*, 12 December 1912).¹⁷ However, a Siamese temple was not established in Singapore until well into the following decade.

Meanwhile, Burmese and Sino-Burmese residents of Singapore were also restless in their search for suitable Buddhist ritual space. The "Buddhist Temple, Kinta Road" (as it was typically referred to in the press), opened on Kinta Road in Singapore sometime in the early 1900s judging from press reports. However, according to information recorded at the Burmese Buddhist Temple which now houses the image first installed at Kinta Road, the Burmese Buddhist Temple was founded somewhere as early as 1875 by Tha Hnit.¹⁸ In any case, it appears that U Tha Hint (also referred to as Tang Sooay Chin) took the initiative to found the Buddhist ritual site at Kinta Road in Singapore, working with U Kyaw Gaung, a Burmese herbal medical specialist and native of Mergui.¹⁹ U Tha Hint donated the first Buddha image for the Kinta Road site, which was joined by two images said to have been received, respectively, from the Siamese royal court and the Ledi Sayadaw (Burmese Buddhist Temple 2001, 35). The Kinta Road temple became one of the key locations for Buddhist ritual activities involving Burmese Buddhists and other Buddhists (including some Chinese Buddhists, probably of diverse origins including the Southeast Asian mainland) who focused their rituals around Sakyamuni Buddha as imaged in mainland Southeast Asian, Pali-oriented, Buddhist style. Newspaper reports do not clarify what ritual language was used at Kinta Road. However, the cycle of festivals celebrated there, the mainland Southeast Asian origins of the images, and the Burmese connections of the first temple organizers all suggest that the Kinta Road temple was a space oriented towards Pali language and scripture rather than Chinese. The "Buddhist New Year" was celebrated in April 1916 at Kinta Road, an inaugural occasion honored by receipt of a supplementary Buddha image from the king of Siam (*Straits Times*, 13 April 1916), while that temple also celebrated Pavarana (the end of the monastic rains retreat) in September of the same year (*Straits Times*, 28 September 1916). According to the *Straits Times*, a Burmese Buddha image earlier housed at an unspecified "Chinese temple" was processed to Kinta Road just prior to the Pavarana celebration (23 September 1916). That is, once there was an appropriate ritual space oriented towards southern Asian Buddhist practice, the image was relocated from its provisional home in the Chinese Buddhist ritual world. There is little attention to the Kinta Road site in the English-language press between 1916 and 1920, which may reflect organizational difficulties at Kinta Road, or simply a shift in editorial and/or contributor interests.²⁰ However, by the 1920s Kinta Road was again referred to as a major site of Buddhist activity in Singapore. Press reports do not indicate specifically Ceylonese Buddhist

¹⁷ This proposal to the Siamese royal court was sufficiently important to the Sinhalese of Singapore that it induced controversy over who would represent the Sinhalese in a visit to Singapore's Consul-General for Siam. See *Straits Times*, 11, 12, and 13 July 1913.

¹⁸ Historical summary on the second floor of the Burmese Buddhist Temple.

¹⁹ According to the historical summary mentioned in note 18, however,, Tha Hnit was born in Mandalay. A souvenir volume prepared for Singapore's Burmese Buddhist Temple reports that Madame Kam Kah Neoh, executive of the late Mr. Tan Kong Seng, donated land at Kinta Road to Mr. Tang Sooay Chin (U Tha Hnit), who donated it to Mr. U Kyaw Gaung (also known as Khoo Teogou). U Tha Hnit appointed U Kyaw Gaung trustee of the temple in 1907, and died in 1911 while in residence at Kinta Road. According to Ven. Sumana Siri, Chief Sangha Nayaka of the United Kingdom and Europe, a Sinhalese-Hokkien monk from Melaka ordained in the Sri Lankan *sangha*, the Kinta Road temple was built by a former Burmese monk (personal communication 1 July 2010). The histories of the Burmese Buddhist Temple, Singapore, do not mention that U Tha Hnit or U Kyaw Gaung spent time in robes. However, given U Kyaw Gaung's work in medicine, it is not unlikely that he received monastic, or at least temple-based, training in Burma.

²⁰ However, the *Straits Times* reported that a white marble Buddha image mounted on a teak chair had been donated by rubber planters in Rangoon, and was to be carried in state to the Kinta Road temple. "The Buddhist community of Burma, Ceylon, Siam, etc., are invited to partake in the ceremony" (6 March 1916).

involvement at Kinta Road during the 1910s, though perhaps some Ceylonese Buddhists sought ritual protection from the Buddha image there or visited the site on full moon merit-making holidays. According to Mahaweera, Sinhala Buddhists attended the Kinta Road temple sometime prior to his arrival in the 1930s (National Archives, Singapore, B000381/34, Reel 20).

During the last half of the 1910s Ceylonese Buddhist life in Singapore was shaped by two wider developments in the port city's public life. The Confucian Association of the Straits Settlements (Singapore, Penang, Malacca) began in May 1914 (*Malaya Tribune*, 28 May 1914). Among the activities of this association, were efforts to raise awareness of the birthday of Confucius and to gain support for formal observances of the birthday (*Malaya Tribune*, 10 October 1914). The Chinese Chamber of Commerce also offered support for the birthday celebration, which was not surprising given the leading role played by Lim Boon Keng (Lin Wenqing 林文慶) in both institutions (*Malaya Tribune*, 17 October 1914). The Malayan press began to carry articles on Confucius and his biography more regularly, especially during the October birthday season (e.g. *Malaya Tribune*, 19 October 1917). By 1919, English-language schools in Singapore closed for a half-day in honor of Confucius' birthday (*Malaya Tribune*, 20 October 1919). In the same year, coverage of Deepavali, a major Hindu holiday, intensified (*Malaya Tribune*, 24 October 1919). Thus, in Singapore, ritual and linguistic communities were increasingly identifying themselves, and being identified by others, in relation to a central religious holiday. In this world where leading Singaporean Chinese celebrated the birthday of Confucius, and their Hindu (especially Indian and Ceylonese Tamil) counterparts were associated with Deepavali, Singapore's Sinhalese would have felt a growing need for a widely acknowledged, publicly celebrated, holiday of their own.²¹

Moreover, as something approaching notions of ethnic and/or religious community began to articulate through publicly and officially recognized holiday calendars, we see the inauguration of public associations linked to religious and ethnic affiliations. For instance, the Hindu Association was established in July 1913 (*Malaya Tribune*, 6 July 1914). The Aryan Sinhalese Fraternal Association began in 1913 (*Malaya Tribune*, 16 April 1918) or 1914 (Ong 2005, 54), perhaps catalyzed in part by the Ceylon Tamils Association initiated in 1909. The Aryan Sinhalese Fraternal Association became a vehicle through which to campaign for the registration of Buddhist marriages and the establishment of a Buddhist cremation ground (Ong 2005, 54). During the 1910s, this association held an annual celebration of "Singhalese New Year's Day" at their meeting hall on Tank Road (near the Lanka Hotel).²² As we shall see, some members of the Aryan Sinhalese Fraternal Association, including A.P.M. Daniel, supported new Sinhalese Buddhist ventures in Singapore during the subsequent decade. Already, however, towards the end of the 1910s, B.S.R. Chandrasekera,²³ along with two other Sinhalese, backed the establishment of the first Ceylonese Buddhist ritual space in Singapore on Spottiswoode Road, one of the Sinhalese enclaves at that time (Arseculeratne 1991, 155). They may have relied upon the Ceylonese monk Venerable Pematatana as a ritual specialist for some months in 1918, before his departure to Penang that year (Mahindarama Dhamma Publishing 2003, 25).

²¹ It was considered newsworthy by the *Malaya Tribune* that Japanese children in Japan had begun to celebrate the Buddha's birthday (27 April 1917).

²² The Aryan Sinhalese Fraternal Association seems to have been troubled persistently by lack of funds and low participation into the 1920s (see *Malaya Tribune*, 15 April 1919, 15 April 1921). It was replaced by the Singapore Sinhalese Association established in 1923 (Ong 2005, 54).

²³ Chandrasekera is listed among the officers of the Singapore Sinhalese Association for 1932 (*Straits Times*, 20 March).

1920-1930: Monasticization, Ethnicity, and "Reform"

Significant changes in Singapore's Buddhist environment, including those affecting Ceylonese Buddhists, occurred during the decade of the 1920s. Ceylonese Buddhism became more publicly visible in Singapore by decade's end and signs of a sharper ethnic-nationalist self-identification were visible among the Sinhalese Ceylonese. During this decade, Sinhalese and Thai Buddhist monks were more stably present in Singapore for the first time. This move to monasticize the southern Asia Buddhist world of Singapore intersected with Buddhist monastic projects emanating from southern China.

The birthday of Sakyamuni Buddha had become a stable part of the Singapore Buddhist festival calendar by the early 1920s.²⁴ The Buddha image at the Kinta Road temple was the central focus of such celebrations as best we can discern from newspaper reports. The "incarnation of the Buddha" and "anniversary of the birth of Lord Buddha" were observed according to the customary lunar calendar followed in Ceylon and mainland Southeast Asia among Pali-using Buddhists. English-language dailies portrayed the festivals through descriptive terms drawn from Christianity, which makes it more difficult to ascertain the nature of the birthday festival rituals. "Feast days" and "prayer and service" were held at Kinta Road, as well as nearby at the third milestone of Serangoon Road, close to what is now the intersection of Serangoon Road and Boon Keng Road (Burmese Buddhist Temple 2001, 35). This ritual space on Serangoon Road was used, apparently with government permission, to house a massive marble image of Sakyamuni Buddha commissioned on the model of the smaller image received earlier from the Ledi Sayadaw. The image, brought from Mandalay, was housed temporarily on Serangoon Road in an "attap shed" that provided an insubstantial thatched cover for the image (*Straits Times*, 15 October 1926).²⁵ This very modest image hall on Serangoon Road became known Buddha Vehera, the Buddha's residence. Efforts were made to purchase land for the image, and to construct a more permanent and suitable Buddhist temple. Towards this end, in the 1920s, rituals in celebration of Buddha's birthday at Kinta Road were linked to fund-raising for a new temple site, at least in the eyes of the Kinta Road trustee

²⁴ The small group of Straits-born Chinese Buddhists oriented towards Sakyamuni Buddha in Malacca observed his birthday at the Kwan Imm Tong Temple (Chiak Chye Teng), where their Sakyamuni Buddha image of Burmese origins was installed (*Malaya Tribune* 10 May 1924). The early history of Malacca Chinese Buddhists devotionally engaged with mainland Southeast Asian images deserves further attention. According to a volume prepared by the image's eventual temple, Seck Kian Eenh, in 1920 "a small group of religious-minded Straits-Born Chinese...come together to learn and practice the Teachings of Lord Buddha." In 1922 they obtained an image of Sakyamuni Buddha, brought by Ven. P. Ratanatissa from Rangoon. "Without a proper premises of their own, the Buddha image ... had to be placed in two different Chinese temples for about 19 years." With the help of a pioneer devotee, Seet Lian Seng, also a trustee of the Geok Siow Kong Temple at Tranquerah, the image was installed at that location and accessible to devotees. It was subsequently moved to the Kwan Imm Temple on Jonker Street in downtown Malacca. Devotees of the Sakyamuni Buddha image did not obtain land of their own until 1940, when they purchased a site on Gajah Berang Road which remains an active temple (Seck Kian Eenh Temple 2010, 9).

²⁵ This use of land was permitted by the government as a temporary occupation, extended at least once in 1927 (*Straits Times*, 11 February 1927). See also *Malaya Tribune* (15 October 1926) and *Straits Times* (2 February 1922). According to an inscription on the image itself, the image was brought from Mandalay to Singapore in 1918 during the time of the trustee Koh Teow Cow, though the historical document mentioned in note 18 reports that the statue reached Singapore in 1921.

(*Straits Times*, October 1926).²⁶ This attempt failed and, in 1927, the image was installed at Kinta Road rather than within a new temple structure (*Straits Times*, 5 November 1927).²⁷

During these years, the Kinta Road temple and the Buddha Vehera also celebrated the beginning and end of the monastic rains retreat, even though there is no sign that a monk resided at either location (*Straits Times*, 27 April and 8 July 1922, 25 April and 23 October 1923, 19 May, 14 July, and 26 September 1924, 29 Sept 1925).²⁸ Press coverage of major Buddhist holidays in the *Straits Times* and *Malaya Tribune* do not mention monks at the Kinta Road temple or the Buddha Vehera.²⁹ It is possible that U Tha Hnit and U Kyaw Gaung developed the ritual space at Kinta Road partly with a Chinese model of temple administration in mind,³⁰ not dependent on monastic presence or monastic ownership. On at least one occasion, the Buddha Vehera linked the ritual end of the rains retreat to "theatrical performances of the Low Kek Lye Hiang Pek Jee" which suggests Chinese or Sino-Burmese attendance among the devotees (*Straits Times*, 15 October 1926). The same festival was in 1928 observed at the "Buddhist burial ground at 8th milestone, Tampenis [Tampines] Road" as well as at Buddha Vehera and Kinta Road (*Straits Times*, 25 September 1928). The burial ground was probably the land donated by Teck Hock to U Kyaw Gaung in 1926, for use by Burmese Buddhists (*In Commemoration* 1991, 15).

The increasingly visible Ceylonese Buddhist celebration of Sakyamuni Buddha's birthday in Singapore included ritual attendance at Kinta Road. The *Straits Times* advertised, "...a free distribution of flowers and candles to all worshippers by the Buddhist members of the Sinhalese Association at the Buddhist Temples in Kinta Road and Race Course Road" (4 May 1928).³¹ However, during the 1920s, Singapore's Sinhalese Buddhists began to crystallize as a more distinct and self-sufficient community, in religious and extra-religious contexts. By 1924, "Buddhist New Year" had become the "National Day" of the "Sinhalese of Singapore," observed independently of any Buddhist ritual space (*Malaya Tribune*, 12 April 1924). Some of the Sinhalese themselves had adopted nationalist discourse by this period to describe their calendar, as we see from references to the Sinhalese National Day Celebration Committee, led by Mr. J.A. Wijeyekoon of Singapore (*Malaya Tribune*, 15 April 1924, 9 April and 14 April 1925). Something of an ethnic distance between Singapore's Sinhalese and Tamils appeared even more sharply in 1926 reporting of the April holidays. The "Sinhalese National Day" and the "all Ceylon, Tamils' Day" were both held on 13 April, at separate locations (*Malaya Tribune*, 12 and 16 April 1926). Levels of participation in these "national" celebrations may have been quite small on the Sinhalese side at least since the Governor observed at the 1928 festivities that "he hoped there would be no further idea of discontinuing the Singapore Sinhalese Association as he understood was intended..." (*Malaya Tribune*, 12 April 1928).

²⁶ See also *Malaya Tribune* (15 October 1926).

²⁷ This newspaper report conflicts with the account given by the Burmese Buddhist Temple (2001, 35), according to which the Mandalay image was enshrined at Kinta Road in 1925.

²⁸ See also the recollections of Mahaweera, who notes that there were no Burmese monks, and that the Kinta Road Buddha image belonged to the Burmese (National Archives, Singapore, B000381/34, Reel 20).

²⁹ According to McDougall, even in the 1950s there was no resident monk at Kinta Road, where the temple was held by private individuals (1956, 44).

³⁰ I am grateful to Hun Lye for a discussion of Chinese Buddhist Trusteeship (24 June 2010). See also Freedman and Topley (1979, esp. 164).

³¹ The Race Course Road temple referred to here was probably the Tiger Sakyamuni Bodh Gaya Temple established in 1927. See further below.

In specifically Buddhist contexts also, signs of increasing celebration of Sinhalese-ness, or at least Ceylonese Buddhist practice, were evident by the mid 1920s. This may owe something to the cumulative impact of the Ceylon-based Maha Bodhi Society on Singapore's Ceylonese Buddhists. It was likely also spurred by the establishment of the Singapore Buddhist Association, comprised of Ceylonese Buddhists, in 1922 (Bennett Manukularatne, personal communication, 14 July 2009) or 1923 (Ong 2005, 54). "It started out as a small group of Sinhalese Buddhists who got together to discuss Buddhism and have prayer sessions. They made a concerted effort to establish a temple for the Sinhalese and a Buddhist Sasana (Order [of monks]) in Singapore" (Manukularatne 1992-3, 53). An effort seems to have been made by some of the city's Ceylonese Buddhists to bring their Buddhist practices and customs to the attention of a wider Singaporean audience, perhaps in part by feeding reports to the local press.³² In the press, Sakyamuni Buddha's birthday was now identified for the first time as *Vesak* -- following Sinhalese usage -- in 1927. The increasing visibility of *Vesak* in Singapore coincided with efforts made in Ceylon to revise the Holidays Ordinance of 1886 in order to provide greater official recognition of non-Christian holidays (Ben Schonthal, personal communication, 4 November 2010).³³

Wesak Day is always looked forward to by Buddhists in all parts of the world with that same joyous enthusiasm which runs in the veins of Christians on the approach of Christmas. It denotes the anniversary of the birth of Buddha and is celebrated in right royal style by Buddhists. In Ceylon where the percentage of Buddhists in the Island's population is by no means meager, the day is celebrated on a very large scale. Tissue paper lanterns of various shapes and other decorations are to be seen in practically every street, and the spectacle in Colombo at night time is one which a stranger will never forget once he has seen it. ...

In Singapore the number of Buddhists is very small but the few there are have not failed to decorate their places of business or their houses according to their means. The business establishment of Messrs. B.P. de Silva, the High Street Jeweller, was gorgeously lighted up last night. ... (*Malaya Tribune*, 8 May 1925).

Moreover, a year later,

The Sinhalese Buddhists have formed into a committee to commemorate this glorious event by ceremonies and alms-giving to the poor and destitute at Serangoon Road (opposite Bendameer) where the biggest sacred image of our Lord is to be seen (*Malaya Tribune*, 20 May 1926).

The festival on Serangoon Road was, however, open to any Buddhists of the city: "All Buddhists are invited, *irrespective of nationality* to participate either by contributing to the alms-giving fund or by being there present personally or by both and thus pray to gain Nirvana, shorten future incarnation and soon attain Nirvana" (*Malaya Tribune*, 20 May 1926, emphasis added). The event was portrayed in the press as an imitation of Colombo (Ceylon) practice: "The giving of alms is looked upon as a meritorious act and is done on a very large scale in Ceylon. Large sheds are generally erected in prominent parts of the country, especially in Colombo, and anybody can walk in and partake of food,

³² Arseculeratne notes that both Sinhalese and Tamils from Ceylon were active in the Malayan press. V.L.S. de Silva, for instance, worked for the *Straits Times*.

³³ C.W.W. Kannangara, Legislative Council representative of the Southern Province of Ceylon, moved for a Select Committee to review the 1886 ordinance. By 1928 the ordinance had indeed been amended, to include two new Buddhist holidays (including *Vesak*), plus one each for Ceylon's Hindus and Muslims (Ben Schonthal, personal communication, 4 November 2010).

no charge being made. ... Such an alms-giving is to be held to-day in Singapore for the first time" (*Malaya Tribune*, 26 May, 1926). By 1928 Vesak festivities included a procession through the city from the Niven Road premises of the Singapore Sinhalese Association (*Singapore: The Encyclopedia* 2006, 505) to the Buddhist ritual spaces in Kinta Road and Race Course Road (*Malaya Tribune*, 3 May 1928). That year, a Vesak "carol party" used "special hymns in Sinhalese and English, set to Oriental music" (*Straits Times*, 3 May 1928) as a festival expression which would have excluded linguistically many of the city's Chinese Buddhists as well as most Siamese and Burmese devotees.

The Singapore Sinhalese Association (SSA) was established in 1923 and seems to have replaced the Aryan Sinhalese Fraternal Association. The Singapore Sinhalese Association overlapped with the Singapore Buddhist Association, though the two organizations sometimes met in separate locations (*Malaya Tribune*, 4 May and 19 October 1928).³⁴ "As well as serving as a place at which members of the community could gather, the SSA's original premises were used as a boarding house for Sinhalese immigrants" (*Singapore: The Encyclopedia* 2006, 505). According to Mahaweera, Ceylonese monks en route to Siam would sometimes stay in Singapore for one to three months, offering opportunities for merit-making and preaching. On other occasions, a wealthy Singaporean Buddhist might invite a monk from Ceylon for the period of the rains retreat (National Archives, Singapore, B000381/34, Reel 20). During the 1920s, Ceylonese Buddhists sought Buddhist monastic presence with increasing animation, but there were no permanent Burmese or Ceylonese monks in Singapore.

The 1920s also saw innovations in the institutional arrangements of Chinese Buddhists. Although we know too little about Chinese Buddhist ritual space in Singapore during the early 19th century, it appears that Chinese devotees who might engage some Buddhist images and texts for protective and funerary rituals did so in spaces that included other ritual elements. These spaces -- sometimes housed within clan halls in the early decades of the century -- included Buddhist images and texts drawn from the wider Chinese Mahayana Buddhist milieu combined with ritual foci associated with the traditions of Confucianism and Taoism (Wee 1975, 5).³⁵ In earlier 19th-century Singapore, Chinese associations and their ritual spaces were typically organized around language group and place of origin (Trocki 2006, 50; Ling 1993, 158). At this time, Buddhist temples (or temple spaces containing Buddhist elements) were administered by lay practitioners who hired ritual specialists (often brought from the Chinese mainland) on a contractual basis (Hun Lye, personal communication, 24 June 2010). These ritual specialists were not necessarily Buddhist monks. Moreover, they did not establish a residential monastic community, or achieve monastic administrative control of the ritual space and temple property. This began to change at century's end. Ong noted, in his well-known reflections on Singapore's Chinese history, that

[i]n early 20th Century, several prominent Buddhist monks from China started to come to Singapore for various reasons. Some were on transit in their pilgrimage to Buddhist holy lands in Ceylon and India. Some were on transit in their lecture tour to Ceylon and Europe. There were those who, on visits to Southeast Asia, made a stopover in Singapore. Some monks were invited to Singapore from China to give lectures and to be spiritual advisors of temples. Some came to collect funds for temple construction in China" (Ong 2005, 36).

³⁴ All of the elected office bearers for Singapore Sinhalese Association in 1928 and 1930 bore Ceylonese names, most obviously Sinhalese (*Malaya Tribune*, 25 Oct 1928, *Straits Times*, 12 March 1930).

³⁵ I use the term "traditions" to refer to Taoist and Confucian practice in Singapore without intending to imply any particular stability or normative content. Such textual and ritual practices were historically and regionally dynamic in China and in overseas Chinese milieux.

As we have seen, Shuang Lin temple (near Balestier Road) had one or more monastics in residence from 1898 or 1899. This was the only site for Chinese Buddhist monastics in Singapore until 1921. In 1921, the Kong Meng San Phor Kark See (Bright Hill) Monastery (Guangmingshan Pujue Si 光明山普覺寺) was established in Singapore, by Venerable Zhuan Dao (轉道). According to Hue, he "realized that the time was right to build a place of practice to propagate the Dharma and to provide lodging for monks, as there were many monks who came to Singapore without proper lodging other than Lian Shan Shuang Lin monastery" (Hue Guan Thye, personal communication, 3 November 2010). This temple, also rooted in southern Chinese monastic traditions, was intended to establish a "forest" monastic Buddhist presence in Singapore, emphasizing meditation more than ritual or scholarship (*Singapore: The Encyclopedia* 2006, 283).³⁶ Zhuan Dao came from South Potalaka Monastery (Nanputuo Temple 南普陀) in Amoy (Xiamen 廈門). He arrived in Singapore to raise funds for the 1925 establishment of the Minnan Buddhist Institution (Minnan Foxue Yuan 閩南佛學院) in Xiamen, associated with Nanputuo Temple. Zhuan Dao established his first Singapore monastery, "Putuo Monastery," on Yan Kit Road, before Kong Meng San Phor Kark See was built. The Bright Hill temple patrons and leading monks had in view an ambitious plan for the monasticization of Chinese Buddhist ritual space in Singapore.³⁷ Singaporean Chinese Buddhist interest in obtaining resident monks for ritual and educational work in Singapore was further intensified by Venerable Taixu's (太虛) 1926 arrival in Singapore.³⁸ This active monk, well known for expressing a vision of "reformist" and "modern" Buddhism within the Chinese Buddhist world (Pittman 2001) became the second principal of the Minnan Buddhist Institute.³⁹ Taixu lectured in Singapore and interacted with Singapore-resident monks and lay Buddhists. His visit is said to have inspired the establishment of the Singapore Chinese Buddhist Association (Zhonghua Fojiao Hui 中華佛教會) (involving Pu Liang, then abbot of Shuang Lin temple), "to promote Buddhism among the overseas Chinese community" (Khoon Chee Vihara 2009, 18; Ong 2005, 39; Chia 2006).⁴⁰

Roughly contemporary with the increasing vitality of Chinese Buddhist monastic presence in Singapore was the arrival of the monk, Venerable Luang Phor Hong Dhammaratano, a former Bangkok resident of Khmer ancestry who had earlier resided at Penang's Siamese temple on Lorong Burma in Pulau Tikus, before travels in Ceylon, India, and Burma (Wat Ananda Metyarama 2009, 41). According to the present abbot of Wat Ananda Metyarama, Venerable Chao Kun Phra Tepsiddhivides, Dhammaratano had spent seven years in Ceylon "on pilgrimage" and had learned

³⁶ See also Ong (2005, 38). These developments in Singapore are perhaps comparable to those occurring slightly earlier to the north. According to Hun Lye, temple administration in Penang's Chinese Buddhist temples began to change around 1908 with the establishment of the Kek Lok See temple. For the first time an independent monastic administration linked to mainland Chinese teacher-student temple lineage was in place in Malaya. In some institutions this began to replace five-year "franchise" terms that brought ritual specialists to officiate at spaces connected to clan associations (personal communication, 24 June 2010).

³⁷ See also Wee (1975, 5).

³⁸ According to Chia (2006, 34-7), Taixu made three visits to Singapore in 1926, 1928, and 1940. Chia draws on *Taixu Dashi Quanshu* (太虛大師全書) and *Taixu Zizhuan* (太虛自傳).

³⁹ Principals from the Minnan Buddhist Institute visited Singapore, and Minnan's graduates were among the Chinese monks staffing Southeast Asian Chinese temples (Ong 2005, 36-7). However, according to Hue, there is no evidence that Shuang Lin temple's abbots were connected to Minnan (Hue Guan Thye, personal communication, 6 November 2010).

⁴⁰ However, according to another source, the establishment of the Singapore Chinese Buddhist Association likely took place not during this visit, but when he returned to Singapore in 1940 (after a visit to India and Sri Lanka) (Notes of Anonymous Reviewer for ARI Working Papers, 6 March 2012).

Sinhala language. He was also proficient in Mandarin (personal communication, 3 August 2010).⁴¹ In 1920 he reached Singapore with a novice monk, to stay at Truro Road near Race Course Road and Serangoon Road which were already sites of Buddhist activity oriented towards Pali-language texts and liturgy (Wat Ananda Metyarama 2009, 41). According to the history compiled by Wat Ananda Metyarama, Dhammaratano was invited to use land behind the Thai embassy which he declined, concerned that the embassy was located too far from the town center. Wat Ananda Metyarama was established in 1923 on Silat Road, with support from Buddhists in Bangkok and Singapore. Lim Tan Choo Leng, Lim Ching Chiew and Lim Eng Yong (of Bangkok) and Goh Thian Beng (of Singapore) are credited with purchase of the Silat Road site (Wat Ananda Metyarama 2009, 41).⁴²

There is evidence of close ties between Wat Ananda and Singapore's Sinhalese Buddhists by the 1930s (National Archives, Singapore, B000381/34, Reel 20). It is likely that some among Singapore Ceylonese Buddhist population attended rituals at Wat Ananda during the 1920s. Wat Ananda was located close to the Spottiswoode Park and Outram Park area of Singapore, core residential areas for the city's Ceylonese. Moreover, since Dhammaratano apparently knew Sinhala and was familiar with Ceylon's Buddhist environment thanks to his travels, he would have been a reassuring figure to Singapore's Ceylonese Buddhists. As noted earlier, Buddhists from Ceylon relied for their ritual needs upon the occasional visits of Ceylonese monks in transit to Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Siam and Burma, or looked elsewhere in Singapore for Buddhist sites that shared the use of Pali-language ritual and scripture.⁴³ According to Mahaweera, before his arrival, Sinhala Buddhist funerals were conducted by Dhammaratano, or by a Sinhala lay man who had studied funerary rites during an earlier period of monastic ordination. This was sometimes combined with funerary rites performed in Ceylon on a visit home (National Archives, Singapore, B000381/34, Reel 20). However, Siamese and Sinhala Pali chanting styles differed, which would have reduced somewhat the comfort offered by Dhammaratano's ritual work. Press reports suggest that, at least for festival occasions, Sinhalese Buddhists might have also found their way to new Tiger Sakyamuni Bodh Gaya temple⁴⁴ established in 1927 (Ong 2005, 57-8). This temple at Race Course Road, was established in 1927 by the Siamese monk Venerable Vutthisara. By 1930 it was supported by the Sino-Burmese Aw brothers associated with the Tiger Balm empire. The Tiger Sakyamuni temple was well located, just a short walk from the Burmese temple in Kinta Road, also near the Burmese neighborhoods then located off Serangoon and Balestier Roads. Judging from press reports, the Tiger Sakyamuni temple quickly became a central ritual location for Pali-using Buddhists of the city.

In the early 1920s (Bennett Manukularatne, personal communication, 14 July 2009), A.P. M. Daniel, owner of the Lanka Hotel (and later an officer of the Singapore Sinhalese Association), gifted land at Outram Road in order to establish a permanent Buddhist temple for the Ceylonese of Singapore (Areseculeratne 1991, 155). However, construction at this location must have proceeded slowly, since Spottiswoode Park Road remained a center for meetings and rituals at least into the early

⁴¹ I am grateful to Pattana Kittiarasa for facilitating this visit, and for translation assistance.

⁴² According to the present abbot of Wat Ananda Metyarama, only one Siamese donor supported Dhammaratano. The majority of his supporters were Sino-Thai. According to Khoo, Thai monks from Bangkok would have been able to speak Teochew, one of the Chinese languages of Singapore (1996, 57). Mahayana Buddhists advised the temple's founders on its geomantic location (Chao Kun Phra Tepsiddhivides, personal communication, 3 August 2010).

⁴³ A Sinhala temple, Mahindarama Buddhist Temple, was established in Penang in 1918 by Venerable Pamaratana (Mahindarama Dhamma Publication 2003, 25).

⁴⁴ So named, in all likelihood, because the founder monk brought bark from the bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya with him to Singapore for installation at the temple.

1930s.⁴⁵ Daniel's gift reflects a growing determination among Ceylonese Buddhists to secure more permanent ritual space and specialists for their city residents. Such aims were likely encouraged by the arrival of Buddhist monks from Ceylon in 1928. In May 1928, a visiting monk from Ceylon was celebrated in the papers, which mentioned that he would offer a sermon at the Sinhalese Association Hall in Wilkie Road (*Straits Times* and *Malaya Tribune*, 4 May 1928). The choice of this location, rather than the Kinta Road temple, Buddha Vehera, or Sakyamuni Bodh Gaya temple, suggests that the monastic visitor was expected to preach in Sinhala to a Ceylonese Buddhist audience. He and his colleagues had been the source of interest and anticipation a month earlier.

Several Buddhist priests, engaged in propaganda work are expected to arrive here from Ceylon by the Hakusan Maru [tomorrow]. There are six Priests on board. It is requested that as many Buddhists as possible will welcome the arrival of the newcomers. It is understood that they will proceed to Kuala Lumpur after a short stay here (*Malaya Tribune*, 7 April 1928).⁴⁶

The ambitious Vesak celebrations organized by the Ceylonese Buddhists of Singapore that year and referred to above were probably inspired in part by these visiting monks.

Already in the late 1920s there was evidence among Singapore's Ceylonese of both the more and less culturally exclusive visions of Ceylonese Buddhist practice and institution building. While some Sinhalese focused their energies and resources on Spottiswoode Park Road and the Singapore Sinhalese Association, others collaborated with Anglophone Singaporean Chinese. One sign of this second orientation was the International Buddhist Union, first mentioned by the *Straits Times* in early 1925, when Mr. W.M. de Alwis, almost certainly a Ceylonese and resident at Rocher Road, invited Singaporeans to discuss formation of the Union (31 January and 14 February 1925). Eventually, probably spurred on by the visiting Ceylonese monks of 1928, the International Buddhist Union was established in Singapore at Raffles Quay in August 1929. Its aim was to "afford a common meeting ground for local English-educated Buddhists. It is also the intention of the promoters *to get from Ceylon an English-educated Buddhist priest who will be able to give instruction in the religion*" (*Straits Times*, 29 August 1929, emphasis added). A Ceylonese monk was an attractive prospect to Anglophone Chinese Buddhists, since the early Siamese temples in Malaya did not produce English-speaking monks and could not readily serve Anglophone Chinese Buddhists (Hun Lye, personal communication, 24 June 2010). More Chinese names than Ceylonese names were listed as officers and members of the Union's organizing committee. Moreover, the Ceylonese names were not all obviously Sinhalese. Both facts suggest, but do not prove, that the International Buddhist Union did

⁴⁵ Outram Park Road replaced Spottiswoode Park Road as the ritual center sometime in the late 1930s or early 1940s. *Dhamma* classes for youth were held there in the post-war period while Sri Lankaramaya Temple on St. Michael's Road was under construction (Lim Ah Swan, personal communication, 11 July 2010).

⁴⁶ See also *Straits Times*, (7 April 1928).

not have full (if any) support of the Singapore Buddhist Association.⁴⁷ The Tiger Sakya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple is mentioned as a meeting site for the International Buddhist Union rather than Spottiswoode Park Road, which further suggests the Union's close connection to parts of Singapore's Chinese Buddhist community including both "Theravada" and "Mahayana" practice (and perhaps some distance from Sinhalese associations) (*Straits Times*, 6 November 1931).

1930-1935: Religion, Language, and Culture

The early 1930s was a time of important changes for the city's Ceylonese Buddhists. They appear to have differentiated themselves increasingly from the ritual spaces used by Siamese and Burmese Buddhists. Some strengthened ties to Anglophone Chinese Buddhists who moved away from Mahayana Buddhist ritual spaces into the world of southern Asian Buddhism focused on Pali texts and liturgy.

One way to track divisions and collaborations among Singapore's Buddhists during the 1930s is by reading press coverage of celebrations of Sakyamuni Buddha's birthday, observed in the March-April period according to a lunar calendar. There appear to have been three or four consistent clusters of Buddhist activity, focused on separate ritual sites. Some Buddhists from the Pali-oriented Buddhist world of Singapore attended the Kinta Road temple, the "Buddhist burial ground" on Tampines Road, and a temple near that funerary site referred to as the Mahabodhi temple (*Malaya Tribune* 22 April 1931, 18 May 1932; *Straits Times* 9 May 1930, 22 April 1931, 19 May 1932)⁴⁸. Given the Burmese origins of the Kinta Road temple and its trustee, it is likely that these sites continued to be the focus of Burmese and Sino-Burmese Buddhist attendance although this is not certain. Completion of a separate room for the primary Buddha image in October 1932 may have increased the attractiveness of the temple for festival observance (*Burmese Buddhist Temple* 2001, 17). For Sakyamuni Buddha's birthday, rituals were also held at the Tiger Sakya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple. In 1931, celebrations there occurred in collaboration with the International Buddhist Union (*Malaya Tribune*, 29 April 1931), but by 1932 the Union celebrated Vesak elsewhere, at its own premises or (in 1932, at least) at the Theosophical Society on Tank Road (*Malaya Tribune* 18 May 1931, 12 May 1932, 26 May 1934; *Straits Times* 19 March and 18 May 1932, 8 May 1933, 26 May 1934, 16 May 1935).⁴⁹ The use of

⁴⁷ I am not able to determine the likely place of origins for the persons whose Chinese names are listed here. President, Kim Hock Quahe; Vice-Presidents, Sim Ah Kow, H. Walters, A.J. Thumboo, and Teo Kah Toh; Secretary, Loh Guan Heng; Assistant Secretary, D.G. de Silva; Treasurer, Chua Sim Keng; Auditor, W.M. de Alwis; Committee, Koh Hoon Teck, Wong Chin Nam, S. Fujimori, S.M.T. Naida, Tan Tiang Ghee, and Seow Cheng Tiam. The report indicated that the Union intended to approach the Siamese Consul-General and Aw Boon Haw as patrons.

Compare the officers and committee for the Singapore Buddhist Association less than a year later: President, N.W.H.K. James; Officers, U.S. de Silva, N.W.H.K. James, A.P. M. Daniel, M. Dharmapala, D.U. de Silva, Wesley de Silva, K.L.A. Thepanis Hamy, R.D. Simon; Committee, Robert de Silva, Albert de Silva, U.S. Perera, Lokugan Hewa, A.E. Perera, A.A. Nanayakkara, and A.H. Lentis (*Straits Times*, 12 March 1930).

⁴⁸ Thus far, I have not been able to reconstruct this history of the "Mahabodhi Temple" located on Tampines Road.

⁴⁹ At least in 1933, Dhammaratano of Wat Ananda Metyarama officiated at the Union's Vesak celebrations, an occasion on which the Union President Ngeow Nian Chin explained *in Malay* the meaning of Vesak "quite unknown among Chinese Buddhists" (*Straits Times* 12 May 1933, emphasis added).

Malay in the President's 1933 Vesak speech suggests that the Union's Chinese Buddhist members included substantial numbers of those who might now be called Straits Chinese or Peranakan.⁵⁰

In this era, the Singapore Buddhist Association, with its solely or predominantly Sinhalese constituency, used their premises to celebrate Vesak. It became customary for them to make offerings to a Buddha image, give alms to the poor, and to offer charity parcels to the Leper Hospital (*Straits Times* 22 May 1932, *Malaya Tribune* 1 May 1931, 23 May 1932, 12 May 1933, 14 May 1934, 14 May 1935). If a suitable monk were available, he would officiate at the *Buddha-puja* and perhaps give a sermon, as a Burmese monk is said to have done in 1932, and as the Sinhala monk Narada did in 1934 (*Straits Times*, 15 January). Narada, who became a major Buddhist figure in Malayan Buddhism (and especially Kuala Lumpur), lectured at the International Buddhist Union and the Chinese Buddhist Association (presumably in English) while offering sermons in Sinhala on separate occasions to Sinhala-speaking Buddhists in the city (*Straits Times*, 15 December and 27 December 1933, 15 January 1934).

During these years Singaporean interest in the southern Asian Buddhist traditions oriented towards Pali texts and liturgy widened. At the same time, distinctions among such Buddhists on the basis of mother tongue and culture of origin sharpened. This was the Buddhist world joined by Mahaweera, a monk from Ceylon's Siam Nikaya fraternity with family origins in southern Ceylon who reached Singapore in December 1934. He was just twenty-one years of age, yet already had experience of what he called "missionary work" or "dhammaduta" in Ceylon. Traveling with Venerable Anomadassi (also known as Dhammadassi) and Venerable Sumanasara, his intention was to study forest meditation in Chiang Mai (Siam) (National Archives, Singapore, B000381/34, Reels 9, 18). A "distant maternal uncle, who was already an established monk in Penang encouraged him to go to Singapore and Malaya" (*Mangala Vihara* 2010, 71). Despite his youth, Mahaweera had experience of urban Buddhist institution-building from days spent in Colombo. Upon arrival in Singapore, the monks encountered a "Sinhalese man" who took them to the Lanka Hotel, owned by Daniel, a leader in the Singapore Buddhist Association. Daniel sent the monks to a rented house three miles from the hotel, a place used as a meeting hall for the Sinhala Buddhist Association and as a rest house for Sinhala visitors (National Archives, Singapore, B000381/34, Reel 18; *Mangala Vihara* 2010, 71). Mahaweera later recollected that in those days there were no temples catering to the "Sinhalese Buddhists. Pressed by the small population of about 800 Sinhalese, they accepted to stay and perform Buddhist marriage and funeral rites, full moon and new moon days, and other activities" (*Mangala Vihara*, 26-7). The three monks were housed at 67 Spottiswoode Park Road, near Wat Ananda Metyarama (27), where Narada also resided in 1935 (*Malaya Tribune*, 31 October 1935). According to Mahaweera, Outram Park Road became the headquarters of the Singapore Buddhist Association in 1939 (National Archives, Singapore B000381/34, Reel 31).

Though thus quickly claimed by Singapore's Sinhalese, Mahaweera rapidly also developed connections to some of Singapore's Chinese Buddhists. As we have already seen, some English-speaking Chinese Buddhists in Singapore had for some years -- in part through the International Buddhist Union -- been keen to locate an English-speaking monk from Ceylon who could provide Buddhist education in the city. Perhaps Mahaweera's first connections to Singapore's Chinese Buddhists were a matter of chance. According to Cecilia Wee, Mahaweera met his first Chinese Buddhist patrons in the Spottiswoode Park neighborhood, including Tan Seng Chye, a Penang Buddhist resident in Singapore, who may have taught Mahaweera Malay. Through Tan Seng Chye,

⁵⁰ I am aware that use of the terms "Straits Chinese" and "Peranakan" is not straightforward, and that there is debate within academic and heritage circles about this nomenclature. This paper is not intended as an intervention in such arguments, though scholars interested in the religious affiliations of Anglophone and Malayophone Singaporean Chinese may find interesting the data presented here.

Mahaweera met Loo Boon Kwee as well as Wee Tin Guan, who served as Mahaweera's interpreter since Mahaweera could not yet teach in English or Malay (Cecilia Wee, personal communication, 11 July 2010).⁵¹ A history prepared by Mangala Vihara states that Mahaweera's Spottiswoode Park residence "attracted several families from Penang who were already familiar with Buddhism" (Mangala Vihara 2020, 27). Given the relatively strong presence of southern Asian Buddhism in Penang at this time, with Siamese, Burmese, and Ceylonese Buddhist ritual spaces already established there, it is likely that the Penangites who sought out Mahaweera had some knowledge of Pali-using Buddhism. It is not unlikely that Mahaweera's uncle, based at a temple in Penang, had alerted Singapore-based Penangite Chinese to the arrival of Mahaweera from Ceylon and advised his nephew on service to Chinese Buddhists. Mahaweera is said to have learned Hokkien to converse "with the mostly Hokkien-speaking Penangites" (27). Mahaweera himself recalls that Chinese or Malay was required to speak with the devotees he referred to as "Chinese Babas," indicating that his early Chinese patrons were not solely Anglophone (National Archives, Singapore B000381/34, Reel 20). In his reminiscences, Mahaweera noted that five or eight Hokkien-speaking "Baba" families from Penang were among his early Chinese supporters at the Spottiswoode Park Road site. These Penangites were already interested in practicing a "purified" or "reformed" Buddhism but were uncertain as to how that should be done. They responded to Mahaweera's Ceylonese Buddhism (National Archives, Singapore B000381/34, Reel 32). I say more about "reformed" Buddhism below.

Family connections likely played an important role in deepening Mahaweera's ties to Singapore's Chinese Buddhists, as the monk's first Chinese acquaintances drew him into an expanding web of familial and neighborly acquaintance (Cecilia Wee, personal communication, 11 July 2010). This vision is consonant with comments offered by Venerable Sumana Siri, a monk of Hokkien Chinese-Sinhala ancestry raised in Melaka. According to Sumana Siri, the proximity of temples or monks to Chinese family homes shaped choices of ritual spaces and specialists. There was, in the inter-war Straits Settlements, an element of chance and convenience to the development of Buddhist networks and temple communities (personal communication, 30 June 2010). In any case, by the mid-1930s, Mahaweera offered Buddhist instruction and ritual to both Chinese and Sinhala Buddhists in Singapore. According to his recollections, he would divide sermons into English and Chinese unless another monk was present who could offer a sermon in one of the languages. In that case two sermons in two languages would be offered simultaneously (National Archives, Singapore B000381/34, Reel 20). Although there are clear signs of Chinese Buddhist interest in Mahaweera's Buddhism, evidence also suggests that the cremation-based funerary practice of Ceylonese Buddhism was slow to displace Chinese-Buddhist rituals. Mahaweera commented at length on the transition from Chinese Buddhist to Sinhala Buddhist ritual practices of all kinds. In his view, Chinese Buddhists were slow to accept what Mahaweera later called a "Theravada system," and would insist on conducting Chinese funerary rites even in the presence of an invited Sinhala Buddhist monk (National Archives, Singapore B000381/34, Reel 20). This is consistent with the remarks of Boon Tang Huat who proposes that the first generation of Mahaweera's Chinese Buddhist devotees maintained a "dual ritual system" comprising both earlier Chinese and novel Sinhala Buddhist practices, while the second generation reduced their attachment to "Taoist" forms of ritual and funerary practices (personal communication, 11 July 2010).⁵²

The deepening collaboration between Ceylonese and Chinese Buddhists during the 1930s was not without difficulties. A small group of Sinhala Buddhist monastics (sometimes only Mahaweera himself) served as educational and ritual specialists for a growing Buddhist population that straddled

⁵¹ See also National Archives, Singapore (B000381/34, Reel 20), where Mahaweera notes that he studied English, Malay, and Chinese for four years.

⁵² See also Wee (1976).

several languages (Sinhala, English, Pali, Hokkien, Malay) and ritual styles. Tensions emerged among the Buddhists oriented towards Ceylonese Buddhist Pali-language ritual space in the early years of Mahaweera's stay in Singapore. By 1939, a separate Singapore Buddhist Association-English was established by Mahaweera for his Chinese devotees, while the Singapore Buddhist Association remained the institutional base for Ceylonese Buddhists. These associations co-existed at the Ceylonese ritual space of Outram Park Road and, later, Sri Lankaramaya Temple, until Mangala Vihara was established in 1960. At that time Mangala Vihara became the primary location for Chinese practitioners of Ceylonese Buddhism in Singapore, while Sri Lankaramaya Temple was the focal site for the city's permanently resident and visiting Sinhalese Buddhists. Jeffrey Samuels' work on Theravada Buddhism in 20th-century Malaysia has begun to reveal the complex alliances and divisions that characterized this Buddhist world after World War II.⁵³ Evidence from Singapore in the early decades of the 1900s discussed here reveals that signs of such intricate, and sometimes awkward, negotiations of a shared Buddhist world were already present by the late 1920s, growing stronger in the 1930s. Sinhalese Buddhists had already begun to crystallize as a self-consciously distinct linguistic and cultural-ethnic Buddhist group by the 1920s, even as Chinese Buddhists (including, but not limited to, Anglophone Chinese) reached towards Ceylonese Buddhist institutional space, attracted both by monks proficient in English and by a sense that that southern Asian Buddhism was a form of Buddhism consonant with "reform."

Directions for Further Research

As a specialist in Sri Lanka's Buddhist institutional history and monastic cultures, unable to work directly in Thai, Burmese, and Chinese language sources, I cannot pursue many of the enticing stories and complex causalities towards which this preliminary research points. In the hope that others better prepared to research the conjoined histories of 19th-century Buddhists in Siam, Burma, Ceylon, Malaya and China will take up the challenge, I note here some of the directions for future research signaled by the present paper. In the first place, there are indications that leading practitioners of Buddhism among the Siamese and Burmese in Singapore – and perhaps the Burmese to an even greater extent than the Siamese – created Buddhist institutional spaces in the context of their continued movement between Singapore, other parts of Malaya and Siam, and Burma. The history of the Kinta Road temple is extremely suggestive in this regard. The commercial networks linking the Burmese to Singapore during the British colonial period seem to have kept the Burmese Buddhists of Singapore in touch with Buddhist temples and monastic activities, teachers, and ritual preferences in Burma as well as in parts of Siam. However, there remains much to learn about the patterns of circulation, and the ways in Buddhist/ritual networks and other networks (commercial, familial, etc.) overlapped with, and perhaps facilitated, one another.

Another area deserving further investigation is the relations that may have obtained between "Chinese Buddhists" of diverse origins as they coalesced in Singapore. The evidence of Siamese and Burmese Buddhist institution-building in Singapore discussed in this paper reveals that Siamese and Burmese Buddhist patrons in Singapore included those known by Chinese names. To what extent, if at all, did the presence of Siamese and Burmese Buddhists in Singapore of Chinese familial heritage help to deepen connections between Singapore's emergent southern Asian Buddhist institutions and Chinese residents of Singapore whose places of origin lay in southern China or archipelagic Southeast Asia? That is, can rising 20th-century interest in southern Asian Buddhism -- oriented towards authoritative texts in Pali language and Pali language ritual -- among Singapore's Chinese be attributed in part to linguistic, commercial, and, perhaps, cultural links that some may have possessed with the Chinese communities of mainland Southeast Asia based in Singapore? A similar

⁵³ See his *Becoming Buddhists: Multiple Minorities in Malay-Muslim Malaysia*, in preparation.

line of reflection draws attention to the potential impact of Penang-Singapore ties during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. To what extent was the eventual Singaporean Chinese Buddhist interest in southern Asian Buddhism a product of Singapore's close ties to Penang? Penang had been home to Pali-language southern Asian Buddhism for several generations prior to the rise of such Buddhist establishments in Singapore. Extended familial, commercial, and intellectual ties linking Penang and Singapore may have helped make southern Asian forms of Buddhism more natural and attractive to Chinese residing on the southern island, even before Mahaweera reached Singapore in the early 1930s. More generally, the evidence presented here suggests that the late 19th- and early 20th-century history of intersection between Mahayana Buddhism and Pali-oriented southern Asian Buddhism throughout Malaya deserves further investigation by scholars of Singaporean and Malayan Buddhist history able to work with Chinese language sources.⁵⁴

During the period considered in this paper, the Maha Bodhi Society and the Theosophical Society linked Ceylon, India, Burma, Siam, Malaya, and Japan through a variety of activities related to the celebration of Buddhism and Hinduism (and sometimes opposition to Christianity or aspects of colonial administration). Much has been written about these societies, especially with respect to Anagarika Dharmapala, Henry Steele Olcott, and Annie Besant famous for their leadership in these societies. However, too little attention has been paid yet to the ways in which the Maha Bodhi Society and the Theosophical Society functioned as umbrella organizations within which a variety of local socio-political agenda were pursued at various locations linked by these societies, or to how these organizations facilitated the travel of local Asians through port cities, travel that was undertaken for a number of reasons including commerce, intellectual exploration, the cultivation of political/activist ties, and the development of religious institutions.⁵⁵ The diaries of Anagarika Dharmapala make very clear how crucial local involvement at each nodal point was to the movement of these societies' leaders, but also that locals associated with the Maha Bodhi Society and the Theosophical Society could pursue their own aims on a wider regional basis through connection to these trans-regional societies and their patronage arrangements that made possible travel as well as liaison with foreign visitors. In the material presented here, both Dhammaloka and B.P. de Silva are striking figures in this regard. Examination of the Maha Bodhi Society and Theosophical Society journals, along with the diaries of Anagarika Dharmapala and Henry Steele Olcott and local newspaper reporting on religion,⁵⁶ would help to build a more robust picture of how the residents of cities like Singapore, Rangoon, Bangkok, Calcutta, and Colombo put the Maha Bodhi Society and the Theosophical Society to the service of their own ends, commercial, religious, and otherwise. Moreover, given the orientation towards southern Asian, Pali-liturgical, Buddhism characteristic of the Maha Bodhi Society throughout its history (and of the Theosophical Society in its early years), it is likely that developing a more substantial local picture of these societies at work in places like Singapore would help us understand the flow of people and ideas that helped make southern Asian Buddhism, and especially its Ceylonese form, increasingly attractive and stably present in British Malaya.

⁵⁴ In this regard see Hue (2010), Wenxue (2010), and Wenxue (2011).

⁵⁵ Indications of this local appropriation of the societies appears in Frost (2002), Jaffe (2004), Trevithick (2006), and Blackburn (2010).

⁵⁶ During the present research, it was not possible to re-examine the diaries of the Anagarika Dharmapala, which I first read (up to the year 1911) for an earlier project (Blackburn 2010). A full set of these diaries is not available outside Sri Lanka. A thorough examination of the journals associated with the Maha Bodhi Society and the Theosophical Society was likewise impossible during a three-month, Singapore-based, research project. Comments on these journals presented in this paper draw on research earlier completed in London for a recent monograph (Blackburn 2010).

Singaporean Chinese interest in southern Asian Buddhism (and particularly in its Ceylonese form) emerged at the turn of the century, and deepened during the 1920s and 1930s. This was contemporary with continuing debates among Chinese intellectuals and social leaders in Singapore about the forms of ritual practice suitable to an era of political upheaval and intellectual experimentation among Chinese on the mainland and overseas. In their reflections on such matters, Singapore's Chinese residents were shaped by, and participants within, diverse local and trans-regional conversations among Chinese intellectuals that might be loosely construed as "reformist." Many spheres of human life -- including national political arrangements, education, gender relations, and domestic ritual -- received attention. Some argued for a ritual world that was more spare in character, narrowing the scope for protective ritual practices addressed to divine or supra-human beings, and seeking to reduce or eliminate burial and graveside rituals undertaken for the benefit of deceased relatives. Southern Asian Buddhism oriented towards Pali-language authoritative texts and liturgy (now typically referred to as "Theravada Buddhism"), especially in its Ceylonese form, is likely to have resonated with some Chinese Buddhist advocates for a leaner ritual world. Emphasizing cremation rather than burial, and death memorial rituals that occurred in domestic privacy (with monastic support), Ceylon's Buddhist practice was in these respects congruent with the "non-burning" position espoused by some of Singapore's Chinese against death memorial observances beyond the home. This may have increased the attractiveness of southern Asian Buddhism to some Chinese in Singapore. Further research is required by specialists in late 19th-century and early 20th-century ritual practice among Singapore's Chinese communities in order to clarify the pace and manner in which funerary practices changed during this period, the stance taken by the city's growing Chinese Buddhist monastic communities on this matter, and the degree to which ritual "reform" was an important concern in any of the spheres that connected Chinese and Ceylonese Buddhists (including the International Buddhist Union and the circles that developed around Narada and Mahaweera). Moreover, it would be valuable to explore how Ceylonese Buddhism (perhaps referred to in local sources as Pali Buddhism, Sinhalese Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism, or Southern Buddhism) was portrayed in Chinese-language publications circulating within Singapore and wider Malaya during the 1920s and 30s. Who among the Chinese readers and writers construed Ceylonese Buddhism as "pure" or "original" Buddhism? To what extent was Ceylonese Buddhism referred to in terms that stressed its "modern" or "reformed" character? With what other social and political projects were Chinese patrons of Ceylonese Buddhism involved during the 1920s and 30s? It may be the case that enthusiasm for Ceylonese Buddhism among the Chinese Buddhists of Malaya, including Singapore, owed something to the view that Ceylonese Buddhism (at least in its forms that circulated within Malaya) was the leanest and most "modern" form of Buddhism available in its day.

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