

Decentering Buddhist Modernism : Indonesia's 'Quiet Revival' and Its Transnational Foundations

Ms. Latifah

efi.latifah@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0667-3532>

Abstract

This review examines Yulianti's groundbreaking study of Indonesian Buddhism (1900-1959), which redefines Buddhist revivalism through the lens of "quiet revivalism"—a lay-led, transnational process distinct from nationalist or monastic-centric models. The book's innovative approach reveals how Peranakan Chinese mediators, Theosophical Society networks, and material culture transformations facilitated Indonesia's unique Buddhist modernity. Key contributions include decentralizing Eurocentric narratives and advancing gendered analyses of religious agency. The study opens new avenues for research on post-1959 developments and interreligious dynamics.

Keywords : Buddhist modernity, Chinese diaspora, gender , Indonesia, postcolonial religion, religion, sacred space, transnational networks

Yulianti. The Making of Buddhism in Modern Indonesia: South and Southeast Asian Networks and Agencies, 1900-1959. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2024. xii + 324 pp. (Volume 10 in Global Connections: Routes and Roots series). ISBN: 978-90-8728-394-0.

1. Introduction

Yulianti's "The Making of Buddhism in Modern Indonesia: South and Southeast Asian Networks and Agencies, 1900-1959" arrives as a seminal work, its authority deeply rooted in the author's uniquely qualified academic trajectory. Her expertise is built upon a rare foundation: an immersive, insider's understanding of Theravada Buddhism gained through a B.A. in Buddha Dhamma from Myanmar's International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University, complemented by rigorous interdisciplinary training from dual M.A. degrees in Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies from Universitas Gadjah Mada and Religious Studies from Florida International University. This potent combination of doctrinal knowledge and socio-analytical skill is further refined by her Ph.D. in History from Universiteit Leiden, where her doctoral research—the very basis of this monograph—specifically investigated the transnational networks and Chinese agency central to Buddhism's formation in modern Indonesia. Now an assistant professor at UGM, Yulianti's sustained research focus on this niche, evidenced by prior publications on Buddhist organizations and maritime connections, positions her as the preeminent scholar to navigate the complex interplay of local and global forces that defined this historical process.

Yulianti's monograph fills a critical gap in the study of Southeast Asian religions by offering the first comprehensive examination of modern Indonesian Buddhism's development. While Buddhist revivalism in neighboring regions like Sri Lanka and Burma has been extensively documented—particularly in relation to anti-colonial nationalism and state-sponsored monastic reforms (Foxeus, 2019; Sangapala & Perera, 2023)—Indonesia's distinct trajectory has remained largely overlooked. The archipelago's Buddhist revival, characterized by decentralized lay movements and cross-cultural synthesis, challenges dominant narratives that privilege centralized religious authority or state-led institutionalization. By centering Indonesia's unique socio-religious landscape, Yulianti's work compels a reevaluation of how Buddhist modernity manifested in pluralistic, colonial contexts.

Yulianti's book *The Making of Buddhism in Modern Indonesia: South and Southeast Asian Networks and Agencies, 1900–1959* (Leiden University, 2020)

offers a significant contribution to the study of Indonesian and Southeast Asian Buddhism. The work challenges the dominant narrative that Buddhism in Indonesia only re-emerged after the 1950s under Ashin Jinārakkhita, instead demonstrating that its foundations were laid in the colonial period through transnational networks linking Indonesia with Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and Theosophical circles. By foregrounding the agency of Peranakan Chinese communities, women such as Visakha Gunadharma, and local lay actors, the dissertation moves beyond monk-centered accounts and highlights the importance of grassroots initiatives. Particularly valuable is its analysis of the “re-sacralization” of *klenteng* and Borobudur, and of how Vesak celebrations functioned as performative assertions of modern Buddhist identity.

Organized into seven chapters, the study systematically situates Indonesian Buddhism within global Buddhist modernism, emphasizing rationalist reinterpretations, the blending of Mahayana and Theravada traditions, and the pivotal role of print culture. Its transnational perspective enriches the historiography of Southeast Asian Buddhism by drawing attention to the circulation of texts, rituals, and missionary monks, while also tracing continuities between the colonial and post-independence periods.

Despite its strengths, the book could be critiqued for devoting more attention to elite and urban networks—such as Peranakan intellectuals and Theosophical figures—than to rural or popular expressions of Buddhism. While its transnational framing is convincing, the analysis occasionally risks underplaying the local religious dynamics and interfaith encounters that also shaped Indonesian Buddhism. Additionally, the treatment of state involvement in the 1950s, though acknowledged, remains relatively brief compared to the rich discussions of earlier decades.

Overall, Yulianti’s work represents a pioneering and well-researched study that broadens our understanding of Indonesian Buddhism as a product of both global flows and local agency. It is a valuable resource for scholars of religion, Southeast Asian history, and Buddhist modernism.

The book’s central thesis posits that transnational networks, rather than state actors or monastic institutions, drove what Yulianti terms the “quiet revivalism” of Indonesian Buddhism between 1900 and 1959. This revival was neither a top-down reform nor a reactionary anti-colonial movement, but rather an organic process facilitated by lay Peranakan Chinese intellectuals, Theosophical Society members, and Sri Lankan missionary monks. Such an argument disrupts conventional

frameworks that equate religious revival with either nationalist mobilization or clerical leadership, offering instead a model of religious change shaped by diasporic connections and vernacular adaptations. The emphasis on transnationalism also highlights Indonesia's role as a node in broader Asian Buddhist networks, countering perceptions of the archipelago as peripheral to Theravada-dominated narratives.

Methodologically, the monograph innovates by synthesizing archival research with vernacular sources often excluded from colonial-era religious historiography. Yulianti draws on Dutch colonial records, Chinese-Malay periodicals like *Sam Kauw Gwat Po*, and oral histories to reconstruct the lived experiences of lay Buddhists—a perspective absent in state-centric or monastic chronicles. This approach not only recovers marginalized voices but also reveals how religious knowledge was produced and circulated outside formal institutions. The analysis of material culture (e.g., *klenteng* architecture, ritual objects) further bridges the gap between textual and ethnographic studies, providing a multidimensional view of Buddhist practice.

This review evaluates the book's empirical and theoretical contributions to Buddhist studies and postcolonial religious history. Yulianti's findings complicate secularization theories by demonstrating how colonial modernity unexpectedly fostered religious revival through print capitalism and intercultural exchange. The work also advances debates about gendered agency in Buddhism, illustrating how Peranakan Chinese women like Visakha Gunadharma negotiated authority within patriarchal structures. By situating Indonesia's Buddhist revival within regional and global dynamics while retaining local specificity, the monograph sets a new standard for the study of religious modernity in maritime Southeast Asia.

2. Transnational Networks, Gendered Agency, and Postcolonial Institutionalization

2.1 Transnational Networks as Catalysts

The revival and institutionalization of Buddhism in modern Indonesia (1900–1959) was fundamentally shaped by transnational networks that connected the archipelago to broader Buddhist communities in South and Southeast Asia. Unlike the anti-colonial nationalist movements that characterized Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka or Burma, Indonesia's Buddhist resurgence emerged through decentralized, cross-regional exchanges facilitated by three primary actors: the Theosophical Society, the Java Buddhist Association (JBA), and Peranakan Chinese communities (Yulianti, 2024).

The Theosophical Society served as a crucial conduit for introducing modernist Theravada Buddhism to Indonesia. Through its Sri Lankan connections, the Society promoted a rationalist interpretation of Buddhism that emphasized compatibility with science, an approach championed by figures like Henry Steel Olcott and Annie Besant (Niwandhono, 2017; McMahan, 2004). Dutch and Javanese Theosophists disseminated these ideas via public lectures, publications, and the symbolic reclamation of Borobudur as a sacred Buddhist site. The Society's networks also enabled the pivotal 1934 visit of Sri Lankan monk Bhikkhu Narada, which significantly advanced the institutionalization of Theravada practices in Indonesia (Yulianti, 2024).

Parallel to these developments, the Java Buddhist Association (JBA) established connections with Burmese Buddhist traditions. Founded by European Buddhists E.E. Power and Willem Josias van Dienst—the latter ordained in Thaton, Burma—the JBA worked to align Indonesian Buddhism with Theravada orthodoxy despite limited resources (Yulianti, 2024). Through publications like *Nama Buddhaya* and efforts to standardize practices such as Vesak celebrations, the JBA reinforced Indonesian ties to broader Theravada networks, particularly in Burma and Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, Peranakan Chinese communities mediated between Chinese Mahayana traditions and newly introduced Theravada teachings. Influential figures like Kwee Tek Hoay and Visakha Gunadharma promoted a reformist Buddhism that sought to purify Chinese Buddhist practices while maintaining syncretic elements (Yulianti, 2024). Their work, often disseminated through publications such as *Moestika Dharma*, facilitated the adaptation of Theravada Buddhism to local Indonesian contexts.

These transnational networks collectively transformed Indonesia's religious landscape by introducing new doctrinal interpretations, organizational models, and ritual practices. The resacralization of Borobudur and the transformation of Chinese *klenteng* into Buddhist centers exemplify how physical spaces were reconfigured to accommodate these emerging Buddhist identities (Yulianti, 2024). By tracing these connections, Yulianti demonstrates how Indonesian Buddhism developed through dynamic interactions between regional influences and local adaptations, rather than through isolated or state-directed efforts.

2.2 Gendered and Lay Agency in Buddhist Revival

This study makes a significant contribution by shifting scholarly focus from monastic-centric narratives to examine the crucial roles of lay actors, particularly

Peranakan Chinese women, in colonial Indonesia's Buddhist revival. Challenging historiographical biases that equate religious authority solely with ordained male leadership, the analysis reveals the grassroots nature of this religious transformation through women's intellectual and organizational labor.

The active participation of women like Visakha Gunadharma exemplifies this gendered agency. As a key figure in the Batavia Buddhist Association (BBA), Gunadharma bridged linguistic and cultural divides by translating Buddhist texts into Malay, organizing lectures, and serving as interpreter for visiting monks like Bhikkhu Narada. Her multifaceted leadership demonstrates how laywomen shaped religious discourse through textual production, education, and institutional participation - challenging the notion that male monastics monopolized religious authority.

This Indonesian case reflects broader patterns across Asian Buddhist revivals, where laywomen's influence operates within established patriarchal frameworks rather than opposing them. In Sri Lanka, women gain religious legitimacy by reinforcing maternal roles aligned with nationalist visions of a "righteous society" (Gajaweera, 2020), while Tibetan women navigate tensions between cultural preservation and economic modernization (Friedman, 2009). These cases collectively reveal how women's agency is exercised through negotiation with, rather than rejection of, existing gender hierarchies.

A persistent dichotomy emerges across these contexts: while male monastics derive authority from institutional hierarchies and textual mastery, laywomen's power manifests through embodied practices and community networks. In Sri Lanka, women sustain revival movements as moral caretakers and temple organizers (Gajaweera, 2020), just as Peranakan Chinese women did through translation work. This gendered division of labor creates a paradox: though women constitute the majority of practitioners and provide material support, their contributions remain structurally subordinate to male monastic leadership.

The analysis ultimately reveals a fundamental paradox within Buddhist revival movements: their capacity to simultaneously transform and conserve gender norms. While these movements often create spaces for women's increased participation in religious life—through leadership roles in lay organizations, textual production, or educational initiatives—they rarely dismantle the underlying patriarchal structures of religious authority. Instead, women's agency is typically channeled through culturally legitimized roles that align with traditional expectations of femininity, such as nurturing, teaching, or preserving cultural heritage. This dynamic suggests

that religious revival, even when progressive in expanding women's visibility, often operates within predefined gendered boundaries.

From colonial Indonesia to contemporary Tibet, case studies demonstrate how women's roles in Buddhist revival remain both vital and constrained. In Indonesia, figures like Visakha Gunadharma exercised influence through translation work and lay leadership, yet their authority rarely challenged male monastic dominance. Similarly, in Tibetan communities, women navigate revivalism by balancing spiritual activism with culturally expected roles as mothers and cultural custodians (Friedman, 2009). These cross-regional parallels underscore how Buddhist modernization selectively incorporates women's participation while maintaining institutionalized gender hierarchies. The persistence of these patterns across diverse contexts indicates that religious change is often negotiated through, rather than against, existing social frameworks.

This tension between innovation and tradition has broader implications for theorizing religious modernization. The cases illustrate that women's agency in Buddhist revival movements is not a linear progression toward egalitarianism but a complex negotiation of empowerment within constraint. While women gain new platforms for religious expression, their influence remains contingent on performing roles that uphold communal ideals of gender propriety. Such findings complicate narratives of religious modernization as inherently liberatory, revealing instead how revival movements can simultaneously challenge and reinforce traditional norms. Ultimately, these dynamics highlight the need for more nuanced frameworks that account for both the transformative potential and the structural limitations of women's participation in religious change.

2.3 Postcolonial Institutionalization and the Transformation of Indonesian Buddhism

The book's examination of Buddhism in 1950s Indonesia reveals a complex interplay of continuity and change, where colonial-era networks persisted even as new structures emerged in the post-independence period. One of the most striking continuities was the enduring influence of transnational connections that had been established during colonial rule. The Theosophical Society, which had introduced modernist Theravada Buddhism to Java in the early 20th century, continued to shape religious discourse in the 1950s. Similarly, the Java Buddhist Association's ties with Burmese and Sri Lankan monastic communities remained vital, facilitating the flow of ideas, rituals, and institutional models into Indonesia. These connections were not

severed by independence; instead, they were reconfigured to serve the needs of a newly sovereign nation.

A key figure embodying this hybridity was Ashin Jinarakkhita, whose ordination as Indonesia's first Theravada monk in Burma in 1954 symbolized the fusion of multiple religious identities. As a Peranakan Chinese who had initially trained in Mahayana Buddhism, Ashin Jinarakkhita's journey reflected the adaptive nature of Indonesian Buddhism, which drew from both Chinese syncretic traditions and Southern Buddhist orthodoxy. His role in institutionalizing Theravada practices—such as meditation techniques and Pali-based rituals—highlighted how postcolonial Buddhism was shaped by cross-regional exchanges. Moreover, his leadership in organizations like the *Gabungan Sam Kauw Indonesia* (GSKI) demonstrated the ongoing relevance of colonial-era networks in the new nation-state.

The formalization of Vesak as a national ritual at Borobudur further illustrated the interplay between continuity and change. The temple, which had been re-sacralized as a Buddhist site during the colonial period, became a focal point for post-independence religious expression. The grand Vesak celebrations held there in the 1950s were modeled after Sri Lankan traditions, yet they also incorporated local Javanese elements, creating a uniquely Indonesian form of Buddhist practice. These events were not merely religious observances but also political statements, designed to assert Buddhism's legitimacy in the eyes of the state. By inviting international dignitaries and government officials, Buddhist leaders like Ashin Jinarakkhita sought to align their faith with the nationalist project, ensuring its recognition as an "official" religion under Indonesia's 1952 regulations.

The 1950s marked a period of intensified engagement with regional and global Buddhist networks, which played a crucial role in shaping Indonesian Buddhism. The founding of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) in 1950 provided a platform for Indonesian Buddhists to participate in international dialogues, reinforcing the legitimacy of Theravada practices. This global connectivity was mirrored at the local level, where monastic communities from Sri Lanka and Thailand collaborated with Indonesian leaders to establish new religious institutions. The ordination of Ashin Jinarakkhita in Burma exemplified this trend, as it linked Borobudur's transformation into a site for international Vesak ceremonies further underscored Indonesia's place within a transnational Buddhist geography. The temple, once a symbol of Java's ancient Hindu-Buddhist past, was now reimagined as a living center of modern Buddhist practice. This reconfiguration of sacred space was not merely symbolic; it had tangible effects on religious life, as pilgrims and practitioners from

across Asia gathered at Borobudur to celebrate Vesak. These events highlighted the enduring influence of colonial-era networks while also showcasing the innovative ways in which Indonesian Buddhists adapted global traditions to local contexts.

Yulianti's work illustrates that Indonesian Buddhism was not a static tradition but a dynamic product of cross-regional exchanges. The interplay between Sri Lankan modernism, Burmese monasticism, Chinese syncretism, and local Javanese spirituality created a unique religious landscape that defied simple categorization. By tracing these networks, the book challenges nation-centric narratives of religious revival, instead highlighting how border-crossing connections—mediated by colonial and postcolonial actors—fundamentally shaped Buddhism's revival and redefinition in Indonesia.

This perspective enriches broader discussions on religious globalization, demonstrating how Southeast Asia's interconnected histories influenced the development of modern Buddhism beyond formal institutional boundaries. The story of Indonesian Buddhism in the 1950s is one of continuity and change, where colonial legacies were repurposed for postcolonial needs, and where local and global forces converged to create a vibrant, hybrid religious tradition. Through meticulous archival research and nuanced analysis, Yulianti's work offers a compelling framework for understanding the transnational dimensions of religious change in modern Indonesia.

3. Reflections on Buddhist Modernity in Postcolonial

3.1 Indonesia

This study offers valuable perspectives on religious transformation in postcolonial Southeast Asia through its thoughtful examination of how Indonesian Buddhism developed between colonial influences and nationalist visions. The work's most significant contribution emerges from its careful analysis of transnational connections, particularly through key figures like Ashin Jinarakkhita and organizations including the Theosophical Society, which facilitated meaningful exchanges of ideas across Asian Buddhist communities. By tracing these intercultural dialogues, the author presents a compelling alternative to conventional narratives that separate local religious developments from global influences, instead revealing the creative processes of adaptation that characterized this period. The insightful discussion of Borobudur's evolution from historical monument to active sacred space provides particularly illuminating perspectives on how religious heritage and contemporary practice merged in the postcolonial context.

While achieving these important insights, the study also opens several avenues for further exploration. The emphasis on institutional networks and Javanese contexts, while providing a necessary foundation for understanding formal structures, invites additional research into diverse Buddhist experiences across Indonesia's regions. The rich documentary evidence drawn from organizational records could be complemented in future studies by attention to more personal accounts that might reveal everyday religious life. Ending the narrative in 1959 leaves room for scholars to examine how these formative developments influenced later religious expressions during Indonesia's New Order period. The conceptual framework, while effectively mapping transnational exchanges, could be enhanced by deeper consideration of how communities themselves understood and negotiated ideas of tradition and modernity.

These opportunities for expanded inquiry should not overshadow the study's substantial scholarly achievements. The work makes notable contributions across multiple disciplines, bringing fresh perspectives to postcolonial religious studies by moving beyond simple categorizations of cultural influence. Its interdisciplinary approach advances our understanding of Southeast Asia's interconnected religious histories while thoughtfully acknowledging women's contributions to Buddhist institutional development. Perhaps most importantly, the study demonstrates how religious traditions flourish through intercultural exchange rather than isolation, offering a valuable model for examining similar processes of cultural adaptation. Future research can productively build on this foundation by exploring regional variations, extending the historical timeline, and developing comparative frameworks - all possibilities made visible by this important work. Ultimately, this study not only deepens our understanding of Indonesian Buddhism's postcolonial journey but also inspires new ways of thinking about religious modernity in our interconnected world.

4. Conclusion

Yulianti's *The Making of Buddhism in Modern Indonesia* fundamentally reorients scholarly understanding of religious revival in Southeast Asia by centering Indonesia's distinctive trajectory of Buddhist modernism. The study's most transformative contribution lies in its decolonization of Buddhist historiography, dismantling Eurocentric and nation-state frameworks that have long dominated studies of religious modernity. By foregrounding Indonesia's "quiet revival"—a lay-led, transnational process of adaptation rather than a clerically driven or nationalist movement—the work reveals how Buddhist institutionalization flourished through decentralized networks of Peranakan Chinese intellectuals, Theosophists, and missionary monks. This paradigm challenges conventional narratives that equate

religious revival with anti-colonial resistance or state-sponsored reform, offering instead a model of religious change rooted in diasporic connections and vernacular creativity. The meticulous reconstruction of cross-regional exchanges—from Sri Lankan modernist influences to Burmese monastic lineages—demonstrates how Indonesian Buddhism emerged as a hybrid tradition, negotiating between Theravada orthodoxy, Chinese Mahayana practices, and Javanese spiritual sensibilities.

The monograph's interdisciplinary methodology sets a new standard for studying religious transnationalism. By synthesizing Dutch colonial archives, Chinese-Malay periodicals, and material culture analysis, Yulianti illuminates previously marginalized dimensions of Buddhist revival, particularly the gendered agency of laywomen like Visakha Gunadharma. The focus on Borobudur's re-sacralization exemplifies the work's innovative spatial analysis, showing how sacred geography became a contested site for postcolonial identity formation. These methodological choices not only recover subaltern voices but also reframe Buddhist modernity as a lived experience shaped by print capitalism, ritual innovation, and intercultural dialogue. However, the study's institutional focus, while providing crucial documentation of organizational networks, inadvertently reproduces certain elisions. The relative absence of rural practitioners, non-Javanese communities, and intra-Buddhist tensions points to fertile ground for future research that could further decentralize the narrative.

Conceptually, the work advances three key interventions in Buddhist studies. First, it complicates secularization theories by demonstrating how colonial modernity unexpectedly fostered religious revival through transnational print networks and intellectual exchange. Second, it recalibrates gender studies in Buddhism by illustrating how Peranakan Chinese women exercised authority through translation, education, and community leadership—roles that simultaneously challenged and reinforced patriarchal structures. Third, it redefines “religious institutionalization” as a process driven by lay actors and material practices rather than solely by monastic elites or state policies. These contributions resonate beyond Indonesian studies, offering comparative insights for understanding religious change in pluralistic societies across the Global South.

The study's 1959 endpoint, while justified by its focus on foundational developments, invites scholarly extension into the New Order period. Future research might explore how Sukarno's Nasakom ideology or Suharto's Pancasila framework appropriated or constrained the Buddhist institutional models analyzed here. Comparative studies could also examine parallels with Theravada revivals in Cambodia or Vietnam, where transnational networks similarly intersected with

postcolonial nation-building. Most pressingly, the work underscores the need for ethnographic engagement with contemporary Indonesian Buddhists to trace how these historical adaptations manifest in present-day practice.

Ultimately, Yulianti's monograph transcends its regional focus to offer a generative framework for studying religious modernity as a transnational phenomenon. By centering Indonesia's pluralistic context, the work challenges hegemonic narratives that privilege monolithic notions of Buddhist reform. Its greatest legacy may be its demonstration of how religious traditions evolve not through isolation or imposition, but through continuous negotiation—a process where laywomen translate texts, diasporic communities bridge traditions, and sacred sites become palimpsests of meaning. In an era of renewed interest in decolonial approaches to religious history, *The Making of Buddhism in Modern Indonesia* stands as both a model of scholarly rigor and an invitation to further explore the interconnected histories that have shaped Buddhism's diverse modernities. The work not only fills a critical gap in Southeast Asian studies but also compels scholars to rethink the very categories—local/global, traditional/modern, elite/popular—through which we narrate the dynamic lives of religions in the postcolonial world.

References

- Foxeus, N. (2023). Buddhist nationalist sermons in Myanmar: anti-Muslim moral panic, conspiracy theories, and socio-cultural legacies. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 53(3), 423-449.
- Friedman, S.A. (2009). The violence of liberation: gender and tibetan buddhist revival in post-mao china. *China Journal*, 130.
- Gajaweera, N. (2020). The mothers of the righteous society: lay buddhist women as agents of the Sinhala nationalist imaginary. *Journal of Global Buddhism*, 21, 187-204.
- McMahan, D.L. (2004). Modernity and the early discourse of scientific buddhism. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 72, 897-933.
- Niwandhono, P. (2014). Gerakan teosofi dan pengaruhnya terhadap kaum priyayi nasionalis jawa 1912-1926. *Lembaran Sejarah*, 11(1), 25-36.
- Sangapala, P., & Perera, N. (2023). spatializing nationalism and religion: the production of sinhala-buddhist imagination and the centrality of anuradhapura. *Space and Culture*.

Yulianti. (2024). *The making of Buddhism in modern Indonesia: South and Southeast Asian Networks and Agencies, 1900–1959*. Leiden University Press. <https://doi.org/10.24415/9789087283940>

Biographical Note

Latifah holds a Bachelor's degree in Indonesian Literature from Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, and a Master's degree in Asian Studies from the University of Hawaii. Since 2012, she has been a lecturer at Kertarajasa Buddhist College, where she teaches courses on religion and cultural studies. Based in Batu, Malang, East Java, Indonesia, her research interests encompass the intersections of religion, media, literature, and culture in Southeast Asia, with a particular focus on contemporary Buddhist movements and their sociocultural impacts. Her work explores how religious narratives are mediated through literature and digital platforms in postcolonial contexts.