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AN ACCOUNT OF THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM IN  
NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA

By Graeme Lyaall

Although the earliest evidence of Buddhist influence in  
Australia is shrouded in mystery, Paul Croucher (1)

suggests that the most likely arrival of the first Buddhists in this continent may have been with the armada of Cheng Ho in the 15th century. The Ming dynasty emperors took a keen interest in exploration and several of their ships are known to have been in the vicinity of Arnhem land around the early 1400's. In 1879, a statuette of a soapstone image was unearthed one metre under a Banyan tree near Darwin. Professor Geoffrey Blainey claims, however, that soapstone would not have survived 400 years and so the statue must be of more recent origin. If this were true, why was it buried so deeply? In the 1800's, especially during the gold rush time, many Chinese people arrived in Australia. Whether any of them were practising Buddhists or perhaps more motivated by greed is unknown. Certainly, the 1800's saw the first establishment of, so called, "Joss Houses" on Australian soil. Two such joss houses are still in operation in Sydney - one at Glebe and the other at Alexandria. Klaas de Jong revealed in his booklet, "A Short Account of the Spread of Southern Buddhism in Australia and Queensland in Particular" (2), that a group of Sri Lankans arrived in Mackay, Queensland, on board the ship, "Devonshire", on November 16th, 1882. There is evidence that many of these early migrants were Buddhists, but as de Jong noted:

'Pressure from the Christian establishment of the day must have been strong. Within twenty years after their arrival, most if not all those that were still alive had been converted. If some older folk remained Buddhists at heart, their children apparently did not.'

At least one family did not succumb to such pressures - that of the Mendis family, who are currently one of Brisbane's leading jewellers and have incorporated the distribution of Buddhist literature as part of their business. The Mendis family established the Brisbane Buddhist Vihara and currently supported its resident monk, the Venerable Shanti Bhadra.

Six years prior to the arrival of the Sri Lankans in Mackay, there was a Buddhist temple on Thursday Island, the northernmost tip of Australia. Klaas de Jong reports that some five hundred Sri Lankans were involved. They were engaged in the pearl trade and they erected a small temple and planted a Bodhi tree. Although remnants of this temple are reputed to have been incorporated into the present post office, the Bodhi tree, apparently, is still thriving.

In the book, "Path to Righteousness" (3), a collection of a series of articles by Anagarika Dhammapala, originally published in the Maha-Bodhi Journal' between 1892 and 1900, it is reported that a Dr. Worthington formed a group called "Students of Truth" which regarded themselves as 'Christian Buddhists'. This group, apparently, had branches on mainland Australia as well as Tasmania and even extending to New Zealand. At that time, there was much hostility from the Christian churches to any favourable mention of Buddhism, let alone its practise. In 1897, a Victorian newspaper, 'The Healsville Guardian' published an article in defence of Buddhism, which resulted in a threatened boycott of the

paper by several Christian ministers. Also in the 1880's, a South Australian newspaper published a long and, reportedly, interesting article on Buddhism which was later reprinted in the New South Wales rural newspaper, 'The Albury Banner'. This article invited the wrath of a Wesleyan minister and much published debate ensued. Anagarika Dhammapala further relates an insulting, unfair and distorted article appearing in a fortnightly Baptist periodical which, he claims, was "full of gross misrepresentations, evidently written out of vindictive malice." A politely worded reply to the editor, pointing out the errors in the article was, not surprisingly, never published. The earliest documented visits to Australia of members of the Sangha has recently been unearthed by Paul Croucher. He reports that Venerable U Sasana Dhaja, an English monk, ordained in Burma, toured Australia in 1910. It was not the first time that I had encountered his name. A few years ago, whilst on a visit to the home of the Founding President of the Buddhist Society of New South Wales, Leo Berkeley, I was shown a Buddha image which was reputedly more than four hundred years old. Mr. Berkeley said that a lady, not a member of the Buddhist Society, had asked him to accept it from her, as she claimed that, whilst it was in her possession, it had brought her bad luck. Had she been familiar with the teachings of the Buddha, perhaps she may have realised that the 'bad luck' was more likely due to her Karma vipaka than to any inherent properties of the image itself. However, accompanying the image was a yellowed document which stated that the image was brought to Australia by 'Venerable U Sasana Dhaja, monk of the order of the yellow robe from Le-Gyun-Man-Lung Monastery Pagoda, Thantabar, Sagaing Hills, Upper Burma.' Apparently, this Venerable U Sasana Dhaja was somewhat of a shady character. He was one of the first Englishmen to take the robe, but, apparently, was still a Christian at heart. Paul quotes some of his utterances which were reported in the newspapers of that time as: "Buddhism is a system of mental development just as a gymnasium is a system of physical development" consequently "a man can be a Christian and yet live the life of a Buddhist monk as naturally as a man can be a student and a gymnast simultaneously." On another occasion he stated that although the Buddha was the Light of Asia, Christ was still the Light of the World. He supported himself during his tour by selling, apparently, an unlimited number of supposedly 700 year old alabaster Buddha images. It is one of these images which is currently in the possession of Leo Berkeley. Despite its doubtful authenticity, it is, indeed, a very beautiful image.

In 1915, five Buddhist monks of German origin arrived in Sydney. They were part of a consignment of foreign internees sent from Sri Lanka for imprisonment in Australia. As most readers would know, England and its colonies were at war with Germany at that time. One of these monks was a former world famous violinist, Anton Gueth, who as Venerable Nyanatiloka, was one of the greatest pioneers of western Buddhism. His student, another German monk, Nyanaponika, together with his master, Nyanatiloka, have passed on to us, a wealth of learned books on the Dharma.

It was during the 1940's in Sydney, whilst studying books on non-Christian religions, that Marie Byles became intensely interested in Buddhism, and no account of its development would be complete if her contribution were ignored. Marie Beuzeville Byles was born in 1900 into a Christian family in England. At the age of eleven years, she migrated with her family to Australia. She was one of the first women to graduate as a solicitor from the University of Sydney and, certainly the first to set up practice after graduation. The 'Sydney Morning Herald', of November 24th, 1979, in her obituary observed that:

'She became a legendary figure, winning achievement as mountaineer, explorer and author.'

She wrote at least six books, four of which were on Buddhist topics. 'World Buddhism', vol.5, No.1, 1956, a publication of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, reports: 'Miss Marie Byles, who spent a short holiday and study tour in Ceylon after a trip to the Himalayas for meditation purposes, is now writing a book on "The Human Aspect of the Buddha's Life" for publication shortly.'

She spent the year 1954 in North India researching this book which was eventually published under the title of "Footprints of Gautama the Buddha". Marie gave many talks to the Theosophical Society in Sydney, as well as broadcasting on their regular Sunday night programme on Radio Station, 2GB. She also preached Dhamma at the Unitarian Church in Sydney. Marie disliked participation in organised groups, preferring to study and meditate in a hut in the garden of her Cheltenham (a Sydney suburb) home. She was a pacifist, naming her home 'Ahimsa' and the meditation hut, 'The Hut of Happy Omen'. Since her death, the home and garden have been given to the people of Sydney as a quiet retreat. It is currently administered by the National Trust.

Leo Berkeley, a Dutchman by birth, who had spent the war years in England, later migrated, with his family, to Australia. Early in 1952, whilst on a ship returning to England for a visit, he met Sir Lalita Rajapakse, the then Sri Lankan Minister of Justice. Sir Lalita was returning to Colombo after attending a Commonwealth Conference in New Zealand. The two became acquainted and, as Sir Lalita was a very devout Buddhist, it seemed inevitable that their daily conversation would turn to Buddhism. Sir Lalita recited to Leo the Dhammapada verse:

"By ourselves is evil done; by ourselves we pain endure.  
By ourselves we cease from ill; by ourselves become we pure.

No one can save us but ourselves, no one can and no one may.

We ourselves must walk the Path, Buddhas only point the way."

Which caused Leo Berkeley to observe:

I was very much impressed by this wisdom because I always had believed that we ourselves create our life and our destiny. I said: "Sir, please tell me a little more about the Teaching of the Buddha". His answer was: "My good friend, I'd like you to meet a learned monk. Come and see me tomorrow when we arrive in Colombo". The learned monk turned out to be the late Venerable Narada Maha Thera from the Vajirarama Vihara in Colombo. Venerable Narada instructed Leo Berkeley in the Dhamma. Fortunate, indeed, was he to have such a fine teacher. Narada was a prolific author of Buddhist books and pamphlets and had been a constant visitor to both South-East Asian and western countries, preaching the Dhamma until well beyond the age when most people would consider such pursuits too strenuous. Venerable Narada suggested to Leo Berkeley that, on his return to Australia, he should establish a Buddhist society. Leo Berkeley, after making some enquires, was put in touch with Marie Byles. He told her of his intention to form a Buddhist Association. "Oh, Mr. Berkeley", she said, "the Australians are not yet ready for the teaching of the Buddha." Leo Berkeley replied: "Miss Byles, if you are ready and I am ready, we can start together an association." Hence the embryo Buddhist Society was born. Additional members were recruited following an advertisement placed in the "Sydney Morning Herald". It was not a formally constituted society, but a loosely formed group of people gathering together to study the Dhamma.

Soon after this group was formed, a seventy year old, American born, Buddhist nun, Dhammadinna, arrived in Sydney. She had been living in Sri Lanka for nearly thirty years. Her supporter in Sri Lanka was Lady de Silva, who had built the 'Forest Hermitage' for her. This same 'Forest Hermitage' was later to become the dwelling of a famous German monk and prolific author, mentioned earlier, Venerable Nyanaponika. Sister Dhammadinna arrived in Australia in 1952, with little money and only one address of a person to contact. She arrived at the home of her contact, Marie Byles, requesting shelter. Marie, who was somewhat of a literalist when interpreting the Vinaya, offered Sister 'The Hut of Happy Omen', which was an unlined wooden structure, open to the elements. She gave Sister a couple of blankets and informed her that she could sleep on the floor. Apart from her advanced age, Sister was partially crippled due to a previous fall which necessitated her wearing a back brace. She suffered much pain. Although the 'Omen' may have been happy, Sister Dhammadinna was less than happy with her accommodation. Despite this, Eric Penrose, who was one of Sister's most devoted students and supporters observed: The one who was really marvellous to her when she arrived was the lady solicitor, Marie Byles. She must have great credit in giving Sister Dhammadinna a place to live. It was Leo Berkeley, however, who came to her rescue and installed her in an apartment at Bellevue Hill (a Sydney eastern suburb), for which he met all expenses. Sister Dhammadinna was well able to look after herself in her new residence. She was strictly vegetarian and insisted that her students followed suit. The kitchen was shared

by other tenants, who, incidentally were all female. She attempted to dissuade her fellow tenants from their carnivorous habits by remarking, as she passed the kitchen, whilst they were preparing the Sunday roast lamb, "Do I smell a corpse incinerating in here?". On Sunday evenings, she conducted Dhamma talks and meditation in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Leo Berkeley. Usually fifteen to twenty people attended these lectures. She did not accept all of those who attended these meetings for personal instruction. She chose eight persons whom she considered were 'ready for the Dhamma'. She referred to them as "my Buddhists". The author was fortunate in being one of those eight. She administered the Three Refuges and eight precepts to this group on the Holy Day of Vesak, 29th of May, 1953. Sister Dhammadinna's visa expired during 1953. Eric Penrose pleaded, on behalf of her students, that the then Minister for Immigration in the Menzies Government, Sir Howard Beale, grant her an extension. Eric observed: He was not overflowing in his desire to do something. But, eventually, an extension was forthcoming. However, Sister left later that year for a short visit to the United States and thence to Hawaii where she was to spend the following five years.

It was in May, 1953, that the Buddhist Society of New South Wales was formally constituted as a society. Prior to that time, as I have already observed, the group meeting at the Berkeley's home had no particular name or structure. A committee was formed and Leo Berkeley was unanimously elected as President. The Vice-President was Norman Weekes, Graeme Lyall was Secretary and Don Ashfordye was Assistant Secretary. I am uncertain who the Treasurer was, but it was either Geoff Martin or Colin Jones. Leo Berkeley had two frock retailing businesses at the time. The top floor of his shop in Oxford Street, Sydney, became the first office of the Buddhist Society of N.S.W.. Don Ashfordye and I would attend the office every Saturday morning, answering correspondence and assisting Leo Berkeley with the layout of the Society's publication, "The Buddhist News", of which he was the editor. It was offset printed on glossy paper and it included photographs as well as Dhamma articles and news. The entire cost of its production was borne by Leo Berkeley. The Society quickly grew too large to be accommodated any longer at the Berkeley's home, so the Centre Club in George Street, Sydney became the regular venue for Sister Dhammadinna's talks. It was during meetings at this venue that Natasha Jackson, who was later to play a significant role in the newly formed Buddhist Society, first made an appearance.

The following year heralded the arrival of a saintly meditation master from Burma, Venerable Sayadaw U Thittila. The Society was, indeed, most fortunate to welcome as its first visiting Bhikkhu such a gentle man, well versed in the Dhamma and who enjoyed an international reputation. Venerable U Thittila gave several public lectures which were the first step in dispelling the many misconceptions, concerning the Buddha's teaching, plaguing Australian Society.

On Tuesday, February the 1st, 1955, to a fanfare of newspaper publicity, arrived the legendary Venerable Narada Maha Thera. The 'Sydney Sun', next evening, featured a photograph of Venerable Narada, with his umbrella raised, under the caption "Cool Customer". That the Sydney press was unused to the appearance of Buddhist monks in that city is evident from the accompanying article which commenced: Bald, bespectacled and smiling and wearing a heavy orange robe, Narada Maha Thera said "I am here to explain Buddha's teachings to those interested." The priest is in Sydney at the invitation of the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. which plans to build a temple.

On the morning of his arrival, Leo Berkeley was quoted in the 'Sydney Morning Herald' as saying: The Society, which consists mainly of Australian nationals, is growing rapidly, and we are anxious to have a temple.; Bhikkhu Narada has told us he has been promised funds from wealthy tea merchants in Ceylon which; might be used to establish one, and he will put certain propositions before us.. The merchants feel they want to put back into Australia what they have taken out of it. It seemed to me that it was somewhat ironical to suggest that these Sri Lankan tea merchants felt guilty at their 'exploitation' of the poor, thirsty, Australian tea drinker and, by this gesture, were hoping to make amends. However, Venerable Narada was, indeed, accompanied by a wealthy Sri Lankan tea merchant in the person of Tilak Ratnayake. Tilak had come to Australia to investigate the possibility of commencing tea production in Queensland. As a devout Buddhist and old boy of Mahinda College, which was established by the Buddhist Theosophical Society of Galle, in Sri Lanka, he paid the fare of Venerable Narada so that the more valuable seeds of the Dhamma could be planted on Australian soil. His headmaster at Mahinda College was Frank Lee Woodward, who although born in England, retired in 1919 to an apple orchard in Tasmania. Woodward was a Pali scholar and translator, his most famous book being "Some Sayings of the Buddha". Tilak brought, with him, a large chest of tea from his plantation and each visitor to Venerable Narada received a gift of pure Ceylon tea. Venerable Narada also brought saplings from the sacred Bodhi tree in Sri Lanka, which had arrived there with Sister Sanghamitta, daughter of Dharmasoka, around 300 B.C.. The 'Daily Telegraph' of February 2nd, 1955, reported:

**BUDDHA'S TREE IN TROUBLE.**

Narada Maha Thera struck quarantine trouble when he arrived in Sydney yesterday. He had with him three seedlings from a tree under which, he said, Buddha sat more than 2,000 years ago. They were thriving in cigarette tins. Narada had tended and watered them each day on the voyage from Ceylon. When he came ashore from the liner 'Australia', quarantine officials took them from him.

They were kept in quarantine for over a year and one was eventually planted in the garden of the Berkeley home. Venerable Narada's lectures were well publicised in the press and thus attracted large and curious audiences. Even the printed media found these lectures newsworthy,

for the 'Daily Telegraph' of the 14th of February featured an article headed "Monk's Hints on Meditation".

Here are a few extracts:

A Buddhist monk last night gave an audience of 500 people hints on meditation. The monk is Bhikkhu Narada Maha Thera. --- The Bhikkhu opened and closed his lecture with a short sing-song recitation. He said he had called his lecture "Mental Culture", although it was about meditation. Some people confused meditation with levitation or visions. The mind could be purified and controlled by meditation.

Venerable Narada also visited Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania, where he established Buddhist Societies. The founding president of the Buddhist Society of Tasmania was Ken Wriedt who was later to become a Senator and is currently leader of the Labor Party in Tasmania. He is still practising Buddhism, starting each day with a period of meditation.

According to Klaas de Jong, Brisbane had a similar enthusiastic, if sensational, press coverage to Narada's visit as Sydney. Some of Brisbane's newspaper headlines were:

"Monk Tells of Buddha", "Buddhist Monk Kept Distance" (from a female reporter) and "Monk Sees Likely Buddhas".

Venerable Narada was a kindly monk who was well versed in the Dhamma. He was an eloquent exponent of the Buddha's message and had captivated audiences everywhere he went. He passed away, after a long period of illness, on October the 2nd, 1983, aged 86 years. I received a letter from him, written from Saigon, Vietnam on the 30th of October, 1970, which says:

I left Ceylon on April 30th on a missionary tour in Indonesia. On 15th June I arrived in Vietnam and unexpectedly fell ill. On July 1st I was hospitalised, suffering from a serious illness. My situation was so grave that even cremation arrangements had also been made. My recovery, they say, is a miracle. I am really grateful to the Vietnamese Buddhists for saving my life. Fortunately, he was able to serve the Buddhist world for another 13 years. He is sadly missed, not only by those who knew, loved and respected him in Australia, but his loss is felt throughout the Buddhist world, both East and West. May he soon attain the bliss of Nirvana.

In 1955, the name of the Buddhist Society of N.S.W.'s journal was changed to "Metta". Towards the end of 1955, the Society's dream of land for a Vihara was realised. Together with substantial monetary donations from Leo Berkeley and Eric Penrose, as well as financial offerings from donors in the South East Asian Buddhist countries, four and a half acres of land was purchased at West Pennant Hills, an outlying suburb of Sydney. Marie Byles discovered this parcel of land in natural bushland at the reasonable price of a few hundred pounds and she urged the Society to secure it. Marie handled all of the legal aspects of its acquisition, at no cost to the Society and a group of trustees was appointed. It

was not until 1956 that the land was dedicated, by two visiting monks from Thailand, as the site for the first Buddhist Vihara and Meditation Centre in Australia.

In October, 1955, the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. promoted an Indian dance drama to raise funds for the United Nation's Appeal for Children. It was an ambitious presentation which ran for three performances in the hall of the N.S.W. State Conservatorium of Music.

It was in February 1956, Buddha Jayanti Year, that two monks arrived from Thailand. One was an abbot of a monastery in Thailand, Phra Dhammadiraja Muni, who spoke little English and his companion was an American, Phra Sumangalo. Phra Sumangalo, who was on his first visit to Australia, was no stranger to us, however. He was the author of many articles and his activities were regularly reported in the Buddhist magazines at that time. He was not known as Phra Sumangalo, however, but as Reverend Robert Stuart Clifton, Superior General of the Western Buddhist Order (Soto Zen). This organisation was in no way connected with the current organisation of the same name founded by the English monk, Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita. Phra Sumangalo was a charismatic figure and it was during his visit, at my suggestion, that the Young Buddhist Association was formed. It was under the umbrella of the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. and its aim was to engender an interest in the Dhamma amongst the younger members of the Society. It was short-lived, however. Unfortunately, during the visit of these two monks, a crisis occurred. Unknown to Abbot Dhammadiraja Muni, Phra Sumangalo, in his role of Rev. Robert Stuart Clifton, Superior General of the Western Buddhist Order, was privately ordaining his followers, both male and female, as priests in his 'Order'. Two members of the Buddhist Society of N.S.W., Gordon and Joy Lishman, who had been his followers for many years, were both ordained during this visit. He performed similar ordination ceremonies in Melbourne and Canberra. These extra-Theravadin activities were soon to come to the notice of his Abbot and so his tour of Australia came to an abrupt termination. He and the Abbot returned hurriedly to Thailand where, no doubt, Rev. Robert Stuart Clifton, alias Phra Sumangalo, faced the music. Several years later, he visited Malaysia where he founded the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia. He passed away in 1962.

May of 1956 saw the welcome return of Venerable Sayadaw U Thittila. The highlight of this visit was his conducting of a three week meditation retreat at the home of the Berkeleys, who were then living in the Sydney suburb of Belrose. Thirty five people participated in this retreat. The Sayadaw also inspected the newly acquired Vihara and Meditation Centre site which had, earlier in the year, been dedicated by the two monks from Thailand. He was full of enthusiasm for it. 'World Buddhism', for August 1956, reported him as commenting:

When the Centre is established, we hope to have a permanent Bhikkhu in the Vihara. He will come: from one of the Buddhist countries and he may even be an

Australian. Appointment of a permanent Bhikkhu will provide Australia with a worthy Buddhist centre and further help the growth of Buddhist teaching.

Sadly, this was the last visit of a Bhikkhu, for teaching purposes, for some years. At that time, although there were many learned monks in the Buddhist countries, very few spoke English. Those few that did, such as Venerable Narada and Sayadaw U Thittila, were in great demand in the awakening western countries and were forced to limit their occasional visits to a few weeks duration. This lack of the stabilising influence of the Sangha resulted in squabbles and disagreements within the Buddhist Societies in Australia. The Buddhist Society of N.S.W. split in 1956. Leo Berkeley's pioneering leadership was replaced by that of Charles Knight and Natasha Jackson. There were now two groups functioning in Sydney - the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. under its new leadership and what was loosely called 'the Buddhist Group', consisting mainly of the pioneers who had studied under Sister Dhammadinna. Hearing of the schism, Venerable Narada returned to Australia to plead with the two groups to sort out their differences and to re-unite. A meeting of both groups was called by him at the home of the Berkeleys. He warned that, as Buddhism was relatively new to Australia and had, as yet, few adherents, we could not afford the luxury of schisms. His pleas, however, fell on deaf ears - neither group would give way.

Late in 1957, whilst on a visit to Hawaii, Eric and Lynne Penrose invited Sister Dhammadinna to return to Australia. She accepted and returned in 1958, to be housed in a lodge, which the Penroses had constructed for her as an annexe to their Bilgola home. She stayed for almost a year before returning to Hawaii, where she passed away in 1967. Eric Penrose, in a tribute to her, said:

Thank heavens we had the experience of Sister Dhammadinna. The studies and the absolute simplicity of it and the strength of what Sister Dhammadinna had to say was so powerful. To me, it was just so absolute that I could never find argument with it. I hope she made it. That would be my greatest hope because what she gave was limitless.

In 1959, the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. combined with the Buddhist Society of Victoria to form the Buddhist Federation of Australia. Charles Knight was its first Chairman. The Buddhist Society of N.S.W.'s journal, 'Metta', was later to become the national journal of the Federation.

'Karuna', of February, 1981, published by the Buddhist Society of N.S.W., reported that:  
Early in the sixties, the Society received an offer for its land at Pennant Hills. As the alternative to selling was to pay enormous rates on the property, which had now been re-zoned by the Council, the members authorised Charles Knight to conduct the sale.

Some of the pioneer members, who had previously severed

their connection with the Society, were outraged that the Society had chosen to sell land that had been dedicated by members of the Sangha as the site for a Vihara and Meditation Centre. However, two of the original trustees, Leo Berkeley and Eric Penrose, decided that the decision of the leadership should not be opposed. Eric Penrose commented:

The Buddhist Society did very well out of it. It gave them the chance to be established. So the good fortune was there that these things happened. That's the way it should be.

During the sixties, the majority of the fortnightly meetings of the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. consisted of lectures by Charles Knight and Natasha Jackson and a sizeable library was built up over this period. Speaking of the void due to Australia's not having resident representatives of the Sangha, Natasha Jackson observed: Knight, himself, made several impassioned pleas for such leaders, and yet the Sangha did not respond positively for eighteen years. Buddhism in the West is almost exclusively a lay movement. The pioneer element in the Sangha has long since become defunct. There were two major factors which probably inhibited the appointment of a resident monk at that time. As previously mentioned, it was not only a case of finding a monk well versed in the Dhamma who was prepared to be a 'pioneer', but the main difficulty was that few learned monks spoke English sufficiently well to undertake such missionary activity. Another factor, and by no means a minor one, is that, according to the Vinaya rules, a monk cannot stay for an extended period in the home of a lay-follower. The establishment of a Vihara to house the monk should have been one of the Society's first priorities, had they been serious about attracting a resident teacher. The land was acquired in the 1950's for that purpose, but the Society chose to dispose of it.

In November, 1960, a lineage holder in the Chinese Cha'an tradition arrived in Sydney, where he stayed until the end of 1961. He was the famous Master Hsuan Hua. He gained the impression that there were no Buddhists among the local Chinese community as he was largely ignored and, was, at one stage on the verge of starvation due to the lack of support. At the end of 1961, he left for California, where, with the support of many followers he established a monastic centre known as the 'City of Ten Thousand Buddhas'.

At a meeting of the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. in 1970, which I attended, discussion turned to the need for a resident Bhikkhu to oversee the Society's activities. The objection was raised, by Charles Knight, that it was impossible to house such a Bhikkhu. I suggested that I knew of a Roman Catholic family at Brighton-le-Sands who, perhaps, may be prepared to offer a Bhikkhu some suitable accommodation. Charles Knight and Natasha Jackson expressed an interest and so were introduced to the MacLaughlin family to formulate the arrangements. A monk's annexe in their garden was prepared which, although small, was relatively comfortable.

On the 9th of May, 1971, Venerable Ratmalane Somaloka arrived in Sydney to become the first resident monk. His devotees and supporters in Malacca had paid his fare and expenses to enable him to undertake this mission to Australia. Knight and Jackson tended to be somewhat undiplomatic in their dealings with the MacLaughlin family and a tense relationship developed. The tension between them became so untenable that a Chinese businessman, Bill Jong, who was quite inspired by Venerable Somaloka's teaching, leased a spacious apartment at Rose Bay, an eastern suburb of Sydney, to house the resident Bhikkhu. Elva Miksevicious, then a keen supporter of Venerable Somaloka, writing in a special edition of 'Metta' (1974) reported that: The Buddhist Society of N.S.W. contributed ten dollars a week from their funds towards the heavy expenses undertaken freely and happily by Mr. Jong. The Ven. Somaloka instructed him to accept this offer for them to share in this meritorious deed until the end of the year.

After working with the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. for twelve months, Venerable Somaloka formed the opinion that the Society had become a group more interested in engaging in armchair discussion than in practising Buddhism as a way of life. The executive of the Buddhist Society and their monk had an uneasy relationship. Prior to the Bhikkhu's moving to Rose Bay, Ven. Somaloka felt that his time was not being used as profitably as it might have been. Venerable Somaloka stressed to the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. that, if Buddhism were to make any progress and a monk were to remain in Sydney, that it would be necessary for them to make moves towards establishing a Vihara. The Society had the funds as the money from the sale of the West Pennant Hills property had yielded a healthy profit which Charles Knight had successfully invested in the share market. Their leaders, however, were not prepared to use this money for a Vihara. Being resident in the MacLaughlin's private home, access to him was necessarily restricted. This situation changed, however, once he was established in the Rose Bay apartment. Elva Miksevicious continued: The Ven. Somaloka then started his religious activities, which were conducted over many hours each day. He talked to people who came to see him from all over Australia, he taught, he instructed, he preached, he conducted services and gave himself to his work and those who were in need of him. Naturally, he met hundreds of people of all ages and walks of life.

Bill Jong selflessly devoted himself to the needs of Venerable Somaloka. He visited the apartment each day to prepare the monk's food and to drive him in his car to his various appointments. The Buddhists who benefited from Ven. Somaloka's instruction will be forever grateful to the great contribution offered by Bill Jong. A few of those people who had gathered around Venerable Somaloka at Rose Bay resolved to find a way to establish a Vihara. Two people, who were staunch supporters of the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. prior to the 1956 split, Jurgis and Elva Miksevicious, had become actively involved in the activities at Rose Bay. The Buddhist

Society of N.S.W., at that time, had no interest whatever in the devotional side of Buddhism. Natasha Jackson, referring to earlier Pujas conducted by the Society, wrote:

Strangers who wandered into our meetings saw obeisance to an image, heard, what was to them, a meaningless chanting in some strange language, and left either amused or mystified, but certainly not edified.

By 1972, the activities, formerly conducted at Rose Bay, were transferred to Annandale, an inner Sydney suburb. A devotional service followed by Dhamma teaching and meditation became a regular Sunday morning activity. Far from being 'amused or mystified', a group of fifteen to twenty people were regularly in attendance.

On Vesak Day, 1973, the Australian Buddhist Vihara was opened at Katoomba, in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney. The dream of Venerable Somaloka and his devotees was finally realised. R.L.Henderson, in an Editorial in 'Metta', concluded:

Many of us feel that the Ven. Somaloka is an ideal person to start off the first fully Buddhist Vihara in this country. He has demonstrated flexibility of mind and the ability to fit into Australian conditions and way of life in a commonsense manner. Despite the bouquets and optimism which greeted the founding of Australia's first Buddhist Vihara, since then, all has not been a bed of roses. A sign on the gate of the Vihara, "Private Property", is a significant indicator of its policies. Despite the Sri Lankan origins of Venerable Somaloka, the local Sri Lankan Buddhist community was discouraged from visiting the Vihara. It was only after the arrival of Venerable Pemananda, who was invited to assist in the activities of the Vihara for a three year period, that the Sri Lankan community was granted limited access. The Bhikkhu who followed Ven. Pemananda's stay, Ven. Suganananda, was most unimpressed with the exclusiveness of the Vihara's policies and threatened to leave unless visitors were granted freer access. Some Blue Mountain's residents who wished to study the Dhamma and practice meditation claim that they were actively discouraged from attending the Vihara. Many of the original supporters have since withdrawn from its activities due in no small degree to Somaloka's alleged breach of a major Vinaya rule.

At the end of 1972, the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. purchased a villa unit at Eastlakes, a Sydney suburb, to serve as a permanent meeting place.

On January 23rd, 1972, Eric Liao, a Chinese businessman, formed the Chinese Buddhist Society of Australia. Initially, he invited Venerable Somaloka to conduct services in a garage adjacent to his home. With the assistance of Bill Jong, he acquired more central and suitable premises in Dixon Street, in Sydney's Chinatown district. This newly established temple in Dixon Street was later named "Prajna Temple". A tragic fire destroyed the premises on November 14th, 1985. All that remained after the fire was the statues of Sakyamuni Buddha, Kwan

Yin, Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva and approximately one thousand books, including the Tripitaka. The abbot of the temple, Ven. Sik Chee Ming, and his supporters re-established the temple at Hornsby, a northern Sydney suburb. In 1989, premises in Dixon Street, vacated by the Chinese See Yup Society, were acquired and the central Chinese community, again, has a place of worship.

The form of Mahayana Buddhism followed by most Chinese and, indeed, the Vietnamese, is a fusion of Cha'an (Zen) and Pure Land (Messianic Buddhism). As Paul Croucher (1) observes:

The elemental Chinese religion is, of course, a kind of nature polytheism, onto which aspects of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism have been grafted. The Chinese brought with them a syncretic blend of beliefs and practices in which the demarcations were ill-defined and the influence of Buddhism only mild. As in China, those who identified themselves with Buddhism probably amounted to no more than one per cent of the population. Most were content to wear 'a Confucian crown, a Taoist robe, and Buddhist sandals', and when pressed had some difficulty in describing the religion they practised. Although a small number of the Chinese Buddhist community in Sydney is very devout, the greater number is quite pragmatic regarding religion and regard it as solely of use in rites of passage.

1973 heralded the arrival of two more monks from Thailand, in the persons of Venerable Chao Khun Pariattikavi and the well known teacher and author, Venerable Khantipalo. Initially, they conducted their activities from a rented bungalow in the Sydney suburb of Roseberry, but in 1975, a magnificent Victorian house, now known as Wat Buddharangsee, was purchased in the inner city suburb of Stanmore. The opening ceremony, on Vesak Day, 25th of May, 1975, was performed by His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn, in the presence of His Highness Ven. Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara and ten visiting Bhikkhus from Thailand. Wat Buddharangsee became the focal point for Theravadin Buddhism in Sydney, a function formerly performed by the Buddhist Society of N.S.W.. Wat Buddharangsee has proved to be one of the most popular Buddhist meeting places in the Sydney area. Such has been its success, that it has rapidly become too small to adequately serve its congregation so, a large tract of land was purchased at Leumeah, south of Sydney, where a traditional Thai-style Wat Pa Buddharangsee was opened in May, 1988. The Stanmore premises is being retained to serve the needs of the inner city Buddhist community.

In 1973, at the Buddhist Society of N.S.W.'s Eastlakes villa, a new style of meeting emerged. Under the guidance of Malcolm Pierce and his Japanese born wife Nara, who were resident there, the Society moved from its originally Theravadin format to incorporate the teachings of other traditions including those of the Japanese Nichiren Sect, Rissho Kosekai. Two years later, Natasha Jackson, unhappy with the new style "Dharma Circle" meetings, resigned from the Society. Natasha

Jackson, despite her, at times, abrasive manner, must be given due credit for keeping Buddhism alive in Sydney through its most difficult years. She had a fiercely independent and strong personality, uncompromisingly defended her views of how the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. should be run and was quick to condemn those with whom she disagreed. Had Sydney not had a Natasha Jackson, it is doubtful if the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. could, today, rightly claim to be the oldest and longest surviving Buddhist organisation in Australia.

1975 saw the birth of the Sydney Zen Centre. It is affiliated with the Diamond Sangha in Hawaii under the leadership of their teacher, Robert Aitken Roshi, who visits Australia regularly. They have purchased some land at St. Albans, north of Sydney, where a country Zendo is being established for meditation retreats. Although the chanting of sutras forms an essential part of the activities at the Zen Centre, the major emphasis is on meditation practise.

As the result of the purchase, in 1978, of 220 acres of land in the Dharug National Park, near Wiseman's Ferry, north of Sydney, Wat Buddha Dhamma came into being. It is a forest monastery with a supporting lay-village. Under the capable guidance of its resident abbot, Venerable Khantipalo, regular meditation retreats were conducted, not only for the benefit of the resident lay-community, but for the many city-dwellers who welcomed the opportunity to spend some time in a quiet natural bush setting. On the 20th of October, 1987, disaster struck the Wat. The Amenities Block was completely destroyed by fire. This block provided the mess and dormitory facilities for visitors and retreat participants. With the assistance of its many supporters, both resident and city dwelling, these facilities have been restored so that its regular retreat and teaching programmes continue. A large new Sala (Meditation Hall) was opened in September, 1988, to accommodate the many people who attend the regular retreats. Phra Khantipalo, the founding abbot, disrobed in 1992 after being a Buddhist monk for thirty years. He has been replaced by a German born monk, Venerable Santitthito, who has been in Thailand for many years.

In 1979, after selling its Eastlakes villa, the Buddhist Society of N.S.W. purchased premises in Walker Street, North Sydney, from where it now operates. The Society acquired a large parcel of land at Katoomba, in the Blue Mountains, in 1982. This acquisition, which was made possible by a large financial donation from the Rissho Kosekai organisation in Japan, is being used as the Society's country retreat centre.

In the late '70's, Venerable Geshe Loden, a Gelugpa monk from Tibet, established centres for the practise and teaching of the Tibetan style of Buddhism in the Eastern States. His Sydney centre, the Loden Mahayana Centre, was started in Chippendale, an inner city suburb. This centre moved to its present location at Dulwich Hill in the early '80's. The Loden Mahayana Centre undertook the mammoth task, in 1982, of organising the Sydney visit of His Holiness, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. The centre is

currently known as the Tibetan Buddhist Society.

Venerable Tsang Hui arrived in Australia from Taiwan in 1977. In 1979, from a rented house in Redfern, an inner city suburb, he established the Hwa Tsang Monastery. Being a qualified school teacher as well as a Buddhist monk, he employed the 'skilful means' of attracting young people to the Monastery by conducting classes in academic subjects. The monastery later moved to Greenacre and then to its present location at Homebush West. In addition to conducting religious observances, the monastery continues to attract many high school students to its daily classes in Buddhism, chemistry, Chinese language, English, general science, physics and mathematics. Due to these special classes, many of the students have gained places at Sydney's universities and later graduated to the professions. After overcoming much local opposition, the Hwa Tsang Monastery opened Sydney's first 'purpose built' Chinese Buddhist Temple at the Homebush site in 1993. After overcoming difficulties encountered with an unsympathetic local council and racist opposition from a few local residents, the Monastery building is now fully functioning. For a detailed account of the battle to establish this Monastery see my article 'Ethnic Buddhism in N.S.W.' (4).

As an outcome of many Buddhist students matriculating to the universities, joined by overseas students studying in Australia, university Buddhist societies were formed in the early eighties. The first student society was the University of New South Wales Buddhist Society, also known as UNIBUDS, which was founded, in 1981, with Venerable Tsang Hui's support. A year later, the Sydney University Buddhist Society was formed at Australia's oldest university, the University of Sydney. UNIBUDS has grown steadily since its inception and produces one of Australia's best produced Buddhist publications, 'Unibuds Annual Magazine'. The Sydney University Buddhist Society has struggled to survive in a university with, until recently, few overseas students, but with a renewed burst of enthusiasm, seems destined to become firmly established. In 1992, a Buddhist Society was established at Macquarie University.

A retreat held at Blackheath, in the Blue Mountains, in November, 1980, with a mere four people attending, heralded the modest beginning in New South Wales, of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. This Order was founded by the English monk, Ven. Sangharakshita, in 1967, with the idea of presenting the Buddha's teachings in Western terms, essentially, to people of European origin. Since then, centres and Buddhist community households have been established throughout the world. The first such household was established, in Australia, at Wollstoncraft, a northern Sydney suburb, in 1981. In 1984, the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order opened an inner city meeting and teaching place, the Sydney Buddhist Centre, near Central Railway, but moved to premises in King Street, Sydney in 1993.

As an outcome of the tragic war and Communist takeover in South-East Asia, many refugees from these Buddhist

countries arrived in Australia, to re-establish their home and to seek religious freedom. At the end of 1979, a group of Vietnamese refugees met at a restaurant in Glebe, an inner city suburb, and formed the Vietnamese Buddhist Society of N.S.W. The first religious ceremonies organised by the Society were held at the Thai temple, Wat Buddharangsee, at Stanmore. Premises at Lakemba, a western suburb, were later leased by the Society, to serve as a temporary temple, prior to the arrival of their monk, Venerable Thich Bao Lac. Problems with the local council and racism from the local residents forced the Society to seek Government assistance to find a more suitable place and to establish a more permanent place of worship. Land at Bonnyrigg, an outer western suburb, was leased to the Society by the Housing Commission of N.S.W.. Today, on this land stands the first, purpose built, Buddhist temple in metropolitan Sydney, the Phap Bao Temple. A large statue of the Bodhisattva Kwan Yin forms a dominating landmark at the entrance to the temple.

Actually, the first Vietnamese monk to arrive in Australia was the senior teacher, Most Venerable Thich Phuoc Hue, who set foot on our soil in 1980. In 1981, he formed the Vietnamese Buddhist Federation of Australia, which currently has branch temples in all Australian States with the exception of Tasmania, which has very few Vietnamese refugees. At its Biennial Conference in 1987, the name of the Federation was changed to the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregations of Australia. He established the Phuoc Hue Temple in a large garage at the rear of a cottage in Fairfield, which served as a monk's residence. Again, racism and the local council's insensitivity to the needs of the refugee communities, forced the Vietnamese Buddhist Federation to seek Government assistance in finding a suitable place for a temple to serve the spiritual needs of Sydney's large Vietnamese Buddhist community. The then Premier of N.S.W., the Hon. Barrie Unsworth, responded by making available an unused school premises at Wetherill Park, an outer western suburb. The foundation stone for the new Phuoc Hue Temple was laid by him in October, 1987. The splendid temple premises, which is a major showpiece of Sydney, is currently situated on this former school land. The Vietnamese community is divided politically, hence the two temples. The Phap Bao Temple was established by Vietnamese who were in Australia, as students or diplomats prior to the 1975 fall of Saigon. The Phuoc Hue Temple serves the 'boat people', who view those, who didn't personally experience Communist oppression, with suspicion. They claim that many of the people from the Phap Bao Temple are not vigorous enough in their opposition to the current regime in Vietnam. Both temples support a youth movement called "The Young Buddhist Family" which is similar to and affiliated with the Boy Scout Movement.

Lao society is inseparable from Buddhism - they have been Buddhist for nearly a thousand years. 95% of the country are rice farmers and rural life revolved around the village Wat (temple) where the monk acted as teacher, doctor and spiritual adviser. Throughout the feudal and colonial periods, the Sangha the order of

monks - remained the main institution in the country. The monks were held in tremendous esteem as moral and spiritual arbiters as well as the most learned of the community.(5) In 1975, the Pathet Lao defeated the army of the royalist Buddhist monarchy and many Lao people fled from the communist tyranny across the Thai border. Many have since settled in Australia. The community divided into two factions - one supporting the former monarchy and the other, feeling dominated by the educated middle class, wishing to follow an independent path. In the mid eighties, the Lao refugees welcomed the arrival of their first monks to serve the spiritual needs of their community. The Lao Community Advancement Co-operative, the pro-monarchist group, purchased a two storeyed premises at Cabramatta West, known as Wat Prayort Keo Dhammananaram, to serve as a temporary residence for their monks and a meeting place for religious observances. They were later granted, by the N.S.W. Government, the lease on some land at Bonnyrigg for the purpose of, eventually, establishing a temple and community centre. The Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony was held on Sunday, 20th of August, 1989 and construction of the first stage, the monks' residence, was completed in 1990. The main temple building, in the traditional Lao style, is scheduled for completion in 1993. For many years the independent Lao Association of N.S.W., rented premises on the Hume Highway at Cabramatta as a temple and residence for the Abbot, Ven. Thongsoun Phantha-Oudom and their monks. The temple, known as Wat Buddhalavarn later became independent from the Lao Association and the Abbot was appointed as President. Early in 1988, a cottage was purchased to serve as a temporary Vihara (residence and temple) until land for a temple could be acquired. Moves were made in 1988 to unite the two Lao temples but, although the monks from both temples strongly supported it, suspicions about the motives for the merger still lingered amongst the laity, especially those from Wat Buddhalavarn, and such a conjunction, unfortunately, now seems more remote than ever. The occasional combined ceremonies, that occurred before the attempted merger, have now completely ceased.

Resulting from the barbarism wrought on the Cambodian people by Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge genocidal maniacs and the consequent invasion and occupation of Cambodia by the armed forces of the Peoples Republic of Vietnam, many refugees fled to the freedom of Thailand. These people, who, under the fanatical policies of the Khmer Rouge, were forced to labour for sixteen hours a day with little food, had lost all of their possessions. Many of their relatives and friends, especially the educated, the professionals and the monks, had been slaughtered. They looked to the compassionate countries of the 'West' for resettlement so that they could resume what was left of their shattered lives. Australia accepted many of these industrious people and the various Governments provided some assistance in their resettlement. Buddhism is central to the lifestyle of the Khmer people and their fondest wish, after their arrival in Australia was to have a Buddhist monk to minister to their spiritual and social needs. Due to the genocide, very few monks survived to satisfy this need.

In the mid 1980's, the Venerable Long Sakkhone, a Cambodian Buddhist monk arrived to take up residence in Sydney. The community rented a rather run-down cottage in Fairfield, a Western suburb of Sydney, to serve as a temporary monk's residence and temple. The then Minister for Housing in the N.S.W. Government, the Hon. Frank Walker, later arranged for the lease of a tract of land adjacent to a large shopping Plaza at Bonnyrigg to the Khmer Community of N.S.W. for the purpose of constructing a community centre and temple. Construction of the first stage of this Cambodian centre, comprising a community hall, office and amenities block as well as a monk's residence has already been completed and was officially opened by the Premier of N.S.W., the Hon. Nick Greiner on Saturday the 10th of February, 1990. The temple building, itself, being large, complex and expensive will have to wait for another day. The Khmer community is divided politically, with some people supporting Prince Norodom Sihanouk (FUNCINPEC), and others, the former Prime Minister, Son San (KPNLNF), whilst a small number support the Vietnamese puppet' government of Hun Sen, however, they are united in their devotion to Theravadin Buddhism and, irrespective of how poor their circumstances in their new country, they generously support the temple and the religion generally. One would imagine that, in the light of the horrific experiences suffered by the Khmer community prior to their arrival in Australia, psychosis would be prevalent. Such is not the case, however. The Khmer people attribute this to their devotion to the teachings of the Buddha and are thus accepting of change, sorrow and their karmic circumstances.

Another religious group in the Bonnyrigg area is the Taoist, Confucian cum Buddhist plus traditional god worshiping lay organisation, the Australian-Chinese Buddhist Society. The membership of this organisation comprises mainly ethnic Chinese refugees from Indo-China. This temple is one of the few serving the Indo-Chinese community which is completely privately funded.

During the past 600 years, Buddhism has undergone turmoil in Korea. Cha'an (Zen) Buddhism was introduced from China in 372 A.D. and fused with the indigenous Shamanism. (6) The Choson kings, who ruled from 1392 until Japan annexed Korea in 1910, favoured Neo-Confucianism and ruthlessly suppressed Buddhism, forcing it out of the cities and towns and confining the temples to the remote mountains. During the Japanese occupation, Buddhism again gained favour but the celibate monks were forced to marry. Following liberation in 1945, the main sect, Chogye, re-instituted celibacy for its clergy whilst several of the minor sects persisted with married priests. Following the Korean war, Korea came under American influence and an influx of Christian missionaries, especially of the aggressive fundamentalist variety, invaded Korea. What was formerly a Buddhist stronghold, now sees half of its population following Christianity. The results of this tumultuous period in Korean history has, to a significant degree, manifested itself amongst the Korean Buddhist migrants in Australia. Early in the 1980's, the

Korean Dharmakaya Society was formed at Summer Hill, a western suburb of Sydney. In 1984, a monk, Venerable Jin Sang Sunim, arrived from Korea and premises were leased at Earlwood to serve as a residence and temporary temple, known originally as Hong Boep Sa and later renamed Dharma Sa. Venerable Jin Sang left Australia early in 1985 and was replaced by Venerable Jang San Sunim, who arrived on the first of April, 1985. An uneasy relationship developed between the monk and the Committee of the temple. By October, the dissent had become so untenable that the Venerable Jang San was forced to leave the temple, together with those members of the congregation who remained loyal to him. By December, 1985, a new Korean temple, Bul Kwang Sa, was established at Summer Hill with Venerable Jang San as its Abbot. His visa expired early in 1986 and he returned to Korea. After returning to Australia in January, 1988, as a permanent resident, he resumed his duties of ministry to the spiritual needs of the Korean community at the Bul Kwang Temple. The Committee of the Korean Dharmakaya Society later sponsored a Bhikshuni (female monk), Venerable Jung O Sunim, in October, 1986, to take over as resident spiritual teacher. Again, conflict arose between Jung O Sunim and the temple committee and she was dismissed in September, 1988. Many of her supporters severed their connection with the Korean Dharmakaya Society and established yet another temple, Kwan Eum Sa, at Belmore, and later at Punchbowl, with Ven. Jung O Sunim as its presiding abbot. Yet another Bhikshuni, Venerable Ja Young Sunim, arrived in 1989 to serve the needs of the Korean Dharmakaya Society. The Society later vacated its Earlwood premises and established itself at Campsie, Sydney's main centre of Korean migrants. Meanwhile, trouble arose at the Bul Kwang Temple at Summer Hill. The President felt that, as he and the committee were meeting the expenses of the temple, the monks should confine their activities to performing ceremonies and all major decisions should be vested in the lay committee. The situation became so tense that Venerable Jang San formed the opinion that the temple was serving more as a Korean social club, providing a venue for Koreans to meet and discuss issues back home rather than as a centre for Buddhist practice. He felt that they had no real interest in practising Buddhism so he returned to Korea, leaving the Bul Kwang Temple without any monks to serve the congregation. In 1991, due to the efforts of Venerable Jah Young Sunim of Dharma Sa and Ki Hu Sunim, the newly installed abbot of Bulkwang Sa, a reconciliation and amalgamation occurred between the two temples. The amalgamated temple was named Jong Bop Sa. Many people in the Korean Buddhist community feel a deep sense of shame over the turbulent history of Korean Buddhism in Australia. With a spirit of goodwill the Korean community is striving for harmony and tolerance and, hopefully, they will leave in the past what belongs in the past and will firmly establish the Korean Buddhist tradition in their new home.

Won Buddhism, an evangelical 'new religious movement' from Korea, is also well established in Sydney. A nun from this order arrived in 1990. Won Buddhism is a fusion of Son (Zen) and Confucianism and has, as its object of worship, a circle, symbolising the Void which

'contains everything and is perfect' (7), rather than the traditional Buddha image. Won Buddhism is celebrated the centenary of the birth of its founder, the Venerable Master Sotaesan, in 1991.

The Australian Buddhist Library was established on the 25th of April, 1984, through the generosity of the family of the Sydney businessman, Mr. Eric Liao. Originally situated in George Street, Sydney, it later moved to Sussex Street, adjacent to Sydney's Chinatown district. The book collection consisted of over 3,000 volumes including four editions of the Chinese Tripitaka, a Tripitaka set in Pali and English from the Pali Text Society, London, as well as Tripitaka versions in Burmese, Sinhala and Thai. It contained, also, many works and valuable reference volumes on Buddhist topics in English as well as in a few other languages. As well as a library and reading room, the library provided a much needed central meeting venue for Dharma lectures and meditation practice. Being in Sydney's main business district, the library and its staff were expensive to maintain and eventually became beyond the financial means of the Liao family. Mr. Liao eventually offered it to the Sydney Buddhist community through the Buddhist Council of N.S.W., but as its upkeep could not be guaranteed, the book collection was finally passed to the National Library in Canberra, where it currently forms a separate collection. Sadly, Sydney's Buddhist community lost its most valuable asset when the Australian Buddhist Library closed its doors early in 1987. In October, 1991, The Buddhist Library and Education Centre was established at Lewisham, an inner city suburb. One of its aims is to re-establish a Buddhist public library in a similar vein to the Australian Buddhist Library.

During the 1980's, there was a proliferation of Buddhist organisations N.S.W.. Sydney's Tibetan community, numbering less than twenty, must constitute, perhaps, the smallest of the ethnic groups, yet, Tibetan Buddhist organisations make up one third of the many Buddhist organisations in Sydney. Tibetan Buddhism attracts many followers of Anglo-European background. Many of the local Tibetans were formerly Buddhist monks either in Tibet or in India following the Chinese occupation so they are often called upon to serve as teachers or translators for visiting lamas. Many groups following the Tibetan Buddhist tradition have been formed as the result of the short visits of various Tibetan teachers. Ven. Dzongsar Jamjang Khyentse Rinpoche, of the Sakya lineage from Bhutan has established the Dzongsar Manju Ghosha Fellowship, the Sakya Centre and the Buddhist Educational Foundation. Venerable Gyaltse Tulku Rinpoche is the resident teacher of these Sakya lineage centres. His organisations also maintain a permanent retreat centre, Vajradhara Gompa, at Kyogle in northern New South Wales. In mid 1988, these organisations organised the visit to Australia of His Holiness Sakya Trizin, the head of the Sakya lineage, one of the four main traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. The Tai Situ Trust of Australia was specifically formed to arrange the visit in early 1988 of His Eminence Tai Situpa Rinpoche, one of the four Regents of the Karma Kargyu School of

Tibetan Buddhism. Another Sydney centre following the Karma Kargyu tradition is the Karma Kargyu Do-ngak Cho-ling at Artarmon, on Sydney's north shore, under the guidance of their resident lama, Ven.Thinley Gyamtso. Following the Gelug-pa tradition are the Tibetan Buddhist Society and the Vajrayana Institute, which is part of the world-wide movement, Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, under the guidance of Ven. Lama Zopa and the Sakyamuni Centre whose guru is Ven. Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey.

On the 12th of December, 1984, during a short visit to Australia of Mr. Teh Thean Choo, President of the Buddhist Missionary Society in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and an executive member of the international body, the World Fellowship of Buddhists, a meeting was called at the home of Dr.Tan Eng-Kong at Pymble, an upper north shore suburb of Sydney, for the purpose of establishing a regional centre of the W.F.B. in Sydney. It was at this meeting that Graeme Lyall put forward an idea, that he had long held, that an umbrella body, to promote co-operation among the many separate Buddhist organisations in Sydney, be formed. He was commissioned by those present at this meeting to assess the interest that the various organisations would have in such a proposed body. The response, though somewhat guarded at first, was generally positive, and so the Buddhist Council of N.S.W. was born. It was not until June, 1985, that a Constitution for the Council, acceptable to the diversity of its member organisations, was ratified and the inaugural Annual General meeting was held. During its relatively short history, the Council has gained the respect and support of not only the members of the Buddhist community but especially that of both the Commonwealth and State Governments. The Council provides assistance and advice to the Buddhist community generally, but the bulk of its work involves special support to the needs of the ethnic Buddhist communities. Council, currently, is the co-ordinating body for the organisation and resource supply for the teaching of Dharma to Buddhist students in N.S.W. State Schools. Combined Vesak celebrations have been organised each year, with the exception of 1990, to bring together, in a greater spirit of understanding, the many traditions that comprise the Sydney Buddhist community. The Council has also organised Seminars, the most notable of which was that held at the University of Sydney in 1986, the International Year of Peace. It was called "A Strategy for Peace" and involved a two day festival of Dharma lectures, meditation practice, an exhibition and a food fair. The Council maintains liaison with various Government Departments and acts as a lobby group to promote the rights and interests of all Buddhists.

Another very active organisation, formed in the early 1980's, with its headquarters in the Wollongong area, south of Sydney, was the Buddha Sasana Association of Australia. This organisation is the main focus for the practise of Satipatthana Vipassana meditation in New South Wales. It is affiliated with the Mahasi Meditation Centre in Rangoon, Burma, and the head of that centre, Ven. Sayadaw U Pandita Bhivamsa, regularly visits Australia to conduct lengthy retreats in Vipassana

practice. The Association also conducts regular meditation sittings at its regional centres throughout New South Wales at Sydney, Byron Bay, Blue Mountains, Bundanoon and in the National Capital, Canberra.

June, 1985 saw the arrival of Venerable Mahinda, who had a long association with both the Buddhist Missionary Society in Kuala Lumpur and the Singapore Buddhist Mission, on a one month missionary lecture tour of the eastern States of Australia. Whilst here, he realised the fertile ground ready for cultivating the Dhamma. An application was lodged, prior to his return to Malaysia, for his permanent residence visa. This was granted and he returned in July, 1986. He was appointed Bhikkhu in Charge of the Hock Cheng See Buddhist Vihara at Ambarvale, a suburb of Campbelltown, south of Sydney. This Vihara had previously been purchased by some monks from Malacca, Malaysia and the trustees had invited Ven. Mahinda to use it as his residence. It was in August, 1986, that Venerable Mahinda suggested that an Australian Buddhist Mission could be set up on similar lines to the B.M.S. and the Singapore Buddhist Mission. During its formative years the Mission has organised several meditation retreats, Buddhist Youth Camps with participants from several ethnic groups including Australian born, Burmese, Cambodian, Malaysians, Sri Lankans and Vietnamese. The aim of the camps was not only to plant the seeds of Dhamma so that future Bodhi trees might grow but to promote mutual understanding and friendship among the diverse groups who make up our multi-cultural Australian community. The Mission's main aim is to complement rather than to duplicate the activities already being so ably performed by the other Buddhist organisations. In 1989, the Mission sponsored a two year missionary tour of one of Thailand's great meditation masters, Venerable Phra Acharn Yantra. In 1990, a generous donor offered Phra Acharn Yantra one hundred acres of land in Bundanoon, in the Southern Highlands, so that a retreat centre in the Thai forest tradition could be established in Australia. This new centre is known as Sunnyatarama Forest Monastery - Bundanoon and monks from Sunnyatarama Forest Monastery in Thailand have taken up residence there. In 1990, the Mission held a two day 'Vesak - 90' Seminar and Exhibition at the University of Sydney, attracting over 1000 visitors over the two days.

In 1987, Sydney's small Burmese community rented a cottage at North Parramatta to serve as a temporary Buddhist Vihara (monk's residence and place of worship) as the first step towards establishing a permanent Burmese temple in the Sydney area. The Abbot, Venerable Sayadaw U Zagarabhivamsa, took up residence there in January, 1988. He is a highly respected teacher and scholar, being formerly a professor of Abhidhamma and Pali language at Nalanda Buddhist Institute in India. In 1989, larger premises were purchased by the Burmese Buddhist Society at Merrylands, also in the Parramatta district from where it currently conducts its activities.

Realising the significant position that the Buddhist community now commands in Sydney, the then Premier of

New South Wales, the Hon. Barrie Unsworth, M.P. held a special reception on Thursday, 16th of July, 1987 at the State Office Block to meet members of the Sangha and representatives of the many Buddhist ethnic communities. In his speech of welcome, the Premier said:  
Yours is an ancient philosophy that has had a beneficial influence on the development of the world. As a movement for peace, moderation and tolerance, you have always been and remain contemporary. That is why you are most welcome in New South Wales, as fellow citizens and as seekers and teachers of truth. I understand that the teachings of Buddha denounce the caste system, war, slavery and the taking of life in any form. His teachings on morality, mental discipline and wisdom have never been fundamentally altered. As followers of his Path, you bring to your new life in New South Wales that same spirit of tolerance, gentleness and kindness that has continued through more than two and a half thousand years of your culture. That spirit is entirely complementary to the path of multi-culturalism that I see as the future of this State. Let me conclude by repeating my welcome to you all tonight. It gives me great pleasure to see our multi-cultural Buddhist community gathered here, at the very centre of Government of our multi-cultural State.

In 1986 and again in 1991, a census was conducted throughout Australia by the Commonwealth Government's Bureau of Statistics. The only question, however, that was not compulsory to answer was that pertaining to religion. This leaves some doubt as to the accuracy of the final figures which could be well and truly understated. The census revealed that in 1986, 80,837 people claimed Buddhism as their religion. However, in 1991 the result showed an increase to 139,847, placing the Buddhists as being 0.8% of the Australian population and 0.1% of the New South Wales population making Buddhism the third major religion, after Christianity and Islam. In New South Wales in 1986, 35,114 people claimed to be Buddhists, of which 12,951 were of Vietnamese origin. 40% of the Buddhist population of Australia lives in New South Wales.

Despite its rather shaky beginnings and occasionally shaky progress, Buddhism in New South Wales has, at last, taken root and its future, or should I say many futures, seems assured.

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