

CHAPTER IV

CHAPTER SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Chapter Summaries

In Chapter One, I demonstrate my life in three parts:

(1) ignorant [*pre-ordained*] '*Buddhist scripture*' studying experience;

(2) two-fold monastic experience:

(a) book learned, city-dwelling monastic experience and

(b) meditative, forest-dwelling monastic experience;

(3) knowing Buddhism through intensive study at the university undergraduate and graduate levels as a lay-disciple.

I demonstrate how mantras are mind tools, used in religion, magic and politics. I suggest that Sariputta, one of the Buddha's most eminent disciples, organized a minor council, contributing the mass of Dhamma into the Sangiti Sutta, to be recalled during recitations. This Sangiti Sutta would be an elaborate mind tool for protecting and preserving the Dhamma into the future. Devadatta was recalled to illustrate errant forms of Buddhism, strains of which can still be found today. After Buddhism spread across India, into Sri Lanka and Thailand - and between Sri Lanka and Thailand and back again, even re-entering into India - Phra Buddhavajiranana created a chant that was based on modern rationality, to disseminate across his eventual kingdom, in the aftermath of the invasive Burmese attempt at liberating Thailand from Buddhist deviance. With picking up the necessary pieces of society and religion, Phra Buddhavajiranana could centralize his rule and gain traditional legitimacy as a Buddhist King.

Buddhism in Thailand was fortunate to have a king, one of many in the current dynasty, that utilized Buddhism for the greater social good. Many societies relegate their religions away from politics [the modern political trend], yet Buddhism and kingship are deeply interwoven in Thailand. Journalist Sanitsuda Ekachai had to remind readers that: "Politics and religion do mix, after all."¹ Days later, Phra Kittisak Kittisomphano is threatened with defrocking, for attending a political rally with representatives of religions in Thailand. The groups of Santi Asok and Dhammakaya have political stances, as do other 'socially engaged Buddhists'.

¹ Sanitsuda Ekachai. *Politics and religion do mix after all*. Bangkok Post. 9 March 2006, sect. 1, p.13

Buddhism is some 2500 years old; the political lifespan of a politician is only a portion of a decade, if re-elected.

Although Phra Buddhavajiranana remained critical of his public and established Sangha hierarchy, he did his best to impart wisdom to his disciples and subjects; the subjects never quite accepted his attempts at reforming Buddhist society despite his disciples venturing out into the provinces to eliminate superstitions and convert others to the central doctrine. The first chapter also discusses the time of Rama IV and his reasons for changing the chanting ceremony. Some key points to recall from the first chapter:

- To adhere more closely to the dhamma-vinaya
- To educate ignorant Buddhists
- To purify Buddhism from harmful elements
- To strengthen Buddhism from the invasion of Abrahamic religions
- To emphasis ‘practice’ of the dhamma-vinaya over ‘traditions and blind allegiance’
- To promote accurate and rational teachings over traditional/superstitious teachings

...these aspects of Rama IV’s revisions originated from his 27 years of monastic experience and position of leadership. The above is necessary to demonstrate because I have personal Buddhist experience and have utilized that wisdom with the knowledge learned from academic texts, to assist in the development of this thesis.

The second chapter is my ‘work’, which took me across Bangkok and into the provincial regions. In the second chapter, the complete morning and evening order to chant is available, and the following section moves into the temple to discuss what occurs before the beginning of the recitation, highlighting the lateness of monks at every temple visited despite the fixed-time for chanting. Chanting is to be conducted with a ‘pleasant’ voice, not distinguishing one’s self too significantly, as a distraction, because chanting also serves as a concentrative or meditative device. The preliminary passages for reverence discuss:

- Anatta: performing the prostrations before the image helps eradicate personality views, humbling the performer before a ‘greater’ being
- Arahant: the final stage of four of Noble Discipleship – one that is adept, has developed special mental powers and eradicated all fetters
- Buddha: the historical human that went forth into austerities and later became the perfected and self-enlightened one who taught the Dhamma to his followers to act properly concerning the body, speech and mind, in accordance to the teachings and regulations
- Abhivademi: a high form of reverence and respect, or admiration

- Meditative attainments are parallel to the cosmological realm – and thus heaven and hell are individualized attainments
- Lokuttara and Lokaia concepts pertaining to the Dhamma - dependent on whether one becomes a renunciate or stays indulgent with the senses
- Dependent origination – the cycle of suffering
- Sangha: the body of monastics that follow the teachings of the Buddha and the components of noble discipleship

The passages of homage directed to the Buddha discuss:

- The refuge format, known as the Three Jewels – not superstitious elements
- Buddhist offerings
- Abhipujayama: higher worship or reverence undertaken with the body, speech and mind
- Wrong ‘employment’ for monks

The passages for praising the Buddha, the largest sub-section in the thesis, discuss:

- Praise, in the context of receiving a visitor of ‘great’ reputation, and why the reputation stands
- Virtuous attainments
- Conventional versus ultimate truths
- Distractions and the Mara metaphor
- Experiencing jhana meditation levels and breathing meditation
- The enlightenment of the Buddha
- Siddhattha Gotama’s transformation from petty thief to the Buddha
- Knower of the worlds and deities
- Trainer of all
- Abhinna – special mental powers
- Kalama Sutta
- Greater emphasis on Dependent Origination

The passages for praising the Dhamma discuss:

- Practicing the dhamma, here and now
- Brief composition of the Tipitaka

The passages for praising the Sangha discuss:

- Noble Discipleship in detail
- The Mirror of Dhamma
- Particularly ‘Stream-Entry’ is discussed
- Possibilities for Lay-disciples
- Backsliding in attainment
- The receiver of gifts

The salutations towards the Triple Gem discuss:

- A brief difference in perspective
- The lightened way

- Eightfold Noble Path
- Ceasing of Obstructions
- Importance of the Five Aggregates
- Samsara
- Futility of Prayer

Pertaining to the use of the four requisites, only a simple outline of the chant was necessary. Pertaining to the evening chanting ceremony: the evening ceremony was not analyzed due to a large amount of commonality with both ‘formats’, eliminating redundancy, although the analysis of the refuge format was taken from the portion.

The chanting ceremony is crucial in understanding the ideology of the Thai Buddhist, because this ‘chant’ is recited daily by the observing Buddhist. Detailed analysis illustrates:

1. The Buddha was indeed a student, trained to high supramundane levels - but strove to surpass all others.
2. Physical heaven and hells are non-existent in Buddhism – they are mental locations rather than geographical realms. The analogy is simple: if one is happy, they reside in heaven; if one is sad, they reside in hell. Only in a human realm can the extinguishment of pleasantries and unpleasantries occur – enabling the attainment of nibbana.
3. With the release of greed, hatred and delusion – political ideologies lose importance and are inherently selfish which incidentally exploit certain citizenry when carried to extremes; one must be ‘restrained’ in order to properly exercise ‘opinion’.
4. The Buddha taught two forms of Buddhism: one for world-renouncers, the other for seekers of heaven. Thus there was a development, two levels of thought that need stressed: lokiya and lokuttara. Lokiya concerns this material world, whereas lokuttara is concerned with otherworldly endeavors. Understanding where one’s thoughts or actions are placed clarifies concerns for development and the type of Buddhism one follows.
5. Understanding dependent origination is important for the Buddhist. This ‘formula’ was repeated or stressed in the Tipitaka over a hundred times, therefore due to multiplicity it may be hard to grasp, but it needs to be constantly repeated and understood in order to escape the round of suffering that restrains nearly every world-dweller.
6. Certain minor training rules are indeed irrelevant or should be adapted to contemporary society.
7. To determine for one’s self the status of stream-entry was given to all by the Buddha.
8. Though the Buddha personally declined offerings of uncooked rice, this practice has not been adapted culturally into Thailand, it’s acceptable for laity to cook and re-offer it to monks or for temple animals.
9. Repeatedly stressed is the importance of the Triple Gem as refuge, and no ‘other’. An ‘other’ would not be Theravada Buddhism. Mahayanists revere multiple Buddhas and deities, bodhisatta’s, etc. The ‘religion’ constructed by Rama IV reveres only the Triple Gem as shown by

- the elite Buddhist religious authorities. The 1929/2472 prohibition against superstition is a highlight of this pronouncement.
10. Mantras are popular. The difficulty of recollecting the Sangiti Sutta gave rise to reverential salutations and praises directed towards the Triple Gem, instead of recitation based on doctrinal points. Today's 'revised' mantra by Rama IV retains elements of doctrinal points, but is still largely remains a work of reverence, rather than a piece for Dhamma recital. However, this shortened formula is conducive for memorization; and as such was manipulated into a tool to spread the rationality of, and to attract followers or adherents to the Dhammayuttika-Nikaya
 11. The parallel of the jhana levels to correspond with the Four Noble Truths, and in jhana levels is presented because one can experience occasional liberation or temporary nibbana. The Four Noble Truths also parallel existing medicinal applications, thus the format lacks originality, despite being a profound metaphor to cure humanity.
 12. Deities are metaphors; particularly Brahma is a metaphor for conservative society.
 13. We cannot portray the Sangha as deserving the same level of reverence as given to the Buddha and Dhamma. Even knowing the majority of the Ariya-Sangha has flaws, and that laity are excluded from certain recognitions, the Sangha had turned into a selfish elitist group. True 'nobles' deserve respect, but discretion should be used before blindly following certain members of the Sangha.

Ignorance remains if one does not understand the recital. The observing Buddhist thus should consequently recognize un-Buddhist elements that have infiltrated their doctrine to the extent of daily reciting 'inefficiencies'. One fails when this is left unaccomplished. The ability to proclaim oneself a 'sotapanna' is within one's right to proclaim for one's self, keeping in mind to refrain from false speech.

Chapter Three partially charts the evolution of monastic chanting to the formula used today in Thailand with the Dhammayuttika-nikaya. Taking refuge in the Triple Gem and faith, is discussed, in order to cap concepts from the second chapter that remained unresolved - in order to progress with the rest of my study concerning Somdet Phra Vajiranana and other important Buddhists. Opponents along with incorporating politics with state-sponsored Buddhism is also discussed, in this work pertaining to monastic chanting.

Rama IV took great effort to construct a chant that represented Buddhism as he understood it, or how he wanted it to be presented as we have it today. His status as an influential person, enabled him to transform and shape the future, eliminating past errors that were detrimental to the existence of Buddhism. This new rationalized and sterile Buddhism was supposed to persevere, but folk elements have infiltrated today's Buddhism, evident throughout numerous popular Thai movies that often depict the 'supernatural' with ghosts and Buddhist magic, or spells [perhaps similar to

the days prior to Rama IV]. No one since his time has seriously addressed the chanting ceremony, as this thesis has done, in an attempt to understand Thailand's 'orthodox' form of Theravada Buddhism. However, who keeps in mind that the Buddha and his chief disciple Sariputta, wanted Buddhists to recite the long Sangiti Sutta [See Appendix A]? Many Buddhists might be grateful to Rama IV, now, for the shorter, less intricate revisions.

Late in the stage of research I developed this partial, visual representation, of modern Thai Buddhist history, showing how superstitions eased back into society:

King	Year	Activity	Result*
Rama I	1782	Rational reforms, including prohibition of male-linga worship	*Influential
Rama II		Literary works; Sangha education reforms	Artistic; educational
Rama III		1824-1851 - Period of Phra Buddhavajirana's monkhood	*Formative years
Rama IV		1851-1868 – Years of reign 1856 – Social elite denounce Traibhumikatha	*Active years
Rama V		1870 – Phra Ajahn Mun is born 1879 - Somdet Phra Vajiranana ordains 1893 – [June] Phra Ajahn Mun ordains 1893 – [Dec] Somdet Phra Vajiranana becomes head of Dhammayuttika-nikaya 1898 – Temple school education reforms / Dhammayuttika-nikaya missionaries sent to provinces 1902 – <i>First Sangha Act</i>	*Proactive years Centralized Education Discipline Monks
Rama VI		1910 - Somdet Phra Vajiranana becomes Sangharaj 1916-19 – <i>Buddhist Attitude Towards National Defense and Administration; The Triumph of Right</i> are written 1921 – Somdet Phra Vajiranana dies	*Incorporation of Nationalism & Buddhism
Rama VII	1929	1929 - Prohibition against Apparitions	Again?
Rama VIII		1941 – <i>Second Sangha Act</i> under regency council	
Rama IX		1949 – Phra Ajahn Mun dies [disciples get royal cremations] 1962 – <i>Third Sangha Act</i> 1983 – <i>Traibhumikatha</i> important for national security 1995 - King publishes a story from the Jatakas 2005 – Princess collects old works and chants 2005 – Many Thai movies depict black magic and hell realm 2005 – My Phra Ajahn states: “may <i>The God</i> protect you!” 2006 – Prime Minister uses black magic, amulets, feng shui 2006 – [March] Brahma idol in Erawan Shrine destroyed	*Re-sanctioning of the supernatural? PM: Apotropaic Buddhist Vandal is murdered

...derived from my research, which demonstrates the permanence and revival of the supernatural.



4.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, verses of protection and chanting are said to have benefits whether or not the one reciting understands the meaning or not. If one is involved with the chanting of parittas, then one altering ones kammic destiny, is not out committing harmful acts, or engaging in kammatic experiences. By actively participating in chanting, one is preventing the arising of potential harm to come, through avoidance. B.J. Terwiel states meditation and the uttering Pali texts is the most beneficial in warding off immediate and ambiguous danger, amulets and making merit provide lesser benefits², but the Tipitaka already mentions that. The various Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya and Ratanakosin eras, both suggest monks and Brahmins chanted mantras or suttas, usually for auspicious occasions [court rituals], sometimes for several days. The Tipitaka does not mention this activity for monks. None mention daily reverential monastic chanting. According to Theravada Buddhism, celestial devas will descend and listen, as well as protect, the one reciting Dhamma. One who recites dhamma, is not necessarily skilled in knowing or learned in Dhamma. Phra Buddhavajiranana suggested from his travels that only ignorant or hereditary Buddhists would result from unknowing. Having studied, and becoming one of the learned, he devised a chant to increase Buddhist wisdom through out his kingdom – although implemented on a larger scale after his death, by Vajiranana, as the head of the Dhammayuttika-nikaya and later as Sangharaja of Thailand.

In this aspect, education has improved, but perhaps the individual will [desire] to understand and follow [participate] has diminished with the additional worldly distractions [commercialism] unavailable 150 years ago. UNESCO has claimed that Thailand is one of 23 nations that have increased the population's literacy rates since mass literacy campaigns began in the 1930's³, but the condition of illiteracy is still prevalent, as another article suggested: "more than three million Thai's have no basic reading and writing skills and another one million students are left out of the school system."⁴ Three million adult Thai's [two million females] do not have functional literacy, according to the Bangkok Post article. Even though enrollment rates are high: social, economic or intellectual hindrances are preventing many Thai's from

² B. J. Terwiel. "A Model for the Study of Thai Buddhism." *Journal of Asian Studies*. Vol. XXXV, No.3, May 1976, p. 400

³ *The Nation*, Thailand's Mass Literacy Campaigns Earn UNESCO's Kudos, 19 November 2005

⁴ *Bangkok Post*, UNESCO Faults Thai Schooling, 19 November 2005

using this very basic tool to improve or claim higher positions in life. One can see, then how Rama IV's effort of revitalizing the chanting was the result of an abysmal condition of ignorance, based on the decline of Buddhism preceding his reign, which also served a catalyst for founding the Dhammayuttika-Nikaya. The real meaning of his reform attempts were to raise the people's condition away from the depths of ignorance. UNESCO suggests more work needs to be done, apart from what has already been demonstrated here.

A major agreement derived from Ishii, is with his remark: "The educational function [of the Sangha] in particular [is] important."⁵ It is from their knowledge that lay people receive their impressions. Terwiel, in his important study, mentions the chanting ceremony is a mixture of passages from the Tipitaka as well as verses composed in later times by famous monks⁶ - he never refers to Rama IV. As mentioned previously and illustrated later, Terwiel's observations are mostly correct; any argument with Terwiel lays outside of this thesis. Tambiah states: "The lay congregation, all the women, most of the men, are in even greater ignorance about the actual content of chants... some men who were previously novices [or ex-monks] have a somewhat better idea of the contents."⁷ From these impressions, one can determine for one's self if Spiro's *nibbanic*, *kammatic*, *apotropaic* or *esoteric* styles of Buddhism are suitable for oneself to take up ideologically – despite Spiro's reductionistic, Judeo-Christian based, analysis. Spiro looks into *sila & samadhi*, and only translates *panna*; instead, when examining the theory of Nibbana, one cannot forget the development of wisdom needed for higher attainments. The Tipitaka tells one how to be a Buddhist, when scientists are looking for Buddhisms in society. In the introductory remarks to my thesis and messages interwoven throughout, one can deduce that I am a *nibbanic Buddhist*, but Spiro's research inadequately portrays why one might be so. Spiro claims salvation has something to do with being a *nibbanic Buddhist*; rather it is my belief that the 'condition' of *nibbana* eliminates the possibility of returning to *samsaric* conditions – and this concept attracts me as a *nibbanic Buddhist*. Because Spiro's argument is framed in the Abrahamic traditions, I cannot culturally escape his definition; although I am not trying to be saved or

⁵ Yoneo Ishii. *Sangha, State and Society – Thai Buddhism in History*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986, p. 29

⁶ B. J. Terwiel. *Monks and Magic: An Analysis of Religious Ceremony in Central Thailand*. Bangkok: White Lotus, 1994, p. 92

⁷ S. J. Tambiah. *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in Northeast Thailand*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, p. 124-125

redeemed – I just never want to come back – and this is my perception’s argument with Spiro. Rama IV’s Dhammayuttika-nikaya is nibbanic in orientation, derived from rationalistic approaches and interpretations – modern science has redefined the shape of the universe and perceptions of geo-operations. This is perhaps, because Spiro lacks direct experience, as a non-Buddhist, practicing the methods or not.

Ishii wrote: “The first task facing the researcher into the Theravada must be to explain coherently the structure of this mass religion that rests on an elite-oriented doctrine.⁸” This has been done through illustrating how a prince in monastic-exile assembled and revitalized strict adherence to orthodox teachings and discipline, and constructed new chants to be used in daily recitations; and through state-sponsorship of Buddhist doctrine at the expense of local/regional practices. But from the earliest days of Buddhism, the ‘sect’ has been surrounded with royalty. The Buddha is continually conversing with some King or Prince, but never demonstrates submission, unless ‘consenting by silence’ is a metaphor for submission to royal pressure. One must remember the existence of the political state, and the collection of monks ‘removed’ from ideology, but not geographically, under some authority – by circumstance of residing on land ‘under the protection’ of some authority. This is my opinion, derived from research in preparation for my doctoral candidacy. The Buddha was liberated mentally, and decided on his ‘death location’ with the Mallas, because of their non-specified leadership. No one authority could claim the remains of the Buddha. Being of royal blood, himself, he understood the power and role sponsorship plays.

When Asoka’s Edicts proclaim what monks should chant, one wonders if monks submitted to his suggestion. Thai Buddhist monks have been under continuous submission since at least the 1902 Acts on the Administration of the Buddhist Order of Sangha of Thailand. Additionally, the ‘Indian’ Buddhist Emperor, Asoka, was perhaps the greatest ruler to embrace Buddhism and sponsor a council, preserving the teachings of the Buddha from yet another threat at schism, which seems to be the occasion for nearly all the early councils. From this royal sponsorship, Buddhism prospered. Yet, preceding the compassion demonstrated by Asoka, there had been other ‘heads of noble families’ that supported the Buddha, through offering lands and monasteries to the original Sangha, as well as serving as sponsors for numerous occasions for exhorting the dhamma. The ‘great’ councils

⁸ Ishii, p. 4

might be perceived as 'great' because it perhaps demonstrates the monks subjection and gathered under political authority. Lesser councils, such as the one at Pava were conducted under 'group consent' or by majority agreement [democratic?], and thus politics determined what is considered great or lesser.

Consequently, the modern sangha is doctrinally relegated below the historical Sangha, and therefore seeking refuge to these men, is like seeking refuge in a home with a leaky ceiling or a weak foundation. The Sangha are mere men, as the Buddha was, but men who have acquired only a portion of what the Buddha understood, but since they have access to the Tipitaka, the monks should do better at disseminating 'religious information'. The modern Sangha is even considered subordinate in nearly every aspect to the ancient Sangha, which had direct contact with the Buddha, and therefore benefited or were allegedly wiser and purer in conduct from today's monks. A wandering monk like Phra Ajahn Mun is 'considered' great [apart from meditation attainments] because the Sangha hierarchy was unable to corral him. To further examine him against the 'first' Sangha is outside the scope of this thesis. As such, how can current practitioners perform the highest reverential salutations at the feet of 'failures', while retaining imagery of that 'ariya-sangha' from centuries ago, that practiced well. Is this a correct perception?

There are two ideas here: either the attainments of noble-disciples are over rated or the current Sangha's attainments have been politically suppressed – people choose therefore to follow the monk to the limit of social responsibility rather than what the government dictates. By the sanctioned suppression of attainments, the laity are nearly without monastics of advertised 'noble' status, and perhaps this is the political goal, to take power away from the bhikkhus. Therefore, to maneuver from lokuttara speech to lokiya speech: there are monks who practice 'well', who practice and study the Dhamma, adhere to the vinaya, and therefore those monks are certainly worthy of offerings and reverence, and thus 'respect'.

The reformation of the evening chanting illustrates what has been highlighted concerning the refuge and apology format, as an accurate reflection of the rationality intended by Phra Buddhavajiranana and his subsequent disciples. It's possible their attention was elsewhere, like pronunciation and grammar, or poetry, rather than incorporating 'specific' details necessary for phrase-accuracy in the ceremony. Conversely, Buddhadasa suggests to throw out the refuge formula altogether, as it is a verbal exercise for the inept Buddhist – yet the passage is included in his book of

chants for his ‘temple’. If discarding the refuge format is exercised, what then would be recollected? We are to be islands unto ourselves, as the Buddha suggests [in full]:

Therefore, Ananda, you should live as islands unto yourselves, being your own refuge, with no one else as your refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, with the dhamma as your refuge, with no other refuge. And how does a monk live as an island unto himself, ... with no other refuge? Here, Ananda, a monk abides contemplating the body as body, earnestly clearly aware, mindful and having put away all hankering and fretting for the world, and likewise with regard to feelings, mind and mind-objects. That, Ananda, is how a monk lives as an island unto himself, ... with no other refuge. And those who now in my time or after live thus, they will become the highest, if they are desirous of learning.⁹

Then in conclusion of the debated exercise: if one is an Arahant, one is an island; but if still a sekha, or even an inept, refuge is sought in other formulas, such as the Triple Gem, and not in superstitions.¹⁰

Gombrich and Obeyesekere’s work on the transformation of Buddhism, details the Sri Lankan exercise of worshipping the sacred Bo/Bodhi tree – an offshoot of the original tree that the Buddha sat under for his Enlightenment. While their study is more fascinating and detailed, compared to my study, I cannot say that their text is directly applicable to Thailand. Excluding their portion on Santi Asok, their work permeates with deity worship. Therefore I don’t find value in the text concerning the transformation of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, I cannot, with full conscious, borrow the term *bhakti*, or an ancient form of devotion still in use with Jains and Hindus – and apply it to my study, because Thai Buddhists are not cultists, in the manner that Gombrich and Obeyesekere detail. From Myanmar, westward, into Pakistan; from Nepal to Sri Lanka, devotional cults have entered mainstream worship. Thailand has largely escapes this phenomena¹¹, millennium movements aside.

For example, the caretaker Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra strongly believes in astrology, palm reading, the supernatural, and uses talismans or Buddha amulets to protect him from voodoo and evil spells; although he is certain that his past

⁹ DN, p. 245 [Mahaparinibbana Sutta], 395 & 404 [Cakkavatti-Sihanada Sutta]

¹⁰ On Sunday, 17 July 2005 – A monk from Ubon telephoned my wife, telling her to offer incense and ‘prayers’ to a ‘thewada’ – [Pali: devata] who was allegedly descending from the heavens that evening. The monk told her to wish for good things and these ‘favours’ would be granted. My wife was three months pregnant at the time of this particular phone call. She took the advice to wish for good health of the baby and as we are recently married, for good luck with our family, etc... While I have no problem with what the monk told her, my issue is best described by my comment: “What is the name of the devata that is supposed to come?” and she said the monk did not tell her a name, only to make the offering. Certainly one may remain skeptical, and certainly one may truly believe. The monk who telephoned my wife belongs to a forest-temple belonging to the Dhammayuttika-Nikaya. He called again a month later, and ‘we’ performed this ritual on 16 August 2005. I’m beginning to recognize a pattern – a mid-month offering to devas, perhaps!

¹¹ Richard Gombrich & Gananth Obeyesekere. *Buddhism Transformed – Religious Change in Sri Lanka*. Delhi: Montilal Banarsidass Publishers; 1988; p. 456-457

good deeds will kammically protect him against the evil spells [contradiction with the use of ‘protective devices’ if his kamma already protects]. Many are accusing the Caretaker Prime Minister of changing laws that benefited his family business, enabling him to sell-off his company to a Singapore state-owned company; and avoiding paying a large amount of tax that such a sale should produce. Politics aside, belief in Tipitaka-suggested, Buddhist practices are not being adhered to in even the uppermost strata of Thai society. People in society have sensibly called for ‘solutions’ to the socio-political situation, but Thaksin [*apotropaic*] isn’t listening.

As witnessed at every temple gathering, lay people present for the sermons are more intent on ‘idle chatter’ than listen to the dhamma. On a trip to Ubon Ratchathani province, in a small rural village, several monks were seated on the ground [with their seating cloth beneath them], under a mango tree reciting verses together, an activity that recalls ‘events’ from the Tipitaka – seldom seen today, especially in Bangkok, though there are exceptions: novices reciting auxiliary chants in a sala. Moments later, the monks rose from beneath the tree and proceeded to exit the temple towards the *bang-fai* ceremony, perhaps they were rehearsing what to chant to ask the deity Indra to bring rain to the rice fields? A few teenagers demonstrated their lack of interest by remaining near the dirt road, posturing with ‘toughness’ while leaning back on their motorcycles, aloof from the main mass of villagers respectfully assembled [but gossiping profusely] and seated on the barren rice field, while some of ‘us’ recited the evening chanting verses with the monks. A celestial deva, once told Phra Ajahn Mun: “When have they ever shown an interest when the monks chant Dhamma verses? Because they show no interest, it’s obvious that the sasana is not truly embedded in their hearts.”¹²

Most modern monks have not analyzed the morning and evening chanting formulas to see how incorrect/correct the verses are, perhaps out of fear of committing some form of ‘intellectual’ crime against the ‘royal’ who devised the chant – though an academic analysis [such as this] should not warrant arrest or charges. However, the argument is against the *total* passivity of monks, as there has been quite a few intellectual or engaged Buddhist monks in Thailand, the most famous is Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, but this can be extended outward to include P.A. Payutto [his ‘lay-disciple’ refused to grant an interview with him for this thesis – claiming the monk was too

¹² <http://www.buddhanet.net> Acariya Maha Boowa. *Acariya Mun Bhuridatta – A Spiritual Biography [Screen Version]*. Buddha Dhamma Education Association, 2003 p. 191

‘sick’, an excuse I have heard for years trying to talk to him; my speculation is that I didn’t have donation money with me – so I wouldn’t be ‘worth’ his time]. Recalling, there is the recently murdered abbot Phra Supoj Suvacano [from Mettadhamma Buddhist Center in Chiang Mai¹³], Phra Paisal Visalo, Phra Kittisak Kittisomphano, Mettanando Bhikkhu; and a host of other unknown monks with political stances/opinions based on Buddhist thinking. Activity cannot be ignored; even journalist Sanitsuda Ekachai has recently noted that politics and religion do mix after all¹⁴. Yet discontented voices can be suppressed – easily done in Thailand through a variety of techniques [denying travel visas to ‘prominent’ monks, is another state technique]. However, monks concerned with doctrinal changes [intellectually] are indeed few. This is perhaps why Ishii claimed why Buddhism is an elite-oriented doctrine: the common people have to fear repercussions – and activists face death.

Rama IV’s reforms to purge the un-Theravada elements from society, again, were only partially successful. Years later, one needs to visit the ‘Central World/Erawan Hotel’ area in Bangkok to see the plethora of Hindu deity shrines [21 March 2006, a vandal destroyed the idol of Brahma and subsequently was beaten to death by bystanders], and wonder if the people around are Buddhists. The plaster idol will be designed and rebuilt from metals. Hundreds of meters away is Wat Pathumwanaram¹⁵ [see photo 1, next page], now diminished under the largest shopping centers in the nation that literally towering over the temple, once surrounded by water and lotus-flowers. Except for a recently made replica pond, the waterways [natural and man-made] have been replaced by congested roadways and concrete, quiet boats have been replaced by hazardous-waste emitting motor vehicles and an overhead sky-train, the towering trees have been replaced by shopping centers [newly constructed ‘Siam Paragon’] and other business-buildings. The photo dates from 1857-1867, late into Rama IV’s reign:

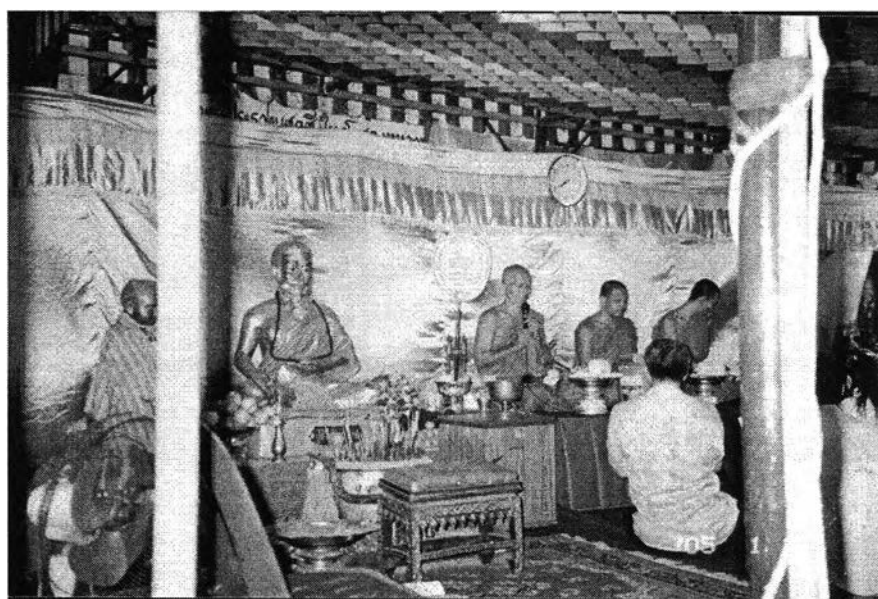
¹³ Onnucha Hutasingh, *Zero Protection for Defenders of Rights*, from *Bangkok Post*, 27 June 2005 – article explains: the Thai government’s failure to protect those involved in environmental conservation and human rights efforts – Phra Supoj Suvacano’s death via stabbing is the 19th death of an ‘activist’ since Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has come to power – eluding to failures in the government’s anti-mafia policies.

¹⁴ Sanitsuda Ekachai. *Politics and religion do mix after all*. *Bangkok Post*; 9 March 2006

¹⁵ Personally scanned from my copy of Wat Pathumwanaram’s Chanting Book: Phra Rajaworakhun Jaowattittimsak (Saiyut Pannasaro), *Nangsuu Suatmon Wat Pathumwanaram Rajaworavihara* (Bangkok: Wat Pathumwanaram Rajaworavihara 2546) [in Pali/Thai]



It is hard to determine fully if Thai Buddhists act per the chanting ceremony, but below are several photographs that may provide the answers when written or verbal communication fails. Non-Buddhist imagery is abundant throughout the kingdom, but how then are the following photographs justified, in Buddhist temples, from a Buddhist's perspective, perhaps as two modern day deviations from respecting the Triple Gem:



Above in photo 2: [*Rusii Saranang Gacchami*?] monks are chanting and drawing sacred power from an apparent hermit statue, above, in a local Buddhist temple – precisely what the mind conjures up without investigation. Lay people are in attendance. In the photo above, people bowed first to the ‘hermit’, and then to the monks who offer parittas/blessings, without making the laity to take first ‘refuge’ in

the Triple Gem. Regretfully, the researcher forgot to inquire why the hermit was respected, at the time of taking the photo. About a year later, additional research was undertaken to determine exactly who this ‘hermit’ is. The wrongly attributed ‘hermit’ is in fact: the Buddha’s doctor, Jivaka Komarabhacca, the son of a prostitute that was left on a rubbish heap, later found by Prince Abhaya. Jivaka, at age 16, studied medicine at Takkasila and was honored by many rajas. He became a lay-disciple of the Buddha and eventually became the physician for the Buddha’s Order of monks. Jivaka was claimed to be a steam-enterer who would later attain Nibbana. The Buddha gave him the famous discourse that it is ok to eat meat if one does not suspect the animal was killed specifically for the receiver. If Buddhist lay people have some sort of ailing condition, they come to Jivaka for a cure, then and now. In the case of the photograph, the monks are indeed drawing sacred power from the ‘brahmanist’ herbal doctor, along with ‘sacred mantra’ or protective verses – precisely the activity lay people are seeking.¹⁶ [Personal photo]



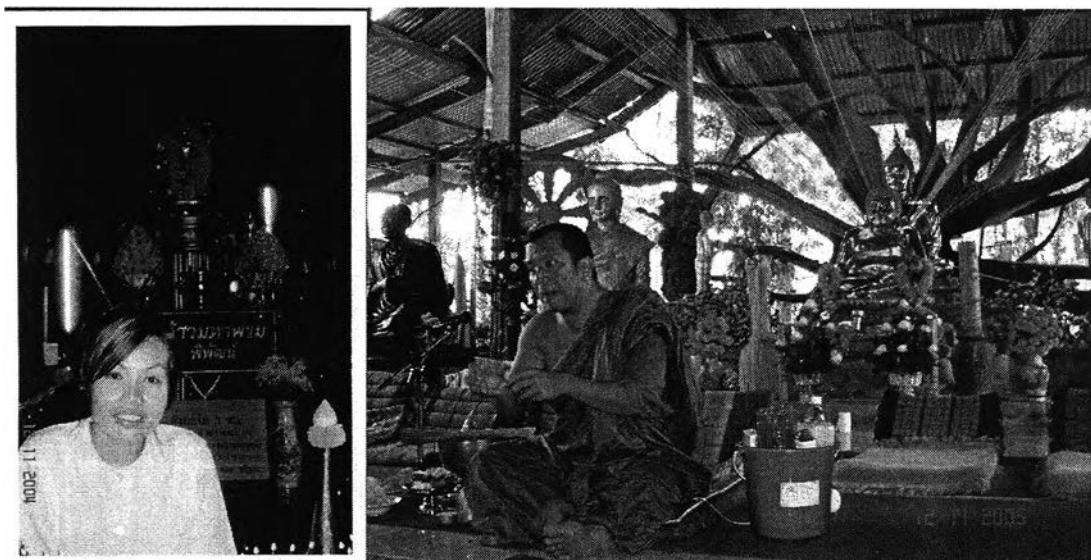
Photo 3: Lay people, above, are reading prayer/protection verses to appease the aggressive Hindu deity Rahu, with offerings of black colored foods. Taken from [Trips Cancelled on Rumor – Mythical Demon Planet Puts the Fright on Tourism Industry](#). *Bangkok Post*, Sunday 13 March 2005. All of the ‘worshippers’ of Rahu can be seen reciting something from a paper, along with a white string tied around their heads. The offering box asks people to ‘make worship-merit to the deity Rahu...’ the demon-type deity responsible for solar and lunar eclipses.

¹⁶ This paragraph is derived from personal observation, Tipitaka research and interview with a local English-speaking Thai monk resident at the temple where the photograph was taken.



Photo 4: Above, is a young couple's wedding ceremony, with monks in attendance, before the home's Buddha image. In this photograph, the couple took refuge in the Triple Gem, consisting of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha – in a 'proper' display of respecting the Triple Gem. There was no seeking of refuge or protection in or from a hermit or deity – before the Buddha image. This photograph perhaps demonstrates more clearly, the proper Buddhist allegiance or ceremony, according to Dhammayuttika-Nikaya professionals. One layman suggested to remove the wall-photos of female family members because monks cannot sit beneath a woman; however, sensing discrimination in his statement, the researcher suggested if that is indeed true, then all photos, including those of the royal family must be removed because monks are above the royal family, by theory. This came as a surprise to the family, but they could only agree to the suggestion on grounds that the researcher was speaking from a doctrinal standpoint. Thus, one can see this home in the rural village in an austere setting. [Personal Photo]

Below in Photo 5 [on the left]: An eight-precept holder poses before the Maha-Brahma statue inside the compound of a Buddhist temple, at night-time. In the photograph, below the statue, are words telling the 'Brahma worshipper' what to say before the statue. Again, recall the concept of the 'Triple Gem', because this statue is in a central or prominent location in this forested, rural area temple. [Personal photo]



Above in Photo 6 [on the right]: The young abbot, Tirayut Tirawaro of a forested, rural area/provincial Dhammayuttika-Nikaya temple is explaining something to a lay supporter [not seen]. In front of the main Buddha image is a large statue of the future Buddha Maitreya [there are numerous alternative spellings for the future Buddha's name¹⁷]. The arahants and chief disciples of the Buddha, Sariputta [left side of main image, possessed of inner analytical rationality] and Moggallana [right side of main image, possessed of outer/mystical powers], are also seen, along with the revered Phra Somdet Tho [1788-1872; Mahanikaya, and patronized by King Chulalongkorn for mystical prowess¹⁸].

The image of the future Buddha was not at the temple the year before. This temple receives numerous donations from 'Chinese-Thai' supporters, suggesting a mass influx of wealth may persuade the abbot to act on supporter's beliefs, compromising doctrinal/personal beliefs, to satisfy donors. The purpose of the visit to this year's *kathin* ceremony of offering new robes to the monks, was to partake in the casting/making of a new Buddha image.

There are an abundance of displayed statues in Thailand, many of which are not of the Buddha, nor members of the Sangha [nor do statues have to be!]. Hindu deities like Ganesha, Shiva, Brahma and Indra can be found throughout Bangkok, members of royalty, folk heroes, Chinese characters and deities, even phallic-symbols

¹⁷ Nidhi states: "The future Buddha, like Metteyya, always played an important part in folk religious thinking in Thailand, as attested to by numerous merit-making vows that we can find in inscriptions. Nidhi Eoseewong, *Pen & Sail – Literature and History in Early Bangkok* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books 2005), p. 264

¹⁸ J. L. Taylor. *Forest Monks and the Nation-State – An Anthropological and Historical Study in Northeastern Thailand*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993; p. 28 & 31

receive reverence across Thailand, despite the proclamations by King Rama I, Rama IV and other successors who stress favoring the Triple Gem. Interestingly, in Photo 5, the Maha Brahma statue resides in a Dhammayuttika-Nikaya forest temple. It might also seem contradictory to some that in Wat Bovorniwet, headquarters of the Dhammayuttika-Nikaya, the main chedi is supported by four Hindu deities. Again, these many social-observations throughout Thailand, seem to run counter to the concept of the Triple Gem being the ideological-trinity professed in Theravada Buddhism, following Rama IV's suggested changes.

Thai studies students and scholars have a difficult time not mentioning Buddhism in their studies; several become quite fascinated with rituals and magical aspects of Buddhism/animism in Thailand. Tambiah studied: rituals by Buddhist monks, khwan rites, cult of guardian spirits, rites addressed to malevolent spirits¹⁹, and early Buddhist cosmology.²⁰ Certain Thai studies students have become bored with amulets and spells, and so forth, wishing to study Buddhist philosophy, further. Buddhism is virtually unavoidable in scholastic endeavors pertaining to Thailand; although certain university faculties can argue. As such, even the Thai nation is deeply weaved in the mantra: '*Nation, Religion, Monarchy*' – or in variation; therefore: talk of Buddhism at times speaks of leadership [the King], which speaks of his leadership and righteousness in governing a nation of various people – weaving a circle/triangle that coalesce and converge with Buddhism, or Buddhist concepts. Consider the below scanned chart, from Tambiah²¹:

¹⁹ Spirit Cults, p. 337

²⁰ Spirit Cults, p. 367

²¹ Spirit Cults, p. 338

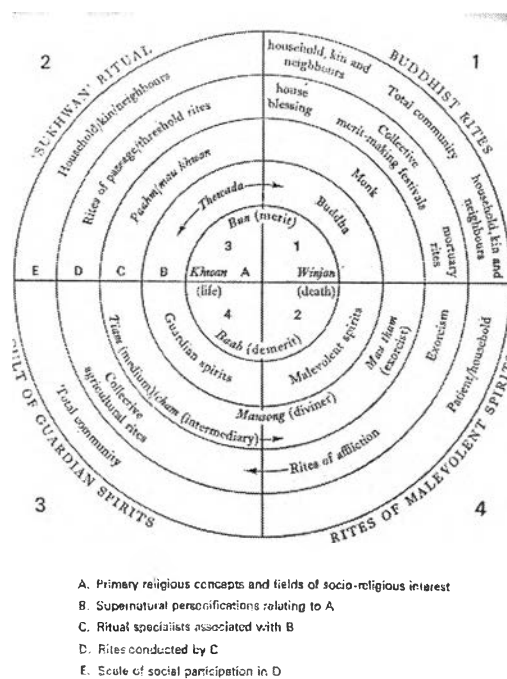


Fig. 5 The religious field

Figure 5 essays a picture of the total field using the circle and sector of representation. It is composed of five concentric circles divided

On the left, Tambiah ignores Tam Wat Chao/Yen as a tool for reverence and wisdom. Everything in the circle represents his study of magic and spirits, and avoids rationality. Clearly, Tambiah leaves no room in his circle for escaping this round of supernatural. Consider the urban dweller, to which few of the items on the left apply - No house-spirit to respect, or consider the monk or lay person who denies the supernatural in his quest for nibbana. Tambiah's interesting circle is broke. My APPENDIX B represents better.

I have read the 'scholastic works' several times by the authors listed in the bibliography, especially those pertinent to Thai Studies. In preparation for this thesis - concerning methodology, or research techniques: when literature was read/analyzed, oldest sources were studied first and newer texts were read last. This was done to understand the unfiltered words of the source and practitioners, and be less concerned with motivated words of scholars. The researcher was able to discern the interests of scholars and was able to determine some scholars don't offer anything new to say, because they only re-interpret something profound that the Buddha had previously mentioned. A 'closed' Pali canon is testament to the fact that everything has been said, already - all that is left to do is practice the taught dhamma. Of course, the effects can be studied. Many scholars have only visited Thailand only once or a few times, and for short durations - and elaborate deeply based on their small impression several decades ago. Most of the scholarly texts are over 30 years old, or drawn their Buddhist 'experience' from the era of the American war with Vietnam; I have read and analyzed nearly all of the old, available literature, pertaining to: 'Communism or Buddhism?'. As such, Peter Jackson's attempts to study the Dhammic Socialism of Buddhadasa is interesting, along with other literature pertaining to the co-existence or compatibility of 'social-isms', with Buddhism. Melford Spiro's work on Myanmar's Buddhism, undertaken before I was born, is interesting because it occurred early in Ne Win's leadership. Works of political nature are interesting when they express how

political changes and Buddhism have faired. Certainly, this thesis could be seen as an expression of Buddhist Socialism; however: since the ‘fall of communism’ – what might be of interest to this researcher to study is perceived to be irrelevant now, based on something the U Nu once said: Karl Marx only taught a speck of dust compared to what the Buddha has taught. Therefore, the language, direction and perceptions of the student-researcher have changed in attempting a personal revolution aspiring to win liberation with a purified mind, attempting to eliminate greed, hatred and delusion. Professor Somparn Promta has written: “Buddhism in the modernized society must not merely be a set of beliefs regardless of a rational justification; but rather a systematic set of knowledge justifiable by a rational mind.²²” This has been demonstrated repeatedly, throughout the thesis, sometimes disassembling metaphors.

In absolute finality: according to the Theravada tradition, I once practiced deviant methods in my former life, up until the time I ordained as a monk. Because I lacked in wisdom, I returned to lay-life to gain the necessary knowledge I couldn’t have gotten if I stayed in the monastery. The necessary education was unavailable for me in Bangkok. To be a better monk, I needed a deeper historical-cultural background. Completing my Bachelor Degree in International Studies, with a Religious Studies minor provided this; while the Master Degree in Thai Studies, allowed me to apply what I have learned in the past, culminating in this thesis. Studying Vedic mantras provided me with the conceptual operating knowledge. When a Buddhist monk is performing chanting – he is transmitting ‘mind-tools’ – powerful when:

- He has knowledge of what he is saying
- The audience has knowledge of the message
- Benefits are produced as a result
- Faith is earned towards the Triple Gem
- Poetic/rhyming schemes assist recollection

As for the origin of chanting: I believe I am the first to gather the most material that provides where today’s formula originates, because to state that chanting is merely passed down from the ancestors is not sufficient. Therefore, I refer the interested, to the chart I developed inside Chapter III.

²² Somparn Promta. *The Sangha Education in Today Thailand: A Crisis Waiting For Hurried Reformation*. International Conference on Buddhist Societies in Stability and Crisis. Kandy: 28-30 July 1994: p. 14

People residing in the information periphery [regardless of the era], were often amazed at the new rituals and concepts, but these 'missionaries' departed back to Bangkok. The populations relapsed into their traditions. The Buddhist tradition is rooted in faith to the Triple Gem, faith derived from wisdom. For today's reader: Chapter I provides a backdrop, Chapter II provides wisdom, Chapter III provides faith. Even the expression of ignorance expresses faith in traditional beliefs that are continually refuted by social elites, taking the nation's current caretaker Prime Minister's apotropaic Buddhism as the example here.

Through the development of wisdom, the wisdom collected in Chapter II, and available in the canonical texts, one can learn the truths contained in one's tradition. Although the social elites are largely the recipients of this benefit – largely because they can afford the excursions to foreign lands to exchange or bring back knowledge to exploit in the home territory; this affirms the application of politics in Buddhism. When Buddhist education is available to all, when publication of the full Tipitaka is available to all – Buddhist doctrinal ignorance can be eradicated. The recitation or studying of the Sangiti Sutta is suitable as a textbook for Buddhists, in the meantime.