

PRESENT SITUATION OF INDONESIAN BUDDHISM: IN MEMORY OF BHIKKHU ASHIN JINARAKKHITA MAHASTHAVIRA

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I. Ashin Jinarakkhita and the Buddhist Revival in Indonesia

In Java and Sumatra, Buddhist culture flourished from the 5th century to the 15th century. Several Buddhist Kingdoms, like Śrīvijaya, were in existence, and many Buddhist temples such as Candi Borobudur were constructed. However, in the early 15th century, Islam had a foothold in Java and spread in the surrounding areas. By the early 17th century, Islam had been predominant and Buddhism had disappeared on most of the Indonesian islands except in some districts like Bali.

The revival of Buddhism in Indonesia started under colonial rule at the end of the 19th century. Among some groups concerned with it, the Theosophical Society seemed to play the most important role. Even though the effect of the activities of the Society was limited to awakening the interest in Buddhism of the intelligentsias, it made preparations for the forthcoming era. Many people who assumed the leadership in the Buddhist revival after the independence of the Republic of Indonesia had direct or indirect relation with the Society.

Bhikkhu Ashin Jinarakkhita Mahasthavira (Mahathera) was one of those people, and in the future, became the greatest leader. He was the first Indonesian Bhikkhu in modern times, the founder of the first Bhikkhu Sangha in the Republic, and also the symbolic person of contemporary Indonesian Buddhism. It is no exaggeration to say that the revival of Buddhism would not have succeeded without him. Furthermore, we can say that his life overlapped with the history of Indonesian Buddhism in the latter half of the 20th century, and that the peculiarities of modern Indonesian Buddhism originated from him.

The movements of this revival led by Ashin Jinarakkhita have often been reported in *World Buddhism*, an international Buddhist

journal issued in Sri Lanka, since 1952. The first detailed account of modern Indonesian Buddhism, written by Khantipāla, was published in 1971 as a record of the Bhikkhus of Thailand visiting Indonesia in 1970. In 1976, Egaku Mayeda and J.W.M. Bakker respectively published the first scholarly papers on this subject. Since then, Egaku Mayeda [1978], Sasanasurya [1979], Yoneo Ishii [1980, 1984], Heinz Bechert [1981, 1983, 1991] and Iem Brown [1987] have published their research papers. And, although written in the Indonesian language, the first detailed biography of Ashin Jinarakkhita was by Edij Juangari in 1995.

I had the opportunity to meet with Bhikkhu Ashin Jinarakkhita Mahasthavira on three occasions. The first meeting was in November 1997. At that time, he said to me, "It is too late for you to have come. Now I am very old. You should have come here at least five years ago. Then I would have been able to talk more with you." However, he was still in good health and was very busy going around all over the country to spread Buddhism. When I visited him, he said that he had just come back to his temple, Vihara Sakyawanaram in Cipanas, West Java, from East Java to welcome me. I stayed there for one night and also had the honor of seeing his private rooms of prayer. The second meeting took place in March 2001. Unlike the first meeting, he was very silent. Because he had been ill for a few years, he used a wheelchair and seemed to have difficulty in speaking even for just a few words. Yet he received me heartily and spared me some time to ask him questions. The third and final meeting was in April 2002. He could not speak anymore, for he was in his closed coffin when I arrived. And it was his ashes that I last saw.

Bhikkhu Ashin Jinarakkhita Mahasthavira passed away at 7:20 a.m. on the 18th of April 2002. He was 80 years old, and 48 years had passed since he became a Buddhist monk. In memory of him, I will, in this paper, summarize the history of his activities to spread Buddhism and record what he told me regarding them. I will also report the series of his funeral and the present situation of his followers, and mention notable points.¹

¹ In the following parts of this paper, I will simply refer to Bhikkhu Ashin Jinarakkhita Mahasthavira as "Ashin Jinarakkhita" without mentioning the titles of "Bhikkhu" and "Mahasthavira."

II. *Brief Biography of Ashin Jinarakkhita*

A. Before Being Ordained a Bhikkhu

Ashin Jinarakkhita was born on the 23rd of January 1923 in Buitenzorg (Bogor). His name as a layman was Tee Boan An 戴滿安, and he was a Peranakan Chinese.² In his childhood, he was familiar with syncretistic Buddhism with Taoism and Confucianism in traditional Chinese style. He was accustomed to visiting Chinese temples with his family, and praying to several kinds of Buddhas and Chinese Gods with huge candles and joss sticks. He attained a special faith in Avalokiteśvara, which he kept throughout his life.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Buitenzorg was one of the central locations of the revival of Indonesian Buddhism. There was an important branch of the Theosophical Society and also a branch of another group named Java Buddhist Association. In 1934, Bhikkhu Narada Thera of Sri Lanka came to Java at the invitation of the Theosophists and visited Buitenzorg. Buitenzorg was also the native town of Kwee Tek Hoay 郭德懷 who was also a Peranakan Chinese and a non-theosophical leader of the revival of Buddhism before the independence of Indonesia. Kwee Tek Hoay wrote numerous books and articles on Buddhism and Oriental Philosophy. He also founded the association named Sam Kauw Hwe 三教会 for the purpose of unifying and practicing the three religions, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, as the spiritual support of the Peranakan Chinese. It is likely that Tee Boan An deepened his Buddhist faith under the conditions of the city.³

When Tee Boan An was a student at de Technische Hoogeschool de Bandung (Institut Teknologi Bandung), he became a member of the Theosophical Society. He told me that he joined the Society not because he wanted to study Buddhism but because he practiced not eating meat and just wanted to find friends who were vegetarians. As a Theosophist, however, he was awakened to “genuine Buddhism”

² Chinese people living in Indonesia used to be socially divided into two groups, Peranakan and Totok. Generally speaking, Peranakan were locally born Chinese who had Indonesian mothers or grandmothers, and never escaped the cultural influences of Indonesia. On the other hand, most Totok were born in China and adhered to the Chinese culture. For detailed discussion on their definitions, see Willmott [1960: 103-116].

³ For further details of the activities of the Theosophical Society, Java Buddhist Association, Narada Thera and Kwee Tek Hoay, see Ishii [1984: 108-111] and Bechert [1991: 165-166].

which was different from traditional Chinese Buddhism tainted with superstitions. After that, he studied physics and chemistry at Groningen in the Netherlands, and then decided to live a life as an “*Anagarika*,” a homeless follower of the teaching of Buddha. On the difference between a monk and an *Anagarika*, he explained to me that the former must have a teacher and that the latter needs not.⁴

In 1951, Tee Boan An returned to Indonesia. He became a high school teacher in Physics in Jakarta, and was elected vice-chairman of Perhimpunan Pemuda Theosofi Indonesia, or the Association of Young Theosophists. In 1952, he took a leading role in organizing Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia (GSKI), the federation of Sam Kauw Associations in several parts of Indonesia, and was elected the first chairman of GSKI.⁵ On the 22nd of May 1953, the Waisak (Vesaka) ceremony was held by both the Theosophical Society and GSKI at Candi Borobudur, where more than 3,000 people assembled and the Buddhist flag was raised for the first time in the country.

On the 23rd of July 1953, Tee Boan An was ordained a Samanera of the Lin Chi 臨濟 sect of Ch’an 禪 Buddhism under the Chinese Bhikkhu Pen Ching 本清 at Vihara Kong Hoa Sie 廣化寺 in Jakarta and took the name as a monk Ti Chen 體正.

In December 1953, Ti Chen went to Burma to study Buddhism sponsored by Pen Ching.⁶ Although he was a Samanera of Ch’an Buddhism, he did not have any intentions to go to China because he did not speak Chinese. As a matter of fact, he had wished to go to Sri Lanka to study under Bhikkhu Narada whom he was acquainted with. However, he received a visa for Burma and was also advised by the ambassador of Burma in Jakarta to become a disciple of Bhikkhu Ashin Sobhana Mahathera, popularly known as Mahasi Sayadaw. Though Mahasi Sayadaw was known worldwide as the master of Vipassana Meditation, Ti Chen had not known him beforehand. These matters show us that he did not go to Burma with the specific intention of studying Vipassana Meditation. On the 23rd of January 1954, Ti Chen was ordained a Samanera in the manner of Theravada

⁴ On the term “*Anagarika*,” see also Brown [1987: 109].

⁵ Ishii [1980: 264] points out the possibility that Tee Boan An was not the initiator for organizing GSKI, because it was probably founded before the passing of Kwee Tek Hoay in the same year, 1952. However, Ashin Jinarakkhita was emphatic in denying this supposition and affirmed that Kwee Tek Hoay was not related to the organization.

⁶ Although Brown [1987: 109] states that Ashin Jinarakkhita was sponsored by Sam Kauw Hwe for going to Burma, Ashin Jinarakkhita completely denied it.

Buddhism, and, after only a few hours, also a Bhikkhu under five Bhikkhus including Mahasi Sayadaw, who bestowed another name as a monk Ashin Jinarakkhita upon Ti Chen on this occasion.⁷

B. After Being Ordained a Bhikkhu

In December 1954, after attending the third Conference of World Fellowship of Buddhists in Rangoon, Ashin Jinarakkhita returned to Indonesia against his will to study more in Burma at the urgent request of the Buddhists of his homeland. He resigned as chairman of GSKI in order to be impartial to all Buddhists, and devoted himself to traveling around Java and Sumatra to give lectures on Buddhism and to teach meditation. In 1955, Ashin Jinarakkhita founded the Buddhist organization, Persaudaraan Upasaka Upasika Indonesia (PUUI). And in 1956, he organized the Waisak ceremony at Candi Borobudur in celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the Buddhist calendar after the tradition of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

In those days, Ashin Jinarakkhita relocated the center of his missionary work from Bandung to Semarang as requested by the Buddhists in this area.⁸ Since relocating, Semarang became the center of Indonesian Buddhism for several years. In February 1957, he founded another Buddhist lay organization called Perhimpunan Buddhis Indonesia (Perbuddhi) in Semarang⁹ and attended the conference of GSKI as the honorable chairman. By the end of 1957, Ashin Jinarakkhita and his followers had one temple named Vihara Buddha Gaya in the suburbs of Semarang, and another temple, which was scheduled to be completed in February 1958 and named Vihara 2500 in commemoration of the 2500th anniversary of the Buddhist calendar, was under construction near that.¹⁰ In December 1958, the

⁷ Each disciple of Ashin Jinarakkhita follows him by having two names as a monk: one is in Chinese and the other in Pali or Sanskrit language, however the Chinese name is not usually used.

⁸ However, Ashin Jinarakkhita went back to Bandung after some years because of the opposition of some Buddhists in Semarang, and in 1965, again moved to Pacet, Cipanas near Bogor, where he constructed Vihara Sakyawanaram in 1972.

⁹ The members of PUUI are *Upasakas* and *Upasikas*, who are the lay Buddhists receiving the five commandments (*śīla*). On the other hand, any Buddhist who embraces the faith to the three gems without receiving the commandments can be a member of Perbuddhi.

¹⁰ This part is based on the letter, dated on the 14th of November 1957, from PUUI and Indonesian Buddhists for Japanese Buddhists, which is in the custody of The Diplomatic Record Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. This letter shows us that Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Modjokerto and Malang aside from Semarang were the important centers of Buddhism in those days. By the way, the purpose of this letter was to request a presentation of a Buddha statue and some books on Buddhism. In response to this request, Japan Buddhist Federation made a gift of an image of Avalokiteśvara, which was handed to Indonesian Buddhists at Vihara Buddha Gaya, where 60 representatives of Buddhists in 16 areas in the state attended, on the previous day

first conference of Perbuddhi was held at Vihara Buddha Gaya.

In May 1959, Ashin Jinarakkhita invited Narada Mahathera and 6 Bhikkhus from Sri Lanka, Mahasi Sayadaw Mahathera from Burma, 3 Bhikkhus from Thailand and 2 Bhikkhus from Cambodia.¹¹ In the afternoon of the 21st of the month, these 14 Theravada Bhikkhus including Ashin Jinarakkhita assembled at Vihara 2500 in order to form Sangha Sutji Indonesia, which was the first Bhikkhu Sangha in contemporary Indonesia, and also to consecrate the first *Śīmā*, popularly known as International *Śīmā*. In the early morning of the following day, one Peranakan Buddhist was ordained a Bhikkhu at the very *Śīmā*.¹² It was the first ordination of a Bhikkhu in Theravada style after the revival of Buddhism in the state.

In the afternoon of the same day, all Bhikkhus moved to Candi Borobudur to attend the international Waisak ceremony, which was proposed by Ashin Jinarakkhita and held by both PUUI and Perbuddhi. At the ceremony, one Mahayana Bhikkhu from Japan was also invited because of Ashin Jinarakkhita's belief that all Buddhists are brothers without distinction of sects and denominations. There was also the presence of ambassadors of foreign countries like Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, India and Turkey as well as the representatives of the national government and military. It was recorded that 50 to 60 thousand people assembled there.¹³

The series of these events was epoch-making in spreading Buddhism. The articles in papers and magazines playing up to these events made the existence of Buddhists in Indonesia acknowledged to the country. They also propagated the fact that Buddhism was a world religion like Islam and that a Buddhist was never "a stupid one (*bodoh*)" as people supposed. These changes of the image caused many people to convert to Buddhism. Moreover, according to Ashin Jinarakkhita, it made the descendants of old Javanese Buddhists, who observed the unique belief handed down from their forefathers secretly, dismiss the doubt that he was a Muslim missionary pretending to be a Buddhist. Consequently, the crypto-Buddhists

of the first conference of Perbuddhi in 1958, according to an official letter from the Japanese Ambassador to Indonesia to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

11 Ashin Jinarakkhita did not invite Bhikkhus from Laos because he could not make contact with them.

12 This *Śīmā* was removed after a single use.

13 The number of the attendants is based on the diary of the invited Japanese Bhikkhu. According to Ishii [1984: 112], a Burmese Bhikkhu also wrote that as many as 60,000 people attended the ceremony.

made profession of their belief all together, which gave an impression to the public that they made a mass conversion to Buddhism.

In June 1959, after the glorious Waisak ceremony, Theravada Bhikkhus went around Indonesia and performed the ordination of the third Indonesian Bhikkhu in Bali. However, the next two Indonesians were ordained Bhikkhus in Thailand in 1966,¹⁴ and other one in Sri Lanka in 1967. After that, the Bhikkhus of Thailand visited Indonesia to administer ordinations several times. Though in the beginning, as Heinz Bechert points out, Sri Lanka and Burma had played the leading parts in the missions, now Thailand came to the fore.¹⁵

The newly ordained Indonesian Bhikkhus joined Sangha Sutji Indonesia, which was renamed Maha Sangha Indonesia in 1963 for the reason that, according to Ashin Jinarakkhita, they were not “*sutji*,” sacred. In 1974, it was again renamed Sangha Agung Indonesia following a request of the government to express the name in the Indonesian language.

III. *The Thought of Buddhayana*

A. Unity in the Diversity of Buddhism

Since returning from Burma in 1954, Ashin Jinarakkhita had intended to form an inclusive Buddhism accepting all of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana. He said that any tradition of Buddhism has some supreme points because all of them follow the teachings of Buddha, and that there is no distinction among the doctrines of Buddhism. Thus, he did not exclude any thoughts or practices of all sects and denominations of Buddhism, and he preached sermons to any people impartially at their request. Soon, his followers started to refer to his thought as “Buddhayana.” This term has been officially used since 1979, when the association of his followers was named Majelis Buddhayana Indonesia (MBI).

We may say that one of the reasons why he had such a standpoint lays in his Buddhist career. He was, as we have seen, a monk of both Theravada and Mahayana. He studied the thoughts of original Buddhism based on the academic inquiry as a Theosophist, while growing up in the circumstance of syncretistic Chinese Buddhism.

¹⁴ It was reported in *Star Weekly* (1967.5) p. 293. The article also stated that there were 55 Viharas in Indonesia at that time.

¹⁵ Bechert [1991: 169]

These experiences caused him to have the idea that there is no "pure" Buddhism and that it is most important to be a disciple of Buddha.

Moreover, we can be fairly certain that it was with this viewpoint that Ashin Jinarakkhita was able to spread Buddhism and to make it take root in the state. The reason for it was that Buddhists in Indonesia had several backgrounds in their faith: someone accustomed to syncretistic Chinese Buddhism, someone who still believed in mystic old Javanese Buddhism, and someone attracted to the contemporary missions and newly converted into Buddhism, etc. If Ashin Jinarakkhita had adhered to some particular ground, he would have failed in bringing all Buddhists together and in reviving Buddhism in the Republic where Buddhists were just minorities. Ashin Jinarakkhita said, "This is Indonesian Buddhism. We need not be limited to accepting only the doctrine and practice of any particular sect and denomination." From this comment, we can see his pride as an Indonesian and also his strong will to create a new Buddhist culture appropriate for his mother country.

Because of the thought of Buddhayana, Sangha Agung Indonesia has some particular features. This Sangha has sub-Sanghas of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana, to one of which each monk belongs according to his choice.¹⁶ Monks wear Buddhist robes and observe the rules based on each denomination, and they perform practices and rituals in the traditional styles of their own denominations. Furthermore, some monks have been to Southeast Asian countries to study Theravada, some to China for Mahayana and some to Tibet for Vajrayana. However, there is no barrier or friction among the sub-Sanghas, and all sub-Sanghas stand on equal footings in this Sangha. Monks of different sub-Sanghas stay at the same Vihara, engage in missionary work together and often attend the same ceremonies.¹⁷

Therefore, it would be inaccurate to say that, as often understood, Buddhayana is the syncretistic form of Theravada. It should instead be expressed as the united form of all Buddhism. Certainly, as I mentioned earlier, Ashin Jinarakkhita himself was ordained as a Theravada Bhikkhu, and he invited only Theravada Bhikkhus for the

¹⁶ Every nun in this Sangha belongs to the sub-Sangha of Mahayana.

¹⁷ They perform a ritual not in a mixed manner of some denominations but in the traditional manner of one. Monks of a particular denomination administer the ritual with monks of other denominations attending.

Bhikkhu ordination in 1959. The constitution of the Sangha was made on the model of a Sangha of Theravada, and a majority of lay Buddhists say that Theravada is most attractive because of the simplicity of its doctrine.¹⁸ In spite of these matters, Theravada is now just one part of Buddhayana.

We can easily find several influences of Mahayana, or to put it more precisely, Chinese Buddhism on Buddhayana. By looking straight into the centers of main halls of several Viharas, one can see the statues of Tathāgatas Śākyamuni, Amitābha and Bhaiṣajyaguru enshrined. There are some Viharas where some deities of Mahayana and sacred images of Vajrayana also rest in addition to them. Many Peranakan Buddhists have the special faith in Avalokiteśvara or Amitābha. They are familiar with rituals in Mahayana style, in which they read Mahayana *sūtras* and *dhāraṇīs* in Chinese translation and also chant the name of Avalokiteśvara or Amitābha.

However, as Iem Brown points out, it is also the truth that Buddhayana has tended to lose its folk-religious elements, or at least some of its “Chinese-ness,” and to adopt a more clearly recognizable form of Buddhism, with the efforts of Ashin Jinarakkhita in particular.¹⁹ This tendency was accelerated by the situation that Peranakan people were estranged from Chinese language and culture because of the restriction of using them in public imposed by the government of President Soeharto. As a result of this, people who do not understand the meaning of Mahayana texts written in Chinese have rapidly increased and have also begun using Pali and Sanskrit terms for expressing concepts of Buddhism.²⁰

Moreover, in visiting most Viharas, we rarely see the lighting of huge candles and joss sticks in daily prayers, and burning toy money, furniture and a house made of paper at funeral ceremonies, which Chinese people, who called themselves “Buddhists,” were previously accustomed to.²¹ People are unanimous in declaring that these are just superstitions without any Buddhist meaning, and that giving a

¹⁸ Another reason why they are attracted to Theravada is that the teaching of Theravada is usually taught in Buddhist classes at schools, where students are required to attend the classes of the authorized religions which they belong to.

¹⁹ Brown [1987: 111]

²⁰ In around 1980, the traditional Chinese names of old temples were replaced or supplemented by other names in Pali or Sanskrit language.

²¹ There are exceptions among some old temples, such as Vihara Dharma Bhakti in Jakarta, built in the 17th century, where these traditional customs still exist.

donation to the poor is much more significant than wasting money on these customs. They go on to say that they intend to root out these old customs though it has not been accomplished because of the opposition of some old people. Here we can appreciate the realization of the strong aim of Ashin Jinarakkhita to propagate that Buddhism is not a Chinese folk religion but a universal one, and to spread the teaching of Buddha with great stress on the precepts and the major doctrines such as *karman* and *pratīyasamutpāda* to all Indonesian people.

When I asked followers of Buddhayana about what the attractive points of Buddhism were, they gave several answers, such as the greatness of the practice of meditation and of the spirit of compassion, among which the following two replies were noteworthy.²² One response was the teaching of *karman* connected with the law of causality, which was pointed out by more than half of the followers. They said that it was quite rational and understandable without any contradiction to modern science. This answer was certainly based on the propagation of Buddhayana that the teaching of *karman* is the central thought of Buddhism. The other noteworthy reply was the precept that one should depend not on others but on one's own self, which was stressed by people who were associated with other religions. They said that the teaching of Buddhism does not force the followers to do anything in their daily lives except to observe the five commandments, practicing meditation and regularly visiting Viharas. Thus, they appreciated that Buddhism has the most respect for the autonomy of its followers. In both of these replies, we can see the intellectual aspects of their Buddhist faith.

On the other hand, it is also interesting to note that the belief in Sai Baba in India has widely spread among them. It was apparently the result of the declaration by Ashin Jinarakkhita that Sai Baba was his "*Guru*." He said that the pain in his legs, from which he had suffered for some years, had disappeared since he met Sai Baba in 1984. This story reminded people of the previous activities of Ashin Jinarakkhita: Many people have experienced his supernatural power for a healing, though Ashin Jinarakkhita himself denied it, and it became one of the important factors in converting them to be his

²² I questioned about 70 people including Bhikkhus at Vihara Ekayana Grha in Jakarta in March 2002.

followers.²³ It seems reasonable to suppose that their acceptance of these beliefs was supported by the traditional Javanese mysticism popularly known as “*Kebatinan*,” particularly an inveterate belief in magical cures. Here, we recognize an instance of the syncretism between Buddhism and a traditional religion, which also contributed to the spread of Buddhism.

B. Acceptance of Ādi Buddha and Schism of the Sangha

The most distinguishing feature of the doctrine of Buddhayana is the concept of Ādi Buddha. This was introduced by Ashin Jinarakkhita for the purpose of proving that Buddhists follow the five fundamental principles of the Republic of Indonesia called “*Pancasila*.” The principle in question is the first principle, “*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*,” that is “Belief in One Supreme God.” It became a political issue particularly after the attempted coup on the 30th of September 1965, which has been said to have been staged by communists. The government banned communism and identified an atheist as being a communist who did not believe in God. In consequence, the entire nation was obligated to be a follower of one of the authorized religions with “Belief in God.”²⁴

Ashin Jinarakkhita declared that Indonesian Buddhism has never been atheistic since ancient times because Ādi Buddha is mentioned as One Supreme God in an old Buddhist canon discovered in Java named *Sang Hyang Kamahāyānikan*.²⁵ He stressed that God of Buddhism is not the creator of the world unlike God of Islam and Christianity. It is also explained that Ādi Buddha is *Dharma-kāya* Buddha and the symbol of the energy of primary Buddha, whose

²³ Mr. Edij Juangari, the author of a biography of Ashin Jinarakkhita, a personal communication in Jakarta in March 2001.

²⁴ There are now five authorized religions in Indonesia: Islam, Catholic, Protestant, Buddhism and Hinduism.

²⁵ It is not sure when Ashin Jinarakkhita realized the necessity to deal with the problem of “Belief in God” in Buddhism, although Ishii [1984: 113] points out that he accepted the concept of Ādi Buddha before the coup, at the latest in May 1965. Regarding this question, it is interesting to note the first Presidential decree in 1965, which was issued on the 27th of January 1965. By this decree, it was prohibited under penalty to proclaim such opinions or to perform such activities as an act of hostility toward the religions believed in Indonesia, an abuse of them and an affront to them, intentionally in public, in order to get one not to believe any religion which is based on the principle “*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*.” According to an official report of the Japanese Ambassador to Indonesia, it was said that the actual purpose of this decree was to prevent the further succession of troubles between Muslims and Communists in those days, and that the decree would be favorable to Muslims. However, if Buddhism had been regarded as the thought without “Belief in God” like Communism, propagating Buddhism would have had a strong possibility to be understood as prohibited activity. Thus, it is likely that Ashin Jinarakkhita made it urgent to start the preparation for his defense.

manifestation is the law taught by Śākyamuni. However, as a matter of fact, there is no evidence of Ādi Buddha being regarded as God in the original text, and Ādi Buddha has no doctrinal grounds in old Javanese Buddhism. As already pointed out, it was Ashin Jinarakkhita and his followers who invented Ādi Buddha as God, and they justified it on the basis of the teaching of later Tantric Buddhism in India.²⁶

Nevertheless, the concept of Ādi Buddha had planted its roots deeply, and played an important role as a symbol of Buddhayana uniting all doctrines of Buddhism. Theoretically, for example, five Tathāgatas of Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha and Amogha are explained, on the basis of the description of the *Sang Hyang Kamahāyānikan*, as the manifestations of Ādi Buddha expressing its particular aspects.²⁷ Practically, on the other hand, people should express, at the beginning of every ceremony, their devotion to Ādi Buddha three times in the formula “*Namo Sang Hyang Ādi Buddhāya*” followed by “*Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsabuddhassa, Namō sarve Bodhisattvāya Mahāsattvāya.*” And, in visiting Viharas, they pray to Śākyamuni and other Buddhas facing their images enshrined in the main hall, and also pray facing the sky with their backs to the hall. This is the manner of worship of Ādi Buddha, because its image is not, and probably will not be, made.

However, all Buddhists in Indonesia have not agreed to accept the concept of Ādi Buddha. Some monks in particular, who have studied Theravada in foreign countries, obstinately rejected its acceptance because it is apparently contradictory to the doctrine of Theravada. And yet, they could also not avoid the principle of “*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa.*” Thus, they interpreted the term “*Ketuhanan*” not as “Belief in God” but as “Divinity,” which is another meaning of it, and declared that “*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*” or “One Supreme Divinity” for Theravada is the absolute and unconditioned “*Nibbāna.*”

These days, the theoretical leaders of Buddhayana explain that Ādi Buddha, which is the transcendental reality or the formless and impersonal Absolute, is the same concept as “*Nibbāna*” of Theravada.²⁸ It is clear that this explanation follows the consensus

²⁶ For detailed discussion on the concept of Ādi Buddha, see Brown [1987: 111-115].

²⁷ According to Ishii [1995: 7], it is described in the *Sang Hyang Kamahāyānikan* that five Tathāgatas emanated from the ultimate reality symbolized by “*Diwarūpa,*” or the thing having shine as its nature, which is to be personalized as *Bhaṭāra Hyang Buddha*, or the Lord Buddha. In the doctrine of Buddhayana, this “*Diwarūpa*” is understood as Ādi Buddha.

²⁸ Dr. Parwati Soepangat, a Member of the Central Board of Majelis Buddhayana Indonesia

reached at the Buddhist Congress in Indonesia in 1979, which both the followers of Ashin Jinarakkhita and his opponents attended: All Buddhist Sects of Indonesia may refer to “*Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*” with different names which, in essence, are one and the same.²⁹

In spite of this resolution, Ashin Jinarakkhita himself did not seem to acquiesce to it. He insisted that the concept of “*Nibbāna*” was not satisfactory for the governmental request for “God.” He also affirmed to me, “I accepted the concept of Ādi Buddha for the safety of Buddhism.” These words suggest that his acceptance of Ādi Buddha was, at least in the beginning, not for religious reasons but thoroughly for political reasons. Moreover, considering the political background in 1960s such as the relationship between China and the Indonesian Communists as the so-called leaders of the coup, it appears obvious that Ashin Jinarakkhita was determined to obey the principle of “Belief in God” by all means in order to steer clear of the authoritative oppression on Buddhism in which many Chinese people in the country believed. Therefore, Ashin Jinarakkhita, who probably thought that Buddhism would not have been authorized without the concept of Ādi Buddha, must have had great difficulty in understanding the people of Theravada adhering to the pureness of the doctrine. It was impressive to me that he talked about only this matter in a severe tone although he spoke gently during all my interviews.

Certainly there were some other conflicting points between Ashin Jinarakkhita and his opponents. For instance, the antagonists reproached Ashin Jinarakkhita for the acceptance of characters of Mahayana Buddhism in spite of his position as a Theravada Bhikkhu. Regarding this charge, Ashin Jinarakkhita responded that he could not eliminate the Buddhist beliefs of the people of Chinese origin living in Indonesia, and that he could not forsake his faith in Avalokiteśvara which he had been accustomed to since his childhood. Yet, the conflict of opinions on the problem of “*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*” made the discord between them definitely fixed. Some Theravada Bhikkhus at last resigned from the Sangha led by Ashin Jinarakkhita, and established a separate Sangha named Sangha Theravada Indonesia in 1976.

On the other hand, the third Sangha named Sangha Mahayana

(MBI), and Dr. Krishnanda Wijaya Mukti, a Secretary of MBI, personal communications respectively in Bandung and in Jakarta in March 2001.

²⁹ Ishii [1984: 114]

Indonesia was also formed by Bhikkhu Dharmasagara, who was first ordained under Ashin Jinarakkhita and again ordained in Mahayana style in Hong Kong, in 1978. This Sangha has been supported by the people of Chinese origin, who have not familiarized themselves with "Theravada" of Ashin Jinarakkhita. They formally declare their belief in Tathāgata as God and intend to follow the genuine style of Mahayana.³⁰

Thus, the Bhikkhu Sangha in Indonesia was divided into three, among which Sangha Agung Indonesia has been largest. And accordingly, followers of Buddhism in the country are now split into seven groups: Buddhayana, Theravada, Mahayana, Kasogatan which is a group of followers of old Javanese Buddhism, Maitreya, Nichiren which is a new Japanese Buddhist sect popularly known as "Sōkagakkai," and Tridharma which was formerly known as GSKI.³¹ These three Bhikkhu Sanghas and seven Buddhist fraternities banded together to organize Perwalian Umat Buddha Indonesia (WALUBI), or the Buddhist Council of Indonesia, in obedience to the authoritative intention to resolve the conflicts among Buddhists in the Republic in May 1979.

However, some original members including Sangha Agung Indonesia thereafter withdrew from WALUBI because of, according to them, the transformation of the association caused by several reasons foreign to Buddhist faith. In 1998, three Sanghas again banded together to form Konferensi Agung Sangha Indonesia (KASI), or the Conference of Sanghas in Indonesia, and Ashin Jinarakkhita was honored by KASI with the title of the pioneer Bhikkhu of the revival of Buddhism in Indonesia. The harmonious and peaceful co-existence of three Bhikkhu Sanghas had been attained.

IV. *Toward the Future Generations*

A. The Funeral Ceremony of Ashin Jinarakkhita

After breathing his last on the 18th of April 2002, the remains of Ashin Jinarakkhita in a posture of meditation was moved from the hospital to Vihara Ekayana Grha in Jakarta, and placed in a coffin on the night of that day. His coffin, whose lid was closed in the morning

³⁰ Sangha Mahayana Indonesia also shows a tendency to remove the folk-religious elements of Chinese, and their manner is more radical than that of Sangha Agung Indonesia.

³¹ For detailed information of these groups, see Bechert [1991: 174-175].

of the next day, rested there for 7 days, and received approximately 40,000 callers for condolence including the former President of Indonesia Abdurrahman Wahid, Vice President Hamzah Haz and the Heads of other authorized religions. On the 26th, the coffin left Jakarta for Bandar Lampung in Sumatra, where some 15,000 people gathered to pay their last respects to him, and in the morning of the 28th, his remains were cremated. On the following day, his disciples with the ashes of Ashin Jinarakkhita returned to Jakarta. They performed a funeral ceremony at Vihara Kong Hoa Sie, where he was first ordained, and, after that, moved to Vihara Sakyawanaram in Cipanas, which was the center of his activity in the latter half of his life, for another ceremony. His ashes were, thereafter, enshrined in Vihara Sakyawanaram, and ceremonies were held every 7 days until the 5th of June, which was the 49th day after his passing.³²

In this part of this paper, I shall concentrate my attention on four notable points concerning the series of these ceremonies, which seem indicative of the thought of Ashin Jinarakkhita and also the recent situation of the followers of Buddhayana.

First, as I said before, the remains of Ashin Jinarakkhita were moved to Sumatra only for cremation. It was in conformity with his will, and the grounds of this request are noteworthy. To perform all ceremonies for his funeral only in Jakarta where most Buddhists were of Chinese origin, would have given an impression that the Buddhism spread by Ashin Jinarakkhita was a religion for Chinese people. And if such an impression had been left, the ideal of Buddhayana would have been destroyed, and followers of Buddhayana belonging to several ethnic groups would have disunited. For the purpose of avoiding these risks, the most important ceremony, or the cremation, had to be held in Sumatra where many descendants of old Javanese Buddhists kept their Buddhist faith.³³ That is to say, Ashin Jinarakkhita paid attention to averting the schism even after his passing. To put it another way, he was aware that there was always the possibility of division among the followers of Buddhayana.

Secondly, on the contrary, the series of ceremonies were mainly performed in Mahayana style, or to put it concretely, in Ch'an style. Although monks of Theravada and Vajrayana also took part in them

32 The numbers of the callers are based on the announcement by Vihara Ekayana Grha.

33 Bhikkhu Aryamaitri Sthavira, Anu Maha Nayaka of Sangha Agung Indonesia, a personal communication in Jakarta in April 2002.

conducting recitation in their own manner, monks of Mahayana officiated as priests at all of the important ceremonies. At the memorial services practiced four times a day until the day of cremation, the *Mahā Karuṇā Dhāraṇī*, the *Prajñāpāramitā Hrdaya Sūtra*, the *Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra* and the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* in Chinese translation were recited. The chanting of the name of Amithābha in Sanskrit pronunciation was also repeated at every occasion. One of the reasons for this course may have been that the ceremonies were totally organized by Vihara Ekayana Grha in Jakarta, whose chief abbot is Bhikkhu Aryamaitri Sthavira of Mahayana. Beside this, we can suppose that it reflected the present situation of Sangha Agung Indonesia, in which the peculiarities of Chinese Buddhism may have increased.

Thirdly, in passing, the recitations of the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* in his memorial services were in accordance with the will of Ashin Jinarakkhita. Although nobody knows the exact reason why he desired its recitation, it is certain that this request was based on his career as a monk of Ch'an Buddhism. One possibility is to assume that the sympathy with the teaching of Mahayana, especially the doctrine of *śūnyatā* taught in the text had been the core of his Buddhist belief, though he usually said that all denominations of Buddhism were the same and had never expressed which denomination he was most attracted to. Another possibility is that his last wish was the reflection of his veneration for his first master, Bhikkhu Pen Ching.

Finally, the followers of Ashin Jinarakkhita had already begun to idealize him. His followers, who saw the pieces of his relics with slight difference of their color, said that they had seven colors like those of a rainbow. They found the cause of this "miracle" in his practice throughout his whole life, which made Ashin Jinarakkhita a person with special power or ability. Certainly, as I said before, people have had the belief in Ashin Jinarakkhita in life with his supernatural power, yet his idealization, or his deification, will further increase with the lapse of time.

B. Problems Left to His Successors

The timing of Ashin Jinarakkhita's life was not desirable for spreading Buddhism. Especially during the Soeharto administration, it is said that political influence was often inconspicuously exercised on

Buddhists to convert to Islam. In recent years, although official restrictions have become relaxed, conflicts between Muslims and believers of other religions have occurred in succession. And in 1998, a serious riot broke out in Jakarta and many people of Chinese origin, the majority of who were Buddhists, were attacked.³⁴ Under these situations, Buddhist people are now required to pay more serious attention to avoid any friction with Muslims. Therefore, they are not active in engaging in missionary work to convert other people to Buddhism, and consequently, the number of Buddhists has stopped increasing. In spite of these circumstances, Ashin Jinarakkhita succeeded in the revival of Buddhism with his strong personality and his unswerving intention to create "Indonesian Buddhism." Moreover, we can say that it was his presence that enabled Buddhists of several types of belief to band together.

Now, Ashin Jinarakkhita, who was familiarly addressed as "*Sukong*" by his followers,³⁵ has left this world, and nobody will be able to take his place. I entertain some uncertainties about the future of Buddhayana, and suppose that there would be at least three problems remaining to be solved in order to keep the unity of its followers.

The first problem is the further maintenance of the harmony of Bhikkhus belonging to different sub-Sanghas. Because Ashin Jinarakkhita was the founder of the Sangha and the master of most Bhikkhus of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana, all of them acknowledged him as the one and only leader of the Sangha without any objections. Every successor, on the other hand, must be elected from one of three sub-Sanghas, and the elections of the leaders would be of concern to the scramble for leadership among the Sangha. If struggles for leadership happen, and if the elected leaders force the styles of their denominations on the Bhikkhus of other sub-Sanghas, the union of the Sangha would be lost.

The second problem is the completeness of the removal of the folk-religious elements, especially the "Chinese-ness," from the Buddhist faith. However, on the contrary, there may be a possibility of its revival, because the use of the Chinese language and culture in

34 Every Vihara in the country fortunately sustained no damage by the riot.

35 The original meaning of the term "*Sukong* 師公" is a master's master, and it is originally addressed by the disciples of his disciples. However, most people, without knowing it, use the term with the meaning of "a grand uncle."

public has been widely permitted since the fall of the Soeharto administration. If the people of Chinese origin intend to recover the style of the faith of their ancestors, a great gap would develop between their Buddhist faith and that of other ethnic people. It would cause the disunion among the followers of Buddhayana, which was something Ashin Jinarakkhita was very concerned and worried about until his passing.

The final problem is the establishment of the scientific and consistent doctrine of Buddhayana for uniting the teachings of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana. They have not been fully expounded, and some of them seem to be hardly acceptable from academic viewpoints. Nevertheless, there was little problem with this while Ashin Jinarakkhita was alive. The reason for it was that his words were regarded as the best authorities of Buddhayana even if they might contain erroneous opinions, and that most of his followers were not probably aware of the differences among the teachings of several Buddhist denominations, since he always stressed that all Buddhism is one and the same. However, his passing will change the situation. For the purpose of the further spread of Buddhayana, the importance of its unquestionable doctrine will increase. Besides, when Buddhist studies in the country attain a higher level, the differences among several teachings will become more clearly and more popularly acknowledged, and consequently, the construction of the doctrinal grounds of their unity will become more necessary.

In order to solve these problems, the spirit of Ashin Jinarakkhita should be again remembered. He said that the meritorious point of Buddhism lies in its flexibility. This means that Buddhism puts "no pressure" on other religions, and that Buddhists should not interfere in another person's faith and practice. In other words, the people following Buddhism should have respect for the autonomy both of their own and of other people. However, Ashin Jinarakkhita asserted that he was not satisfied with the state of Buddhism and the practice of Buddhists in the country. He emphasized that a mere understanding of the teaching of Buddha without practice is of no importance and meaning.

He also expressed that the most important things were "Truth" and "Love," both of which are the same and one in the final analysis. According to him, all people should have the aspiration for these things, or *bodhicitta*, and practice the teachings of Buddha for the

acquirement of them in their daily lives. And it is the same with the respect for the autonomy. When one respects the autonomy of other people, the person would lose one's own ego and gain compassion for all other people, or Universal Love, which is the same with Truth. In doing everything with Love and Truth, the person would be separated from all afflictions and attain peace.

It is no exaggeration that the history of Buddhism for over 2000 years has been the history of the schism of the sects and denominations. However, Ashin Jinarakkhita offered a challenge to the opposite goals: He commenced a grand experiment to unify all Buddhist thoughts and practices. Its success would effect the realization of "Indonesian Buddhism" and the maintenance of the harmonious co-existence of his successors. Moreover, it would be a forerunner of the unity of all Buddhists of several types of faith and practices in the world. Ashin Jinarakkhita has passed away, and I expect that his ideal of Buddhayana will survive not only in his motherland but all over the world.

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