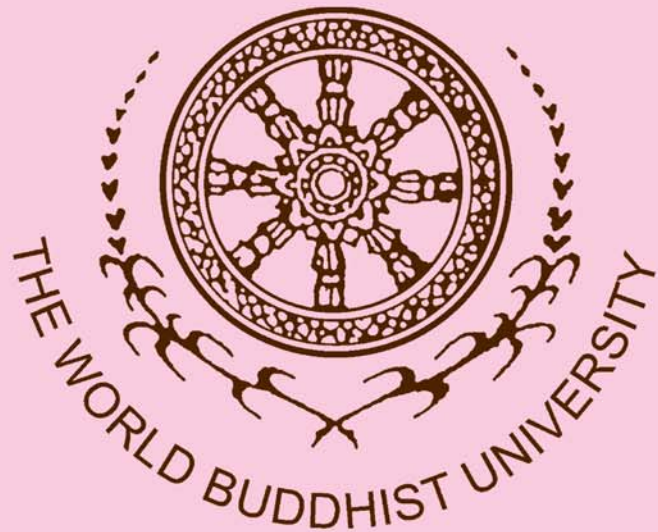


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Introduction

This is the last Issue of the Journal of the World Buddhist University in the year B.E. 2551 (C.E. 2008). We thus would like to say “Happy New Year” to all of our readers. We also wish the year B.E. 2552 (C.E. 2009) be the auspicious year for your sustainable happiness and success.

There are three academic articles in this Journal, “A Brief History of Buddhism in Japan,” “Essential Facets of Thai Buddhism” and “Buddhist Ordination Ceremony.” I feel thankful to and honoured by Rev. Kodo Matsunami for giving me his permission to publish a part of his famous book. I also thank Dr. Somboon Duangsamorn for sending me his valuable article, “Thai Buddhist Ordination Ceremony”. As to my article, “Essential Facets of Thai Buddhism,” I hope all readers will have more understanding of different phenomena of Thai Buddhism.

The articles here focus on Japanese Buddhism and Thai Buddhism in order to remind all participants of the 7th Meeting of the World Buddhist University and the 24th WFB General Conference in Tokyo, Japan, in which we enjoyed our Buddhist Seminar and our Buddhist work together very well.

Pataraporn Sirikanchana
Editor

A Brief History of Buddhism in Japan

Rev. Kodo Matsunami

1. Buddhism Introduced to Japan Presentation of Korean Buddhist Materials

Buddhism is considered to have been officially introduced to Japan in A.D. 538 when the ruler of Baekje, a Korean kingdom, presented a brilliant image of the Buddha along with scripturescrolls and ornaments to the Japanese Emperor Kimmei. In those days, Emperor Kimmei ruled Japan with his court nobles and immediately controversy started over whether or not such a foreign cult should be accepted. The orthodox Mononobe and Nakatomi clans strongly opposed this new religion on the grounds that Japan already had its traditional and indigenous religion of Shinto. But the influential Soga clan favored Buddhism; they believed that it had much to offer for the enrichment of their culture. Thus in the end, despite the disputes that took place among the court nobles, the emperor deferred the matter to the Soga clan.

About 40 years later, the pious Prince Regent Shotoku (A.D. 574-621) was appointed regent to the Empress Suiko, at which time he declared Buddhism as the official religion. Prince Shotoku was a great statesman and a devout Buddhist. He strongly believed that only with Buddhist teachings could he make Japan a unified and culturally refined country.

Prince Shotoku's Support of Buddhism

In order to carry out his plans, Prince Shotoku issued the 17-Article Constitution in 604, which emphasized Buddhist and Confucian principles.

Prefectures in Japan

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Hokkaido | 25. Shiga |
| 2. Aomori | 26. Kyoto |
| 3. Iwate | 27. Osaka |
| 4. Miyagi | 28. Hyogo |
| 5. Akita | 29. Nara |
| 6. Yamagata | 30. Wakayama |
| 7. Fukushima | 31. Tottori |
| 8. Ibaraki | 32. Shimane |
| 9. Tochigi | 33. Okayama |
| 10. Gumma | 34. Hiroshima |
| 11. Saitama | 35. Yamaguchi |
| 12. Chiba | 36. Tokushima |
| 13. Tokyo | 37. Kagawa |
| 14. Kanagawa | 38. Ehime |
| 15. Niigata | 39. Kochi |
| 16. Toyama | 40. Fukuoka |
| 17. Ishikawa | 41. Saga |
| 18. Fukui | 42. Nagasaki |
| 19. Yamanashi | 43. Kumamoto |
| 20. Nagano | 44. Oita |
| 21. Gifu | 45. Miyazaki |
| 22. Shizuoka | 46. Kagoshima |
| 23. Aichi | 47. Okinawa |
| 24. Mie | |

Article II of this injunction reads, “Fervently respect the Three Treasures.” Prince Shotoku stressed that everyone should faithfully revere the Three Treasures (the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) as the supreme and unmistakable guidance.

He also ordered the government to build many Buddhist temples among which the most famous is Horyu-ji temple, the world’s oldest wooden structure now standing near the former capital of Nara. It was because of his patronage and devotion that Buddhism was firmly established on Japanese soil.

Cultural Benefits of Buddhism

Therefore, we can see that in the beginning the introduction of Buddhism to Japan was highly motivated by political and cultural reasons. The court wanted to establish a system in which the existing clans could be consolidated. Buddhism offered both moral and intellectual benefits which Shinto lacked and it was these cultural learnings that attracted the court. Since Japan did not have a formal written language at the time, all of the Buddhist scriptures that were used were in Chinese. Thus at first, Buddhism was almost exclusive to the court families. However, the subsequent history of Buddhism in Japan demonstrated a gradual process of Buddhist acculturation downward through a ladder of social strata.

2. The Nara Period (A.D. 710-784)

National Support of Buddhism

After the death of Prince Regent Shotoku, Buddhism continued to flourish among court nobles, monks, and artisans. National Buddhist temples, called *okubunji*, were built by the Emperor Shomu in every province, the headquarters of which was at Todai-ji temple in Nara. Buddhist scriptures were introduced from China and without much modification they were studied by the Japanese monks. Buddhist images and ornaments were made by the Japanese artisans, some of which can still be seen in the older temples in Japan.

Buddhist temples in those days were the center of culture; they were not only used as places of worship, but also as schools, hospitals, dispensaries, orphanages, and refuges for older people. The monks were also school teachers, physicians, engineers, and developers of many construction projects. Therefore, the Japanese government encouraged and supported the Buddhist institutions and monks spiritually and materially, so that they could work with the government and the people more effectively.

The Six Nara Schools of Buddhism

As the numbers of monks increased, they were gradually classified into six Buddhist schools; namely, the Sanron, Hosso, Kegon, Ritsu, Kusha, and Jojitsu. These schools were direct importations from China and were studied at the various government-established temples.

These six schools were not independent sects, but existed in one temple side by side just like various departments in a college and each school contributed much to the development of later Buddhist thought in Japan.

3. The Heian Period (A.D. 794-1185)

Introduction of Tendai Buddhism

In 784, the Japanese capital was transferred from Nara to Kyoto, and accordingly became the Buddhist center of Japan. Soon after, two new Buddhist

schools were introduced from China, namely Tendai and Shingon. The six Buddhist schools were gradually overshadowed by these two schools. Saicho (767-822) established a Japanese Tendai school on Mount Hiei near Kyoto and tried to synthesize all the then existing philosophical concepts. While in China, he studied Esotericism, Zen, and Pure Land Buddhism along with the Tiantai Buddhism. He also studied the *Brahmajala Sutra (Bonmokyō)*, a modification of the Hinayana precepts. Upon his return to Japan he refuted the standpoints of all other schools, particularly of the Sanron and Hosso schools, and instead expounded the Ekayana doctrine based on the *Saddharma Pundarika Sutra*. It emphasized the belief that all forms of life stood on an equal basis in attaining Buddhahood, so that even conciliation between Buddhism and Shinto was made possible.

Establishment of a Mahayana Ordination Platform

In those days all the Buddhist monks had to accept the Hinayana precepts at the official ordination platform (*kaidan*), otherwise they were not admitted or qualified as Buddhist monks. Saicho, dissatisfied with this rule, wanted to be recognized under the Mahayana precepts which were suitable for Japanese monks. Several times he submitted a petition to the Emperor Saga to open a Mahayana ordination platform on Mount Hiei, and only after his death was the request granted by the Emperor in 822. From this time on, the Tendai school gained independence from the older schools in Japan, and from the fetter of the Hinayana precepts.

After Saicho there were two outstanding leaders in Tendai Buddhism: Ennin (794-864) and Enchin (814-891), who had studied both Tendai philosophy and the rituals of esoteric Buddhism in China. It was due to their contributions that Japanese Tendai could meet the desires of its supporters for esoteric rituals. Saicho, their master and the founder of Japanese Tendai, was not able to embrace the esoteric teachings completely. In the course, however, his successors were to fulfill the unfinished work of their master Saicho. Saicho's all inclusive Buddhism was thus gradually enriched by his faithful disciples.

Introduction of Shingon Buddhism

Kukai (774-835) was a contemporary of Saicho, and he also studied Esoteric Buddhism in China. Upon his return to Japan, he established the Shingon school on Mount Koya, and expounded the mystical teaching of Oneness with Vairochana Buddha based on the text of the *Mahavairocana Sutra (Dainichikyō)*. Unlike Saicho, Kukai did not deny the validity of the Hinayana precept. He accepted both the Hinayana and the Mahayana precepts and interpreted them according to his own esoteric teaching. He classified Buddhist thought into two parts: esoteric and exoteric, and taught that all schools of Buddhism other than Shingon were exoteric, because they were known and revealed by the historical Shakyamuni Buddha.

On the other hand, in esoteric Buddhism, truth is hidden and must be revealed. There are in the universe the knower and the known, and they must be identical with Vairochana Buddha through the mystical practices of mantra (invocations) and mudra (hand gestures) in order for the universe to be in harmony. Kukai also classified the then existing concepts into ten parts according to the degree of profundity: 1) No doctrines at all; 2) Confucianism and Taoism; 3) The Sankhaya and Vaisesika schools; 4) The Kusha school; 5) The Jojitsu school; 6) The Hosso school; 7) The Sanron school; 8) The Tendai school; 9) The Kengon school, and 10) The Shingon school. According to him, the Shingon school is the supreme and complete form of religion, while the other schools are lesser and incomplete.

Rising Power of Tendai and Shingon

However, the philosophical speculation of Tendai and the mystical ritualism of Shingon had only attracted the minds of court nobles, monks, and scholars who were weary of studying Buddhism theoretically without religious practice. The monks, belonging to either the Tendai or Shingon schools, became independent from the six schools and defended themselves from the influence of the government. Once they obtained the privilege of being monks, they lived together at the leading temples and became a third power standing against the Imperial government and its counterpart. The temple life became lax and there was degeneration and corruption among some of the monks in Buddhist institutions. Seeing this, the ordinary people were greatly discouraged and deeply impressed by the impermanency and vicissitudes of life.

4. The Kamakura Period (A.D. 1192-1333) Changes of the Kamakura Period

Buddhism was confined to the privileged classes of court nobles, monks, scholars, and artisans who had enough time to master the complicated philosophy and rituals of Buddhism. It was in the Kamakura period that a drastic change took place in the field of religion; Buddhism became for the first time the religion of the masses.

The old court eventually fell to a new military government which brought about the Kamakura period (1192-1333). The increasing discord and chaos of the times led to disillusionment and a call for the revival of faith. It was during these troubled time that Honen (1133-1212), Shinran (1173-1262), Eisai (1141- 1215), Dogen (1200-1253), Nichiren (1222-1282), and other Buddhist leaders appeared and expounded their teachings of salvation for all.

Development of Popular Buddhism

They were always on the side of the masses, discarding the existing aristocratic Buddhist hierarchy and its theoretical implications. Before this, only the elite class could enjoy the grandeur of Buddhist art and ceremony represented by glorious images, paintings, and ornaments. Strongly dissatisfied with these phenomena, these Buddhist leaders tried to reevaluate Buddhism through their own painful life experiences. The conclusion reached was that everyone had a potential Buddha Nature and thus could be saved by the mercy of the Buddha if one had firm faith in him. The new thoughts were based on the Bodhisattva doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism, particularly that of the Tendai school, which advocated that every sentient being has a Buddha Nature and is capable of becoming a Buddha.

As the new military government was established by Minamoto no Yoritomo at Kamakura in 1192, five prominent Buddhist schools were founded one by one, namely the Jodo, Jodo Shin, Rinzai Zen, Soto Zen, and Nichiren. They had common stand-points; they were established on the foundation of the Tendai doctrine and yet transcended it in their own respective ways.

Honen and Pure Land Buddhism

Honen (1133-1212) studied the Tendai doctrine thoroughly on Mount Hiei, and yet he was dissatisfied with a teaching which only taught the definition of salvation and the superiority of the Tendai doctrine as opposed to other schools of thought. However, what he wanted was a way to relieve others from suffering and to gain salvation himself. One day he came across the Genshin's *Ojoyoshu* (The essentials of rebirth) in which he found a passage by the Chinese monk Shandao, "Only call the name of Amida Buddha with one's whole heart—whether walking or

standing still, whether sitting or lying—this is the practice which brings salvation without fail, for it is in accordance with the original vow of the Buddha.”

In this passage he had at last found what he was seeking. He did not, however, deny the validity of other elaborate teachings and methods found in other schools. But he was convinced that this simple and straight forward calling of Amida Buddha was the only way for him and for everyone else who needed relief in that turbulent and degenerate age, because it required no elaborate rituals or complicated philosophy, but only the *nembutsu*, “Namu Amida Butsu,” which anyone can do anywhere.

Opposition to Pure Land Buddhism

In 1175, Honen established the independent Jodo (Pure Land) school which was based on three canonical texts, the *Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra (Muryojukyo)*, the *Smaller Sukhavativyuha Sutra (Amidakyo)*, and the *Amitayurdhyana Sutra (Kan Muryojukyo)*. He wrote the *Senchakuhongan Nembutsushu* (Passages on the selection of the *nembutsu* in the original vow) in order to defend his standpoint against the orthodox schools, and preached the teaching of the *nembutsu* (the recitation of Namu Amida Butsu) to the masses of the people.

However, his ever-increasing popularity among them encountered strong opposition from other schools and government, so that in 1207 his teachings were prohibited and he was exiled to the Isle of Shikoku with a handful of disciples. Later he was permitted to return and his teachings were officially recognized. One of Honen’s disciples, Shinran, further developed his teachings and established the Jodo Shin school.

Shinran and Shinshu Buddhism

Shinran (1173-1262) deeply perceived the weak nature of human beings, and had become convinced that salvation could only be found in self-surrender and in complete reliance on the saving power of Amida Buddha. What mattered to Shinran was no longer Amida Buddha, as the object of worship, but “Namu Amida Butsu.” Amida Buddha as *upaya* (expedient device) can be objectified, but not “Namu Amida Butsu,” for it is the actual interrelationship between subject and object; it is not a static “thing,” but a dynamic “event.”

He totally abandoned the precepts of both Hinayana and Mahayana which were “musts” for all monks in those days. Instead he got married and called himself the most wicked man in the world. He simply wanted to identify himself with ordinary people in order to save his wretched self and to pave the way of relief for other suffering people.

Introduction of Rinzai Zen

Buddhism was introduced to Japan by Eisai and firmly established by Dogen. Eisai (1141-1215) studied the Tendai doctrine on Mount Hiei and then went to China where he found that the Tendai (Tiantai in Chinese) had already declined and the study of Zen was flourishing. He therefore studied Zen and brought back to Japan many Zen texts such as the *Linchi-lu* (Analects of Master Linchi; known as the *Rinzai-roku* in Japan), the *Pi-yen-lu* (The blue cliff record; known as the *Hekigan-roku* in Japan), and the *Huaiangou-yu* (The story of the country Huaian; known as the *Kaian Kokugo* in Japan), and established Rinzai Zen. Zen Buddhism teaches that there is nothing to rely upon but one’s true self. Everyone has the Buddha-nature and the potentiality to become a Buddha, and yet it is hidden because of our illusions.

The aim of Zen is to throw off one's illusions and all artificiality and to see directly into the innermost nature of one's being. In order to awaken oneself and gain an intuitional understanding of life, Rinzai Zen stresses the practice of sitting in meditation and koan study. The koan is a pedagogic device which generally is put in the form of a problem. For example, "What was your original face before your mother gave birth to you?" or "When your corpse is cremated and the ashes are scattered to the winds, where are you?" These highly metaphysical questions must be answered immediately without resorting to any kind of logical reasoning process, because Zen is not a philosophical exercise but a way of life. This teaching was greatly favored by the military class, particularly by the Hojo family at Kamakura, and the government assisted the building of monasteries and temples for Eisai and his disciples.

Introduction of Soto Zen

Dogen (1200-1253) also studied Zen in China, and upon his return to Japan he established Soto Zen. From the beginning, Dogen disliked to engage in worldly affairs and hated to submit to the authority and power of the military government. He built Eihei-ji, the mountain monastery, in Fukui Prefecture and wrote 95 volumes of essays. Soto Zen teaches that the practice of sitting in meditation is the sole means to discover our true selves and to attain enlightenment. It does not require any reasoning or inferring.

Zen meditation is not a mystic union with Buddha or the simple confrontation with a religious object for one in a prescribed discipline at a specific time and place, but rather a way of life for everyone in any circumstances. It teaches a way to live and to die peacefully, meaningfully, and pleasantly. This teaching particularly attracted the warriors whose lives were constantly threatened by their enemies. The Bushido, the warrior's spirit, developed out of its teaching.

Nichiren and the *Lotus Sutra*

Nichiren (1222-1282) studied the then existing Buddhist schools of thought extensively, from which he chose the *Lotus Sutra (Saddharma Pundarika Sutra)* as the most reliable text. He established the Nichiren school which is of Japanese origin and proclaimed that the eternal life of the historical Buddha is revealed in us. He stressed that by reciting the name of this text, "Namu Myohorenge Kyo" in Japanese, with our whole heart, we can become one with the eternal Buddha and gain enlightenment. He denounced all other existing schools strongly on the ground that their teachings refer to salvation only in the next world.

According to him, no texts except the *Lotus Sutra* are a direct and authentic revelation to us who are living in this world. Since he wrote the *Rissho Ankoku Ron* (The establishment of righteousness in the rule of the country) and tried to persuade the government also to be blessed and ruled by his teaching, he was punished by the government and exiled to the Izu Peninsula and the Isle of Sado. Later he was pardoned to return to Kamakura. He built the Kuon-ji temple on Mount Minobu afterward and settled there for the rest of his life. His worldly and patriotic spirit accelerated the rise of the new subjects which we see in contemporary Japan.

Peak of Religious Consciousness

There were many other fine personalities living during this period, but they are somewhat less significant compared to the above mentioned Honen, Shinran, Eisai, Dogen, and Nichiren. No new major schools have arisen since the Kamakura period. Those that did arise were more or less the filling-in and working out of details in the

existing ones. That is, after the Kamakura period, there was nothing that stimulated the growth of new thought except the flourishing Jodo, Zen, and Nichiren schools of the Kamakura period.

Although during this period little productivity in art and literature was seen, a well-disciplined and concentrated spirit, as well as religious zeal and originality were crystallized by the founders of the newly established schools. Therefore, it was a time in Japanese history that religious consciousness attained its highest peak, and individual minds were freed from all the external bondages which had long obstructed spontaneous growth.

5. The Muromachi Period (A.D. 1336-1573)

Flourishing of Culture in the Muromachi Period

Though the military government at Kamakura unified the country and won battles against the two Mongol invasions of 1274 and 1281, it began to decline and collapse in the next century. Once again Japan was in chaos and encountered great political and social unrest with many civil wars. The ordinary people were perplexed and ill at ease. As a natural consequence, the people were obliged to seek solace by relying on religion. The worship of Avalokiteshvara (Kannon), the Bodhisattva of Infinite Compassion, flourished among the people at large.

When the new military government was established by Ashikaga Takauji in 1336, Japan was once again unified. More temples and monasteries were built through the patronage of the government or by contributions from the people. Buddhist culture also became highly developed during this period. The introduction of painting, calligraphy, tea ceremony, flower arrangement, and gardening by the monks from China greatly influenced the formation of refinements in Japanese culture that have continued to develop up to the present time.

Powerful Buddhist Institutions and Secluded Zen Temples

However, partial favoritism of certain schools by the government or the Imperial Household caused jealousy among Buddhist institutions and they either fought against each other or against the government. Particularly the leading temples on Mount Hiei and Mount Koya became the citadel of the priest warriors of the Tendai and Shingon schools. The priests were more conspicuous as a military and political force than in their proper religious sphere.

Zen temples and monasteries, however, became hermitages for the monks who detached themselves from worldly affairs and either concentrated their minds on meditation or engaged in artistic creation. The Jodo and Jodo Shin schools were less significant during this period, but they quietly and steadily increased their influence among the populace.

6. The Momoyama Period (A.D. 1573-1603)

Suppression of Buddhism by Oda Nobunaga

When Oda Nobunaga overthrew the military government of Ashikaga in 1573, he actively suppressed Buddhist institutions because he feared the increased power of the leading temples and monasteries which sided with his enemies. He favored the newly introduced foreign cult of Christianity for purely political reasons.

After the death of Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi took over his stand and also suppressed Buddhist institutions with the idea of bringing the ecclesiastical

completely under the sway of the secular. With the surrender of the Buddhist institutions to the secular power of Nobunaga and Hideyoshi, Buddhist art gradually lapsed into insignificance and was replaced by secular art.

7. The Edo Period (A.D. 1603-1867)

Isolation of Japan and the Proscription of Christianity

When Tokugawa Ieyasu established the Tokugawa shogunate in 1603 at Edo (the present Tokyo), he prohibited the Japanese to leave the country and foreigners to enter with few exceptions. The isolation of Japan lasted for the next 260 odd years; and during that time, Buddhism became purely ecclesiastical. The temples and monasteries destroyed by Nobunaga and Hideyoshi were restored by Ieyasu a comparatively modest and unfortified building. Ieyasu personally favored the Jodo school and assisted in building Zojo-ji temple in Tokyo, Chion-in temple in Kyoto, and other temples.

He also assisted in building Higashi Hongan-ji for financial and administrative reasons and divided the Jodo Shin school into two subsects—Nishi Hongwanji and Higashi Hongwanji. The following successors of Ieyasu also followed his policies and continued to patronize Buddhism and to proscribe Christianity. These measures were taken in order to weaken and control the power of the Buddhist institutions and to protect Japan from foreign invasion. During this period, all temples became registry offices where births, marriages, deaths, and funerals had to be registered with the priest in charge and they were accordingly considered family temples. The priest lived in ease and idleness and they often gave the people cheap and worldly instruction.

Rise of Shinto and Confucianism

Despite these unfavorable circumstances, Zen Buddhism continued to show some vitality. Hakuin appeared and revitalized Rinzai Zen with his fine personality and sermons. Basho, who brought into fashion the 17-syllable haiku poetry, owed much to Zen. Ingen established Obaku Zen when he was invited from China to Japan in 1655. Tetsugen published a reprint of the Ming edition of the Buddhist canon (*Tripitaka*) in 1681 which is remarkable for its clear type printing.

However, from the 17th century on, the influence of Buddhism gradually declined and was overshadowed by the rise of the rival religious and political philosophies of Confucianism and Shinto. In the first place both Buddhism and Shinto were identified by the decree of 1614, but later due to the roles of Buddhism, Confucianism and Shinto, the three were completely separated; i.e., Buddhism functioned in the sphere of religion; Confucianism in the moral; and Shinto in state politics. The idea of separation of these roles was consciously or unconsciously implanted in the minds of the Japanese and has been continuously held by them up to the present time. Buddhism was no longer a vital religion, but retained only its tradition which was handed down by the priests and monks from the Kamakura period.

8. Under Imperial Japan (A.D. 1868-1945)

Proscription of Buddhism in the Meiji Era

The Meiji Restoration in 1868 ended the long isolation of Japan and restored the power of the Imperial Household which had been under the shadow of successive

military governments for the previous 800 years. Japan opened its door to the world and encountered the impact of Western culture and technology. The policy of the Meiji government, therefore, went to both extremes in order to cope with modern nations. That is to say, Japan adopted Western culture and technology as a means of modernizing Japan and reaffirmed the Imperial Household, which was transferred from the ancient capital of Kyoto to the present day Tokyo in 1868, as the supreme sovereignty of Japan. The Emperor was the object of worship as a living god of Shinto; and since Buddhism had no room in this schema, it was completely separated from Shinto. Buddhist beliefs and worship were banned by the order of the Meiji government in 1868. Many temples and valuable works of Buddhist art were either destroyed or sold. A large number of priests and monks were forced to return to lay life, although this ban was later lifted. The Buddhist institutions were, however, classified under 13 denominations and 56 sub sects and the founding of any new sect was strictly prohibited.

Buddhism and Military Expansionism

Fortunately or unfortunately, Buddhism had already been accepted by the Japanese as part of Japanese culture and tradition. Therefore, apart from its religious beliefs and practices, Buddhism had permeated even to the lowest strata of the people and was removed from few of them. Only a very small number of priests and monks endured and reaffirmed their Buddhist discipline despite the hardships. They also reevaluated their religion in the light of modern scholarship. However, as time went on, this critical study and application of Buddhism was often interrupted by the nationalistic military government, and Buddhist institutions were once again utilized by it during two World Wars.

9. Contemporary Japan (A.D. 1945—)

Two Streams in Modern Buddhism

Since the militaristic Imperial government surrendered to the Allied Powers in 1945, Buddhism has been neither the monopoly of Buddhist institutions nor of the government nor of a certain privileged class of people. Buddhist studies have been accelerated by the monks, ministers, and scholars in temples, institutions, and universities. Ancient treasures of Buddhist art have been preserved at temples and museums under the protection of the government. Once ruined temples have been restored and have become centers of study and worship. International Buddhist conferences have been held in Japan in which a number of programs have been initiated for the exchange of knowledge and individuals.

As can be seen from the above brief history of Buddhism in Japan, two streams of Buddhism have come to exist; one which flows from top down and one which flows from the bottom up. In other words, the former can be characterized as “Higher” or “Normative” Buddhism to which many of the Buddhist monks and their denominations belong, though not a form of state religion with official status; while the latter can be characterized as “Lower” or “Popular” Buddhism to which lay members usually profess. In the course and development of Buddhism in Japanese history, when the former acted too progressively, the latter appeared to regress; on the other hand, when the former became hopelessly stagnant, the latter demanded reform movements with religious zeal which ushered in changes in response to the social, economic, and political climate of the day. Because of these two streams which have

been interacting with each other, Japanese Buddhism has come to the present time, enriching and developing both its inner and outer forms.

Embracing Nature of Buddhism

The Japanese word for “faith” sometimes means “progress” as well, which can mean including something better from outside. Therefore, we see in Japanese Buddhism heterogeneous elements from other beliefs such as Hinduism, Shinto, Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity, and folk religion. Most Japanese Buddhists prefer substance and quality over name or form and regard the virtue of the Buddha permeating to all corners of the world. It is pervasive but formless; it is difficult to grasp unless we are a part of it and living in it. This idea is in accordance with the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism. That is why we are taught that all sentient beings, whatever we profess to, are within the hands of the Buddha.

Some say that this all-embracing attitude of Buddhists is nothing but degenerating Buddhism from its original form, making it insignificant and secular. But we do not believe that this is so. By assimilating other elements such as modern technology and Western thought, Buddhism in Japan has enriched and expanded its tenets and power while retaining its century-old traditions. In this way, it continually recreates itself.

Buddhism at a New Juncture

However, at this juncture, Buddhism in Japan stands where its road forks—leading either to self-destruction or development. If it stands idle, it may lead to self-destruction, but if it looks ahead and struggles, it may lead to prosperous development.

At the time when the rigorous austerities, intellectualism, and self-affirming egoism have entered a blind alley, there is great perplexity, can these not be set free by the all-embracing sensitivity and ever-renewing selflessness of Buddhist teachings? In this sense, Buddhism in Japan would play a great role in order to give birth to a new sense of value not only in the present world but also in the world to come.

At present, the Japanese have an opportunity to open their eyes to see Buddhism not only as a part of their culture and tradition, but also as a religion and a way of life. Moreover, they are assured of freedom of belief. Individual minds are once again freed from all external bondage and fetters. At this time, they are free to choose their own belief from the already established or not-yet established systems of thought, religion, philosophy, and morals. It seems that they are now struggling to find the best and most suitable discipline to be the guiding light of their lives. No one can tell exactly where they are going, but one thing is clear, that is, they will never tread the same way as in the past. Instead of becoming tools of an already established culture and tradition, they are becoming fine designers of their own future.

Essential Facets of Thai Buddhism*

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pataraporn Sirikanchana

Thai Buddhism is not a monolithic religion. It can be understood to belong to Theravada denomination. Nevertheless, it can be classified into different types of beliefs and practices within the umbrella of Theravada Buddhism.

Theravada Buddhism holds strictly to the Tipitaka¹ (The Buddhist Scriptures) as transmitted from the First Buddhist Council by the Elders (500 holy monks who were the Buddha's disciples and had been ordained no less than 10 years) to all Buddhists. The First Buddhist Council took place 3 months after the passing away (parinibbana) of the Buddha². Thus, all beliefs and practices which follow the Buddha's teachings and the Great Disciples' words are called Theravada (Theravada comes from a Pali word "Theravada" which means "the Teachings of the Elders").

1. General Beliefs and Practices of Theravada Buddhism

1) Beliefs in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha as spiritual refuges of all Buddhists.

2) Practices according to the Five Buddhist Precepts which are required for being good Buddhists.

The Five Buddhist Precepts are as follows :-

- a) To abstain from killing
- b) To abstain from stealing
- c) To abstain from committing adultery
- d) To abstain from false speech
- e) To abstain from indulging oneself in spirits which leads to heedlessness³

3) Nibbana is the Theravada Buddhist ideal. A Theravada Buddhist who attains Nibbana is called an Arahant (a Buddhist saint). Nibbana can be attained through the clear understanding of the Four Noble Truth⁴ and the Three Characteristics⁵ of all phenomena.

4) Theravada Buddhism uses Pali as its sacred language for chanting and recording scriptures.

5) Monks and novices are considered superior to laypeople in social status and have to fulfill their duties in the study of the Buddha's teachings and the propagation of Buddhism.

* The Lecture Content of the Course PD 353 (Buddhism in Thailand) in the Thai Studies Program, Pridi Banomyong International College, Thammasat University in B.E. 2551 and B.E. 2552.

¹ "Tipitaka" comes from "tipitaka" which is a Pali word. As Theravada Buddhism uses Pali words, all technical terms here thus use Pali instead of Sanskrit (which is used in the texts of Mahayana Buddhism).

² P.A. Payutto, *The Pali Canon, What a Buddhist Must Know* (Bangkok: S.R. Printing Mass Products, Co. Ltd., 2002), p. 17.

³ P.A. Payutto, *A Constitution for Living, The Pali canon: What a Buddhist Must Know* (Bangkok: Printing House of Thammasat University, B.E. 2551/2008), p. 21.

⁴ The Four Noble Truth (*ariyasacca* is composed of suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path leading to the cessation of suffering).

⁵ The Three Characteristics (*Tilakkhan'a* is composed of impermanence, the state of being oppressed and not-self)

6) Monks and laypeople are differentiated from one another in their duties. A monk is expected by the Buddhist community to purify himself in order to attain Nibbana. A layperson basically supports monks and novices with all necessities of life (food, shelter, medicine and clothing).

7) Theravada Buddhism acknowledges monks and novices as “the ordained.” It considers nuns (mae chee) as laywomen. Formally and officially, there are no female monks (bhikkhunis) in Thailand. It is believed they became extinct in the 17th Century B.E. (the 11th Century C.E.) in Sri Lanka before the expansion of Buddhism to Southeast Asia.

8) Theravada Buddhism holds to the Law of Kamma (the Law of Nature or the Law of Cause and Effect), i.e. doing good yields good in return, and vice versa. Generally, the Law of Kamma is understood concretely and literally.

9) A Theravada Buddhist monk lives a celibate life according to the Buddhist Discipline (vinaya) and normally stays in his temple during the Buddhist Lent (Rainy Season from July to October).

10) Theravada Buddhists follow Buddhist beliefs and practices in the Tipitaka⁶ and Commentaries as guidelines for their moral cultivation and religious ceremonies.

2. Buddhism in Thailand Throughout History

Buddhism first entered Thailand in Nakhon Pathom Province in Central Thailand before the Fifth Century B.E. (the First Century C.E.) from India. Some archaeological evidence is seen in the Wheel of the Law (the Dhammacakka) with Pali inscription and the Stupa.⁷

In the 13th Century B.E. (the 17th Century C.E.), the King of Sri Vijaya Kingdom who ruled Sumatra (an Island in Indonesia at present) spread Mahayana Buddhism to Southern Thailand. The evidence is the Bronze Statue of a Bodhisattva found in Surat Thani Province in Southern Thailand and now shown at the National Museum, Bangkok.⁸

In the 14th Century B.E. (the 8th Century C.E.), Queen Camadevi who had formerly lived in Lopburi moved to Northern Thailand to rule the City of Haripunjaya (Lamphun) and established Theravada Buddhism in Haripunjaya.⁹

In the 16th Century B.E. (the 10th Century C.E.), King Surya-varaman I of Cambodia expanded his power to Central Thailand and established the City of Lopburi (Lavo) as the Center of his Kingdom. He had a Mahayana temple built in Lopburi called Prang Sam Yod (Triple Sanctuary Tower).¹⁰

In the 19th Century B.E. (the 13th Century C.E.), King Ramkhamhaeng the Great of the Sukhothai Kingdom invited monks from Nakhon Si Thammarat who had been ordained in Sri Lanka to preach the Buddha-dhamma (the Buddha’s Doctrine) in Sukhothai.

The Sri Lankan monks belonged to Theravada Buddhism. They were forest-dwellers. When they came to Sukhothai, they stayed in a temple not so far from the

⁶ The Tipitaka is divided into the Sutta, the Vinaya and the Abhidhamma. The Sutta is the Buddhist teachings for monks and laypeople. The Vinaya is the Buddhist Discipline for monks and novices and female monks. The Abhidhamma is the Buddhist metaphysics in subtle and sophisticated version.

⁷ Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Monuments of the Buddha in Siam*, Translated by Sulak Sivaraksa and A.B. Griswold (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1973), pp. 9-11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

city. They used the Buddhist Scriptures and Commentaries in Pali. Thai Buddhism was thus influenced by Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition. After the establishment of Theravada Buddhism in Sukhothai, other Buddhist denominations began to fade away from Thailand.¹¹

In the Period of the Kingdom of Ayutthaya (the 20th Century B.E. or the 14th Century C.E.), Brahmanism and Animism flourished and co-existed with Buddhism, besides beliefs in the Divine King and his supernatural power, the making of Buddha Images in Royal Attire, the construction of Buddhist monasteries and so on.¹²

In the 22th Century B.E. (the 16th Century C.E.), Northern Thailand was under the domination of Anuruddha, the famous Burmese king. Theravada Buddhist art and architecture thus followed the Burmese style.¹³

In the Bangkok Period, Prince Mongkut who had been ordained as a monk established the Dhammayutika Sect in B.E. 2379 (C.E. 1836) in order to be the model of Normative Buddhism. Monks outside the Dhammayutika Sect belonged to Mahanikaya Sect. In the reign of King Rama V, many Chinese people came to live in Thailand and established Mahayana Chinese Buddhism.¹⁴

Before the advent of Buddhism in Thailand, Thai people had believed in Hinduism and Animism. When they turned to follow Buddhism, they assimilated other beliefs in it. Thai Buddhism is thus a unified religion of the Buddhists in Thailand who make 95% of the entire population. Besides, sociologically and phenomenologically, it can be differentiated into Normative Buddhism, Popular Buddhism, (Socially) Engaged Buddhism and Intellectual Buddhism.

3. Normative Buddhism in Thailand

Normative Buddhism is the mainstream Buddhism in Thailand. It is supported by the State and Sinhalese Buddhism (Buddhism of Sri Lanka).

In the Reign of King Ramkhamhaeng the Great (the 19th Century B.E. or the 13th Century C.E.), monks who came from Nakhon Si Thammarat in Southern Thailand preached to the people in his Kingdom in the Buddhist Sabbath Day. Many people in this Sukhothai Kingdom (located in Northern Thailand), both men and women, strongly believed in the Buddhist teachings. Some wanted to be ordained. Though men could be ordained, women cannot. According to the monastic rules, a woman should be ordained by groups of monks (bhikkhus) and female monks (bhikkhunis). Since female monks at that time could not be found in Sri Lanka and Thailand which were Theravada countries, female ordination was not possible.¹⁵ Women who wore white robes and shaved their heads were called “mae chee” or upasika. Yet, they were not officially called the ordained.

Thai men since the time of the Sukhothai Period can be ordained as monks by their preceptors in the consecrated assembly hall (Uposatha Hall) when they reach the age of 20. Monks wear yellow robes and take 227 precepts. They abide by the Buddhist Disciplines (the Vinaya). Monks stay in a temple or a monastery. Some stay in a hermitage. They have a duty to go for an alms-round early in the morning. Being on an alms-round, monks give people a chance to make merit when the people offer food to them.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-23.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 23-27.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-17.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31

¹⁵ Samer Boonma, “Bhikshuni in Buddhism,” *Journal of the National Research Council of Thailand*, 1981, 13 (1): 56-57. (In Thai).

Young men under 20 years old may be ordained as novices. A novice takes 10 precepts: 1) To abstain from killing 2) To abstain from stealing 3) To abstain from committing adultery 4) To abstain from false speech 5) To abstain from indulging oneself in spirits leading to heedlessness 6) To abstain from untimely eating 7) To abstain from dancing, singing, playing musical instruments and watching shows 8) To abstain from decorating oneself with ornaments, flowers and from rubbing scented substance on one's body 9) To abstain from using high and luxurious bed and 10) To abstain from touching money and gold in order to have them for oneself.¹⁶

The transgression of the precepts leads to a penalty. The most serious penalty is being expelled from the monastery and monastic institution.

There are 2 types of monastic dwellers: the forest dwellers and the village dwellers. The forest dwellers are monks who primarily work on meditation practice. The village dwellers, on the other hand, pay more attention to scriptural studying.

During the Sukhothai period (from the 18th to the 20th Century B.E. or the 12th to the 14th Century C.E.), most monks were forest-dwellers. Theravada Buddhism flourished especially in the Reigns of King Ramkhamhaeng the Great and his grandson, King Lithai. King Lithai wrote a great Buddhist text called *Trai Phum Phra Ruang* (Three Worlds of King Ruang) in order to promote the Buddhist norms and virtues to his people. This Buddhist text portrays the Buddhist cosmology illustrating the universe which is comprised of three worlds (realms): 1) Kama-bhumi (the World of the Desired) which is differentiated into the realms of denizens of hell, hungry ghosts, demons, animals, human beings and deities 2) Rupa-bhumi (the World of Form Beings) where higher type of beings who possess form and bodies exist 3) Arupa-bhumi (the World of Formless Beings) where formless beings exist.¹⁷

Human beings suffer in the Cycle of Death and Rebirth according to their kamma (volitional actions or deeds). If they do good, they will receive good in return, e.g. giving things to the needy will yield wealth in the future in return. The Cycle of Death and Rebirth will be destroyed when one attains Nibbana.

Trai Phum Phra Ruang has been the ground of Buddhist morality in Thai society since the Reign of King Lithai. It initiates beliefs and practices of Normative Buddhism in Thailand as follows :-

1) Beliefs and Practices according to the Law of Kamma

In *Trai Phum Phra Ruang*, the Law of Kamma is depicted concretely, e.g. offering food to monks will result in rebirth as a rich person on earth or a deity in heaven.

2) Buddhist Education Based on the Tipitaka and Buddhaghosa's Commentaries

Buddhaghosa was born a Brahmin in Southern India in approximately the early 11th Century B.E. (the 5th Century C.E.). He later studied the Tipitaka and became so knowledgeable in the Buddhist doctrine that he was named Buddhaghosa meaning the voice of the Buddha. During his time, Buddhism declined in India but flourished in Sri Lanka. Buddhaghosa thus journeyed to Sri Lanka in order to search for the orthodox teaching of the Buddha. After arriving in Sri Lanka, he stayed with the Sinhalese monks who allowed him to use their Sinhalese collection of the Buddhist

¹⁶ P.A. Payutto, *Dictionary of Buddhism*, 16th Edition (Bangkok: S.R. Printing, B.E. 2551/2008), pp. 176-177

¹⁷ King, Lithai, *Trai Phum Phra Ruang (Three Worlds of King Ruang)* (Bangkok: Klang-vidaya, B.E. 2515/1972), p. 314. (In Thai).

texts. Buddhaghosa then composed Buddhist Commentaries on the Tipitaka in Pali and his famous book called *Visuddhimagga* (Path of Purification). The *Visuddhimagga* is considered by Thai scholars as a veritable encyclopedia of Theravada Buddhism because it contains all the important Buddhist concepts and teachings found in the Tipitaka.¹⁸

When King Lithai composed *Trai Phum Phra Ruang*, he used the Tipitaka and Buddhaghosa's work as his references. *Trai Phum Phra Ruang* is used directly and indirectly in Thailand to promote national morality and Buddhist culture, e.g. a high respect for monks and a strong belief in the Law of Kamma.

The general characteristics of Normative Buddhism can be described as follows :-

1) The monastic institution is under a hierarchic system headed by the Supreme Patriarch who is appointed by the King. The Supreme Patriarch has the Sangha Supreme Council as his Advisory Board. He exercises his ruling power consecutively over the Ecclesiastical Governor General, Ecclesiastical Regional Governor, Ecclesiastical Provincial Governor, Ecclesiastical District Officer, Ecclesiastical Sub-District Head, Abbot, monks and novices.¹⁹

The King is the Supporter of the Sangha and the Upholder of Buddhism. For example, King Rama V (B.E. 2411 - B.E. 2453 or C.E. 1868 - C.E. 1910) established the two Buddhist universities: Mahamakuta and Mahachulalongkorn. In addition, King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great is the Patron of the Buddhist Association of Thailand and the World Fellowship of Buddhists.

The Sangha supports the sovereignty and charismatic leadership of the King. In return, the King presents an ecclesiastical rank to a member of the Sangha. There is no conflict between the Monarch and the Sangha throughout the Thai history.

All Theravada monks are under rules and orders of the Sangha. Monks of other denominations, i.e. Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism are under the monastic law of the Office of Religious Affairs.

2) The Pali language is considered the sacred language of Buddhism. Pali is used for recording the Buddhist Scriptures and for chanting. In all Buddhist ceremonies in Thailand, Pali is used for reciting and chanting. Pali first appeared in Thailand in the Inscription at the wheel of the Law, the symbol of Buddhist propagation, found in Nakhon Pathom around the 5th Century B.E. (the 1st Century C.E.).²⁰

3) The Tipitaka and Buddhist Commentaries are taken strictly and literally, e.g. the Law of Kamma is the Law of Reward and Punishment for a person who volitionally does good or evil rather than for a whole community. The study of the Buddhist Scriptures was strongly recommended in the Reign of King Rama V. Monks who had passed a certain level of Pali Knowledge were eligible to gain certain monastic ranks. If they quitted the monastery, they could find a good job, e.g. being a civil servant, which is considered by all Thais good earnings and highly respected. Since Normative Buddhism highly recommends knowledge of the Buddhist Scriptures, it is also called Doctrinal Buddhism.

4) Nibbana is the final good of all Buddhists, especially of monks. Nibbana is freedom from suffering and can be obtained through the elimination of all defilements, i.e. greed, hatred and delusion, which are causes of all sufferings on earth. Nibbana is not easy to attain. It needs a proper knowledge and a hard work in

¹⁸ *Buddhaghos'-uppatti*, ed. and trans. J. Gray (London: Luzac & Co., 1892), p. 31.

¹⁹ Vajira-anā - varorasa, *Karn Khana Song (Monastic Organization)* (Bangkok: Mahamakuta Press, 1971), pp. 3-4. (In Thai).

²⁰ Prince Damrong Rajanbhab, *Monuments of the Buddha in Siam*, p. 1.

order to overcome one's own self. The attainment of Nibbana is a monk's highest duty.²¹ The Buddhist Training toward Nibbana is through morality (sīla), meditation (samādhi) and wisdom (pañña).²² The knowledge toward Nibbana is through the understanding of the Fourfold Noble Truth (ariya-sacca) consisting of the true understanding of Suffering (dukkha), of Causes of Suffering (Samudaya), of the Cessation of Suffering (nirodha) and of the Path toward the Cessation of Suffering (magga).²³

5) Monks and novices are in superior status to laypeople. Parents thus encourage their son to be ordained when he reaches 20 years of age. Having a son ordained is considered a way to gain a great merit.

6) Buddhist tradition and culture based on the Buddhist teachings in the Tipitaka and the Commentaries are closely followed by Normative Buddhists, e.g. the respect to elderly people and the use of the lotus flower in Buddhist ceremonies.

4. Popular Buddhism in Thailand

Popular Buddhism is also called Folk Buddhism. It is the dominant stream of Buddhism followed by most Thai people but not advocated by neither the State nor the Sangha. It refers to the tradition as commonly practiced by Thai people especially in rural areas.²⁴ It is the consequence of human attempts to survive in the often confusing and conflicting world of everyday problems and to struggle to attain happiness at present or in the near future. For example, when a Thai villager is desperately in need of some money, s/he may pay homage to a Buddha image and ask for it.

Popular Buddhism embraces Animism in its beliefs and practices. In *The Sociology of Religion*, Max Weber (C.E. 1864- 1920), a famous German sociologist, defined "animism" as the belief in spirits or souls dwelling continuously and exclusively near or within a concrete object or process. These spirits may possess and dominate events, things, categories, and behaviors, and any temporarily incorporate themselves into things, plants, animals, or people.²⁵ In general, Animism is the belief in spirits and sacred powers in either natural or man-made objects.

Many popular practices of Thai Buddhists are animistic, such as the Ceremony of Invoking the Rice Spirit (tham khwan khao). In this ceremony, farmers carry rice to the threshing ground and gather the scattered fallen rice in the field. While they are gathering the rice, they chant:

O Rice Goddess, come you up into the
rice barn. Do not go astray in the meadows and
fields for mice to bite you and birds to take you
in their beaks. Go you to the happy place, to
rear your children and grand children in prosperity.

²¹ *Anguttara-nikaya.v.23-25, The Book of the Gradual Sayings*, trans. F.L. Woodward, Vol. V (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 17-19.

²² Vajirānā - varorasa, "Hua Chai Traisikkha (The Essence of the Tisikkha)," *Dhamma - gati (Story of the dhamma)* (Bangkok: Mahamakuta Press, 1971), p. 175. (In Thai).

²³ P.A. Payutto, *Dictionary of Buddhism*, 16th Edition, p. 155.

²⁴ John E. de Young, *Village Life in Modern Thailand* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), p. 145.

²⁵ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 4.

Come you!²⁶

Through such an informal ritual, the farmers hope to guarantee protection by the Rice Spirit.

In Popular Buddhism, all ceremonies are believed to provide magical power. For example, monks' chanting is considered the utterance of sacred words in Pali which are thought to have the power of protection from all harm and to grant benefits such as long life, success and happiness to the participants of the ceremonies. Monks' chanting conveys no meaning of the Buddha's teachings to Popular Buddhists but rather magical and supernatural power. Monks who master meditation technique are believed to have strong magical power and can effectively invoke power in amulets and certain objects in their chanting ceremony.²⁷ Moreover, merit making is transferable and sometimes collective, for example, as part of a public ritual or ceremony. Besides, in a cremation ceremony, Buddhists dedicate their merits to the death so that s/he may be reborn in a good place.

Generally, Popular Buddhism can be clarified as follows:

1) It is a combination of Buddhism, Brahmanism/Hinduism and Animism. Though Buddhists believe that the Buddha is the founder of Buddhism, they also faithfully believe in Hindu deities, spirits in nature, amulets, phallic stones and consecrated Buddha images.

2) It gives more support to the belief in Divine Predestination of God Brahma than to that to the Law of Kamma. Popular Buddhists do not deny the dominant power of God Brahma and all deities. Though they accept the Buddha's teaching of the Law of Kamma, they are faithful to gods. They believe that their lives are subject to the Signs revealed through Stars by the Absolute God Brahma. Some Popular Buddhist monks thus work as astrologers for the people.

3) Popular Buddhism encourages beliefs and practices of supernatural power. Even the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha are endowed with supernatural power. The Buddha is believed as being a super-human being. When he was alive, he had extra-ordinary markings and qualities.²⁸ After his death, his relics and his consecrated images have a magical power.

The Buddha's Dhamma in Pali, for Popular Buddhists, consists of sacred words with magical power in healing, blessing and protecting all participants when uttered during a Buddhist ceremony. For example, an amulet or water in a bowl becomes sacred and has a protective power after sacred words of the Pali Dhamma have been transferred into it during an invocation ceremony.

The Sangha or monks are not only the followers of the Buddha and the propagators of Buddhism but also sacred persons with magical power. There are legends of Thai Buddhist monks who had gained magical power after their long years of meditation retreat. For example, Venerable Luang Poh Tuad who had lived in the 22nd Century B.E. (the 16th Century C.E.) in the Period of Ayudhya was believed to have a miraculous birth. He was born in a poor family. When he was a baby, he was

²⁶ Phya Anuman Rajadon, "The Life of the Farmer," *Life and Ritual in Old Siam*, trans. and ed., William J. Gedney (New Haven: Hraf Press, 1961), p. 38. There are many versions of rice chanting. Please see Iam Thongdee, *The Rice Culture* (Bangkok: Sahadharmonic Printing, B.E. 2537/C.E. 1994), pp. 123-124. (In Thai).

²⁷ John E. de Young, *Village Life in Modern Thailand*, p. 145.

²⁸ S.J. Tambiah, "The Sociology of Merit and Social Correlates of Buddhism in a Thai Village," in B.R. Leach ed., *Dialectic in Practical Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 43.

called “Poo” (which means a crab in Thai) and had a sacred crystal ball from a serpent (Naga). When he grew up as a boy, his father took him to a monastery to be ordained as a novice. Later, when he was 20 years old, he was ordained as a monk. One day he was invited to pay homage to the Buddha’s Relics in Nakhon Si Thammarat in Southern Thailand. On the way back to Ayudhya in Central Thailand after he had sailed in the sea for several days because of a storm and found no water to drink, the captain put him in a small boat to sail to the shore with some crew. Venerable Luang Poh tuad then put his foot in the sea and turned the salty sea into drinking water. Everyone was saved from dying of thirst. Venerable Luang Poh Tuad is still respected highly throughout Thailand. His image has been made into many kinds of sacred objects of worship.²⁹

Another example is the worship of a deity called Catu gama-rama-deva which was originated in Southern Thailand and has been very popular throughout Thailand since the last decade. According to an ancient legend called *Catugama-sastra*, Queen Candra who was King Suriyadeva’s wife had united all regions in the Suwannaphum (the Golden Peninsula) in the 7th Century B.E. (the First Century C.E.). She was Prince Ramadeva’s mother. Prince Ramadeva had studied Mahayana Buddhist doctrine and faithfully believed in Mahayana Buddhism. He intended to accumulate merits in order to be a Bodhisattva and to propagate Buddhism throughout Suwannaphum. He was named Catugamara ma-deva because he once studied *Catugama - sastra* from his mother. At the end of the 8th Century B.E. (the 2nd Century C.E.), he became a Bodhisattva. He could utter sacred words and possessed miraculous powers like the Sun and the Moon. He thus could destroy his enemies through his verbal utterance. He was venerated by the people who made a sacred image in his likeness in order to worship him as a deity. People believed that his image possessed a supernatural power to protect Buddhism and their kingdom.³⁰ The earliest image of Catugama-rama-deva can now be seen at the entrance of the Buddha’s Relic Stupa in Nakhon Si Thammarat.

4) Popular beliefs and practices are based on folk tales and local tradition rather than on the Buddhist Scriptures. For example, the *Tale of Khun Borom* which depicts the story of the creation asserts that Than, the creator god, made the human world and ruled things on earth. Than has serpents as his servants. If he orders the serpents to play with water in the sky, the rain will fall on earth. If drought prevails, Northeastern people will perform a sacrificial ceremony for Than who, being satisfied with it, will let the rain fall. This ceremony is traditionally performed in February before the ploughing season so that villagers can have enough rain in their rice fields. If Than does not hear their asking, they would shoot ceremonial rockets to the sky in order to call for his attention.

5) Popular Buddhists prefer the attainment of the World of Metteyya Buddha, the future Buddha, to the attainment of Nibbana. They consider Nibbana too far to reach. Apart from the World of Metteyya Buddha, they want to be reborn in either a rich family or in heaven. They believe that Nibbana is exclusively the ideal for monks. In the Tipitaka, the story of Metteyya is mentioned briefly that he would come to purify the Buddhist doctrine and bring it back to its original form. During the time of the Buddha Metteyya, the whole world will be filled with happiness and prosperity.

²⁹ Choomsak Nararatwong, *History in the Time of Luang Poo Tuad* (Bangkok: J.P. Graphic Design and Printing, B.E. 2545/2002), pp. 57-59. (In Thai).

³⁰ Suriyan Siddhichai-bhutikul, *Catugama-rama-deva* (Bangkok: Bhabpim, B.E. 2550/2007), pp. 101-104. (In Thai).

Popular Buddhists consider Nibbana inaccessible and undesirable because it is beyond reach and is irrelevant to the present life.³¹

The belief in the realm of Metteyya is similar to that of Christian Millennialism (or Millenarianism) which is the Kingdom of God on earth. According to *Revelation 20*, in *the New Testament*, Christ will return to this world within 1,000 years before the Judgment Day. After the Judgment of God, the Kingdom of God on earth will be established and all beings will live together in happiness.³²

As Popular Buddhism can solve immediate problems of Buddhists and render hope and consolation to them, the majority of Thai Buddhists willingly follow this type of Buddhism.

5. Socially Engaged Buddhism in Thailand

Some Westerners misunderstand that Theravada Buddhism teaches the way of escapists because it promotes an individual search for Nibbana rather than an altruistic ideal of life. In fact, Theravada Buddhism teaches Buddhists to primarily work for their attainment of Nibbana. Each individual is told to depend on him/herself and to struggle by him/herself toward his/her final goal. Theravada Buddhism does not deny the merit of altruism but emphasizes on primarily helping oneself before helping others.

Formerly, Mahayana Buddhists also considered Theravada Buddhists narrow-minded because of their individual search for Nibbana instead of helping others to attain the Buddhist final goal along with them. Accordingly, Mahayana Buddhists called Theravada Buddhists the Hinayanists and the small denomination, Hinayana Buddhism. The word “Hinayana” means a small and narrow vehicle which can carry only the person who practices it to the final goal. On the contrary, the word “Mahayana” means a large vehicle which can carry many people to the final goal together.³³ In Mahayana Buddhism, a follower does not struggle alone for the Highest Bliss. There are Buddha(s) and Bodhisattva(s) who are always ready to help him through his practice. Since the word “Hinayana” denotes inferiority and contempt, the World Fellowship of Buddhists, an international organization of Buddhists, agreed in its first Meeting in Sri Lanka in B.E. 2493 (C.E. 1950) that the word “Theravada” should be used instead of “Hinayana.”³⁴ Since then, all text-books and formal documents have used the word “Theravada” instead of “Hinayana.” In Thailand today, many Theravada monks and laypeople are socially engaged Buddhists. For example, Phra Khamkhian Suwanno, the former abbot of the Sukhato Forest Hermitage in Chayaphum Province, had helped poor villagers overcome their difficulties through his many projects, e.g. a nursery school for children and a trade union of villagers.

When Phra Khamkhian first came to Tha Mafai Wan Village in Chayaphum Province in B.E. 2520 (C.E. 1977), he preached the Buddhist doctrine to villagers. He expected to dissuade villagers from being drunkards and thieves. He advised them to raise animals, to establish fish farm and so on. He asserted that mental development

³¹ Charles E. Keyes, “Millennialism, Theravada Buddhism, and Thai Society,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 2 (February 1977), p. 288.

³² *The New Testament* (Bangkok: The Gideons International in Thailand, no date), pp. 1022-1031.

³³ Ashvaghosa, *The Awakening of Faith (Sraddhotpada-Sastra)*, trans, Timothy Richard (Shanghai: Christian Literature Society, 1907), p. 1.

³⁴ Sunao Miyabara, *A History of the World Fellowship of Buddhist 2493 B.E. (1950) to 2533 B.E. (1990)* (Bangkok: Darnsutha Press Co., Ltd., 2537/1994), pp. 2-3

through the Buddhist moral teachings and meditation practice is necessary as foundation of good thought and good action.

At present, Phra Pisal Visalo, the abbot of the Sukhato Forest Hermitage, is Phra Khamkhian's efficient successor who works for the best of the people. He is the author of many books such as *the Position and Fate of Human Being in the Computer Age* (in Thai) and *Making Merit with Wisdom* (in Thai). He is an organizer of the Religious Group for Society and works with Sulak Sivalaksa, a famous thinker and social activist of Thailand today. Phra Pisal promotes the roles of monks and laypeople in working for human right, social equality and political justice. He criticizes the monastic preceptors for their inefficiency of being good teachers and their failure to train novices. Moreover, he encourages the establishment of the Bhikkhuni (female monks) Order in Thailand which is against the Rule of the Thai Sangha.³⁵

While most Thai Buddhists make merits through financial donation and giving things to others, Phra Pisal suggests making merits without money but working for social benefits instead, e.g. feeding orphans in a nursery, visiting old people in an Old People's Home and being volunteers in a temple.³⁶

Another example of a Socially Engaged Buddhist monk is Phra Boonrod Adhipu in Saithong Village, Kalasin Province, Thailand. Phra Boonrod works in order to turn the community into the Drinking-Free Village. He preaches the evil of drinking and being alcoholic. He offers jobs in his Temple for those who can quit drinking. He teaches children to understand Buddhist morality and practise accordingly. He also initiates many projects which effectively free villagers from their poor lives, e.g. weaving silk cloth and farming.³⁷

Phra Kroo Pipattanachot, the abbot of Don Temple, Songkhla Province, in Southern Thailand also works to help villagers overcome their own poverty. He is the founder of the Bank of Life aiming to free the Community of Hua Kwai (Buffalo's Head) Village from all debts. The Bank of Life is a form of banking of which the objectives are rather for helping its customers than sharing benefits. A villager should deposit 30 bahts (about one dollar) in the Bank every month. Those who want to take out a loan should sign the agreement one month ahead. They cannot take out a loan more than a double amount of their deposit and should pay the interest of one percent per month. All benefits from this banking system go to hospital welfare for all villagers and educational funds for children in the village.³⁸

Cooperation of monks and laypeople in order to protect and develop their community can be also seen in the role of Phra Kroo Pitak-nantakun, the leader of "Love the Nan City" Foundation who restores the villagers' conscience and the forest to its former richness through the strategy of "ordaining the forest" in Nan, a province in Northern Thailand. He and the villagers tie yellow cloths around many big trees in

³⁵ Phra Pisal Visalo, *Thai Buddhism in the Future: A Tendency and an Exit from Crisis* (Bangkok: The Sodsri-Saritwong Foundation, B.E. 2546/2003), p. 364. (In Thai).

³⁶ Phra Chai Worathammo and Phra Pisal Visalo, *Making Merits Cleverly: A Collection of Things Worth Knowing and Manual for Making Merits Properly* (Bangkok: Medsai Printing, B.E. 2544/2001), pp. 50-53). (In Thai).

³⁷ Theera Vacharapran and Anan Manpayak, *Drinking-Free Village* (Bangkok: Champathong Printing, B.E. 2550/C.E. 2007), pp. 17-27. (In Thai)

³⁸ Somkiat Meethan, "Phra Kroo Pipattanachot and the Bank of Life," in *Sekhiyadharma* Vol. 10 No. 43 (January - March, B.E. 2543/C.E. 2000): 136- 139.

the forest in order to make them ordained. They hope that when choppers see trees with yellow cloths, they may feel guilty to chop down the ordained trees.³⁹

Cooperation of monks and laity to save their community is a characteristic of a civil religion. A civil religion aims at stimulating a public mind and conscience for the sake of one's community and one's personal right in one's religious activities. Thai Buddhism as a civil religion plays an important role in Thailand.

In Thailand, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great is the greatest socially engaged Buddhist. He has done many projects for the benefits of his people. His projects are based on Buddhist teachings. For example, his "New Theory for the Solution of Drought for Farmers" and "the Theory of Sufficient Economy" is based on the Buddhist teaching of self reliance and a moderate life. According to this Theory, each farmer who averagely owns the land of 6 acres per family should make the best benefit of the land by dividing it into 4 parts. The first part about 30% of the land is used for water storage by digging a pond where fish are kept and water is used in the dry season. The second part, 30% of the land, is used for growing rice which yields food to the family during the whole year. The third part, 30% of the land, is used for growing vegetable and fruit plants for eating and selling. The fourth part which is 10% of the land is used for building a house, raising animals and growing small plants.⁴⁰ Through this management of land, farmers will be able to live sufficiently and overcome all difficulties throughout their lives.

Though His Majesty the King's work affirms his being a Socially Engaged Buddhist, he is basically and primarily representing mainstream Normative Buddhism. His role as a Socially Engaged Buddhist is the outcome of his loving kindness and compassion toward his people. Nevertheless, he needs to strictly preserve and follow the norm of the country.

The Theory of Sufficient Economy was first introduced by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand to his people in order to deal with problems of poverty, morality and environments in Thailand. He first presented his Theory to the students of Kasetsart University on July 18, B.E. 2517/C.E. 1974 as a means to solve economic problems of the country. A part of his lecture on this Theory is as follows:

The Development of the country should follow a step-by-step plan. It should first provide the people with self-sufficiency by means of an economical way of life and proper management. Then it can proceed to a higher step of economic success and social prosperity.⁴¹

Sufficient economy promotes self-reliance of a person. A person who is economically secure can survive and help others. The practical dimension of the sufficient economy aims at economic sustainability of one's community through living in moderation. It is not to be mistaken as a form of localism which is the antagonistic view to modern capitalism. In fact, sufficient economy can be applied to

³⁹ Banchit Sairawkam and Thanat Baiya, *Hak Muang Nan (Love Nan City)* (Chiangmai: Nontagarn Graffic Printing, B.E. 2549/2006), p. 51. (In Thai). solving the problems of environment and in promoting sustainably good lives.

⁴⁰ Pragas Wacharaporn, *Phra Raja Panithan Nailuang (His Majesty the King's Resolution)* (Bangkok: Prapansarn Printing, B.E. 2542/1999), pp. 205-207. (In Thai).

⁴¹ The Message of His Majesty the King delivered on the Occasion of the Commencement of Kasetsart University Students.

all levels of life, e.g. lives of local, town, lower class and middle class people. In other words, sufficient economy is a philosophy that stresses the Middle Path⁴² as an overriding principle for appropriate conduct by the populace at all levels. It is a holistic concept of moderation and contentment which can be applied to all conducts in family, community and nation.

The Middle Path is the Buddha's teaching as recorded in the Tipitaka and the principle of the Buddhist practices. The Renunciation of Prince Siddhattha can illustrate the meaning of the Middle Path which is the avoidance of the two extremities, i.e. the luxurious life in the three palaces and self-mortification of an ascetic during the Search of Truth.

His Majesty the King gives his exposition of sufficient economy as follows:

Sufficient economy is an economy which can help those who practice it attain self-sufficiency and live without trouble. It promotes primarily the establishment of one's economic foundation or self-sufficiency. Those who are able to stand firmly on their self-sufficient bases can proceed to a higher level of their economic progress.⁴³

Self-sufficiency enables self-reliance. It strengthens economic stability of an individual and his/her community and supports them to live harmoniously with their natural environment.

In the Tipitaka, one can find the Buddhist teaching which promotes self-sufficiency, i.e. the virtues leading to Temporal Welfare, as follows:

1) Endowment of Industry

One should be energetic and apply oneself to one's duty and honest living.

2) Endowment of Protection

One should know how to protect the fruitfulness of one's labor which is gained through one's honest efforts.

3) Association with Good Friends

One should not associate with those who lead one downward. One should associate with people who are learned, worthy, capable and endowed with qualities helpful to one's livelihood.

4) Sufficient Livelihood (Living Moderately)

One should keep track of one's income and expense and live accordingly so that one can be secured financially.⁴⁴

⁴² The Middle Path is the Path between the two extremities and the way toward the end of suffering as enlightened by the Buddha. It is composed of Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. Here, His Majesty the King expects to mean it only "sufficiency" or "the middle of the two extremities."

⁴³ The Message of His Majesty the King delivered on the occasion of His Birthday Anniversary Celebration on December 4, B.E. 2541/1998.

⁴⁴ P.A. Payutto, A Constitution for Living, The Pali Canon: What a Buddhist Must Know, p. 41.

The Tipitaka also suggests the Buddhists to divide their income into 4 parts. One part is for supporting themselves, their dependants and for good causes. Two parts are for investment. The last part is for saving for future needs.⁴⁵

Similarly, the sufficient economy asserts the right method for managing one's own property, i.e. the acquisition of wealth through intelligent and moral acts and the protection of wealth for one's own development and security. Especially, it encourages all human beings to attain sustainable happiness.

Sustainable happiness worth pursuing according to the Tipitaka can be described as follows:

- 1) Happiness of possessing one's property which is the outcome of one's own effort and moral conduct.
- 2) Happiness of spending one's property for the sake of one's own self, one's own family, the needy and the public welfare.
- 3) Happiness of freedom from debt
- 4) Happiness of blameless conduct⁴⁶

Sufficient economy values happiness of the people more than economic growth and wealth of the country. Evidently, the Kingdom of Bhutan closely follows the Theory of Sufficient Economy. The King of Bhutan is knowledgeable about western civilization and development. Yet, he does not allow his country to be westernized. In addition, the people of Bhutan are devout Buddhists. They live moderate and sufficient lives and strictly observe Buddhist precepts and ceremonies. They prefer living with nature and in natural environment to living in materialism and modern technology. The Bhutanese aim to attain the ideology of GNH (Gross National Happiness). Though Bhutan is considered a poor country with low income and simple life style, the people are content with their ways of lives.

His Majesty the King of Thailand presented the Theory of Sufficient Economy to Thai people when the country suffered from economic deterioration. Primarily, he expected to save all in lower social status, e.g. farmers and labourers, from economic poverty. At present, he loves to have his Theory followed by all Thais who want to attain sustainable happiness. His Theory was recommended by the United Nations (UN) which honoured him with the Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award in May 26, B.E. 2549 (C.E. 2006). In the UN Lecture in honor of him, the Theory of Sufficient Economy was praised as a worthy theory for Thailand and all nations. In addition, the UN encourages its 166 nation members to apply this Theory to their sustainable development.

In summary, the characteristics of Socially Engaged Buddhism can be presented as follows:

1) It puts more emphasis on the solution of immediate problems than on the preservation of the Buddhist discipline and tradition. For example, a monk can touch a woman if he intends to save her life or to cure her from her illness.

2) Pali language and Pali Scriptures are not considered crucial for a Buddhist life. Buddhist teachings and practices which serve immediate needs of the community are particularly emphasized, e.g. Buddhist teachings of herbal medicine, environmental protection and the Present Benefits of Life which consist of the

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

fulfillment of hard-working, the protection of one's own property, the association of good people and the economical living.⁴⁷

3) It supports a civil society and encourages a cultivation of a public mind. It values the ideology of altruism and social responsibility. Monks live in a village or near a lay community. They work for the sake of others rather than for their own final liberation.

4) It supports all movements for the social development. For example, unlike Normative Buddhism, it approves the ordination of female monks (bhikkhunis). In Socially Engaged Buddhism, monks and laypeople work together to promote human right, freedom and the benefits of all beings.

6. Intellectual Buddhism in Thailand

Intellectual Buddhism asserts the understanding of profound meaning of the Buddha's teachings through wisdom and intellectual capacities. It firmly states that wisdom is the only means to the end of suffering or Nibbana. In Normative Buddhism, Buddhists are encouraged to practice the Threefold Training (Ti-sikkha)⁴⁸ respectively in order to attain Nibbana. Intellectual Buddhism, on the contrary, emphasizes only the use of wisdom. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, an Intellectual Buddhist monk, explains the significance of wisdom or insight as follows:

The Buddha summed up this principle very briefly by saying: "Insight is the means by which we can purify ourselves." He did not specify morality or concentration as the means by which we could purify ourselves, but insight, which enables us to escape, which liberates us from things. Not freed from things, one is impure, tainted, infatuated, passionate. Once free, one is pure, spotless, enlightened, tranquil. This is the fruit of insight, the condition that results, when insight has done its job completely.⁴⁹

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (B.E. 2449-2536/ C.E. 1906-1993) was the former abbot and the founder of Suan Mokkha, a famous hermitage in Southern Thailand. He was honoured by the UNESCO as one of the World Great Personalities in B.E. 2549 (C.E. 2006). Moreover, he was a Great thinker and influential preacher for scholars in Buddhism both in Thailand and abroad. His writings were translated into many languages, e.g. English, German and Japanese.

In the time of Buddhadasa, superstition, materialism, deterioration of morality and blind faith prevailed in Thai society. Wisdom or insight was the only rescuer of all people. Buddhadasa thus proposed methods for activating wisdom of Thai Buddhists as follows:

1) The Use of Dhamma Language

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

⁴⁸ The Threefold Training (Ti-sikkha) is composed of morality (sila), concentration (samadhi) and wisdom (panna).

⁴⁹ Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Handbook for Mankind* (Bangkok: Thammasapa Press, B.E. 2548/C.E. 2005), p. 75.

According to Buddhadasa, language as means of human communication can be classified into dhamma language and everyday language. Everyday language is worldly language, i.e. language of those who do not know the profound meaning of the Buddha's teachings. Everyday language is based on sensory things and experiences accessible to common people. Being based on the physical rather than the spiritual, it serves only for discussion of worldly matters and tangible things perceived under ordinary circumstances. For example, "hell," in everyday language, is a region under the earth. It is ruled over by the God of Death who carries off the souls of the dead and subjects them to all sorts of punishments. It is a place where the bad must go after death.⁵⁰

On the contrary, dhamma language is the language spoken by people who have gained a deep insight into the truth of the Buddha's teachings (the Dhamma). Dhamma language concerns the mind, the intangible and the nonphysical world. For example, "hell," in dhamma language, is the anxiety that burns us just like a fire and causes suffering to us.⁵¹

2) The Use of Symbolic Pictures

In the Spiritual Theatre established by Buddhadasa at Suan Mokkha Hermitage in Surat Thani Province, Thailand, one can find Buddhadasa's symbolic pictures. Buddhadasa had these pictures painted and drawn in order to initiate one's insight and moral consciousness. For example, the picture "Hatred, Enemy of Peace" shows a man holding a guitar which he plays so violently that all the strings are broken. The picture symbolizes mental condition of human beings when dominated by hatred. It suggests us that we should free ourselves from the power of anger and hatred.⁵²

3) The Use of Poems

Buddhadasa is certainly a brilliant poet. He has composed many poems expressing Buddhist philosophy, e.g. "Me and Mine," "Looking only at the Good Side," and "The World is Saved by Gratitude". His poems are influential and attractive. They challenge our intellectual capacities to penetrate the truth of their meanings.

4) The Use of a Straightforward Statement

In some cases, Buddhadasa puts it bluntly. He prefers monarchy to democracy and seems to support dictatorship. We can find some passages to illustrate the point as follows:

Asoka was not a tyrant, however. He was a gentle person who acted for the good of the whole society. He constructed wells and assembly halls, and had various kinds of fruit trees planted for the benefit of all. He was "dictatorial" in the sense that if his subjects did not do these public works

⁵⁰ Buddhadasa, *Toward the Truth*, edited by Donald K. Swearer (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), p. 71.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Dhammic Pictures in the Spiritual Theatre at SuanMokkha*, Chaiya (Bangkok: Somchai Printing, no date), pp. 18-20.

as commanded, they were punished.⁵³

and

An illusory democracy cannot survive.
Liberal democracy has too many flaws. Socialism
is preferable, but it must be a socialism
based on dhamma. Such dhammic socialism is
by its very nature “dictatorial” in the sense I
have been discussing today⁵⁴

In the light of Buddhadasa, dictatorship is better than democracy because it keeps people in line.

Besides, Buddhadasa criticizes some popular traditions of Thai villagers which are results of their selfishness. For example, during a funeral rite in a village, Thai men always drink alcoholic beverage and eat food at the house of the dead’s family, Instead of bringing some food to the house, they expect to consume everything at the expense of others. Buddhadasa thus straightforwardly criticizes the bad habit as follows:

When someone dies in a house, the family
has to prepare liquor for those Buddhist guests
to drink. The family has to kill an ox, a buffalo
or a pig for them. Those greedy men come to
devour all food in the house of the miserable.
What is this sort of loving kindness! How can
we love others this way?⁵⁵

5) The Use of Metaphor

Buddhadasa criticizes education in Thailand that it emphasizes only academic knowledge and overlooks the cultivation of morality. Thus, he compares the educational system in Thailand to a “tail-less” dog.⁵⁶ He suggests that we should “recover a dog’s tail.” He explains that education without morality is like a dog whose tail is cut off and tries to deceive others that a dog without a tail is more beautiful than the one with it. He tries to correct this misunderstanding by pointing out that a dog must have a tail, that, similarly, education must include moral lessons, and that education without morality is useless and even harmful to a society.

Buddhadasa asserts that it is crucial to consider all phenomena through wisdom or insight. Buddhadasa’s work aims at elevating our intellectual capacities toward the end of suffering. By means of the clarification of everyday language and dhamma language, he demythologizes the Buddhist texts. He does not intend to deny the truth of the text but rather to reveal its true meaning. To “de-mythologize” means to “recover the deeper meaning behind the mythological conception.”⁵⁷ This term is

⁵³ Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Dhammic Socialism*, trans. Donald K. Swearer (Bangkok: Suksit Siam, B.E. 2529/1986), p. 92.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

⁵⁵ Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Chat Mankhong Dai Duay Sasana (Securing the Nation Through Religion)* (Bangkok: Somchai Press, 1981), pp. 20-21. (In Thai).

⁵⁶ Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Aseeti-Sangwachara-yusamanusorn* (Bangkok: Karnpim Phranakorn, B.E. 2531/C.E. 1988), p. 139, (In Thai).

⁵⁷ Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), p. 18.

first used by Rudolf Bultmann in his analysis of Jesus' teachings and his interpretation of the New Testament.⁵⁸ Bultmann asserts his point as follows:

We can understand the problem best when we remember that de-mythologizing is a hermeneutic method, that is, a method of interpretation, of exegesis.⁵⁹

For Bultmann, "de-mythologizing" is a very important means to penetrate the true meaning of the Scriptures. In the beginning of **Jesus Christ and Mythology**, he proposes the following passage:

This method of interpretation of the New Testament which tries to recover the deeper meaning behind the mythological conceptions I call de-mythologizing --- an unsatisfactory word, to be sure. Its aim is not to eliminate the mythological statements but to interpret them. It is a method of hermeneutics. The meaning of this method will be best understood when we make clear the meaning of mythology in general.⁶⁰

Like Bultmann, Buddhadasa tries to de-mythologize the Tipitaka. He believes that Buddhists will understand the true meaning of the Buddha's teaching if they do not take mythology of the Tipitaka literally, but consider it analytically and philosophically instead. For example, the story of gods mentioned in the Tipitaka should be taken as the symbol of a certain kind of human beings who live in luxury, happiness, and wealth, not as the story of extra-terrestrial beings outside human world.

The general characteristics of Intellectual Buddhism can be summed up as follows:

1) It emphasizes the role of wisdom in all Buddhist beliefs and practices and asserts that wisdom is essential for being a good Buddhist. In the light of Buddhadasa, wisdom brings about insight which reveals the truth of all phenomena.⁶¹ Those who penetrate the truth of all phenomena understand that all is subject to transience (anicca), unsatisfactoriness (dukkha) and nonselfhood (anatta) and thus is not worth clinging to.

2) It rejects all supernatural beliefs and practices. Intellectual Buddhism accepts the Law of Nature or the Law of Cause and Effect.

3) It considers selfishness, consumerism and materialism as the causes of human defilements and suffering. Selfishness is the root of all evils. For Buddhadasa, those who work for money, food, desire, fame and honor are selfish, consumerists and materialists, but those who do their duty for duty's sake are followers of dhamma.⁶²

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-34.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁶¹ Buddhadasa, *Toward the Truth*, edited by Donald K. Swearer, pp. 32-33.

⁶² Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Dhamma Nai Thana Srang Tua* (Dhamma As a mean to Build Oneself) (Bangkok: Suvijan Press, 1968), p. 36. (In Thai).

4) It rejects literal meanings of the Buddhist Scriptures. It accepts the meaning of the Buddha's teachings in dhamma language. Besides, it disregards Buddhaghosa's Commentaries and the Abhidhamma. According to Buddhadasa, the essential teachings of the Buddha are *dhamma* and *vinaya* (the monastic discipline). Abhidhamma and dhamma are not essentially different from each other. The Abhidhamma, however, is an excessive and unnecessary teaching of the Buddha of which the content has already been presented in the dhamma.⁶³

5) It asserts "Nibbana here and now." This assertion encourages Buddhists to seek Nibbana in their present lives. In Buddhadasa's exposition, Nibbana which most Thai Buddhists believe to exist beyond the Cycle of Birth and Death is only in our worldly experiences and can be understood as the state achieved through the eradication of desire and attachment.⁶⁴

Though Buddhism in Thailand can be classified sociologically and phenomenologically into Normative Buddhism, Popular Buddhism, Socially Engaged Buddhism and Intellectual Buddhism, Thai Buddhists do not clearly belong to any particular type of Buddhism. For example, a Thai Buddhist who claims that s/he is Buddhadasa's follower may devote him/herself working to help poor people in a community instead of trying to attain Nibbana through wisdom. Besides, Buddhadasa himself can be taken as both an Intellectual Buddhist monk and a Socially Engaged Buddhist monk because of his teaching of the crucial role of wisdom and his establishment of the Spiritual Theatre and the International Hermitage for Foreigners in Suan Mokkha.

The classification of Buddhist beliefs and practices into four types is aimed primarily to provide more understanding to Thai Buddhists' ways of life which always depend on their situations and circumstances. Thai Buddhists take Buddhism as a part of their social lives and not a transcendental religion. Though they have no knowledge of the Buddha's teachings as recorded in the Tipitaka, they try their best to be good Buddhists. Their being Buddhists is expressed through their Buddhist culture and ceremonies as well as their loving kindness and compassion towards others. If we understand the whole picture of Thai Buddhists as expressed in their multifarious and multifaceted beliefs and practices, we may not blame a Thai Buddhist for being a wayward follower of the Buddha.

⁶³ Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Abhidhamma Khu Arai (What is the Abhidhamma)* (Bangkok: Dhamma-puja Press, B.E. 2521/1978), p. 43. (In Thai).

⁶⁴ Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Toward the Truth*, edited by Donald K. Swearer, pp 84-85.

Buddhist Ordination Ceremony (Theravada Tradition)

*Dr. Somboon Duangsamosorn**

In the Kingdom of Thailand, it is a Buddhist Tradition for a young man having completed 20 years of age, not less, but more is proper, to be ordained a Buddhist monk and stay at a Buddhist Temple during the Buddhist Lent in the rainy season from July to October. The Ordination Ceremony usually takes place for two days or more which may vary from region to region; the means may be different, but the end is the same. Prior to the Ordination Ceremony the parents of the young man take him to a temple near their house and consult with the Abbot to fix the date of ordination. The young man will stay at the temple for at least three days or a week during which he will be taught and trained as an Ordination Candidate, which is called *Nag*, pronounced “Narg”. According to Buddhist history, some time back a King of Serpents called *Byanag* or *Phayanarg* had so much faith in Buddhism that he wanted to be ordained a Buddhist monk and disguised himself as a human being and finally was ordained. One day in the afternoon, the King of Serpents was asleep and had forgotten to lock the door. A young monk came by and pushed the door open. He was terribly shocked to see a big snake asleep in a coiling position. In his sleep the disguised King of Serpents had returned to his former shape. The young monk went on shouting all over the temple that made all other monks frightened. The King of Serpents, however, realized how much trouble he had created. Thereafter the discipline was laid down that animals were not allowed to be ordained Buddhist monks. With sadness and despair, the King of Serpents requested his name *Nag* to be used for an Ordination Candidate by which he would at least be part of the Buddhist Monk Ordination.

In the late afternoon of the Ordination eve, the Nag returns home, accompanied and escorted by his parents and close relatives. Inside, his house is decorated with streamers and coloured paper bunting to announce the joyous occasion. On the lawn in the open air in front of his house, the shaving ceremony is conducted by his parents who shave the Nag’s hair, eyebrows, beard and mustache, giving him a bath and anointing him with turmeric powder and perfume. Then he is dressed in white and decorated with a gold necklace, diamond or precious stone rings, wearing a wristwatch and a gold or alloy of gold belt around his waist.

In some provinces of the northeastern region, the ordination candidates are carried in group of about 3-5 on a palanquin, which is strongly swung and rocked all the way from the temple, and if one or more have fallen off, they are not qualified to be ordained.

In the evening around 6 o’clock or later, 9 Buddhist monks as invited, come to the house and chant mantras in Pali. The religious ceremony is started by the most senior monk while the chairman of the ceremony lights the 3 joss-sticks and 2 candles on the altar and asks for the 5 precepts. The senior monk then gives the 5 precepts; not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie and not to drink intoxicants after which he presents a roll of holy tread on a vessel to the senior monks at the head of the row and requests the monks to chant the mantras for the Nag, his parents, relatives and invited guests. The chanting to bless the occasion usually takes about 30 minutes.

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In the meantime, the preparation of dinner and drinks for the participants is carried out in a special kitchen as managed. After the monks' departure, at about 7.00 to 7.30 p.m., another important ceremony is performed, and that is called the Encouragement Ceremony conducted by one or two popular performers, who can be a man, or two men, or one man and one woman. Their performance is to explain in a melodious recitation the merits of virtue, mercy, kindness and describing the great care of the parents who raised the boy since his birth to the age of ordination, which is a very great merit indeed, and the son's obligation and gratitude to be expressed to his parents by means of ordination which is also a deed of merit.

One important feature of the ceremony is a decorative item made of banana leaf, beautifully arranged and decorated with a variety of flowers placed in the middle of the gathering. The banana leaf work is usually made of 7 or 9 tiers in the shapes of a pagoda, small at the bottom, larger at the middle and smallest at the top. This is an auspicious symbol around which the Nag, his parents, close relatives and important invited guests sit and after the verbal performance has been finished, the light waving rite is carried out by the right side for 3 rounds around the Nag which is an auspicious gesture to encourage and bless him. At the same time a Thai music band, which actually starts playing before the arrival of the 9 monks to welcome them, also salutes the end of the chanting and to see off the monks.

Included in the ordination ceremony is that the close relatives, friends and all invited guests offer their share in this meritorious acquisition of good deeds and the amount given in envelopes or cash by hand depends entirely on the intention of the individuals.

At about 8:30 or 9:30 p.m. the entertaining programme as organized begins. It could be a popular folk music concert, Thai drama or others as provided. The entertainment program continues till midnight after which those who are assigned to look after the next morning's programme may have to stay up and see that all is in good order.

In the morning on the following day, the Nag is taken in a procession to the temple where the ordination is performed. The arrangement of procession varies from region to region as stated earlier. On the way from home to the temple, traditionally the Nag is seated on horse back that is to follow suit *Prince Siddhartha Gautama* who became Lord Buddha of the world. The Nag may also be seated on an elephant back, on a buffalo back, in a bullock cart, on a palanquin, or even in a car, as the case may be. If the distance is not too long, the Nag may be seated on the shoulders of a strong man, or two or three men take turns in carrying the Nag. The procession is usually accompanied by a music band, with long drums, string instruments or a brass band all the way. Also men and women, boys and girls dance along and enjoy the atmosphere of merit acquisition. In front of the procession is the Nag's father, who carries the iron bowl with its strap on the left shoulder across his neck and displays the Religious Fan in his right hand, while the mother carries a vessel of three yellow robes. Other senior relatives, young boys and girls carry things of utility including the offerings to be presented to the 28 monks in the Ordination Ceremony inside the main chapel. Along the way, the procession is accompanied by the joyful sound of voices led by a man or a woman who shouts loud and clear, "Ho ...Hoe," and all others respond with "Hiw ..." and the sound of drums. In case the Nag is seated in a car accompanied by many other cars, the music band will follow in a truck or pick-up, and also to carry more loads of things.

At the main chapel the Nag seated on the shoulders of a strong man is carried in an organized procession three times around the chapel. The procession moves by

the right side around the chapel accompanied by music and voices of joy while the Nag throws coins, mostly one baht coins. Children struggle to pick up the coins to buy sweets but the adults or elderly keep the coins as auspicious mementos. At the end of the third round, the Nag is placed on the ground to pay respect to one of the 8 boundary stones that are buried underneath.

Again, while standing in front of the chapel, the Nag throws coins as a gesture of donation. Thereafter, he is carried across the threshold of the left door and moved forward to kneel down with a bundle of 3 pieces of yellow robes received from his parents and placed on his two outstretched arms and the two hands joined in the shape of a lotus and then recites his request in Pali words for the Chairman monk to ordain him as a novice first. Then he is given an *Angsa* (Amsa-shoulder piece) or an inside yellow clothing for the upper body slipped over his head and hung on his left shoulder and is instructed by the Chairman monk to be dressed in the yellow robes. He is then escorted to be dressed up in the yellow robes by one of the monks sitting in the ceremony, normally at the side of the Principal Buddha Statue. After having dressed, he is led back to receive from his father the iron bowl which is hung from his left shoulder touching down to his right hip. His request for the 10 Precepts from the Chairman monk makes him a complete novice.

After the 10 precepts, the Chairman monk gives a brief discourse on the functions of the 3 Yellow Robes and the Iron Bowl to the Candidate and tells him to go and stand on a corner or at the place between the two front doors inside the chapel. Here, an instruction is given in Pali. The two questioning monks, *Phra Kammavajajarn* and *Phra Anusasanajarn* come to stand on a mat or carpet before the novice and begin to simultaneously question him as follows:

Part I

Questions	Answers
1. Are you infected with leprosy?	No, Sir.
2. Are you infected with pox?	No, Sir.
3. Are you infected with ringworm?	No, Sir.
4. Are you infected with asthma?	No, Sir.
5. Are you infected with epilepsy?	No, Sir.

Part II

1. Are you a human being?	Yes, Sir.
2. Are you a man?	Yes, Sir.
3. Are you free?	Yes, Sir.
4. Are you free from debt?	Yes, Sir.
5. Are you not an official?	No, Sir. (English sense)
6. Are you allowed by your parents?	Yes, Sir.
7. Are you completely 20 years old?	Yes, Sir.
8. Have you already got an iron bowl and the three pieces of Yellow Robes?	Yes, Sir.
9. What is your Pali name?	Sir, my name is Sampunyo (Sama - punno).
10. What is your Upajchaya (Upajjhaya)'s name?	Sir, my Upajchaya's name is Venerable Anuruddho.

If they are satisfied with the answers by the monk ordination candidate, they return to their seats. The candidate is then called to join the ceremony and kneel down before the Upajchaya and the questioning monks; Phra Kammavajajarn is on the right and Phra Anusasanajarn is on the left of the Chairman monk. The newly ordained

novice then requests in Pali words for the Sangha of 28 monks comprising the Chairman monk or *Phra Upajchaya*, two questioning monks or *Koosuad*, and 25 monks sitting in a U-shape in the Ordination Ceremony to ordain him as a monk. The chanting in Pali begins to upgrade the novice or candidate to the monkhood and the ceremony ends at about 10:45 a.m. Then the newly ordained Buddhist monk or *Bhikkhu* receives offerings from the participants who remain inside the chapel while the 28 monks are invited to proceed to a big hall, a place of gathering where their lunch is served. Thereafter, offerings are presented to the 28 monks by the new monk and his relatives and all are blessed with the holy mantras by the monks while the new monk, his parents and all the participants join in the Water Pouring Rite to dedicate the results of the merits to their departed ancestors. The Chairman monk gets up and walks around to sprinkle Holy Water from a brass vessel carried along by a man to bless all while the remaining monks sit and chant the Jayamaṅgala Gatha (or Gatha of Auspicious Victory) that marks the end of the ordination ceremony and the celebration thereof.

After the monks' departure, the lunch is served to all present. Then, everybody takes leave from the new monk and the hosting party.

At the temple, the new monk must have the following items intended for his use called *Atthaborikharn* (atthaparikkha ra) which are:

1. *Sabong* (antaravasaka) - the lower cloth to wear
2. *Jivorn* (civara) - the big cloth to cover
3. *Sanghati* (saṅghatī) - the folded cloth to be placed on the left shoulder
4. Iron Bowl - to receive alms
5. Razer/Nail Cutter
6. Needle
7. Yellow Thread Belt
8. Water Distilling Cylinder

It is philosophically believed that an ordained Buddhist monk, after his monkhood and return to a layman's life, is regarded as a learned or ripe man called *Thid* who is ready to get married and start his family life. It is said that when a man who has not been ordained a Buddhist monk proposes to a girl, in most cases he is refused by the parents who hold the idea that the man is still raw, and is not qualified to be their daughter's husband and their grandchildren's father. The concept is derived from the continuing tradition that while in his monkhood, he is taught with four subjects:

1. Dhamma in Pali Proverbs and relevant Explanation
2. History of Lord Buddha and Buddhism
3. Important Discourses of Dhamma
4. Buddhist Discipline that consist of 5-8-10-227-311 Precepts (the last is for Buddhist Bhikkhunis only) in the Vinayapitaka.

Besides, he is also trained to be a man of quality with good knowledge of Dhamma and well behaved. He is careful and aware of what he thinks, what he speaks and what he does, and is shy and afraid of committing sin. He is a person who stays away from the ways that lead to disaster:

1. Alcohol consumption
2. Nightlife
3. Entertainment and womanizing

4. Gambling
5. Association with bad people
6. Laziness to work

He is taught to be oriented with:

1. Diligence to work and earn income
2. Obligation to save
3. Association with good and wise friends
4. Balanced way of life based on Self-sufficiency Economy

Traditionally, it is also believed that a man who is already married with children, if ordained, the merits of his ordination shall be shared by his wife and children. In that case, his parents will get less merit and that is why a grateful son is ordained before he gets married.

It is also possible for those who are government officials or employees of private organizations, who often cannot take leave of 3 months for ordination during the lent, to be ordained and stay in the monkhood for 7-10-15 days so that they can acquire merit there from.

19 December 2551

Book Review

**Guruge, Ananda W.P., *Buddhism, Economics and Science*.
Bloomington, Indiana: Author House, 2008. 205 pages.**

As an outstanding scholar in Buddhist Studies and a brilliant administrator in many Buddhist offices, Professor Ananda W.P. Guruge has untiringly published many academic books for the sake of Buddhist education. His new book, **Buddhism, Economics and Science**, has proved great scrutiny in his work and his wisdom in the world of endless search of truth.

The Book is divided into two parts. Part One, “Buddhist Economics: Myth and Reality,” deals with issues pertaining to Buddhism and Economics. Ananda Guruge intends mainly to draw the attention of the reader to the growing bibliographical resources. It culminates in introducing three of the most recent developments in the national economic policies in Bhutan and Thailand resulting from the initiatives of Their Majesties the Kings of Bhutan and Thailand and in Mongolia from that of the Prime Minister (and now President). He intends to encourage and stimulate further examination of all issues in Buddhism which contributes to the making of economic principles governing the lives of all people. Part Two, “Buddhism and Science: Claims and Disclaimers,” surveys, with reference to bibliographical resources, the development of the investigation into the compatibility of modern science and Buddhism.

In the part of “Buddhist Economics”, Guruge’s main objective is to examine how best Buddhism could serve humanity in assuring development conceived not merely as economic growth measurable in financial terms or provision of infrastructure but more comprehensively as progressively reducing and ultimately eliminating hunger, malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, social inequalities, exploitation, discrimination, insecurity and violence. Many eminent scholars and thinkers are selected in order to examine and publicize their interesting views. For example, Venerable P.A. Payutto, one of the most respectable monks in Thailand, asserts the way of sufficient economy and sustainable happiness. He expresses his ideas as follows :-

“Although consumption and economic wealth are important, they are not goals in themselves, but are merely the foundations for human development and the enhancement of the quality of life - - - Buddhist economics ensures that the creation of wealth leads to a life in which people can develop their potentials and increase in goodness. Quality of life, rather than wealth for its own sake, is the goal.”

(Buddhist Economics - A Middle Way for the Market Place)

In “Buddhism and Science,” Guruge aims to trace the investigation of the compatibility, or otherwise, between Buddhism and Science starting from the comments of Olcott dated 1881 to those of recent Buddhist analysts in the traditionally Buddhist countries of Thailand and Sri Lanka.

Guruge is not an extremist. What he presents in his book is a stimulation and an inspiration for readers to find some proper answers for themselves. His book is surely a food of thought which is always worth tasting.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pataraporn Sirikanchana, Ph.D.
WBU Deputy Rector

In the News

7th Meeting of the World Buddhist University (WBU) Council

The World Buddhist University held its 7th Council Meeting at the Asuka View Hotel in Tokyo, Japan on November 13, B.E. 2551 (2008) in order to consider many topics for the implementation of the University projects and the development of the University Affairs. The Rector (Assoc. Prof. Noranit Setabutr), the Deputy Rector (Assoc. Prof. Pataraporn Sirikanchana), and the Directors of WBU Institutes (Asst. Prof. Tavivat Puntarigvivat and Asst. Prof. Banjob Bannaruji) gave their reports to the Meeting.

The Meeting was satisfied with the reports and encouraged the University staff to work successful for the best of the University.

Visit to the UN University

Assoc. Prof. Noranit Setabutr, the WBU Rector, led the WBU administrating staff to visit the United Nation University in Tokyo, Japan, on November 13, B.E. 2551 (2008). The UN University is the model for the World Buddhist University. The WBU staff was warmly welcomed by Prof. Dr. Konrad Osterwalder, the UN University Rector, and his colleagues. The UN University is financially supported by the Japanese government.

Visit to Soka University

Assoc. Prof. Noranit Setabutr, the WBU Rector, led the WBU administrating staff consisting of the Deputy Rector (Assoc. Prof. Pataraporn Sirikanchana), and the Directors of WBU Institutes (Asst. Prof. Tavivat Puntarigvivat and Asst. Prof. Banjob Bannaruji) to visit Soka University in Hachioji City, Tokyo, on November 14, B.E. 2551 (2008).

The WBU staff was received with warm welcome by Dr. Hideo Yamamoto, the President of the University, and his colleagues. A group of students sang an impressively welcoming song while showing an elephant mascot at the entrance of the building. Dr. Minoru Koide, the Director of the International Affairs Office, and his colleagues showed the Buddhist Scriptures recorded in three languages to the WBU staff in the reception hall.

WBU Commemorates the 9th Anniversary at The Headquarters

On Sunday, December 7th, B.E. 2551 (2008), the World Buddhist University organized a religious ceremony and luncheon to commemorate the University 9th anniversary at the University Headquarters in Benjasiri park, Bangkok. Among the guests were prominent Buddhist scholars and the WBU supporters including members of associated organizations, of the World Fellowship of Buddhists and of the World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth. In the afternoon, there was a special lecture in English at the WFB Sanya Dhammasakdi Auditorium by Dr. Arg-ong Jumsai na Ayudhya, a renowned scholar who spoke on the topic "Buddhism and Global Warming."

About the Writers

Reverend Kodo Matsunami is the head priest at Jodo Buddhist temple Kinryu-ji in the city of Tochigi, Japan. He is also a councilor of the World Buddhist University in Bangkok, Thailand, and is the International Committee Chairperson of the Japan Buddhist Federation. In B.E. 2542/C.E. 1999, he was awarded a Medal with Blue Ribbon. Graduated with M.A. Degree from Harvard University, he has published many books both in Japanese and in English such as *Introducing Buddhism* (B.E. 2519/C.E. 1976) and *International Handbook of Funeral Customs* (B.E. 2541/C.E. 1998).

Dr. Somboon Duangsamorn is the Honorary Rector of International Buddhist College, Songkhla, Thailand. He has participated in the WBU activities for a long time. As a brilliant professor and administrator in Buddhist Studies who has continuously worked for the Buddhist progress; his articles are always worth reading.

Associate Professor Pataraporn Sirikanchana is a long-time professor in Philosophy and Religious Studies in Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand. Having received the Harvard - Yenching scholarship and graduated with Ph.D. Degree in Religious Studies from the University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A., she has worked continuously in the academic realm. She has many articles and books published both in Thai and in English, including an academic contributor of *Religions of the World: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices* published in U.S.A. At present, she is also an Associate Fellow of the Royal Institute of Thailand, Deputy Rector of the World Buddhist University, and a member of many academic committees in Thammasat University.