

Beachcombing, Going Native and Freethinking: Rewriting the History of Early Western Buddhist Monastics¹

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Abstract

The article provides an introduction to the special issue of Contemporary Buddhism entitled ‘U Dhammaloka, “The Irish Buddhist”’: Rewriting the History of Early Western Buddhist Monastics’. Traditional accounts of pioneer Western Buddhist monastics begin with the 1899 ordination of H. Gordon Douglas (Aśoka), and highlight gentleman scholars writing for a European audience. They consign to obscurity a pre-existing world of Western Buddhist monastics of all social classes. To open a window onto this hidden history, this issue presents new material relating to the extraordinary career of U Dhammaloka (?1856 - ?1914),

¹ We plan to publish a substantial volume on Dhammaloka in the near future and this will carry a very long list of acknowledgements. At the present stage of research, and for contributions directed particularly towards the IAHR panel and this publication, we wish to thank in particular Shelagh Bocking, John Breen, Chang Qing, Kate Crosby, Michelle Hubert, Andrew Skilton, Thomas Tweed and Shin’ichi Yoshinaga.

widely known as "The Irish Buddhist". A working-class autodidact, freethinker and temperance campaigner from Dublin, Dhammaloka became renowned throughout colonial Asia as an implacable critic of Christian missionaries and tireless transnational organiser of Asian Buddhists from Burma to Japan. The research described in this issue is innovative not only in content but also in method and approach, having advanced through collaborative, international research employing web-based research tools and online resources. These offer new possibilities for other translocative and interdisciplinary research projects.

White men ... often join the true religion. There are many who are priests of Buddha in Burma, and some in Ceylon. They are much honored.

(The "High Priest" of the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, 1905)²

Origin myths are important in Buddhism, and indeed in Buddhist studies. The standard origin myth of western Buddhist monasticism normally traces its

² Harry Alverson Franck, *A Vagabond Journey Around the World: A Narrative of Personal Experience* (New York: The Century Co., 1910), 269, http://www.archive.org.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/stream/avagabondjourne00frangoog/avagabondjourne00frangoog_djvu.txt

foundation to three gentleman scholars in the years around 1900: the British converts H. Gordon Douglas (Aśoka) and Allan Bennett MacGregor (Ananda Metteyya),³ and the German Anton Gueth (Nyanatiloka). Even where academic research has asked critical questions of the ways such figures constructed ‘Buddhism’, it has accepted the genealogy which highlights these figures as pioneers. As our opening quotation suggests, matters are more complex than that.

The essays in this special issue of *Contemporary Buddhism* include three extended articles and a critical response derived from the panel on ‘Rewriting the History of Early Western Buddhist Monastics’, presented at the XXth International Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) in Toronto, Canada, on 19th August 2010. The somewhat ambitious title of that panel, which reappears as the subtitle of this issue of *Contemporary Buddhism*, reflects our conviction as researchers that the material we have discovered and are now presenting should provoke a comprehensive and critical re-examination of this origin myth, not simply by way of replacing one set of names with others, but more substantively by rethinking the character, history and significance of western engagements with Buddhism at the turn of the twentieth century.

Our own re-examination of the myth of origin began - and continues, for this is very much a work in progress - with the study of a hitherto ignored monk

³ Spelled variously as Metteya, Maitreya, Maitriya, etc..

known formally by his Burmese monastic name U Dhammaloka, and widely referred to in contemporary sources simply as “The Irish Buddhist” or “The Irish Pongyi” (monk). Dhammaloka’s life and activities, especially during the period 1900-1911, form the main focus of this issue; more broadly, they offer a window into a world of very different kinds of early western bhikkhus from those usually acknowledged, and a window into the broader social context of Asia around 1900, highlighting imperial anxieties about 'poor whites' and 'going native', the Buddhist revival in Asia, the construction of religion and the contestation of identities.

U Dhammaloka was Irish, he was working class and he had a limited formal education.⁴ He was also renowned in his day throughout South, Southeast and East Asia as a fully-ordained and observant Theravadin monk who attracted European, Chinese and Burmese support for his many and varied organisational and publishing projects in support of the ‘Buddhist Revival’. Dhammaloka was loved and respected by the Buddhist laity. He was less admired by the European colonial establishment, for reasons which will become clear in the other papers in this issue, and admired least of all by Christian missionaries and their converts, whose activities he energetically disrupted.

Buddhism among the ‘Beachcombers’

⁴ On Dhammaloka’s pre-monastic identity, see below in this article.

We can begin to get a glimpse of the varied world of western monastics at the turn of the twentieth century from the accounts of those who travelled among them.

The ‘Vagabond Traveller’, Harry Alvarez Franck, was a graduate of the University of Michigan who tramped penniless through Europe and Asia for sixteen months in 1904-1905. Franck shared, observed and wrote about the lives of the legions of down-and-out European sailors, hoboes, beggars and occasional workers known in Asia at the time as ‘beachcombers’.

Franck tells us that converting to the nearest religion, whether it be Christianity, Islam or Buddhism, in return for a meal or a safe billet had for decades been a common tactic among this class of men. However, for at least some European converts to Buddhism the religious interest was genuine and the conversion lasting. Franck narrates the following from a conversation in Colombo, Ceylon⁵ with ‘John Askins’, a former civil engineer and graduate of Dublin University and now a beachcomber in his fifties, about the same age as Dhammaloka:

“It's an old game out here,” mused Askins. “In the good old days, whenever one of the boys went broke, it was get converted. Not all played out yet either. There's a bunch of one-time beachcombers scattered among the Burmese monasteries. An old pal of mine

⁵ Throughout this issue, in the interests of historical accuracy, we have used those terms and spellings prevailing in the period (such as Ceylon, Siam, Burma for Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, etc.). No political stance is implied by this usage.

wears the yellow up in Nepal. No graft [dissimulation] about him, though. He's a firm believer.”⁶

The Known and the Unknown

Such 'one-time beachcombers' are unknown to existing scholarship on European and American Buddhism in the colonial era. Instead, there is a well-rehearsed roster of early European Buddhist monastics beginning with Douglas in 1899. The stories of these 'known' men were preserved in part because of their social class, but mainly because the organizations they founded and the journals they edited went on to become central to mainstream Western European Buddhism in the twentieth century. These 'known' monks include the following:

- **Bhikkhu Aśoka** (H. Gordon Douglas), ??-1900. English. He was the headmaster of Mahinda College in Ceylon, founded by the Buddhist Theosophical Society. Ordained February 1899, Ceylon, in the Amarapura fraternity by a Burmese monk, he travelled in Burma and India, and died of cholera in Bassein, Burma in April 1900.

⁶ Franck, “Vagabond Journey,” 272-3. Although Askins does not name his ‘old pal’, Dhammaloka was reportedly in Nepal at the time of this conversation (March/April 1905).

- **Ananda Metteyya** (Allan Bennett [MacGregor]), 1872-1923. English. He was known for his participation in the British occult organization the Order of the Golden Dawn with Aleister Crowley. Bennett was ordained in Burma, May 1902 He founded the ‘International Buddhist Society’ in Burma in the same year and published *Buddhism: An Illustrated Quarterly Review*. He led the first Buddhist mission to England in 1908, founding the ‘Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland’, forerunner of the present-day Buddhist Society.
- **Nyanatiloka** (Anton Gueth), 1878-1957. German. Ordained in Burma, 1904. Well known for his writings and work in Sri Lanka throughout the twentieth century.
- **U Silacara** (J. F. McKechnie), 1871-1951. Scottish. He answered a call to join Ananda Metteyya in the work of the ‘International Buddhist Society’ and moved to Burma. He ordained as novice in July 1907 in Rangoon. After disrobing in 1925, he continued as the editor of *The British Buddhist* for many years.

In researching the life of Dhammaloka it surprised us – given the frequency and confidence with which the short list above has been reproduced – to discover just how many other westerners were ordained in this same period. As soon as we look for an apparently ‘unknown’ Buddhist monk like Dhammaloka, we discover

not only that he was widely celebrated at the time, but also that there were many other European monastics who are seldom or never mentioned today, some again well-known by their contemporaries. Our list is constantly expanding, but the following (ordered by probable date of ordination) is indicative of the wide range of early western Buddhist monks who for one reason or another have been omitted from the prevailing narrative:

- **Kunigaikštis Gedyminas** (Mahacharya Ratnavajra) Lithuanian aristocrat. By 1893 had spent 'many decades' as a Buddhist (Tibetan Gelugpa order) monk with Siberian Buryats⁷.
- **An unnamed Austrian** in Siamese government service, temporarily ordained as a *Bhikkhu* ca. 1870 at Wat Panchaiyat in Thonburi⁸.
- **Mr. MacMillan**, Scottish. Arrived in Ceylon in June 1892 intending to be ordained by Ven. Sumangala⁹.
- **Karlis Alexis Tennisons**, 1873 – 1962. Latvian. Ordained in Siberia by Ratnavajra, 1893. Supposedly named Bishop of the Baltic States by the

⁷ Alois Payer, Materialien zum Neobuddhismus, <http://www.payer.de/neobuddhismus/neobud1401.htm>.

⁸ Bhikkhu Khantipalo, *Banner of the Arahants: Buddhist monks and Nuns from the Buddha's Time till Now* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1979), 167-8.

⁹ *Daily Advertiser* (Singapore), June 25, 1892, 3. It is not uncommon that the last notice we have of an individual in the English-language colonial newspapers is one highlighting their *intention* to ordain. Unless this was followed, as with Ananda Metteyya or Dhammaloka, by public activity in English further public records are unlikely, which means the ordination may or may not have happened.

13th Dalai Lama. Involved in founding the St Petersburg Buddhist temple – the first (and still surviving) such temple in Europe¹⁰.

- **U Dhammaloka** (a.k.a. William Colvin, Lawrence O'Rourke and / or Lawrence Carroll), ?1856-?1914. Irish. Ordained (in Burma?) seemingly well before 1900, active throughout Asia at a minimum 1901-11, perhaps before and after.
- **Dr. Norman**, a 'well known English physician'. Travelled to Japan intending to ordain, July 1900.¹¹
- **Aśoka (II)**, European name unknown. English. Ordained in Rangoon, Burma on May 21st 1902. Described as an old man.¹²
- **Dr Alois Führer**, 1853 - ?? German. A leading figure in the search for the sites of the Buddha's life, found to have fabricated archaeological sites to suit his literal belief in the scriptures. Arrived in Ceylon in February 1903, intending to ordain in Siam¹³.

¹⁰ Alois Payer, Materialien zum Neobuddhismus, <http://www.payer.de/neobuddhismus/neobud1401.htm>.

¹¹ *The Straits Times*, July 6, 1900, 2.

¹² Mrs Everard Cotes, "The Ordination of Asoka," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 105 (1902), 757.

¹³ Charles Allen, *The Buddha and Dr Führer: An Archeological Scandal* (London: Haus Publishers, 2008), 213-6.

- **Arnold Abraham or Abrams**, Jewish, Straits (Singapore) Settler. Sent by Dhammaloka to Rangoon for ordination June 1904. Monastic name possibly Dipalamkara.¹⁴
- **Dhammawanga** (C. Roberts). Welsh, with an American accent. Ordained as a novice by 1904. Disrobed in Singapore, October 1904 for receiving a remittance and/or temporarily leaving his monastery.¹⁵
- **Dharmatrata** (M. T. de la Courneuve). English. Ordained by Dhammaloka as a novice in Singapore October 2nd 1904. He was formerly an Inspector of Police in Penang, Straits Settlements and his father was a Deputy Commissioner in Burma.¹⁶
- **Unnamed Former Sailor**. American. Ordained in Burma by May 1905 and residing in the Tavoy Monastery, Rangoon.¹⁷
- **Mr. Bergandahl**. Dutch. Nineteen-year-old son of a rich family on an allowance to travel around the world. Ordained in Ceylon in March 1906

¹⁴ *Straits Times*, October 1, 1904, 5; *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, June 14, 1904, 5.

¹⁵ “Buddhism in Singapore: Interesting Ceremony at Havelock Road,” *The Straits Times*, October 3, 1904, 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Franck *Vagabond Journey*, 383-4.

by another European monk from Penang, disrobed shortly afterwards on the advice of Annie Besant.¹⁸

- **Sasana Dhaja** (E. H. Stevenson), 1863-? English. Ordained in Burma September 1908 (for Christian research purposes?) Lectured on Buddhism in Australia in 1910¹⁹.

This list demonstrates that there was no shortage of early European monks in Asia in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. The above is in no way an exhaustive catalogue, rather a collection of some of those we have come across while researching Dhammaloka's life. Even so, it is clear that any perspective which restricts us to Asoka, Ananda Metteyya and Nyanatiloka is wholly inadequate. It restricts our view to the self presentations of these early gentlemen scholar monastics themselves and their vision for European Buddhism. They sought to have Buddhism, and scholarly Buddhist Studies, recognised as intellectually on a par with the study of western philosophy or religion; to have Buddhism recognised as a world religion on a par with others; and to highlight a certain organisational and conceptual core of Buddhism rather

¹⁸ “European Buddhist Priest,” *Eastern Daily Mail and Straits Morning Advertiser*, December 6, 1905, 3; “Dutch Buddhist Priest: Learns the error of his ways,” *Eastern Daily Mail and Straits Morning Advertiser*, April 11, 1906, 1.

¹⁹ Paul Croucher, *Buddhism in Australia 1848-1988* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1989), 19-20.

than to celebrate its diversity and contradictions - in other words, to establish its intellectual respectability.

Other kinds of respectability may also have played a role, however, in the expansion of Buddhist Studies. One of the key Western audiences in the development of Buddhist Studies as a discipline in recent decades has been university students, whose interest in Buddhism could easily come, as Donald Lopez²⁰ has observed, from 'illegitimate' and 'unrespectable' sources like T. Lobsang Rampa's *Third Eye* books or Jack Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums* and other works of 'Beat Buddhism'²¹. Students may have been warned off taking Kerouac's Japhy Ryder (the real-life Gary Snyder) – drifter, forester, sailor, political radical – as a model of Buddhist practice in favour of a parade of serious scholars, but Dhammaloka and his fellow 'beachcomber bhikkhus' suggest that the Beat Buddhists were less misleading as guides than they have sometimes been represented.

Our list of early Western monastics, it will have been noted, includes only those male monks ordained in Asian traditions. There are many other groups of Europeans involved with Buddhism in this period that we do not consider here. These include ordained women, such as Sister Sanghamitta (Countess Miranda de

²⁰ Donald S. Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

²¹ Carole Tonkinson, *Big Sky Mind: Buddhism and the Beat Generation* (London: Thorsons, 1996).

Souza Canavarro), who understood herself as re-establishing the bhikkhuni order in Ceylon²², lay European figures active in Asia such as Col. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky, and a series of other western-born members of the Buddhist Theosophical Society who formally converted to lay Buddhism by taking refuge in Ceylon from the 1880s onwards, such as C.W. Leadbeater in 1884, and John Bowles Daly and E.B. Fawcett in 1890²³. Nor do we discuss the non-monastic position of other Irish Buddhist figures such as the wonderfully-named Captain Condor Pfoundes, who was initiated and reportedly attained an honorary rank in the Shingon and Tendai forms of the Shugen "fire rite" in late 19th century Japan²⁴.

Monastic ordination is one among a series of performative acts, including taking refuge, being initiated, being ordained, ordaining others (as Dhammaloka

²² On Sister Sanghamitta see: Thomas Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism 1844-1912* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Tessa J. Bartholomeusz, *Women Under the Bo Tree: Buddhist Nuns in Sri Lanka* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

²³ Kitsiri Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society, 1750-1900: A Study of Religious Revival and Change* (London: University of California Press, 1976), 254. On Daly, see Laurence Cox and Maria Griffin, "Border Country Dharma: Buddhism, Ireland and Peripherality," *Journal of Global Buddhism* 10 (2009): 102.

²⁴ Nor, it should be noted, do we discuss in any detail modernist Japanese engagements with other Asian forms of Buddhism, which in some respects prefigured western involvement. Laurence Cox and Maria Griffin, "The *Wild Irish Girl* and the 'dalai lama of little Thibet': the long encounter between Ireland and Asian Buddhism," in *New religion in Ireland: alternative spiritualities, migrant religions, the New Age and new religious movements*, ed. Olivia Cosgrove, Laurence Cox, Carmen Kuhling and Peter Mulholland (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, forthcoming 2011).

did) and founding an order (as Sanghamitta did), whose meaning is perhaps not as obvious, nor as uncontested, as retrospective organisational genealogies suggest. The particular value accorded to male bhikkhu status and to monastic progenitors, both by Theravadin Asian Buddhists and by western Buddhist sympathisers however, makes monastic ordination a useful location from which to begin exploring the contested ways in which such statuses were understood at the time, and to begin unpicking the 'origin narrative' that places only a small clique at the heart of the interaction.

From a European perspective, frequently articulated by Christian missionaries in particular, Ananda Metteyya was far more of a "real Buddhist" than U Dhammaloka ever was, because of Ananda Metteyya's class, his education, his concern to convert westerners rather than engage with Asian Buddhists and his generally ecumenical leanings. From a Burmese Buddhist perspective, however, Dhammaloka was equally if not more orthodox— correctly ordained, ritually pure, with some degree of seniority – and wildly popular. To complicate matters further, as Brian Bocking's article in this issue shows, different Asian Buddhisms in different countries could respond very differently to the same claim to legitimacy. In Dhammaloka's life, moreover, we have a case of a most *un-gentlemanly*, *un-scholarly* western monk whose ideas and activities were nevertheless recorded for posterity, albeit erratically and in a wide range of ways. If we cannot make him representative of those "other", forgotten monks, we can at

least use him to broaden our sense of the range of early ordained westerners far beyond what scholarship has hitherto assumed.

Because Dhammaloka, unlike the gentleman scholars, oriented himself towards *Asian* audiences, sought acceptance of his status by *Asian Buddhists* rather than western academics, and located himself within the Asian Buddhist *revival* rather than attempting to found a western sangha, we can begin to explore the role of early western monastics in an account grounded in (multiple) Asian perspectives rather than simply a part of the history of western thought or western Buddhism. We can, in other words, move beyond the relatively uninformative claims to priority in relation to events that were to unfold in Europe or North America, and ask rather—with authors like McMahan—how we can see the worldwide revival of Buddhism, starting in Asia, as part of a dialogue both between different Asian Buddhisms and between Asians and Europeans.²⁵

Dhammaloka among the Beachcombers

As noted above, Dhammaloka was one of a number of early western *bhikkhus* to be recruited from the plebeian milieu so impressively evoked in Harry Franck's 1904-05 eyewitness account of "beachcombers" and "vagabonds" in America, Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Japan. There are different dimensions to this

²⁵ David L. McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

plebeian world. Firstly, as noted in Cox's article in this issue, and as is evident from Dhammaloka's own account of his pre-Buddhist life, there was a world of migrant workers - Dhammaloka himself claims to have been "sailor, tramp, shepherd, truckman, stevedore and tally clerk for a British timber firm in Rangoon"²⁶ - whose occupations ranged from completely unskilled manual labourer to tradesman, deckhand, foreman or security worker, posts often no doubt, as Franck reports, obtained on the basis of claimed rather than earned qualifications.

"Hoboes" in the USA were not in this period the desperate figures we encounter in Steinbeck or Woody Guthrie's Dustbowl songs, but reflective, often confident, migrant workers within the expanding American economy²⁷. Within Britain, which at that time included Ireland, a significant and politically active section of the working class was Irish and routinely migrated between the two islands. In colonial Asia, although many white migrant workers such as those whom Franck encountered in Calcutta may eventually have died destitute, in life they enjoyed at least some of the advantages that went with being 'European'.

²⁶ *Sunday Independent* (Dublin), Aug 6, 1911, 8.

²⁷ Frank Tobias Higbie, *Indispensable Outcasts: Hobo Workers and Community in the American Midwest, 1880-1930* (Bristol: University Presses Marketing, 2003).

That many such figures were or became sailors is completely unsurprising, as is – at the Asian end of the story – the discovery that when work was scarce, or drink or other problems put it out of reach, or even simply when needs were few, paid labour could be abandoned temporarily or permanently in favour of ‘beachcombing’. ‘Beachcombers’ or, less generously, ‘loafers’ was a term for white men who obtained money, food, clothing, shelter or transport by any method short of paid work.²⁸ Such figures were central to the history of Polynesia and other "South Sea Islands" in this period, where their role has been extensively studied, but they existed in large numbers elsewhere in colonial-period Asia.

Nostalgia no doubt casts a rosy glow over Jan Morris' account:

Think of what the Empire could do for a fellow! It could take him gold-hunting in the Yukon... . Or it could make of him, very frequently, and happiest of all perhaps, one of the myriad bums of Empire, the loafers and beachcombers and itinerant philosophers who roamed all the imperial frontiers, frequented every island strand, and turned up to shame the imperial hierarchy from Penang to Nootka Sound.²⁹

²⁸ A newspaper item in Rangoon in 1904 criticised the activities of local Western converts to Buddhism under the heading “Loafers in Burma” (reported in *Straits Times*, December 12, 1904, 8).

²⁹ Jan Morris, *The Spectacle of Empire: Style, Effect and the Pax Britannica* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1982), 205.

The romanticism is perhaps not entirely misplaced: John McCarthy, wrote of one such character he encountered in New Guinea.

He was in fact a beachcomber but it takes as great deal more than a mere drunken loafer to achieve that status. For a start, a beachcomber must possess some sort of innate charm so that other men would bear with him; he must be prepared to refuse all work that might put him on their level; and he must have sufficient education to let him expound on life, thereby guaranteeing drinks from his listeners³⁰.

Survival as a beachcomber, in other words, was not something that fell from the sky but something that depended on an active and even enjoyable performance³¹.

Yet the line between migrant worker and beachcomber was not so clearly defined that individuals could not move back and forth across it. The *United Service Magazine* as far back as 1879 noted that ex-servicemen "are at this day, Ceylon peelers [policemen] –... Ceylon coolies, Ceylon loafers, Ceylon anything, by which the daily curry may be earned!"³² and Harry Franck in 1905 similarly

³⁰ John Keith McCarthy, *Patrol Into Yesterday: My New Guinea Years*, (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1963), 70.

³¹ Conversely, we can note a beachcomber in a contemporary novel saying 'I don't want your drink, Captain Cray. And please don't call me by that name again. I am no longer the Jack Hamerton that you knew at Oxford. My name is Corton – Charlie Corton, loafer, drunkard, beachcomber, abandoned good-for-nothing, and I don't want to be reminded that I was once something better!' Robert Leighton and Phil Ebbutt, *The Kidnapping of Peter Cray: A Story of the South Seas* (London: Grant Richards, 1903), 11.

³² "An Extinct Legion," *United Service Magazine*, 2 (1879): 309.

observed that beachcombers could get police work in Ceylon, as well as ‘coolie’ labour – and he also noted the threat posed to white claims to racial superiority by Europeans taking up this latter, lower form of work. Thus, while for many the transition from employee to beachcomber or ‘loafer’ was a permanent one (for Morris' happy reasons, or for less happy ones), for others it was simply one option among many in a world characterised by transient and insecure employment opportunities.

‘Migrant worker’ and ‘beachcomber’ are forms of employment within individual biographies; but colonial perspectives saw populations rather than individuals. An official report of 1881, speaking of Burma, said:

Few towns present such a motley assemblage as jostle each other in the streets of Rangoon. Every quarter of the globe is represented, and loafers from all parts of the world...³³

Yumna Siddiqi highlights the problems caused by this assemblage, focusing here on the lowest status members of loafer society:

along with its English 'nabobs', colonial European society produced its contingent of paupers, vagrants, orphans, prostitutes, insane, and criminals.... These so-called 'poor whites' struggled to subsist by whatever means they had, sometimes falling into poverty when they were

³³ Government of India, *General Report of the Marine Survey of India* (Calcutta: Government Press, 1881), 25.

discharged from jobs in the army, the railways, on ships, and the like. Like Mayhew's 'nomads' who traversed London, they often wandered from country to country. This class was an imperial lumpenproletariat, an underclass found throughout the colonial world...³⁴

Siddiqi further highlights the anxieties aroused by this world:

The status and comportment of this imperial underclass was particularly troubling to colonial regimes, which saw the racial superiority of Europeans as a key justification for, and instrument of, imperial rule... Not only did the spectacle of these degraded and degrading colonials threaten to discredit the mythology of European racial supremacy, but their ambiguous appearance also confused the boundary between European and native identity.... Such cross-dressed figures were perceived as scandalous because in 'going native', they revealed European identity to be a fragile construction.³⁵

From all we know of Dhammaloka, he was not one to be constrained by his origins, but in colonial terms he certainly belonged broadly to the underclass and he certainly 'went native' to the extent that in his dress, deportment and opinions

³⁴ Yumna Siddiqi, *Anxieties of Empire and the Fiction of Intrigue* (New York: Columbia University Press), 75.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

as a Buddhist monk he was a standing challenge to this ‘fragile construction’ of European identity.

While the notion of ‘going native’ and transgressing racial boundaries has been increasingly been studied in contexts such as the early colonial history of North America and the Caribbean, it deserves further consideration for this period of Asian history. Consequently, much historiography, including that within the study of religions, too easily assumes a fixed boundary between ‘Europeans’ and ‘Asians’ that leaves out not only deserters, ex-missionaries, the intermarried and their children, but also migrant workers and – as we have seen – beachcombers and the rest. This transgressive population was also challenging politically. As Siddiqi observes, ‘[t]he allegiances of this group to the colonial elite were questionable. Of all the classes in the colony, it was the least wedded to the *status quo* of colonial capitalism.’³⁶

Dhammaloka, like his fellow beachcomber-*bhikkhus*, crossed the line between "white" and "native" .Dhammaloka was also quick-witted, charming, and able to move between worlds, to get by in multiple languages and perhaps to be, like Kipling’s Kim, a ‘friend-of-all-the-world’. No wonder, then, that Dhammaloka was a ‘troublesome priest’ to his opponents, in a way that white gentlemen scholars, intent upon translating Buddhism for western consumption

³⁶ Ibid., 77.

and on gaining recognition for it as a world religion equal to Christianity, could never be.

The Quest for the Historical Dhammaloka?

When the papers in this issue were presented at the IAHR congress in Toronto, James Kapalo observed wittily that ‘Dhammaloka studies’ currently bears a marked resemblance to the ‘quest for the historical Jesus’: a rabble-rousing plebeian religious figure, problematic to the Empire, about whose early life and ambivalent death much remains obscure. However, there are some differences. As Laurence Cox observes in his article in this issue on Dhammaloka as a social movement organiser, Dhammaloka left no followers who would maintain a narrative to perpetuate his memory, while as Brian Bocking points out, Dhammaloka is forgotten because he ‘falls between the lines’ of a wide range of modern discourses. There has been, until now, no-one in the modern period arguing over interpretations of the meaning and significance of Dhammaloka’s life.

Mystery nevertheless does surround Dhammaloka’s birth and formative years in (probably) Dublin, and the first fifty or so years of his life before his emergence into the public eye in 1901 are still unaccounted for; at least, none of the many conflicting accounts can be verified, and research in this area is still ongoing. Between 1901 and 1911, however, Dhammaloka’s activities are for the

most part comprehensively documented, sometimes from a variety of independent, if mainly journalistic, sources. After 1911, if all the available reports are to be believed, Dhammaloka died in a temperance hotel in Melbourne, Australia in 1912 and was seen alive again in Siam two years later! Hence, most of what we believe we know of Dhammaloka stems from the period 1901-1911.

Below, we provide a brief chronological outline of Dhammaloka's life, but a preliminary note on why this is important and how we have gone about studying Dhammaloka may also be useful. Since our research increasingly shows that Dhammaloka's life as an activist European Buddhist monk was significant, not only for Buddhists in Asia at the time but in the echoes of his ideas and his example in the world of colonial and postcolonial Buddhism, the facts of that life, insofar as they can be established, acquire a corresponding significance. In the context of understanding the development of modern global Buddhism, Dhammaloka appears to stand as a strong counter-example to the notion that early European Buddhism was primarily an intellectual and literate response to Buddhist philosophy. Dhammaloka was undoubtedly a thinker but he was not a philosopher or man of letters. As Alicia Turner points out in her article, Dhammaloka responded only with indifference to a quotation from Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, the ubiquitous *vade mecum* of Victorian Buddhist sympathisers. Dhammaloka's Buddhism was a practical, lived-in-the world kind of Buddhism, evidently learned at first hand in Burma.

It was also, therefore, a kind of Buddhism which, in Dhammaloka's mind at least, was consistent with ferocious expressions of radical atheism ('freethinking') and anticlericalism, and with a campaigning commitment to temperance. Underlying these ideas, which find repeated expression in his tracts and recorded public utterances, we can surely also discern in Dhammaloka's personal conduct and circle of relationships some attitudes to matters of race, class and colonialism which invite reference to his own class and colonial Irish background. If articulated with as much fervour as his views on religion, these ideas might have locked Dhammaloka in destructive confrontation with the secular colonial authorities right from the outset. Hence, Thomas Tweed in his response proposes that we need to attune ourselves to a 'vernacular intellectualism' if we want to understand how Dhammaloka and others among his working-class contemporaries thought about, understood and articulated 'Buddhism'.

The 'vagabond' writer Harry Franck met Dhammaloka in May 1905 on a steam ferry crossing the Ganges delta.³⁷ After telling Franck of his early life, spent partly as a hobo in America, Dhammaloka also retailed some of his more recent experiences as a Buddhist monk travelling far and wide in Asia. He claimed that he had been received by royalty in every Buddhist country, including by the Dalai Lama in Lhasa before Younghusband, and he provided evidence for

³⁷ Franck *Vagabond Journey*, 361ff. Franck calls him 'U Damalaku'.

many if not all of his remarkable claims in the form of a book stuffed with ‘more than a hundred newspaper clippings’ about his exploits.³⁸

While that book of press cuttings has not survived, many of the contemporary press reports of Dhammaloka’s activities that Franck would have browsed through can still be found scattered in archives worldwide. These have provided a major source of information – much of it still conflicting and confusing – about the life and works of ‘the Irish Buddhist’. In addition, other travel writers, missionaries, government officials, journalists and fellow Buddhists wrote, whether briefly or at length, about Dhammaloka.

Fortunately for us, Dhammaloka was highly visible, voluble and industrious, not least, as both Laurence Cox and Alicia Turner indicate in their articles, in his publications. Dhammaloka published prolifically, usually in the form of short tracts and articles. Few of these appear to have survived intact, or at least have not found their way into libraries, but most provoked sufficient description and comment at the time for us to gain a fair idea of what they contained. Taken together, these sources offer not simply a partial biography of Dhammaloka but also an overview of what his Buddhism entailed. Our experience to date is that, while Dhammaloka was certainly capable of embroidering the truth for the sake of a good story, even some of his most outlandish-sounding claims have proven, on sufficient research, to be grounded in

³⁸ Ibid., 364.

truth; he was every bit as remarkable a figure as he claimed to be, if not always in exactly the fashion he suggested.

Rediscovering Dhammaloka

Turning to our methods of study, research on Dhammaloka's life and activities has benefited enormously from the fact that as three scholars with different strengths and a common interest we have pooled our resources in the project: no one of the three of us would have been able adequately to study someone whose life was characterised by 'moving between worlds' – the world of the radical migrant worker, the world of orthodox Burmese Buddhism, and the world of the Asian (including the Japanese) Buddhist revival.

The genesis of this research however lies much earlier than the collaboration. Burma specialist Alicia Turner (now at York University, Toronto) identified and studied Dhammaloka using Burmese records in the course of research for her 2009 University of Chicago PhD dissertation *Buddhism, Colonialism and the Boundaries of Religion: Theravada Buddhism in Burma 1885-1920*, highlighting his public intervention in key issues in the construction

of Burmese moral identity.³⁹ At the time, Turner noted him as worthy of further research at a later point.

Meanwhile, social movements researcher Laurence Cox (National University of Ireland Maynooth), had discovered western references to Dhammaloka while researching the history of Buddhism and Ireland (for a monograph soon to be published); one a 1911 Irish newspaper article detailing his 'remarkable life' and another in the correspondence columns of a US freethinking journal. The story seemed sufficiently incredible that it was not until Cox physically located a Buddhist Tract Society envelope sent from Burma to Canada that he was convinced that Dhammaloka was not a "sock puppet", a figure created to give Buddhist assent to western atheist arguments of the period.

While Turner and Cox remained unaware of each other's work, Brian Bocking, who had recently moved from SOAS to start the first Study of Religions department in the Republic of Ireland, in August 2009 came across a passing reference to an Irish monk U Dhammaloka, also known as Colvin, in a book chapter by Alexey Kirichenko on Buddhism in colonial Burma.⁴⁰ Kirichenko, in a

³⁹ Alicia Turner, "Buddhism, Colonialism and the Boundaries of Religion: Theravada Buddhism in Burma 1885-1920" (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 2009).

⁴⁰ Alexey Kirichenko, "From Thathanadaw to Theravada Buddhism: Constructions of Religion and Religious Identity in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Myanmar" in Thomas David DuBois, ed. *Casting Faiths: Imperialism and the Transformation of Religion in East and Southeast Asia* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 34.

crucial footnote, identified Alicia Turner as the source of the information. Bocking contacted Turner by email and started looking for Dhammaloka/ Colvin in local Irish sources. In October 2009, at a conference in Maynooth, Bocking met Laurence Cox who had just completed the only article published so far on Dhammaloka; a research note entitled ‘Laurence O’Rourke / U Dhammaloka: working-class Irish freethinker, and the first European bhikkhu?’⁴¹ From this point onwards, the research became a joint international effort, but without any opportunity to meet together as a team the three scholars identified and used, from the beginning, some of the fast-developing on-line archives, digitized books and other web resources, as well as collaborative on-line research tools, which have enabled each participant to learn from the others and which have substantially enhanced productivity in the project.⁴²

Briefly put, the research project is, to use a phrase of Thomas Tweed’s, ‘translocative’ as well as being collaborative and interdisciplinary.⁴³ It has involved research on Dhammaloka in America, Burma, Canada, Germany, India, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the United Kingdom

⁴¹ Laurence Cox, “Laurence O’Rourke/U Dhammaloka: Working-class Irish Freethinking, and the First European Bhikkhu?,” *Journal of Global Buddhism* 10 (2009): 135-144.

⁴² We met in person for the first time on August 18, 2010 in Toronto, having completed first drafts of the three papers in this special issue.

⁴³ Thomas Tweed, “American Occultism and Japanese Buddhism: Albert J. Edmunds, D. T. Suzuki, and Translocative History,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 32(2): 249–81.

and other places. Several languages and multiple disciplines have been employed. None of us, working alone, could possibly have learned what we have learned about Dhammaloka so far. Several other scholars have been drawn into the discussion at certain points and contributed valuable information. In return, insights and information gained from our research on Dhammaloka have sometimes cast light on topics being studied by others. The ‘Response’ in this issue by Thomas Tweed, the leading scholar of ‘translocative’ Euro-American Buddhism at the turn of the 19th century, for example, provides an excellent ‘state of the art’ evaluation of this project and the future potential and possible impact of what might be called ‘Dhammaloka Studies’.

New Research Tools for the Study of Religions

The web-based collaborative research tools used in this project deserve to be discussed, at least briefly, since not all scholars in Buddhist Studies or the wider study of religions will be familiar with the advantages they can bring to a project of this kind – and not simply one focused on the Buddhist Revival.

For on-line discussion, the group uses Googlegroups (<http://groups.google.com/>) to create a closed email-based discussion group which has the benefit of preserving and archiving as a searchable database all of our communications as a research community. To develop a cumulative, shared bibliography, we use the on-line academic bibliographical tool *Zotero*

(<http://www.zotero.org/>) which not only stores and formats citations but also archives pdfs of whole books and documents, images, scans and webpages. To keep track of new themes and relationships between apparently disparate events we have used Mindmeister (<http://www.mindmeister.com/>), an online mind-mapping or ‘spidergram’ facility, and to establish a timeline for events in Dhammaloka’s life we have used *Dipity* (<http://www.dipity.com/>) which helps to organise the mass of material diachronically and visualizes the gaps in our documentation of Dhammaloka’s life and activities.

Although the implications of the Googlebooks and similar projects are rightly controversial, the massive open-access digitization of books by Google and others such as Internet Archive (www.archive.org), have made it possible to document the details of many near-forgotten figures such as Dhammaloka and his contemporaries. While much of this information was in principle available on library shelves somewhere in the world, the new technologies have allowed us to pull together a massive range of material that no single set of expertise or manual searches could ever cover. These technologies have yielded hundreds of unexpected references to Dhammaloka, many of them fleeting and, before the advent of the digital research tools, practically impossible to find. Dhammaloka was a European who was a public figure but he was not, as it were, a European public figure and thus, as we have seen, he has not (yet) made it into the Buddhist history books. Even for those who interviewed him or reported on him, he was

seldom the main story. Miscellaneous travel books, missionary reports, religious journals, popular magazines and memoirs of colonial careers from the early 1900s are rarely indexed, but through the new availability of digitised versions we have found a multitude of fleeting or more substantial references to Dhammaloka in writings emanating from Burma, Singapore, India, Ceylon, Malaya, Japan and America amongst others. Since we are dealing mainly with a period a hundred years ago, virtually all of the contemporary witnesses fall into the category of out-of-copyright texts that are most likely to be digitised. The process of digitisation is ongoing, worldwide, and conducted on a massive scale, which means that the same search repeated a month later can yield significant new results.⁴⁴

Another very new and very important source has been the fast-emerging digitised newspaper archives. Different countries have made more or less progress in this regard, but we have been fortunate that within the short lifetime of the project the Singapore newspaper archives have gone completely on-line, yielding numerous articles about Dhammaloka in Singapore and beyond. Australia, the USA, Ireland, the UK, Japan and some other countries also have advanced online searchable newspaper archives. Where these do not exist, the only alternative is to search microfilms page by page, or to commission the digitisation of microfilm

⁴⁴ It should be noted that, as with many such initiatives, this process is currently privileging English-language material and that published in the west. We have done our best to correct this bias by seeking out Asian-language sources and collaborators with access to such material offline.

records. Much of Alicia Turner's earliest work on Dhammaloka in Burma was undertaken through microfilm searches and it remains our source for further knowledge of his time there. Since, to date, we have had virtually no funds for the research, we are limited in the extent to which we can review the non-digitized newspapers and there are still significant gaps in our coverage of Dhammaloka's life, for example from Thai and Chinese-language sources.

The new on-line tools are of particular assistance in 'translocative' research projects in Buddhism or any other area of religion and in the humanities more widely; that is to say, in projects which trace a mobile subject such as Dhammaloka across national and linguistic boundaries. They point at least one way forward beyond the all-too-familiar phenomenon of research which is structured primarily by the shape of a single form of data to which an individual scholar has access. Linguistic and disciplinary constraints, however, mean that such translocative projects are inherently collaborative ones for all but the most polymath of scholars. In our experience, this is an unqualified advantage.

Dhammaloka's Life in Outline

The articles in this issue of *Contemporary Buddhism*, taken together, cover in some detail Dhammaloka's activities between 1901-1911; the period when he was very much in the public eye. However, there are many significant omissions and since each article has its own particular 'take' on Dhammaloka the material there

is not presented in chronological order. In order to help orient those readers who are new to Dhammaloka and, perhaps, new to some of the places and times in which he operated, we provide below a short summary of his life and activities, arranged chronologically. This too is by no means a complete account of Dhammaloka's life, but it has the advantage of containing – with the notable exceptions of the first entry covering the 50 years of his life from the 1850s-1900 and the last few entries following his trial in 1911 – only events for which there is good documentary evidence; a very good probability is indicated by (?). Dhammaloka was fond of announcing, usually through the press, what he was going to do and what he had done in the past, but in the year-by-year summary below we include only events which to the best of our knowledge actually happened.

Another purpose of this table is to give an at-a-glance impression of the remarkable nature and range of Dhammaloka's activities during the ten years when he was in the public eye. The table also points, of course, to how much is so far unaccounted for. Key **dates** and **places** have been highlighted to emphasise the extent to which Dhammaloka moved about, not just between different Asian countries, especially in the years 1902-6, but also within Burma, where he engaged in a number of major speaking tours covering great distances. Where the month of an event is known it is indicated, otherwise it may be assumed only that an event took place during the year in which it is listed.

1850 to 1900

There is no independent evidence of Dhammaloka's life before 1900, so all details in this paragraph remain speculative. He was born 1850-56 as ?Lawrence Carroll or ?Lawrence O'Rourke or ?William Colvin (or none of these), probably in **Dublin, Ireland**. According to his own account he crossed the **USA** from the East Coast to California as a hobo/ manual worker, followed various semi-skilled occupations including stevedore, truckman, sailor, etc. and arrived in **Burma**, via **Japan**, ca.1880(?) Accounts by various others say he had lived in **Australia**, was a Roman Catholic priest, a member of the Salvation Army, the British Army, or a pearl-diver in **Ceylon**⁴⁵. He was ordained as a novice then a monk at some point prior to 1900 and became resident at the Tavoy Monastery, **Rangoon**.

1900

November Rangoon, Burma A notice by Dhammaloka appeared warning missionaries not to distribute tracts at the Shwedagon pagoda. A subsequent notice forbade Christian missionary activity in Burma altogether. **December Akyab, Burma:** His "Warning to Buddhists" circular attacked Christian missionary activity and rallied Burmese for the defense of Buddhism.

⁴⁵ Except for the Catholic priesthood these are not necessarily incompatible with Dhammaloka's own story of his career as a migrant worker, which remains the most plausible account.

1901

January Burma Dhammaloka undertook a preaching tour of the delta region and the southeast of Burma. He claimed to have closed three mission stations by force of argument during this tour. **March Rangoon**, He confronted an Indian police officer at the Shwedagon pagoda over the issue of wearing shoes and was charged with insult by a District Magistrate. **April** He co-published *Revival of Buddhism* (by Dawsonne Strong) with the 'Chinese Cycling Society'. **November-December, Mandalay** He was greeted by huge crowds, hosted by the Society for Promoting Buddhism. He then launched a preaching tour of central Burma and the Shan States.

1902

May Rangoon Dhammaloka participated in the ordination of an elderly Englishman 'Aśoka' and was interviewed by the Canadian writer Mrs Everard Cotes. **September-October Tokyo, Japan** Dhammaloka was the only European speaker at the launch of the 'International Young Men's Buddhist Association', at Takanawa Buddhist University. His return trip was via **China** and **Hong Kong**.

1903

February Singapore In a brief stopover Dhammaloka delivered a temperance

lecture at the Singapore I.O.G.T. lodge. **February-August Bangkok, Siam**

Dhammaloka resided at 'Wat Bantawai'. There he started a free multiracial English school, launched the Siam Buddhist Society, co-founded a temperance society and proposed an International Buddhist congress for the following year with a new Wat / conference centre to be built for visiting foreign Buddhists.

October Having returned to **Singapore** he opened the Havelock Road Buddhist Mission and free school.

1904

January Singapore Wealthy Buddhist jeweller B.P. d'Silva sponsored

scholarships to Dhammaloka's school. **April Singapore** Dhammaloka organised

pan-Buddhist New Year celebrations. **April** He sent two European/Eurasian

Buddhist converts from Singapore to **Rangoon** for ordination. **October Singapore**

Dhammaloka conducted his own Pali *samanera* ordination of the Englishman M.

T. de la Courneuve at Havelock Road Buddhist Mission, and founded the 'Straits

Young Men's Buddhist Association'.

1905

January Singapore Dhammaloka was attacked in print as a 'fraud' by the (Irish)

editor of *The Straits Times*. **February-May** He spent three months in **Nepal** (?).

May Travelling from **Calcutta to Chittagong** Dhammaloka was interviewed at length at the ferry port of Goulundo by the ‘vagabond traveller’ Harry Alvarez Franck.

1906

Dhammaloka’s whereabouts are unknown. (He was possibly in **Penang, Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh (Malaya) or Ceylon.**)

1907

Colombo, Ceylon: Dhammaloka published *Buddhism or Christianity, Which?*
August Rangoon, Burma He founded the Buddhist Tract Society (BTS) which distributed ‘75,000’ tracts at the Shwedagon pagoda to mark the end of the rains retreat. **September Rangoon,** the BTS decided to publish ‘10,000 copies’ each of ‘100 tracts’. **October Rangoon,** an article in *The Burma Echo* (by Dhammaloka?) claimed that there were three hundred ‘conscious freethinkers’ in Rangoon.
December Mandalay, Burma Over a hundred monks attended a reception in Dhammaloka's honour; he distributed anti-Christian tracts at the annual Baptist convention.

1908

January Meiktila, Myingyan, Pakokku, Pagan, Burma Dhammaloka drew crowds of thousands to hear his preaching. **February Myingyan** A BTS branch was founded. **May Henzada, Burma** He was greeted by thousands with golden umbrellas and a Burmese string band. **June New York** *The Truth Seeker* published his 'Buddhism misrepresented by Christian missionaries'. **Burma** The BTS claimed sales of ten thousand copies of *The Age of Reason* and *The Rights of Man* by Thomas Paine.

1909

Burma The BTS published *Buddhism: the Highest Religion* by Sophia Egoroff and *Bible Atrocities and Immoralities*. **Burma** Dhammaloka addressed an audience of five thousand on the centenary of Thomas Paine's death, and planned a Burmese translation of *The Age of Reason*. **New York** *The Truth Seeker* published a piece by Dhammaloka. **August Ceylon** Dhammaloka gave a series of lectures criticizing Christian missionaries.

1910

Burma Christian missionary Francis Clark reported that the BTS had distributed tracts 'by the million'. The BTS published *The teachings of Jesus not adapted to modern civilization* by George Brown. **October-November Moulmein, Burma** Dhammaloka preached against Christian missionaries to crowds of several

thousand for three nights. In **November** he was found guilty of sedition on the basis of these lectures and bound over against financial sureties by the Amherst District Magistrate.

1911

January Rangoon, Burma Dhammaloka appealed against the sedition conviction before Mr Justice Twomey of the Chief Court, but was unsuccessful. **August** *The Sunday Independent* in **Dublin** printed an account of ‘The Irish Buddhist’ Dhammaloka’s remarkable life drawn ‘from the American press’.

1912

April A letter (probably fake) published in the *Times of Ceylon* and reproduced in the *Bangkok Times and Weekly Mail* reported Dhammaloka’s death from beri-beri in a temperance hotel in **Melbourne, Australia**.

1914

Christian Missionary W. C. Purser in **Burma** wrote that Dhammaloka, though reportedly dead, was alive in **Bangkok** and running the ‘Siam Buddhist Freethought Association’.

Overview of the articles in this issue

Alicia Turner's article in this issue charts U Dhammaloka's time in colonial Burma, focusing on his popularity with Burmese laity as a preacher, his interactions with Rangoon civil society and his conflicts with colonial authorities. During his time in Burma, U Dhammaloka thrived on confrontation; he first gained notoriety for confronting a police officer wearing shoes in a Buddhist pagoda and he never relented in his polemics against Christian missionaries. This article considers what scholars of Buddhism can learn from Dhammaloka's remarkable career. Turner argues that for all the challenges he mounted to the Christian missionaries, middle class Buddhists and the colonial state alike, Dhammaloka poses an equal challenge to contemporary scholars, forcing us to reconsider the motivations and meanings of European Buddhist converts at the turn of the twentieth century. The article considers the multiple modes of perceiving Buddhism and interacting with Buddhists in Asia available to Europeans in the period around 1900, challenging scholars to rethink how the colonial divide might have been reconceived or bridged by these interactions.

Laurence Cox's article is an attempt to track Dhammaloka's mysterious past by drawing on what we do know about the 'public' years from 1900 – 1911. First, it points out that his work within the Buddhist Revival was eminently practical, comparable to that of social movement organisers. For the Buddhist Tract Society alone, Dhammaloka had to mobilise funders, publishers, printers,

amanuenses, translators and distributors. More generally, we find him surrounded by patrons doing everything from paying his train fare to sponsoring his free schools; supporters putting down silk scarves for him to walk on or letting his friends cross borders; and other Buddhists taking part in his ordination ceremonies or indeed being sent out as missionaries.

We also know quite a bit about his organisations and his involvement in other people's organisations. All of this gives us a sense of him as a highly effective organiser, strategically deploying confrontation and polemic, albeit with weaknesses in founding organisations that could outlive him. This begs the question of where he learnt these skills, which are not available to most fifty-somethings previously unknown to history, even to most Buddhist monks.

Secondly, Dhammaloka's Buddhist Tract Society publications provide a wonderful corpus of ideology which should, in principle, enable us to draw links to particular traditions or indeed organisations (and so, perhaps, identify "Dhammaloka before Dhammaloka"). What we find, however, is a highly eclectic selection, characteristic of the self-taught plebeians who made up a significant wing of freethought in the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth century. Tracing such cultures through Ireland, Britain, the USA and Asia we find that many of the same ideas were widely shared by the often migrant figures who populated these worlds.

The article concludes by proposing that Dhammaloka was a graduate of what one observer calls a "Workers' University" – of sociable autodidacts, often with only weak organisational or indeed geographical ties, but reading and debating ferociously – and that it was this heritage that Dhammaloka brought to the Buddhist Revival. If that Revival developed in dialogue with the west, then, it developed not only in dialogue with the dominant west – that of empire and missionary Christianity – but also with the west's internal dissidents: anti-colonial freethinkers who found themselves sufficiently in solidarity with the Revival to "go native", convert and work within Asian contexts and organisations.

Brian Bocking's article documents Dhammaloka's extensive travels outside Burma, in other parts of South and East Asia. It asks why, in the latter half of 1902, Dhammaloka suddenly left Burma to travel to Japan, where he was the only European to give an address at the Tokyo launch of a new 'International Young Men's Buddhist Association' in September of that year. In 1903, Dhammaloka spent six months in Siam, living in a Buddhist wat and attempting to develop a number of projects including a global conference of Buddhists and an international hostel for Buddhists visiting Siam. In Singapore, where Dhammaloka stayed for almost eighteen months from September 1903 to January 1905, he established a Buddhist Mission and free school and conducted the first Pali ordination by a European monk. The article asks how Dhammaloka positioned himself as a campaigning Irish/European Buddhist cleric in relation to

other individuals and institutions in these very different socio-religious contexts, and how he was received and perceived.

The final article in this issue is Thomas Tweed's generous and thought-provoking response to the three papers by Alicia Turner, Laurence Cox and Brian Bocking prepared for the IAHR Panel in Toronto. Tweed's response has been lightly edited for publication, but retains the form of the original. Tweed proposes two directions for this research programme, one methodological and the other theoretical. Methodologically, he points to the value of relativising the biographical component of the research in favour of a broader social history while on the theoretical front, Tweed invites us to explore ways in which Dhammaloka's example would not only complement existing work on the nature of religion but also provide the foundation for a new theory, challenging Tweed's own understanding of translocative religion expounded in his recent work *Crossing and Dwelling*. Tweed's suggestions and guidance following his careful reading of the IAHR papers will undoubtedly benefit our future research and publications on Dhammaloka.

Conclusion

Since two of the three members of the Dhammaloka research group are based in Ireland, where both religion and the academic study of religion have developed in rather distinctive ways, it might not be indulgent to offer some comments on

Dhammaloka's significance in the Irish academic and social context. Within Irish Studies, existing research on relationships between Irish Theosophists and Hinduism –generally thought to be the only significant connection outside the Christian sphere – has already been considerably extended and developed by the discovery of Dhammaloka. It was not only Irish women and men like Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita), James Stephens or Annie Besant who "jumped ship" to become Hindu-identified Indian nationalists; the parallel with Dhammaloka (and other early Irish Buddhists) is remarkable⁴⁶.

Both histories also fit within a broader and significant new tendency in the study of religions in Ireland, exemplified by the work of a University College Cork research team investigating the history of Islam in Ireland,⁴⁷ to resist the ascription of an eternal Catholicism, or eternal Catholic-Protestant opposition, to Irish religious history, and to push the encounters between Ireland and (at least) Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism well back into the 19th century, in Ireland as much as in Asia. In doing this, in highlighting the extent to which Irish people

⁴⁶ Brian Bocking, *Inaugural Lecture* "The Study of Religions in a Smart Society" at University College *Cork*, January 20, 2010; Laurence Cox, "Plebeian Freethought and the Politics of Anti-Colonial Solidarity: Irish Buddhists in Imperial Asia," (paper presented at the 15th International *Alternative Futures and Popular Protest* conference, Manchester Metropolitan University March 30 to April 1, 2010).

⁴⁷ The Principal Investigator for this 2008-2011 research project at UCC funded by the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) and the office of An Taoiseach, is Dr Oliver Scharbrodt, working with Dr Vivian Ibrahim, Dr Adil Khan, and Dr Yafa Shanneik. Details at <http://www.ucc.ie/en/studyofreligions/islamproject/>.

have converted and/or gone native, and in stressing the degree of knowledge of Asian religions within a supposedly monocultural Ireland, the "givenness" of what has hitherto been seen as the only story in Irish religious history for the past fifteen centuries or so (i.e. the Catholic-Protestant divide) is questioned⁴⁸. These perspectives also deconstruct the methodological opposition between, on the one hand, what can best be described as "Little Ireland" studies, in which events beyond the island are of interest only if they immediately and directly impinge on events "at home", and, on the other hand, forms of diaspora studies which treat "the Irish abroad" as a distinct and even timeless ethnic category. Instead, with the work of Piaras MacÉinrí, Robbie McVeigh and others, we can stress the ways in which 'outer' and 'inner' have always been mutually constitutive, and not only with Dhammaloka himself. St Patrick's school in Moulmein, Burma, no doubt shared with the rest of the Irish missionary effort the peculiar situation in which the handful of Irish Catholic missions genuinely aimed at 'the heathen' were forefronted in fundraising and recruitment literature at home, while simultaneously representing a strong Irish ethnocentrism abroad, complained of even by non-Irish religious of the same orders⁴⁹. From the Burmese point of view, too, "outer" and "inner" were not separate: by 1908 the Catholic St Patrick's school had a Buddhist Student Association!

⁴⁸ Cox, "Plebeian Freethought."

⁴⁹ Neil Collins, *The Splendid Cause: The Missionary Society of St. Columban, 1916-1954* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 2009).

Moving beyond the Irish situation, we might re-emphasise the earlier point that the study of western Buddhism has all too often oscillated between organisational genealogy and the history of ideas – both, of course, relatively simple to research but both also liable to take orthodoxy too much at face value. Dhammaloka as the first *vocal* western *bhikkhu* is a useful antidote to this particular research hindrance: he reminds us that dramatically significant individuals can leave no organisational trace, while effective thinkers can be self-taught or draw eclectically on a range of views rather than being reducible to a particular "teacher" or, come to that, a single philosophical perspective. A history of western Buddhism which starts with beach bums rather than with Edwin Arnold, Theosophy or Schopenhauer highlights the extent to which we as scholars tend to construct a western Buddhism in our own image – and not only retrospectively.

Thomas Tweed's response notes that 'Dhammaloka Studies' has led us, as researchers, into a lively and engaging conversation. Much of the merit of this is due to the man Dhammaloka himself. While no early western Buddhist monk was in any sense dull, Dhammaloka has a fascination all his own. As a former migrant worker, radical organiser (perhaps) and beachcomber, he must have found his charm, quick wit, ability to be all things to all people and readiness to seize the moment to be essential survival skills. In the documented period of his life he moved between personas and projects, networked across countries and continents,

conjured up organisations out of smoke and mirrors, mobilised supporters and became a (contested) celebrity. By turns infuriating and charming, untrustworthy and courageous, witty and pious, pompous and confrontational, he can still evoke in researchers today some of the fascination he must have exerted on his own contemporaries. As noted, Dhammaloka was hardly the only early western bhikkhu of whom this can be said, but thanks to his 'ongoing auto-hagiography' in the form of his efforts to promote and publicise himself and his causes, a substantial if scattered textual legacy has remained to be discovered a century later, so that Dhammaloka can at least stand as a fine 'Exhibit A', giving us a sense of what we miss in not knowing more about some of his fellow beachcomber monks, Buddhist sailors and "poor whites gone native".

Finally, since this is a work in progress we actively welcome comments and suggestions for further areas of investigation. Please address your comments to any one of the three researchers: Alicia Turner (turnera@yorku.ca), Laurence Cox (laurence.cox@nuim.ie) or Brian Bocking (b.bocking@ucc.ie).

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