



Stichting Vrienden van het Boeddhisme
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The Netherlands

Policy plan 2020-2023

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Some donors have been supporting us for decades, others have started more recently and are only following us recently. Therefore, we introduce our policy plans for the period 2020-2023 with a brief outline of the developments that our foundation has undergone.

Starting points

In the more than fifty years of its existence the Friends of Buddhism (VvB) have continuously adjusted their policy and its related areas of attention to the changing times. At the same time, the basic principles of the policy have not changed during that time. A good example thereof is the reply that former secretary Willem Roscam Abbing wrote forty years ago to a letter writer asking for information.

He explains: "The aim of our policy is to promote knowledge and understanding of Buddhism and its practical application in Western culture¹. Moreover, we are not affiliated with any group or circle active in the field of Buddhism in our country [or abroad]. The Friends of Buddhism Foundation explicitly does not aim to function as a religious society, but focuses on those who are interested in Buddhism in any way or who feel involved in it."

It is these unchanged principles that still form the basis for policy.

Activities

What did change, however, were our activities. We initiated our activities at a time, more than fifty years ago, when Buddhism was hardly noticed and interested people in the Netherlands had difficulty in finding reliable information about the Buddha Dhamma (the Buddhist teachings). This soon changed after its establishment in 1967. As early as 1980 Roscam Abbing stated in his letter about the discontinuation of its function as documentation centre and meeting point, because they were no longer useful.

Forty years later, this also applies to 'the organisation of meetings, mediation courses and the like', which Roscam Abbing mentions in his letter when referring to the foundation's activities. With the advent of dozens of Buddhist sanghas (groups) that have been formed in the course of years from virtually all Buddhist currents and schools in the Netherlands, this is now well taken care of. The Buddhist Union Netherlands (BUN), of which our foundation was a founding member, now unites more than forty sangha's. "The establishment and maintenance of a library" is an activity that has been placed in the hands of the Netherlands Buddhist Archive (NBA), which has evolved from our foundation as well.

What remained was the publication of the "writings" of which the letter speaks, including magazines at that time - which were discontinued after years of publication - as well as books and online articles.

¹ Western 'culture', which Roscam Abbing refers to in his letter, has since 2017 been replaced in our objective by the broader concept of Western 'society'.

Recalibration

In 2017 we celebrated our 50th anniversary. At the beginning of this jubilee year, the VvB board, in particular Chairman Prof. Rob Janssen, reflected on the future of the foundation. The central question was how the foundation could and should remain relevant for the coming decades in the light of its objectives. Janssen had a vision that required administrative and policy changes for which he himself, due to his advanced age and health, could no longer muster the attention and energy. Since 1997 he and his partner Jan de Breet have been translating the Pali Canon and this work was his priority. This also applied to De Breet, treasurer of the Friends. For him too, translation was, and is, his most important activity within the foundation.

Prof. Janssen then approached André Kalden, former chairman of the Buddhist Union of the Netherlands (BUN, who had brought the BUN into clear waters during a stormy period, together with a board he had newly composed. He was honoured and, after some urging, motivated, but made it a condition for taking over the chairman's gavel and the recruitment of new board members that a clear administrative course for the foundation was to be set.

The following matters have since been realised in close consultation with De Breet and Janssen.

- Adaptation of the statutes, unchanged since 1979, to modern ANBI standards and introduction of decision making processes based on consent instead of just majority voting.
- Reorganisation, professionalisation and rejuvenation of the board.
 - Martijn Vermunt of BGH Accountants & Adviseurs in Nijmegen was appointed treasurer in July 2017 to serve on the board - like the other board members - on an voluntary basis.
 - Rozanne van der Veur, former secretary of the BUN, was appointed secretary in March 2018.
 - Yvon Mattaar, a Pali translator and long-time editorial contributor to the foundation, joined the board in October 2019.
 - Anco van der Vorm, former student of Prof. Ria Kloppenburg, has been approached for the management and support of the translation of the Pali Canon.
- A new website with donation facilities and content management system (CMS), including a listing of all translations of the Pali Canon by De Breet and Janssen plus translations by some other translators.
- The adjustment to the new ownership of all back office processes at the Centraal Boekhuis, such as updating the bibliographic ISBN data of all 17 Pali-Canon titles.
- Regularly publicing articles on the foundation's website (again).
- Publishing two new translations by De Breet and Janssen, Anguttara-Nikaya part 3 and 4.
- Start of work on a revised second edition of the Digha-Nikaya translation.
- Start of the translation of Angutta-Nikaya Volume 5.
- Commencement of publication of Majjhima-Nikaya part 1,2 and 3 in e-book form.
- The further development of a policy course for the coming years, the result of which is summarised in this document.

Translation policy

The death of Rob Janssen at the age of 87 in March 2019, as well as the fact that Jan de Breet was told at the end of the same year that he was suffering from incurable cancer, had and continues to have a great impact on our foundation.

Our policy is to continue their translation activities by recruiting and training new translators. In 2020 Jan de Breet made an earmarked donation that enabled Yvon Mattaar to quit her part-time job and work for our foundation as a freelance Pali translator under the supervision of Jan de Breet for a period of two years as of 1 June. (Initially, the board was under the impression that this meant she could no longer serve on the board and Yvon Mattaar - who, as reported above, had joined the board in October 2019 - stepped down from the board on 1 June 2020. However, in November 2020 the Tax Authorities Team ANBI informed us that her work as a freelancer for the foundation does not impede membership of the board. As of 2 December 2020, Yvon was thereupon reappointed as a board member).

Book publishing policy

The printed translations are pricey (€39.95 - €44.95). In the course of 2021, we hope to be able to reduce the price of the books. In addition, in 2021 we will publish all translations in e- book form and make them available at a much lower price than the printed titles.

Fund raising policy

The number of loyal donors is decreasing and has dropped below one hundred. This is due to natural turnover in a database with many elderly donors. But also the fact that we do not recruit much. There are, however, a few donors who, in order to support the translation and publication of the oldest scriptures known to Buddhism, are making a (much) larger financial contribution. In addition, in 2020 we received a bequest (from Mr. M.J.A. Peekstok), which will be paid out in 2021 and which can be used to ensure the continuity of the foundation independently of individual donors.

Personal

A fundamental change as compared to the past is that our activities are no longer aimed at the donors personally. In 1991, the then secretary Victor van Gemert wrote in a welcoming letter to a donor "I hope the foundation will give you what you expect of it." Nowadays, donors give a financial contribution because of our efforts to make and keep Dutch translations of the Pali Canon available, and because of the bond they often have had with us for a long time.

Attracting new individual donors will not become any easier without changing our current policy of not doing anything in return for the donors personally. We will therefore keep this in consideration.

Legacies

Jan de Breet and Rob Janssen were in the unique position of being financially independent from the income generated by translation work. Most translators are not in that position. And translators with an excellent command of both Dutch and Pali language can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Translators will therefore have to be trained. As of 2021 we will make an effort to acquire (earmarked) legacies for the translation of Pali texts into Dutch. The inheritance tax for a donation by will to an ANBI such as our foundation is 0%. We plan to bring this possibility more explicitly to the attention of our donors.

Funds from abroad

We will also try to attract funds from abroad by rekindling past contacts that have been neglected, such as those in Thailand.

Quality

Apart from individual donors, our translation project has received contributions from other organisations in the past, such as the Gonda Fund. In the period 2020-2023, we will further explore the possibilities of attracting more substantial and structural subsidies, especially to enable us to put Pali back on the map in the Netherlands at university level and to publish new translations. Possession of a CBF seal of approval may help us in this respect. Our board policy is to operate in such a way as to qualify for this quality mark.

Policy website

Where some 20 years ago you could manage a technically simple website that is no longer possible in the present days. In 2018, we decided to have a new website built that meets modern technical (security) requirements. Because not everyone can imagine what that might look like, here, in no particular order, are a number of features that our old website did not have, but our new website does:

- Someone without IT knowledge can update our website and provide new articles by means of a so-called content management system (CMS).
- The design and the technology behind it are in tune with modern times. The website can be viewed simply on desktop, laptop, tablet and mobile phone.
- Donations can be made via our website. This is done in a safe way for both donors and our foundation.
- The website can easily present the same content in two languages, for example Dutch and English. This enables the publication of our work abroad and thus raise international funds, particularly in countries such as Thailand and Sri Lanka, where the Pali Canon occupies a prominent place in the national Buddhist tradition.
- The website makes Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) easy(er). As a result, the content of the website can be found more easily by search engines.
- Visitors to our website can subscribe to a mailing list which is automatically updated and can also be modified by the visitor when an e-mail is sent from the mailing list.
- The server hosting the website protects transmitted data against manipulation (through the use of the so-called HyperText Transfer Protocol Secure).
- The website complies with modern regulations on privacy.

For the technical execution, quotations were asked for from two companies in advance. We asked a non-competitive third agency with a full portfolio of orders to evaluate the quotations for both design and technical implementation. These were judged to be competitive. We then selected the cheapest firm for the technical implementation. (The more expensive agency dropped out during the selection process because our budget was too low).

Developments in online communication are such that we expect to have to make functional adjustments, such as upgrading the WordPress CMS to a newer generation, in addition to regular maintenance. In the course of 2021, there will be a major technical update of the by then three-year-old technology behind the website.

Due to setbacks such as death and illness combined with a reorientation on the content, optimal use has not yet been made of all possibilities offered by the new website. In the course of 2021 we expect to have the texts about the Pali-Canon and the background of our foundation bilingual. New articles will continue to appear on a regular basis. Also, in the course of 2021, the possibilities of easily finding the contents of the website through search engines will be better utilised.

Social media policy

We limit our social media activities to the modest use of our Facebook page.

Plans concerning making translations available online

In addition to the printed versions and e-books, we aim to make our Dutch translations of the Pali Canon available online in a way that facilitates research and study of the Pali Canon in the Dutch language. In the course of 2021 we expect to establish international cooperation that will help us with these plans and their technical implementation. It is certain that we will have to hire paid third parties for the actual technical implementation of this IT project. In order to finance the start-up costs of this project as well as its maintenance for the coming years, we are hoping for (earmarked) legacies and other donations. Without these extra funds, we will wait for the implementation of this project and will continue to give priority to the continued availability of the series of books in print, wider publication of the translations, making the sometimes complex texts more accessible by writing articles, and raising funds for new translations.

Special chair

In addition to the above-mentioned efforts, we will start exploring the needs and possibilities of financing a special chair with a teaching mission focused on the Pali canon and the translation of Pali into Dutch.

Should you wish to [contact us](#) in connection with the above, please do not hesitate to do so. You could also call our chairman, André Kalden, on +31 6 24600678.

The Board of the Friends of Buddhism Foundation