In this very readable text, filled with marvelously synthesized historical details, Anne Blackburn presents an invigorating approach to the history of nineteenth century colonial Sri Lankan Buddhism. In so doing, Blackburn answers the following questions: how did nineteenth century Sri Lankan Buddhists challenge social and economic changes while keeping the integrity of the Buddhist tradition? Who was responsible for uniting Southeast Asian nations to work together for their common interest, the preservation of Buddhist values and practices? Most importantly, how did they respond to the political, religious, and Western-oriented educational discourses presented by their wealthy Christian rivals? With these questions, Blackburn explores one of the most influential and pioneering Buddhist monks of the nineteenth century, Hikkauvē Sumaga Thero (1827-1911), investigating the socio-cultural obligations and religious responsibilities through which he made his life and his monastic activities. In *The Location of Buddhism*, Blackburn reveals much-needed biographical details of a great educator and social activist, who had played various pivotal roles in Sri Lanka in particular and Southeast Asia in general.

The book has six fascinating chapters, each containing thought-provoking historical memories of Hikkauvē’s tireless works such as his great passion for education, textual productions, anti-Christian activities, and intramonastic debate. While explaining the details of Hikkauvē’s religious life and his social responsibilities, Blackburn devotes the first chapter to assessing two specific issues: the biographical events that brought him to become the chief priest of Sri Pada, or ‘Adam’s Peak’, and the historical discourses of the last half of the nineteenth century in Sri Lanka from the colonial perspective. The book reveals that debates between Buddhists and Buddhists and Christians contributed to the Buddhist monastic prowess and monastic scholarship. Blackburn rightly observes that the consequences of colonial rule lay in the British removal of a local Buddhist king and Christians attack on Buddhist practices and
authoritative texts. These resulted in public anti-Christian preaching and Buddhist-Christian debates (18/205). Blackburn argues that the intensification of racial hierarchies with the Christian presence made Buddhists profoundly anxious and antagonistic.

Of particular concern in the second chapter are the logistics of Hickauvē’s intellectual and institutional activities and the need for Buddhist institutions and organizations to mount a challenge to Christian educational systems, particularly English medium intuition introduced by the Christian missionaries. Among the many monastic institutions established in the early nineteenth century, Vidyodaya Pirive a occupied a prominent place and still continues to play the same role in modern Sri Lankan education. After its establishment, Vidyodaya Pirive a immediately became the primary monastic institution in the suburb of Colombo, where Hickauvē was appointed as the principal (ādhipati). Despite the fact that it was initially a private monastic institution, it soon received government grants and support. Still, it continually resisted government intervention and the influence of broader European-oriented discourses (57). Vidyodaya Pirive a was famous for its emphasis on the study of Sri Lankan history, medicine, astrology, and astronomy as well as oriental literature and languages such as Sanskrit, Pāli, and Sinhala.

Born early in the first century of European colonialism, Hickauvē certainly reflected his location as an intellectual Buddhist monk. Appropriately appreciating Hickauvē’s academic erudition, Blackburn remarks that “The emergent expectations of colonial historiographies and ethnologies, as well as Buddhological studies, were all a part of Hickauvē’s milieu (70).” With this remark, in chapter three, Blackburn explores in depth the intellectual world of nineteenth century Sri Lankan Buddhist scholarship under British rule, focusing particularly on Hickauvē’s three most important public circumstances: his scholarly intellectual projects, Buddhist textual production, and his explicit involvement in monastic caste politic. Blackburn begins with Sir William Gregory’s (1812-92) interest in the chronicle history of ancient Sri Lanka, particularly Sinhalese historical narrative poetry, Mahāvāsa. Having become governor of British Ceylon (Sri Lanka) between 1872 and 1877, Gregory asked Hickauvē to collect, edit,
and publish Mahāvāsa. In 1877, Hikka uvē and his close colleague, Pandit Ba uvantu āvē, completed the task, including revisions for a Pāli edition of chapters 37-1-1 in Sinhala scripts. Both the Pāli edition and Sinhala translation were dedicated to Sir William Gregory. In the preface Hikka uvē heavily criticized the orientalist bias of scholarship on Buddhism demonstrated by scholars like Johan Hendrick C. Kern and Hermann Oldenberg. In Hikka uvē’s opinion, they failed to understand chronologies of Buddhist history.

Perhaps one of the most controversial of Hikka uvē’s monastic activities was his participation in the delicate world of monastic caste politics (79). Presenting a thorough investigation of the debates of hierarchical caste politic, which contributed to a variety of struggles within the monastic fraternity in mid-nineteenth century Sri Lanka, Blackburn further explores the issue of the monastic dress and discipline. By raising the question of proper monastic dress, according to Blackburn, Hikka uvē tried to rectify the monastic order through disciplinary reform.

Interested in the idea of reviving Buddhism through modernization while resisting European empirical power and resisting Christian missionary activities, the fourth chapter offers another investigation on Hikka uvē’s two closest lay associates, Henry Steele Olcott (1832-1907), a theosopher and co-founder of the Theosophical Society, and Don David Hēvāvitāra a, later popularly known as Anagarika Dharmapāla. The colonial situation offered the opportunity for Westerners to travel to Asia and spread Christian ideas but, in contrast, some Europeans and North Americans developed an interest in Asian spirituality and philosophy, enabling them to assist local Buddhist modernists/reformers in arguing against Christian Missionaries. Henry Steele Olcott, originally from New York, fit the latter category.

Colonel Olcott was a major revivalist in Sri Lankan Buddhist history. For his efforts in helping Sri Lanka gain national independence, he is honored with the most prestigious title of the White Bodhisattva. Sri Lankans still commemorate his anniversary
According to Blackburn, “Olcott himself generated considerable interest as a likely ally against Christian missionaries on the Island, especially since his white skin and nonnative status were expected to strengthen the power and effectiveness of his anti-Christian stance” (105). The Location of Buddhism also reveals two contradictory understandings of Buddhism: the local or traditional understanding, and Olcott’s. Olcott saw Buddhism through orientalist accounts and Protestant ideals, stressing that true Buddhism has nothing to do with prayers, deity worship, rites, and rituals (107). Despite ideological differences between Hikkauvē and Olcott, both worked together for the promotion, through print media and public engagement, and protection of Buddhism against colonial powers. In rest of the chapter, Blackburn briefly reiterates Dharmapāla’s hagiography and his personal and emotional correspondences with Hikkauvē, but more importantly his pioneering endeavors to widen Buddhist social networks and extend regional boundaries to Britain, America, Europe, Japan, India, and other parts of Southeast Asia. Anagarika Dharmapāla is portrayed as neither monk nor a layperson. Instead, Blackburn uses the word “laicization” to emphasize the interconnection between the monks and laity, lay and lay-monastic associations, and their collective activism and organization.

During colonial rule, the shared sense of traumatic apprehension in Sri Lanka, Burma and Cambodia was culturally and religiously destructive. To protect Buddhist values and ideas, and hence Buddhism, the people often sought each other’s assistance. The fourth chapter of Location of Buddhism further investigates the religious world of Southern Asia through the concepts of śāsana and empire. The term ‘śāsana’ originally refers to the Buddhist dispensation, but in this context it is exclusively used as physical space, an idiom for social, religious, and devotional purposes. Despite cultural and language differences, it was the ‘śāsana’ that brought South and Southeast Asia united. Hikkauvē was instrumental in bringing together the royal families/courts, monastic leaderships, and wealthy people in a common sense of bondage and, perhaps, Buddhist brotherhood. For his success and popularity, not only among the native Sri Lankans but

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also beyond Sri Lanka territory, Hikka uvē appears to have received many donations (190). Blackburn covers all aspects of Hikka uvē’s activities except the issue of monastic wealth.

The pre-colonial history of Sri Lanka shows that monks from Burma and Thailand used to take ordination from Sri Lanka. This tradition changed during colonial rule. Instead, as Blackburn demonstrates, Sri Lankan monks sought proper ordination from Thailand and Burma. Accordingly, Sri Lanka was left with three different monastic orders – Amarapura Nikāya brought from Upper Burma, Siam Dhammayuttika Nikāya from Thailand, and Ramañña Nikāya from Lower Burma – which led to the politicization of nineteenth century Sri Lankan Buddhist monastic historical discourses (165). Blackburn’s argument makes one realize that even monks are not above worldly motives such as jealousy, anger, and pride.

At the end of the book, Blackburn suggests an innovative method of studying colonial Buddhist discourses and the impact of colonialism on societies, reiterating the difficulties associated with the categorical frameworks used by her predecessors, who insist on “Protestant Buddhism,” “Buddhist Revival,” and “Buddhist Modernization.” What alternative categories are left for Buddhist anthropologists and South and Southeast Asian colonial historians? Blackburn stresses that one can selectively pick to study spheres of intellectual and social activities in a colonial-periodic historical context emphatically marked by the presence of colonial discourse rather then looking at intellectual and social responses to colonialism (201). An example can be found in her micro-level examination of Hikka uvē’s social actions, institutional activities, scholasticism, and his ability to interact successfully with other colonial Buddhist worlds. Whether her suggestion can be valid theoretical solution to the colonial study of Buddhism remains an open question.

As indicated above, one criticism of Blackburn’s book looks at to the topic of the “monastic wealth management.” She fails to look at Hikka uvē’s personal dispositions
of wealth, as Rachelle M. Scott has done with other monks.\(^2\) The inclusion of this fact would make the book much stronger and more complete. Why does the author not include this issue? Are there larger theoretical prejudices which keep the author from being sensitive to it? More importantly, Sri Lanka played a crucial role developing and reviving Theravāda Buddhism in Nepal.\(^3\) This being the case, I also expected to see Hikka uvē’s role in disseminating Theravāda Buddhism to Nepal.

The overall strength of Blackburn’s work, however, is excellent. It is well organized, well written, and rich in both details and insight. It will remain a landmark text for many years in the field of Theravāda Buddhist studies. Most importantly, it is compelling and enjoyable to any one who studies colonial history, colonial Buddhist discourses, South Asian studies, and Buddhist monastic discourses.

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