

Stepping-Stones magazine – from studies of Buddhism in the Eastern Himalayas to the perspectives of the philosophy of perennialism*

**Denis A. Korablin
(Institute of Oriental Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences)**

The region of the Eastern Himalayas (the state of Sikkim – its modern part of India) was the object of close study in the XIX-XX centuries, first of all it was connected with the study of the culture and history of local ethnic communities. However, the independence of India and the crisis of Tibetan statehood in the second half of the 1940s - early 1950s, accompanied by the easing of restrictions for foreigners on access to the country, and another round of growing interest in Tibetan culture in general, allowed many European researchers and travelers to reach Tibet and other hard-to-reach places of the Indo-Tibetan border. In 1949, an Indian protectorate was established over Sikkim, and in the following 1950 the Government of India has assumed responsibility for the defense and maintenance of the territorial integrity and unity of Sikkim. Kalimpong, acting as a "gate to Tibet" and being one of the key transit points of trade between Tibet and India since the beginning of the twentieth century, by the 1950s will become not just a refuge and trading platform for Tibetans and other Himalayan peoples, but also a center of literary and cultural activities, as well as in many ways an open-air laboratory, where the culture and religion of the Himalayas were subject to direct study by European researchers. A special socio-cultural space emerged in Kalimpong, in which not only the interaction of various communities, groups and individuals took place, but also the civilizational and political systems of the colonial, Indian and Tibetan worlds converged in it. Missionaries of various Christian churches, political groups of Tibetan reformers, Chinese communists, cultural associations of Himalayan ethnic

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groups and various trade missions will settle here, and Kalimpong will also become one of the leading centers of Himalayan printed products.¹

In 1950, at the invitation of Gyan Jyoti,² a local wealthy Newar,³ Uryen Sangharakshita (Dennis Lingwood (1925-2018)) stayed in Kalimpong with a rather odious goal – the revival of Theravada Buddhism among the ethnic groups of the Eastern Himalayas. Dennis Lingwood was born in London in 1925 and today he is best known as one of the first Europeans to promote the spread of Buddhism in Western Europe, especially in the UK, where in 1967 he founded the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO).⁴ At the same time, it should be noted that his activities in Kalimpong, where he spent 14 years,⁵ are known mainly from his memoirs.⁶ In the mid-forties, experiencing an increasing interest in Buddhism, he nevertheless enlisted in the army and served in various colonial territories of British India. In 1947, after leaving the service, he actively engaged in ascetic practices, visiting sacred Buddhist places such as Kushinagar, Benares, Virupaksha in South India (Arunachala) and in 1949 he took monastic order of the Theravada Buddhist tradition. From the very beginning of her stay in Kalimpong, Sangharakshita has been actively involved in the process of establishing contacts with people who were somehow connected with Buddhism, in order to organize and conduct various lectures and festive events, which formed the basis of the Kalimpong branch of the Young Men's Buddhist Association⁷ (hereinafter – YMBA). Largely

¹ The printing house "The Tibet Mirror Press" was located in Kalimpong, which was headed by the public figure and writer Dorje Tarchin (*Rdo rje mthar phyin*) (1890-1976). Tarchin was the publisher of the most famous newspaper within Tibet and the Himalayas, *The Tibet Mirror* (abbreviated name of the newspaper "Mirror of News from different countries" (*yl phyogs so so'i gsar 'gyur me long*)), published from 1925 to 1963. The weekly newspaper *The Himalayan Times* was also published in Kalimpong from 1947 to 1963. The founder and editor-in-chief of the newspaper was Suresh Chandra Jain (1911-1956).

² Brief information about the activities of Sangharakshita and a list of his contacts is provided by researcher Kalzang Dorjee Bhutia. See: Kalzang Dorjee Bhutia. Local Agency in Global Movements: Negotiating Forms of Buddhist Cosmopolitanism in the Young Men's Buddhist Associations of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. *The Journal of Transcultural Studies* Vol. 7 No. 1. 2016. P.121-148. URL: <https://heiu.uni-heidelberg.de/journals/index.php/transcultural/article/view/23540/17317>

³ The Newars are a Nepalese people who directly inhabit the Kathmandu Valley.

⁴ Later it was renamed to Triratna Buddhist Community.

⁵ Sangharakshita lived in Kalimpong from 1950 to 1964.

⁶ Sangharakshita wrote many works of the memoir cycle, and if we talk about his Kalimpong period, we can distinguish the following from them: "Facing Mount Kanchenjunga: An English Buddhist in the Eastern Himalayas" (1991) and "Precious Teachers: Indian Memoirs of an English Buddhist" (2007).

⁷ The Young Men's Buddhist Association was originally founded in Ceylon in 1898 in Ceylon. In the Eastern Himalayas, in addition to the Kalimpong branch founded

due to the public activities of YMBA (namely: attracting famous lecturers, organizing seminars, creating text materials based on the speeches), the magazine *Stepping-Stones* appeared, which was published monthly from July 1950 (Vol. 1, No. 1) to February 1952 (Vol. 2, No. 10) – a total of twenty issues were released during the specified period. The size of the magazine is 21 × 13 cm, the cover is made of cardboard. In the design of the cover of most of the issues, an image of the Buddha⁸ was used, on the numbers starting from (Jun. 1951. Vol. 2, No. 1) there is an image of a manual prayer mani-wheel (*lag-'khor*) and only a single number is decorated with an image of a lotus flower (May 1951. Vol. 2, No. 1). The magazine has end-to-end page numbering. On the pages of the magazine, in addition to the main content, there are also various ads, information about sponsors, advertising of various trading enterprises, and so on.

If we try to analyze the composition of the authors, then on the one hand, we can say that Sangharakshita, as the editor-in-chief, proceeded from the principles of accessibility and situationality (a number of authors also lived in Kalimpong during the period when the magazine was published), and on the other, it is quite obvious that he was interested in attracting the most famous specialists, one way or another otherwise engaged in research of the Himalayan region, Tibet, Buddhist philosophy and culture. The authors of all twenty issues can be grouped into the following four categories:

1. First of all, these are well-known Tibetologists and orientalists:

– G. Roerich (1902-1960) – Russian orientalist and the eldest son of Helena and Nicholas Roerich, the creators of the teaching of Agni Yoga (Living Ethics). Together with Helena Roerich, he lived in Kalimpong since 1949. Roerich's social and research activities aimed at consolidating the local community in Kalimpong, in the period from 1950 to 1957, were marked by public lectures, exhibitions, participation in religious and national holidays, membership in various public organizations⁹. G. Roerich by invitation from Sangharakshita also became an advisor in YMBA. His articles in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine: Indo-Nepalese Art in Tibet. Sept. 1950. Vol. 1, № 3, Om Mani Padme Hum. July 1950.

by Sangharakshita, there was also a branch in Darjeeling, headed by Pak Tsering ('Phags tshe ring).

⁸ The first issue of the magazine states that the cover design is "woodcut of a drawing by a Tibetan artist depicting the Buddha preaching His First Sermon to His five erstwhile disciples in the Deer Park at Sarnath, near Benaras". See: *Stepping-Stones*. June 1950. Vol. 1, No. 1. P. 20.

⁹ See more about G. Roerich activities in Kalimpong: Korablin D. G. Roerich's Contribution to the Formation of "Transcultural Space" in Kalimpong (1950s). *Vestnik Instituta Vostokovedenia RAN*. 2022. No. 1(19). P. 194–203 (in Russian). URL: https://www.ivran.ru/f/Vestnik_Instituta_vostokovedeniia_RAN_2022_1.pdf

Vol. 1, № 1, The Introduction of Buddhism into Tibet. Aug. 1951. Vol. 2, № 4, The Dalai Lamas of Tibet. Feb. 1951. Vol. 1, № 8;

– Herbert V. Günther (1917-2006) was a German Buddhist scholar who worked in India for more than fourteen years at various universities and made a significant contribution to the study of the philosophy of Abhidharma. As the philosopher and Indologist V. Lysenko mentions: "G. Gunter was one of the first Western scientists who tried to apply the Buddhist approach to the human psyche in order to show its importance for the analysis of contemporary psychological and philosophical theories"¹⁰. His articles in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine: The Bodhisattva's Realm of Knowledge. Jan. 1951. Vol.1, № 7, Excerpts from the Gandavyuha Sutra, II. Feb. 1951. Vol.1, № 8, In Praise of Bodhicitta. Feb. 1951. Vol. 1, № 8, Friends in the Good Life. Mar., Apr. 1951. Vol. 1, № 9-10, The Diamond of Omniscience. June 1951. Vol. 2, № 2, The Jewel of Buddhahood. Aug. 1951. Vol. 2, № 4, The Bodhisattva, The Devices. Nov., Dec. 1951. Vol. 2, № 7-8, Our Position in Life. Nov., Dec. 1951. Vol. 2, № 7-8, The Buddhism (book review). Jan. 1952. Vol. 2, № 9;

– E. Conze (1904-1979), with his divergent scientific interests, continued the comparative study of Buddhist and European philosophy that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, which was reflected in some of his works: "Buddhist philosophy and its European parallels" (1963), "Buddhism and gnosis" (1967). However, this did not prevent him from being convinced that all world religions share a single metaphysical truth and, thanks to the concept of perennial philosophy¹¹, this truth can be understood and transmitted to a specific individual. Being an extremely eccentric scientist, Conze, apparently, was inspired by D.T. Suzuki (1870-1966) was a pioneer of the popularization of Zen Buddhism in the West, who also did not pass by the fascination with theosophy. The frequency of citations allows us to say with confidence that the Anglo-German Buddhologist took a very thorough approach to Suzuki's scientific works. At the same time, Conze also openly engaged in Buddhist meditation, which greatly amazed his university colleagues, and his merits in Buddhist science were appreciated thanks to the translation of the Prajnaparamita sutras. His article in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine: Selected Sayings from: "the Perfection of Wisdom". Feb., 1952. Vol. 2, № 10;

– Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark (1908-1980), in addition to his aristocratic origin, gained popularity as an anthropologist and researcher of Tibetan polyandry. During his stay in Kalimpong since

¹⁰ Lysenko V. Afterword // Pyatigorsky A.M. Selected articles on Indology and Buddhology: The 1960s-1970s / ed. L. N. Pyatigorskaya; comp. V. G. Lysenko. M.: RSUH, 2018. P. 361.

¹¹ Lat.: Philosophia Perennis.

1950, he devoted himself to creating a collection of the material and cultural heritage of Tibet commissioned by the Danish National Museum. His articles in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine: Polyandry in Tibet. July 1950. Vol. 1, № 1, The Tibetan Tulku of Tikse. Sep. 1950. Vol. 1, № 3, The Viking of the Himalaya. Oct. 1950. Vol. 1, № 4;

– René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1923-1959) a Tibetologist who undertook a number of different expeditions in the Himalayan region, which allowed him to collect significant material related to cult and incantation practices, the mystery of Tsam and other ethnographic studies in the field of Tibetan Buddhism. In 1953, an important work "Oracles and Demons of Tibet" was published, which gave detailed information about a little-known area in Tibetology – the pantheon of deities that Tibetans worship as protectors and guardians of Buddhism. His articles in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine: The Origin of Tibetan Writing. Oct. 1950. Vol. 1, № 4, The Tombs of the Tibetan Kings. Jan. 1951. Vol. 1, № 7, The Bon Religion of Tibet (book review). Mar. 1951. Vol. 1, № 9, The Kagyupa Sect of Tibet. Feb. 1951. Vol. 1. № 8., The Introduction of Buddhism into Sikkim. Apr. 1951. Vol. 1. № 10, A Contribution to Mahayana Iconography. Jul.1951. Vol. 2 № 3, Some Recent Publications of Tibet. Nov., Dec. 1951. Vol. 2. № 7-8;

– H. von Glasenap (1891-1963) German religious scholar and specialist in dharmic religions. His articles in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine: Buddhism and Vital Problems of Our Life. Nov., Dec. 1950. Vol. 1, № 5-6;

– F.L. Woodward (1871-1952) English researcher of Theravada Buddhism and theosophist. At the invitation of Henry Olcott (1832-1907), he became the director of Mahinda College, a famous Buddhist school founded by the Theosophical Society back in 1892. His article in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine: Matteya Bodhisattva – The coming Buddha. Sep. 1951, Vol. 2, № 5;

– I.B. Horner (1896-1981) English researcher of the Pali Canon and Theravada Buddhism. Her most famous work is related to the status of women in Buddhism "Women under Primitive Buddhism: Laywomen and Almswomen" (1930). Also, in collaboration with A. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), she prepared the book "The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha" (1948). Her text in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine: Compassion. May.1951, Volume 2, No. 1;

2. Famous travelers, mystics, inspirers and popularizers of Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy in the West:

– A. David-Néel (1868-1969) French opera singer, who gained world fame as the first female traveler to visit the capital of Tibet, Lhasa, in 1924. After returning to France, she settled in Digne-les-Bains (France), creating there "Samten-Dzong", which served as a Tibetan cultural center, and devoted herself to the study and practice of

Buddhism, as well as writing various memorial books. Her article in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine: The Buddha and His Modern Disciples. June 1951. Vol. 2, № 2;

– Lama Anagarika Govinda, (Ernst Lothar Hoffmann (1898-1985)) one of the most famous researchers and popularizers of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as a writer, traveler and artist. In 1928 he moved to Ceylon, where he first immersed himself in the study of Theravada Buddhism, and then in the 1930s the sphere of his interests shifted towards Tibetan Buddhism. After many trips to the Himalayas and Tibet in 1952, Anagarika Govinda announced the creation of the Arya Maitreya Mandala, an organization with which he planned to spread Buddhism in the West. They were connected with Sangharakshita not only by personal acquaintance and correspondence, but also by an interest in the interaction of Buddhist philosophy and fine art – how various artistic means are connected with the intellectual understanding of Buddhist teaching. According to Sangharakshita, in one of the last letters he received from Anagarika Govinda a few days before his death, there was a line that read: "Now it's up to the next generation to take Buddhism out of a purely academic atmosphere and turn it into a living experience"¹². His articles and poem in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine: Look deeper! Oct. 1950. Vol. 1, № 4, The Universal Perspective of the Bodhisattva Ideal. Nov. 1950. Vol. 1, № 5, The Realty of Perfection. Dec. 1950, Vol. 1, № 6, The Temple of Sunyata. Jan. 1951. Vol. 1, № 7, The Significance of "OM" and the Foundations of Mantric Lore. Mar. 1951. Vol. 1, № 9, The Significance of "OM" and the Foundations of Mantric Lore II. Apr. 1951. Vol. 1, № 10, The Hermit and the Warrior (poem). May. 1951. Vol. 2, № 1, The Significance of "OM" and the Foundations of Mantric Lore III. May. 1951. Vol. 2, № 1, Buddhism and Living Experience. June 1951. Vol. 2, № 2, The Importance of the Bodhisattva Ideal in Buddhist Life. Oct. 1951. Vol. 2, № 6, Origins of the Bodhisattva Ideal. Jan. 1952. Vol. 2, № 9, Two Poems. Jan. 1952. Vol. 2, № 9;

– Marco Pallis (1895-1989) was a native of Liverpool, a researcher of the Himalayan region, a collector, a mountaineer and a musician who stayed in Kalimpong after his 1947 trip to Tibet. In addition, he was a practicing Buddhist, had the Tibetan name Tubden Tendzin (*thub bstan bstan 'dzin*) and shared the views of the famous French philosopher Rene Guenon (1886-1951), who initiated the philosophy of traditionalism. His concern about the events taking place in Tibet in the mid-twentieth century, his desire to help preserve traditional Buddhist

¹² Sangharakshita. Great Buddhists of the Twentieth Century. Windhorse Publications, 1996. 36 p. URL: http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/Miscellaneous/Great_Buddhists.pdf (accessed: 20.12.2022)

values and the Tibetan civilization itself in its confrontation with Chinese military-political and ideological expansion in Tibet, led to the fact that in 1950 he prepared and published a book in Tibetan called "A Clear Treatise with Comments and Examples, explaining [the reasons for the attack] The Era of Decline and its Nightmares, Under the Title "An Immediate Appeal to Maitreya" (*snyigs ma'i dus dang de yi 'jigs pa'i brda sprod dpe don bcas gsal bar bkral ba'i bstan bcos byams mgon myur 'bod ma zhes bya ba bzhugs so*)¹³. This is the first religious and philosophical treatise written by a European in Tibetan, addressed to Tibetans for the sake of saving their homeland from the oblivion of Buddhism and the arrival of the red tradition (*dmar lugs*) – this is how the word communism is literally translated from Tibetan. His articles in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine: Sikkim Buddhism Today and Tomorrow. Apr. 1951, Vol. 1, № 10, I, The Buddha (book review). Oct. 1951, Vol. 2, № 6;

– Alfred Sorensen (1890-1984) traveler, writer and mystic, born in Denmark. Since the 1930s, he spent many years in India studying various spiritual teachings. He was most influenced by Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950). His articles in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine: The Snow Maiden: Uma-Haimavati. Nov. 1950, Vol. 1, № 5; The Rose-Apple-Tree. Dec. 1950. Vol. 1, № 6;

– Clare Cameron (1896-1983) – English poet and mystic, was associated with the London Buddhist Society (date of foundation – 1924), created by Christmas Humphreys (1901-1983). In the 1930s, she was the editor of the Buddhist magazine *The Middle Way*, which began publishing in 1926. Her poetry and works are imbued with the spirit of perennialism, as well as the search for interfaith dialogue. Her poem in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine: The White Snow of Meditation (poem). Mar. 1951, Vol. 1, № 9;

– J.H. Cousins (1873-1956) – poet and writer of the Irish Renaissance, playwright and actor in his extensive works tried to combine "the wisdom of Western Celticism and the wisdom of Eastern theosophy"¹⁴. Since 1915 he lived in India. His poem in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine: Avaalokiteswara (poem). Aug. 1950, Vol. 1, № 2;

3. Sangharakshita also attracted some little-known local authors to the publication (I.N. Pradhan, S. Gyastho, Sachindra Coomar Singh, etc.), among them David MacDonald (1870-1962), who was born into

¹³ See: Korablin D. "An outstanding lama of the West taught..." – M. Pallis and his treatise warning Tibet about the consequences of Kali Yuga. *Orientalistica*. 2022. №5(5). p. 1170–1186. (in Russian). URL: <https://www.orientalistica.su/jour/article/view/716/779>

¹⁴ Nolan J. The Hindu Celticism of James Cousins (1873–1956). *ABEI Journal: The Brazilian Journal of Irish Studies*. 2005. p. 219–232. URL: <https://www.revistas.usp.br/abei/article/view/184280/170620> (accessed: 21.01.2023).

the family of a tea planter from Scotland and a lepcha-woman¹⁵ from Sikkim. David MacDonald participated as an interpreter in the campaign of F. Younghusband (1863-1942) to Tibet (1903-1904), and then worked as a British sales agent for about twenty years. After retiring, he opened the Himalayan Hotel, which became a meeting place for all visitors and residents in Kalimpong. He has published several works related to tourism in Sikkim, as well as a book "Twenty Years in Tibet" (1932). His poem in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine: *Sunset* (Poem) Oct. 1950. Vol. 1, № 4;

4. The latter category can be neatly designated as situational or accidental authors such as, for example, Donald Hofford, a traveler who traveled from London to Gangtok with his friend Leslie Turner, we learn about them only from the memoirs of Sangharakshita, who mentions that at lectures practiced on Sundays, Donald Hofford gave a vivid description of the Bamiyan Valley and the famous Buddha statue. At the same time, in passing and with some irony, Sangharakshita draws attention to the fact that none of them was interested in Buddhism. Another of these authors we also learn from the memoirs of Sangharakshita is Major Joseph E. Cann (Upasaka Joseph E. Cann), a Buddhist from Lucknow, who settled there after the war, becoming president of the local branch of the Bengali Buddhist Association¹⁶.

In the given general list of authors, it is striking that the largest part of the authors are Europeans, as well as how many researchers, Orientalists and writers (G. Roerich, E. Conze, F.L. Woodward, J.H. Cousins etc.) was either previously inspired by the theosophical society and theosophy in their interest in Buddhism, or in one way or another was a conductor of theosophical views. And if we go further than the attempted categorization of authors, then it should be noted that the editor of the journal, in addition to the articles and their authors stated in the table of contents, uses poetry (including his own works), individual quotations or excerpts from various works thematically related to the general main topic of the journal. For example, in the issue Sep. 1951. Vol. 2, No. 5 there is a quote by the famous Italian traditionalist J. Evola (1898-1974), who in the early forties was also actively interested in Buddhism, mainly basing his Buddhist studies on the Pali Canon¹⁷. His quote proclaims spiritual knowledge and awakening

¹⁵ Lepcha is one of the indigenous peoples inhabiting Sikkim and part of the territory of Bhutan.

¹⁶ Sangharakshita (Lingwood D. P. E.). *Facing Mount Kanchenjunga: An English Buddhist in the Eastern Himalayas* Glasgow: Windhorse Publications. 1991. 498 p. URL: <https://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/facing-mount-kanchenjunga-ebook/> (accessed: 17.04.2023).

¹⁷ His most famous and thorough work on Buddhism can be considered "The Doctrine of Awakening", published in 1943.

emanating from the East, which surpasses the general Western view of life, with its rationality and false humanism: "This is the East; and it resembles the reality once known to the West, although less intensely and universally, before secularization and rationalism took over"¹⁸. At the same time, in other issues we can find quotations from the work "Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines" (1935), published under the editorship of the famous American anthropologist W. Evans-Wentz (1878-1965), who opened the so-called Tibetan Book of the Dead to the Western world. In the mentioned book "Tibetan Yoga and secret doctrines" the author anticipates the "new renaissance" associated with the world spiritual revival: "Then, in such a flourishing New Age of newly established mutual understanding and respect between East and West, no less carefully guarded training from the master minds of Tibet will be enhanced by training from the master minds of India, which will help the Western World to come to a clearer understanding of the ancient and still new truths about man and man's place in the Structure The universe"¹⁹. Such a diverse palette in the placement of various articles and individual quotes in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine creates a very special atmosphere. Perhaps this is the only publication in history whose pages united not only academic researchers who contributed to the development of Buddhology, Tibetology and the study of the Himalayan region, but also followers of theosophy and the traditionalist school²⁰ – all of them were able to get along peacefully, reflecting on the special path that Buddhism offers to humanity in the middle of the twentieth century!

In this amazing combination, on the one hand (the subjective side), the editorial position of Sangharakshita is visible: he also, in the process of his acquaintance with Buddhism, did not ignore the study of Helena Blavatsky's texts²¹. His creative path can be assessed as a gradual movement from the Theravada Buddhist tradition to an understanding of the importance of unity of various Buddhist paths or, as some researchers mention, to the formation of an "ecumenical approach to Buddhism." From this point of view, Sangharakshita in the late 1940s and early 1950s criticized various Tibetan Buddhist schools in their local reading. His personal views during this period were

¹⁸ *Stepping-Stones*. Sep. 1951. Vol. 2, № 5. P. 139.

¹⁹ *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines: Or, Seven Books of Wisdom of the Great Path*. Arranged and edited by W. Y. Evans-Wentz. Oxford University Press, 1967. 441 p. URL: <https://selfdefinition.org/tibetan/Evans-Wentz-Tibetan-Yoga-and-Secret-Doctrines.pdf> (accessed: 17.04.2023).

²⁰ It is noteworthy that the founder of the philosophy of traditionalism, Rene Guenon, was a consistent critic of theosophy, and in 1921 his book "Theosophy: History of a Pseudo-religion" was published.

²¹ Lopez D. A *Modern Buddhist Bible: Essential Readings from East and West*. Beacon Press, 2002. P. 186.

largely connected, or rather even conditioned by a position consonant with the Buddhist revival movement, which was one of the reasons for the creation of YMBA. In particular, historian Kalzang Dorjee Bhutia mentions that one of the motivations for founding YMBA was Sangharakshita's awareness of "the catastrophic decline in doctrinal knowledge that has engulfed Sikkim Buddhism in recent years and he called for an 'urgent' revival of Buddhism..."²². It is noteworthy that the position of many Western researchers of Buddhism for a long time maintained the emphasis on the fact that Theravada Buddhism is much closer to the original teaching of the Buddha, this trend continued until the middle of the twentieth century. The period following the Chinese invasion of Tibet opened Buddhism to world Tibetology as an integral part of Tibetan culture, the reason for this was the introduction into scientific circulation of a number of new sources that became available thanks to Tibetan refugees. Prior to these events, as R. King rightly notes, "... radically unhistorical and textualized Buddhism, located in the libraries of Europe and managed from them, and not from Asia, provided a normative standard by which all particular examples of Buddhism could be both defined and (negatively) evaluated"²³. Therefore, some assessments of the Sangharakshita of the regional forms of Buddhism of the Eastern Himalayas are largely symptomatic of the discourse of the Buddhist Ceylon renaissance, with an emphasis on the rationalization of cult practices, with its inherent modernist statement of the presence of decline.

On the other hand (the objective side), we can also see in this some trends related to the global processes of intellectual history of the mid-twentieth century, namely, a direct change in ideas about Buddhism in the world philosophical discourse. This is, of course, a significant issue in terms of volume, which is not the direct subject of consideration of this article, but nevertheless a couple of accents should be made. Suffice it to recall that since the 1920s the eastern countries are no longer only a subject of colonial expansion: the search for intercultural dialogue and civilizational interaction is at the forefront, the question of the status and role of religion in culture is being raised, which contributed to the search that connects the philosophy of the West and the

²² Kalzang Dorjee Bhutia. Local Agency in Global Movements: Negotiating Forms of Buddhist Cosmopolitanism in the Young Men's Buddhist Associations of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. *The Journal of Transcultural Studies* Vol. 7 No. 1. 2016. P.121-148. URL: <https://heiup.uni-heidelberg.de/journals/index.php/transcultural/article/view/23540/17317> (accessed: 06.03.2023).

²³ King R. *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and the "Mystic East"*. Routledge. London, 2001. 283 p. URL: <https://foldxx.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/orientalism-and-religion-post-colonial-theory-india-and-the-mystic-east.pdf> (accessed: 06.03.2023).

East. The followers of some esoteric doctrines once again turned to the search for knowledge hidden in the inaccessible edges of Eastern civilizations – these aspirations created prerequisites for the next answers to the question of the proper perception of the religions of the East in the language of European or Western philosophy. However, in these searches, the difficulty of overcoming the state of belonging to one's own culture, which philosophers and writers of the late XIX-early XX centuries faced, has already been partially overcome. By this time, not only the teaching of the theosophical movement had already taken shape (largely thanks to the activities of the Roerichs, who gave a new impetus to theosophy in the 1920s, with their inherent modernist tendency of spiritual evolution and human transformation) and the school of philosophy of traditionalism, on the horizon of which rose the name of the French thinker R. Guenon, who announced the existence of a Primordial Tradition. It is fair to note that the search for counteraction to the spiritual decline of the West occupied the minds of many thinkers and scientists, not only theosophists and traditionalists of the twentieth century, who saw esoteric knowledge in the very process of searching, while each of these groups sometimes found diametrically opposite answers to the same questions.

One way or another, Buddhism, starting from the second half of the nineteenth century, having passed hand in hand with the period of formation of comparative philosophy and religious studies²⁴ (P. Mason-Ursel²⁵, Max Müller), in many ways found its dynamics of spread and, according to the fair remark of researcher Donald Lopez, was eventually to become one of the last world religions that it should have been opened. By the middle of the twentieth century, many philosophical movements in varying degrees of articulation designated the so-called universalist approach, in which attempts were made at global synthesis. This, of course, could not but influence research programs related to Oriental disciplines. It is enough to recall the most striking indicator of this process, which has reached a wide reader: we are talking about the famous book by the English writer and philosopher A. Huxley "The Perennial Philosophy" (1945). The eclectic literary technique allowed the writer to easily combine various religious traditions based on the idea of community. For the mid-twentieth century the newly updated concept of *Philosophia Perennis* has gained solid

²⁴ J. Jeffrey Franklin in his thorough work "The Lion and the Lotus" analyzes in detail the origins of the theosophical movement in Great Britain, linking it with the stage of formation of comparative religious studies. See: Franklin J. *The Lotus and the Lion: Buddhism and the British Empire*. Ithaca and London. Cornell University Press, 2008. 273 p.

²⁵ His most famous work is called "Comparative Philosophy" ("La Philosophie comparée" (1923)).

potential: the disappearing colonial model of the world provided unique opportunities to easily perceive religious ideas and practices lying on the other side of the Judeo-Christian civilization. The East and the West have opened the doors to each other, towards the spiritual world, putting Buddhism at the forefront and defining it as a universal philosophical teaching. Indeed, Buddhism as a religious and philosophical teaching carried a high potential of relativism, and therefore, unlike other religious traditions with strict dogmatic frameworks, accumulated various interpretations around itself. This controversial issue is investigated by the American religious scholar Richard Payne, who notes that in relation to the principles of *Philosophia Perennis*, Buddhist teaching and Buddhist philosophy acquire very original features²⁶. The relativism of Buddhist philosophy makes it possible for a peculiar interpretation of certain provisions used in the rhetorical strategy – this is the idea of the existence of an eternal philosophy, within which a new interpretation of Buddhist concepts is being formed, creating common cultural and value orientations. In many ways, this process reached its culmination by the 1950s, when the World Fellowship of Buddhists²⁷ was created, and the 2500 anniversary of Buddha Shakyamuni was celebrated all over the world, not the least role in this was played by the events taking place in Kalimpong. A striking example of this is the rhetoric of G. Roerich, his congratulatory letter was published in the May 1956 issue of *The Himalayan Times* newspaper: "The celebration of Buddha Jayanti this year is an extremely important and relevant event. It will help rekindle the fire of an ancient but great and living heritage that has remained the true Light of Asia to this day, and which attracts some of the most influential minds in the West. The existing interest is due to the significant modernity of the Buddhist philosophical worldview. The Buddha challenged the generally accepted concept of the Creator. The Buddha denied the existence of an eternal unchanging soul. The Buddha fought against class privileges and warned people against obsession. And today, in its third millennium, the message of the Buddha sounds around the world as a mighty challenge to the enemies of discord and ignorance"²⁸. In this regard, the mention of the enduring importance of Buddhism in various scientific journals, newspapers or public

²⁶ Payne Richard K. Traditionalist Representations of Buddhism. *Pacific World*. 3rd Ser. No. 10. 2008. P. 177–223. URL: https://www.academia.edu/8609186/Traditionalist_Representations_of_Buddhism (accessed: 06.03.2023).

²⁷ The association of Buddhist schools, organizations and representative offices, founded in 1950. One of the goals of the society was to promote the preservation of the purity of Buddhist Law and the implementation of cultural and educational activities of Buddhists in the world.

²⁸ *The Himalayan Times*. May 24. 1956. P. 12. URL: http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/himalayan_times (accessed: 04.02.2023).

speeches touched upon the most acute problems and ideological issues faced by States forced to accept the new geopolitical structure of the Himalayas and South Asia and their cultural borders.

An example of such a discourse is the representations of the most famous thinkers who have become authors of publications in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine. Each of them in his own way carried out the ideas of perennialism through the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, and the consideration of Buddhism as a *Philosophia Perennis* not only removes or reformulates the question of the origin of certain aspects, but, as it were, brings under the indisputable thoroughness, and again the absence of criticism of the researcher's position in relation to the latter. The idea of perennialism, one way or another, interprets the path to the Dharma in its own way, and this very often depended on the personal view, on the personal position of the researcher who turned to Buddhism. For example, M. Pallis exposes Tibet as a traditional civilization in the Genonian sense, not just not seduced by the imaginary charms of the universalism of Western culture, but opposed to the West because of its fundamental otherness, non-identity and the absence of any equivalents. The Western idea of "progress" threatens to make the world largely homogeneous, erasing from history the unique spiritual way of whole peoples who, thanks to their genius, managed to find their own unique meaning in it, easily erased under the growing hegemony of rationalism. However, if we take a closer look at the principles of the eternal philosophy, do they really agree with the idea of Buddhadharma? It should not be forgotten that perennialism, which absorbed previously existing ideological premises, largely took shape as a project of the XX century, which set the tone for the principles on which it defended its validity, namely objectivity and inclusiveness (universality). Thanks to these principles, perennialism met such urgent needs as the synthesis of spiritual and scientific. All this could make it possible to reduce perennialism to a single theoretical justification. In this approach, Buddhism could well be consonant with perennialism, in which religiosity is not reduced to any particular culture. In general, this is a very characteristic example for the history of philosophy: by the middle of the twentieth century, within the framework of two intellectual esoteric schools²⁹, there was a fairly similar, at least not in its premises, but in the conclusions of *Philosophia Perennis*, explicated through Buddhist teaching as the "wisdom of the Himalayas"³⁰. Does this detract from the dignity and quality of the

²⁹ We are talking about theosophy and traditionalism.

³⁰ The Australian researcher G. Oldmeddow discusses the search in the Himalayas for a worldwide "religion of wisdom" already mentioned earlier W. Evans-Wentz, "in the existence of which he was convinced by his studies of Gnosticism, Egyptian and Greek mysteries and Hinduism". See: Oldmeddow H. In Search of Secret Tibet.

academic studies of Buddhism presented in the reviewed journal – no, is it a vivid example of joint efforts united by the intent of the editor of the journal – yes, but together with the rest of the articles, as well as various poetic sketches, it creates a rather peculiar kaleidoscope in which Buddhism appears as a kind of universal philosophy capable of to throw a bridge of understanding between East and West, which the thinkers of the early twentieth century were so hungry for.

Conclusions

Kalimpong in the 1950s XX in the context of cultural borrowings and intersections for a short time became one of the centers for the study of Buddhism and Himalayan culture. The Eastern Himalayas as a region connected by a former network of trade networks (Kalimpong, Darjeeling acting as a frontier played the role of a link between Tibet and the British Empire) transmitted knowledge and generated various interactions between Buddhism and Western researchers who visited this area. It was in the 1950s there are a number of publications covering Tibetan Buddhism and Himalayan religious traditions in a popular scientific form³¹, as well as the first European Buddhist centers.

The bearers of these ideas were direct participants in the transculturation process³² that took place in Kalimpong, contributing to the development of ideas about Tibet and modern forms of Buddhism.

In the 1950s, individual representatives of Tibetans and other Himalayan nationalities were included both in the formation of a modernist, but also nationalist agenda (by the end of the 1950s, Tibetan refugees, founding their settlements and monasteries in exile, were no longer focused on cosmopolitanism and social community, but on building a separate Tibetan identity). In this connection, the *Stepping-Stones* magazine can trace two partly interpenetrating, but also mutually exclusive tropes that influence the reception of Buddhism in the world philosophical space of the mid-twentieth century and reflect specifically Western aspirations, partly also an orientalist view of problems and current interests:

Esoterica. East Lansing: Michigan State University. 2000. URL: <http://www.esoterica.msu.edu/VolumeIII/HTML/Oldmeadow.html>

³¹ The most famous books popularizing the image of Tibet: Maraini F. "Secret Tibet" (1952), H. Harrer "Seven Years in Tibet" (1953), Lobsang Rampa "The Third Eye" (1956).

³² In this case, I am referring to the process of transferring various cultural features between the communicator participants in it to other cultural communities, generating new relationships between communicators.

a) the trope of ascent, reformation and social evolutionism of Buddhism, presented in the form of cosmopolitanism, creating a sense of belonging to its adherents, proclaiming Buddhism as a modern ideology of an international social movement that united Asian cultures in its opposition to the challenges of colonialism and aggressive missionary work.

b) the trope of preserving the Buddhist tradition, the carefully protected traditional way of life of Tibet and the Himalayas as an image and "reliquary of Buddhist civilization", subject to degradation not due to internal processes, but when meeting with the Western capitalist world. Moreover, this view was characteristic not only of traditionalists (Marco Pallis), it was also largely shared by anthropologists (Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark), thereby perpetuating the idea of cultural decline widespread in this area.³³

As it should be clear from the content of the article, I did not set out to detract from the value and significance of the works included in the *Stepping-Stones* magazine on Himalayan religion, culture – their contribution to Buddhology and Tibetology cannot be underestimated or it can be argued that many of them to one degree or another were different projections of modern ideas about Buddhism, for me, the very question of the mutual influence of various worldview philosophical positions of the mid-twentieth century on the understanding of Buddhist teaching in the local and global cultural and philosophical space was significant.

Individual stylistic techniques and the way of editorial placement of material in the magazine are an interesting technique of how the editor of *Stepping-Stones*, initially guided by his personal motivations, nevertheless was captured by various available sources and interpretations, which resulted in a tendency to construct and exhibit individual problems and issues related to Buddhism in the Himalayan region to Buddhism as a the global general philosophical paradigm, which in turn, apparently contributed to an unprecedented surge of interest in the "Tibetan question", Buddhism and the Himalayas in the 1950s of the twentieth century.

³³ Marshall S. Two or Three Things I Know about Culture. Journal of The Royal Anthropological Institute. № 5 (3) 1999. P. 399–422. URL: https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4410587/mod_resource/content/0/sahlins1999.pdf (accessed: 18.04.2023)

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