

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THAI AND KHMER BUDDHISM

SAMSOPHEAP PREAP

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirement for the Degree of
Master of Arts
(Buddhist Studies)

International Master Degree Programme
Graduate School
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University
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The Graduate School, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, has approved this thesis as a part of education according to its curriculum of the Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to study the interaction of Buddhism and politics in Thailand and Cambodia. The contents of this research work are based on the three important aspects, viz., Buddhism, society and politics. The overall study is divided into five chapters and each chapter is based mainly on documentary research. The results of the documentary and other research showed that Buddhism constitutes the core of traditional culture, serves as integrative forces of the societies, and provides the states with an ideological basis and political leaders with legitimacy. It has profoundly influenced the cultural, social and political development of the countries. The political leaders of Thailand and Cambodia have mobilized Buddhism and its associated values including the monkhood to assist in the achievement of their political goals. This study has therefore concentrated on the political mobilization of religion to support political ideologies and activities.

The documentary research appearing in chapter 1 and 2 deals with Buddhist teachings concerning society and politics, this research is based on Theravada Buddhist sacred books, the Tripitaka, and secondary documents, which are related to books and magazines. Chapter 1 introduces the significance, purpose and scope of the study. It also outlines the importance of religions as social and psychological forces that should be considered in the making of political, and socio-economic policy and in the problem solving process. Key words and approaches used in this chapter are explained based on examples. Much of the discussion in chapter 2 involves the Dhamma, which serves

functionally as a social integrative force, social order and social control mechanism. It also describes Buddhist concept of socio-political changes, the development of society, and system of government, including ideal rulers.

The discussion appearing in chapters 3 and 4 deals with Buddhism and Political Legitimacy in Thailand and Cambodia. Chapter 3 focuses on a case study of the relationship between Buddhism and politics in Thailand. What develops from this complex interaction is a reciprocal relationship of political rulers, the Sangha, and the people. The central assumption is that Buddhism and the Sangha (the community of monks) are a facet of the society's total culture, and as part of the socio-political structure they permeate other parts and institutions as much as they are affected by them. The study places the effects of the forces of socio-political change on Buddhism and the Sangha and their responses to changes at the center of the dynamic interactions of Buddhism and politics. The Sangha, by cooperating with political rulers and sometimes advising them, provides a symbol of morality and integrity of the state. The discussion in chapter 4 is based on Buddhism and Politics in Cambodia. To get the research work done, the researcher studied the subject carefully by using historical, anthropological and cultural approaches for data collection and analysis. The historical facts show that Buddhism has brought Cambodia a great civilization. Buddhism is the symbol of unity and prosperity. In the modern history of Cambodia, especially in the last half of the twentieth century Khmer Buddhism has repeatedly been mobilized to achieve the political goals of the ruling elites. The results of the research show that many Khmer leaders have attempted to use Buddhism for their own purposes and to legitimize their political control.

In the conclusion (Chapter 5&6) the researcher recapitulates the ideas put forward in earlier chapters, and discuss them further to make clear what are the critical factors in the roles, activities, and involvement of the Sangha in politics. The researcher attempts to evaluate the effects on the Sangha as a whole of their increased political engagement, and consequently the fate of Buddhism in Thailand and Cambodia. On the other hand, researcher would like to suggest that a thorough Comparative Study of Thai and Khmer Buddhism has not yet been attempted. However, it is hoped that this study will be beneficial for future research work.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	= Association of Southeast Asian Countries
BLDP	= Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party
CPK	= Communist Party of Kampuchea
CPP	= Cambodian People's Party
CSOC	= Communist Suppression Operation Command
DK	= Democratic Kampuchea
FUNCINPEC	= National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia
Khmer	= Cambodian
KNUFNS	= The National Front for the Liberation of Kampuchea
KPNLF	= Khmer People's National Liberation Front
KR	= Khmer Rouge
PRK	= People's Republic of Kampuchea
SOC	= State of Cambodia
SNC	= Supreme National Council
UN	= United Nations
UNAMIC	= United Nations Advance Mission to Cambodia
UNHCR	= United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNTAC	= United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
US	= United States
USA	= United States of America
USSR	= Unions of Soviet Socialism Republic
WFB	= World Fellowship of Buddhists
AN	= Aṅguttara Nikāya
DN	= Dīgha Nikāya
JK	= The Jātaka
MN	= Majjhima Nikāya
MQ	= Milinda's Questions
SN	= Saṅgīyutta Nikāya
Ibid.	= ibidem/in the same book
op.cit.	= opere citato/as referred
pp.	= page(s)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Significance of the Study

From about the 2nd to the 10th centuries A. D., Indian emigrants, traders, and armies carried their way of life to many distant places. The influences were gradual but eventually reached as far west as Madagascar and as far east as Taiwan.

Indian influence was strongest in Sri Lanka, Burma, and central Thailand. Here the cultures became almost entirely Indian. In more distant places, such as Java, Cambodia, and Vietnam, Indian influence was weaker, and Indian culture blended with local customs.

Indian art, however, made a strong impression on all of Southeast Asia. It influenced a Buddhist dynasty in central Java, which built the world's largest Buddhist shrine at Borobudur in the 8th or 9th century. About the same time, Hindus in Cambodia began one of the greatest religious buildings in the world, the temple of Angkor Wat.

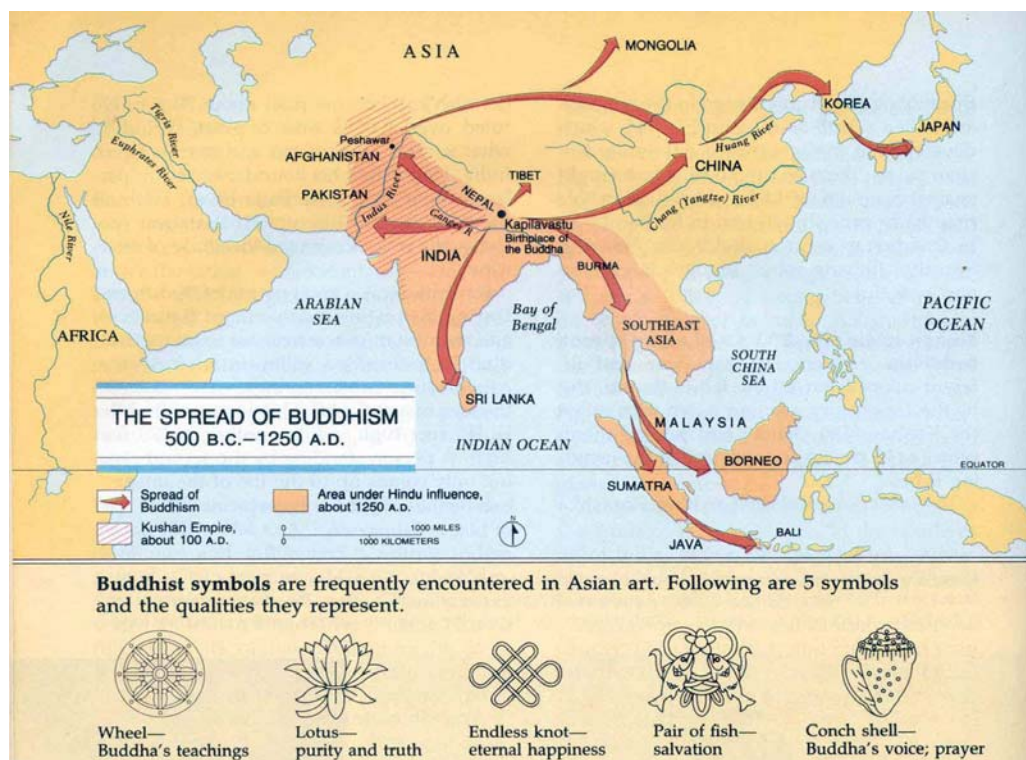
Indian culture spread so widely throughout Southeast Asia, particularly between 650 and 1250, that scholars call the phenomenon "the Indianization of Southeast Asia"¹ (see picture no.1 on page 2). On the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java, and Borneo, local rulers adopted the Sanskrit language and script, along with Indian mythology. The Indian religions of Hinduism and Buddhism made a lasting impact on Southeast Asian countries. Buddhism was especially important, for it emphasized the value of popular education. Buddhist missionaries helped to bring education to the common people and taught many kings and local rulers the value of good and humane government.

By the 12th century, Indian culture was firmly established in Southeast Asia. Although later on Islam became a major rival of Buddhism

¹ George Coedes, **The Indianized States of Southeast Asia**, (University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1971), pp.15-35.

in Southeast Asia, Indian culture persisted, especially in the southern part of the region (see picture no.2 on page 3).

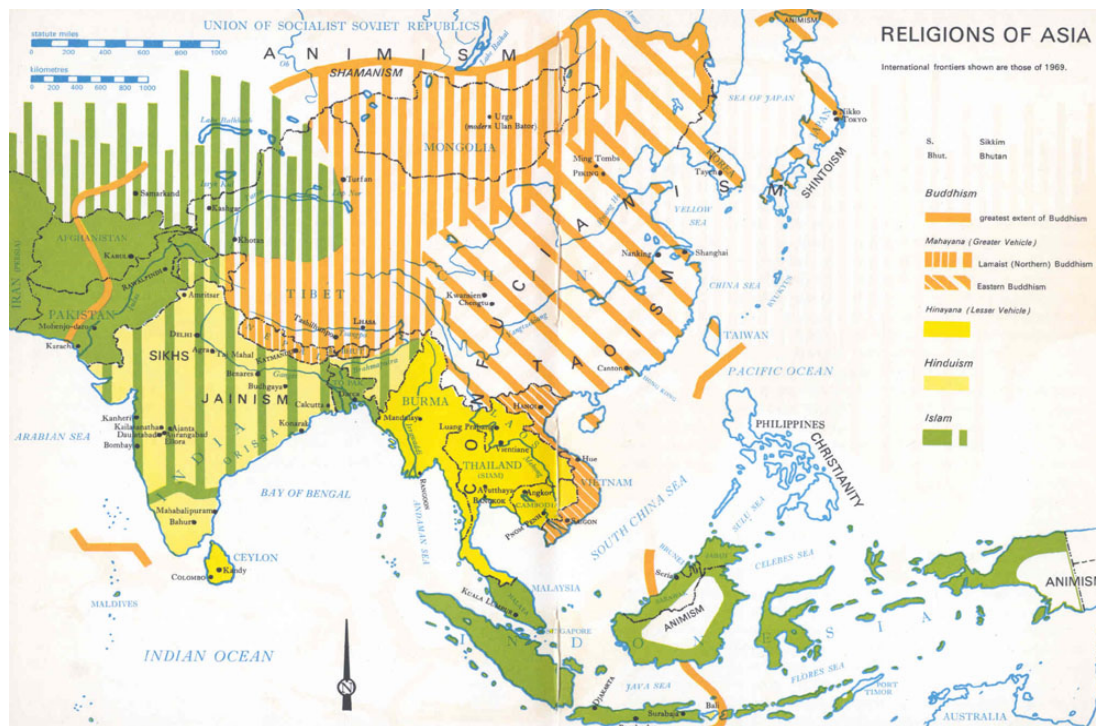
The political processes and socio-political changes in their respective societies influenced the values of these two religions, Buddhism and Islam, which were moulded by their forces. It is also evident that the impact of religion on the processes of socio-political change has both good and bad aspects. On the one hand, socio-political changes tend to weaken religious values and practices.



(Picture No. 1)

This has always been the case particularly in those countries where socio-political changes have taken place so abruptly that the traditional socio-economic and political structures were destroyed and replaced by structures, which were ideologically hostile to religion. On the other hand, however, where socio-political change does not involve revolutionary change and the old structures and religious values remain intact, religious values and norms can illuminate and clarify the objectives of planned social change. Changes in such a case are explained as cultural truth.

In the Buddhist countries² of Southeast Asia, Buddhism and its associated values constitute the core of traditional culture and the integrative value system of societies. For centuries, Buddhism has acted as an integrative force in assuring the survival of Buddhist societies in Southeast Asia. It can be said that Buddhism has long served as one of the main socializing, acculturating and unifying forces in Buddhist societies. It has profoundly influenced the cultural, economic, and political development of the Buddhist nations and also reputedly continues to mould the social and political values of the great majority of Buddhists. In other words, Buddhism is the concrete pillar of the nation, the root from which the traditional identity, and political and social heritage grows.



(Picture No. II)

For these reasons Buddhism has traditionally provided an ideological basis in the administration of the government and legitimacy for the rulers. The ruling elite of Buddhist countries has invariably sought legitimacy from Buddhism and its associated values. Buddhism has often been modified and explained to be in harmony with indigenous ideas and culture, and accommodating to the ever changing nature of the cultural milieu. It is therefore an important socio-political element contributing to national stability and integration.

² Somboon Suksamran, **Buddhism and Political Legitimacy**, (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Printing house, 1993), pp.2-3.

Socio-political changes in Indochina (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) in 1975 exemplified changes that were caused by revolution. The socio-political and economic structures of the countries were destroyed and replaced by new structures and systems based on Communism. These abrupt changes brought about radical changes in the structure, roles and functions of Buddhism and the Sangha in these three countries. In Thailand the nature of socio-political and economic changes has been evolutionary rather than a revolutionary. The essence of socio-political and economic structure has not been overturned but has adjusted to the change. Adjustment to such a change inevitably compels the modification, and to a certain extent the reinterpretation, of the role and functions of Thai Buddhism.

In a society where religious values still play an important role in the social and cultural life of the great majority of the people, it is essential to understand the dynamic and relationships between religion and the socio-political and economic structure of the country. Negligence of these dynamic interactions would lead to a misconception of the substance of the spirit and life of the society. It would also be almost impossible to have feasible and workable policies and programs for the future. The task of promoting social, economic and political development, and national integration has to be planned with a clear understanding of the role and function of religion and its dynamic interaction and relationship with socio-political and economic activities in a given society.

It should also be noticed that in the less developed and developing countries only a tiny minority have been educated in Western countries, and thus exposed to Western ideas, political processes and economic systems. These people in most cases are government technocrats and are entrusted with the task of social, and economic and political planning for the nation. The Western ideas inevitably influence their national development plans and, as a result, these seem foreign to the indigenous masses whose mode of thought is deeply influenced by traditional and religious values. It must be emphasized that Buddhism has permeated the entire life of the Buddhist nations of Southeast Asia.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the interaction of Buddhism and politics in Thailand and Cambodia. It is intended to show that Buddhism and its values and the Sangha have had complex interaction

with politics over a long period of time. The socio-political changes since the 1970s and 1980s in Thailand and Indochina have led to the formation and assumption of new roles and quite unique redefinition of roles for the monkhood and the reinterpretation of the Dhamma for the achievement of the political goals. The mobilization of Buddhism, the Dhamma, and the Sangha to initiate, defend, explain and support planned socio-political changes will be illustrated.

Greater attention on the mobilization of Buddhism for the legitimization of political power, action and ideology will be placed at the center of the study. The study intends to show a comparative mobilization of Buddhism for political ends in Thailand and Cambodia. Thus, there are four main objectives as stated below:

1.2.1 To investigate the influence of the Buddhist concept toward social and political changes in Buddhist societies.

1.2.2 To study the interaction of Buddhism and politics in Thailand.

1.2.3 To observe the important role of Buddhism in political changes in Cambodia until the present day.

1.2.4 The study is intended to show a comparative mobilization of Buddhism for political ends in Thailand and Cambodia.

1.3 Problems to be Answered

1.3.1 Has Buddhism brought any important changes to the way of life of the people in Buddhist societies?

1.3.2 What is the interaction of Buddhism and politics in Thai society?

1.3.3 Has Buddhism had an important role to play in political changes in Cambodia?

1.4 Definitions of Technical Terms

1.4.1 Politics

There can be many definitions of politics³, but for the purposes of this study, I'm concerned with ideas and actions, which relate to the use of power in the organization of the state. They are included in the concept of political action with any activities, in which men acquire, employ, or influence the distribution of power, authority, wealth and prestige within a social structure.

1.4.2 Socio-political Change

By socio-political change⁴, it is concerned with the process, by which sets of social relationships, particularly those based on power and wealth, and sets of ideas about the nature of society and its power relationships, alter over the time. A broad definition of socio-political change such as this allows for the inclusion within the definition of everyday alterations in social organization of little long-term significance, and broader oscillations in social structure, while still incorporating such notions as modernization and development. Within this basic theme, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the interactions of the Sangha with politics in a situation of socio-political change.

1.4.3 Political Legitimacy

The notion of political legitimacy⁵ is, in general, based on the belief that the government has the right to govern and the people (the governed) recognize that right. It involves the capacity of a political system to engender and maintain the belief that its political institutions, structures, processes, policies, decisions, and actions are the ones most appropriate for the society in question. A legitimate government or political system is one, which has proved it possesses those qualities of righteousness, propriety, or moral goodness, which are accepted by the governed. Thus, whether a government is legitimate or illegitimate depends on the government's success in convincing the people that its values are their primary values.

³ Somboon Suksamran, **Buddhism and Politics in Thailand**, (Singapore: The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1982), pp.7-8.

⁴ Loan Davies, **Social Mobility & Political Change**, (London: Pall Mall Press Ltd., 1970). pp. 6-7.

⁵ Somboon Suksamran, **Buddhism and Political Legitimacy**, op.cit., pp.5-7.

In a broad sense legitimacy is derived from two types of values. According to David E. Apter these are ‘consummatory’ and ‘instrumental’ values. Consummatory values are based on a particular set of moralities, and an integral set of cultural norms that are widely dispersed in the population, or contradictory sets held by mutually antagonistic groups. Instrumental values refer to the capacity of a government or political system to deal effectively with political, economic, and social problems, and to make provision for the future well-being of that society.

1.5 Documents and Research Works Concerned

The comparative study of Buddhism and politics in Thailand and Cambodia has not been thoroughly carried out by the academic community. Studies on Khmer Buddhism are few and mainly ethnographic. Buddhism was studied as a belief system and in terms of its social services to the society. Research on the involvement of Buddhism in Khmer politics has seriously been attempted only after the political change in Cambodia in 1975 when the Communist Khmer Rouge overthrew the Khmer Republic, the government of Gen. Lon Nol. Unfortunately, the country was flung into the Killing Fields with more than one and a half million people dead within only four years during the Khmer Rouge’s revolution of carnage. When their cruel regime was toppled by the Vietnamese incursion in 1979, Cambodia experienced civil wars for more than ten years until the UNTAC came to organize the general election in 1993. Obviously speaking, within more than two decades Cambodia has passed through many wars and revolutions, which brought great destruction to both Khmer lives and properties. The country was set back for years because of these wars also had a bad impact on Khmer Buddhism and its Sangha. To collect the source of information within the 70s and 80s the researcher sees that the data and information seem to be very limited.

Recently, many books have been written about Cambodia and its people after the wars were over and the country was opened to the outside world again. Only then were the data and information suitably available. To get the research work done in the field of Khmer Buddhism and politics the researcher has collected information from various books but the most important ones are: *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, written by George Coedès, *Le Bouddhisme Au Cambodge*, written by Pang Khat Bhikkhu, and *A History of Cambodia*, written by David Chandler. Besides these books there are many other books and documents which are included in this research whenever the information is available.

For Buddhism and politics in Thailand the researcher finds it easy to get all the information from many sources such as, books, magazines and Buddhist scriptures. The relationship between Buddhism and the state in Thailand has been of interest to historians for some time. Scholars have paid a great deal of attention to the inter-dependent relationship between kingship and Buddhism, the role and function of the two institutions as modifying forces and as the center of the nation's unity. There are also studies concerning the role of Buddhism and its potential in strengthening national security. Political mobilization of Buddhism and the Sangha for political legitimacy of the ruling elite and its programs and activities has been taken up recently. The aspect of Buddhism and political legitimacy has been thoroughly researched and studied by Dr. Somboon Suksamran. He has written many books on the interaction of Buddhism and Politics in Thailand and they are included: (1) Political Buddhism in Southeast Asia, (2) Political Patronage and Control over the Thai Sangha, (3) Buddhism and Politics in Thailand, and (4) Buddhism and Political Legitimacy. My research is mainly based on them.

1.6 Procedure of Doing the Research Works

This research work is a qualitative. The research methodology can be divided into three stages as the following:

1.6.1 Collecting the materials from both sources, Thai and Khmer sources, in which all the information and data concerned with Buddhism and politics, are available. These include: (a) Primary document, which refers to the Tipitaka, and (b) Secondary documents, which are related to books and magazines.

1.6.2 Analyzing the raw materials as well as systematizing them to give a clear scope of the topics of Buddhism and politics in both countries.

1.6.3 Giving conclusions and suggestions for further research study, on Buddhism and Politics, which can be beneficial for anyone who is interested in the academic field. The researcher has collected all these documents from various places. These places are: the National Library, Thammasat University's Library, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University's Library, and Silapakorn University's Library.

1.7 Advantages of the Study

1.7.1 Present the selected teachings from the Buddha's Dhamma, which serve functionally as a social integrative force, social order and social control mechanism. It also describes the Buddhist concept of socio-political changes, the development of society and system of government, including ideal rulers.

1.7.2 To have a sound knowledge of political legitimacy and how can Buddhism be supportive to political legitimacy. A case study on Thailand illuminates such an interaction of Buddhism and politics.

1.7.3 To have a sound knowledge for the development of political mobilization through Buddhism to foster the purpose of political factions in Cambodia.

CHAPTER II

BUDDHISM AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

2. 1 The Dhamma and the Social Life

Buddhism has been an integral part of the life of Buddhists for it is the root of culture and way of life of the people. In order to appreciate the importance, role and influence of Buddhism on the way of life of the Buddhist populace, it is necessary to understand other structures or fabrics, which are integral parts of Buddhism. Important components are the Buddha⁶, the Dhamma, the Sangha and the Wat (monastery) and lay disciples. The Dhamma or the teachings of the Buddha has been the most influential on the way of life of Buddhists. The teachings are found not only in the Pali Canon and Suttapitaka but also in such religious literatures as the Jataka, Buddhist chronicles and myths. The Dhamma component is an abstract aspect and serves as the heart of Buddhism. The Sangha or the community of monks and the Wat are in close relation and proximity with the laymen and interact with society in its daily life.

The close association and continuous relationship between Buddhism and society is based on the concept that a society is a conglomeration of tangible compositions and such abstract elements as virtue, value, goodness, morality and ethics. There are continuous interactions between the tangible and intangible components. In order to maintain the society functionally and structurally, there must be an interdependent and supportive relationship of different compositions of Buddhism. Lacking any of them would cause imbalance in society. In a village community, for example, not having a monastery and monks to edify and guide the people would result in the low morality and spirit of the inhabitants. Similarly, if the monks in the community do not strictly adhere to the Dhamma and keep to their duties according to the code of discipline (Vinaya), the people's morality and spirit would become lax, the community's social relationships would also be weakened, unstable and not in peace. Social relationships are not always in harmony. Conflicts may

⁶ Somdej Phra Nyanasamvara, **What did the Buddha teach?** (Bangkok: Publications, 2000), pp.6-7.

arise from time to time. Resolution to such conflicts may be achieved by means of adjustment and adaptation of the existing social structure and function in order to maintain the society. Alternatively, there might be a replacement of the structure and function of the old society by a new one.

Interaction and the independent relationship of the Sangha and lay society is another aspect of the relationship between society and religion. The Sangha is the most important and traditional Buddhist institution, which is in close association with the people. It plays an essential role, both religious and secular, in the life of the people. It provides spiritual sanctuary and serves as a field of merit for the people when they need spiritual comfort. In the secular sphere, the monks render services to rural and remote communities. The monks help in teaching the children, healing the sick by traditional methods, and leading the villagers in various development efforts. Reciprocally, the lay community provides the monks with necessities for their living so that they need not worry about earning their living. Such an interdependent and reciprocal relationship contributes to a situation in which each party has to be flexible and adaptable to changes. An accommodating and adaptive ability is an indispensable quality of the structure within a society, which make possible the maintenance of the society. The maintenance of the structure and the regulation of social order are structurally and functionally defined. It is a situation in which every component of the society is interdependent, interacting and contributing to the system maintenance.

Generally speaking, there are a variety of components in a society. The important ones are an economic structure, a political structure and a belief system meaningful to people's lives and thoughts. The major element in this belief system is a religious structure.

2. 2 The Dhamma and the Society

The teachings of the Buddha are voluminous and classified into groups. Each group serves a specific purpose. It explains an existing phenomenon, its cause of arising and the effects thereof. There are also prescriptions to overcome individual problems. The level of depth and sophistication of the teachings are also purposely prescribed to suit individual needs. Due to the differences in context and level of sophistication of the teachings, there arise differences in interpretation of the teachings. This concerns one's perception and experiences, occupation and education. Some political scientists may understand the Buddhist

concept *Santosa* (satisfaction with whatever is one's own) as not conducive to development. In contrast, conservationists and environmentalists would see the meaning of *Santosa* as contentment with the maintenance of the existing status and conditions, which is supportive to environmental conservation. Students of Buddhist Studies would view such interpretations as not comprehensive. This signifies different levels of understanding of the teachings of the Buddha by the Buddhists. According to Robert Redfield's concept of 'Great and Little Tradition', people's appreciation of Buddhism can be divided into two broad categories⁷, doctrinal and popular Buddhism.

Firstly, doctrinal Buddhism refers to the teachings of the Buddha and practices contained in the Canon Sutta and related literatures. Doctrinal Buddhism is thus believed to be original. Its followers will refuse principles, teachings and practices, which are not contained in the Canon and Suttapitaka. They view belief in spirits, deities, and other forms of Animism including beliefs and practices adopted from other faiths, as heresy. The followers of doctrinal Buddhism are few in number but are well educated.

Secondly, popular Buddhism refers to a Buddhism which is permeated by other religions and belief systems. It includes Animism, Brahmanism, and beliefs in spirits and ghosts. The teachings and practices of Buddhism and other belief systems are so interwoven that only the well educated among the faithful can distinguish Buddhism from the others.

Religious rites, an important structure and function of a religion can differentiate between the intricacy of doctrinal and popular Buddhism. The followers of popular Buddhism tend to rank ritual very high. Their rituals are a combination of Buddhistic, Animistic and Brahmanical elements. A wedding ceremony, for example, begins with Buddhist merit making such as giving alms to the monks in the morning. Late morning ritual involves the offering of sacrifices to the spirit house and to the ancestors. In the evening Brahmanism is invoked to bless the bride and the groom. The holiest part of the evening ritual is the pouring of lustral water on the hands of the couple with blessings from the senior guests. On the contrary, the followers of doctrinal Buddhism are more concerned with Buddhist ritual and play down the non-Buddhistic ones.

⁷ Robert Redfield, **Peasant Society and Culture**, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp.41-43.

The great majority of Buddhists in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia follow popular Buddhism. This phenomenon can be explained in the context of the belief system at every level of society. Amongst the most primitive, there exists a belief system that human beings can hold on to. Such a belief system may be Animism in various forms, including beliefs regarding natural happenings. Certain communities have embraced an established religion such as Brahmanism, which was well rooted in India and propagated all over the world, and Taoism or Confucianism, which spread from China. By the time that Buddhism was introduced to Southeast Asia, there already existed belief systems and religious among the people. When they accepted Buddhism they also kept their old beliefs. Due to its flexible and liberalism, Buddhism easily absorbed certain elements of existing belief systems into its mainstream. What developed from this process is popular Buddhism.

The teachings of the Buddha displays variety in its levels of sophistication, purposes, content, and specialties. For example, the Four Noble Truths explain natural phenomena, which will be with everyone from birth to death. It describes the nature of suffering represented by birth, old age, disease and death, including sorrow and frustration of every kind; the origin of problems and suffering by way of causality; the extinction of suffering; and the path leading to the extinction of suffering. There are teachings that guide the people to live comfortably without economic hardship. This teaching is called Dittadhammikattasamvattanika-dhamma (virtues conducive to benefits in the present). It teaches the laymen to have energy; industry and watchfulness concerning their properties; to associate with good people; and to live economically. The Buddha also encouraged people to follow the path to success. This appears in a particular teaching called Iddhipada (basis for success). However, the over all purpose of the teachings of the Buddha can be summarized in the following:

Firstly, it is to enlighten the laymen about the nature of life from birth and existence to death. This includes an explanation of the origin of life, existence after birth and survival until death. The teachings also deal with ways to lead one's life happily, in harmony with nature and how to minimize and cope with suffering arising from sickness, death, disappointment, separation and other misfortunes.

Secondly, it is to explain and prescribe ways for people to live together mutually on a one to one level, as well as on national and global levels. The teachings, to achieve this purpose, deal with the prescriptions for social relationships between individuals, social relations within the family, social relationships between family and family, between teacher and students, between employer and employees, between religious personnel and laymen, between government and subjects and between state and state.

Thirdly, it is to give guidance on the application of the teachings of the Buddha to improve the daily life. The prescriptions are designed to be workable according to the nature of problems and the level of appreciation of the individual needs. Therefore, there are levels in the teachings of the Buddha, i.e., basic truth, middle and sophisticated truth, both in mundane and supramundane states (Lokiyadhamma and Lokuttaradhamma).

The dissemination of the teachings of the Buddha to people at different levels of appreciation requires specialized methods to suit each group. So as to preach Dhamma to intellectuals and educated people who are keen on Buddhism and who want to apply Dhamma to improve their lives, sophisticated Dhamma must be selected. The Dhamma for the followers of popular Buddhism, on the contrary, has to be simplified and easy to understand. Simplified Laws⁸ of Kamma and stories from the Jataka and Sutta are an effective means to edify them. However, Phra Rajavoramuni points out that whatever the teaching methods are, all teachings are related, for the essence of the teachings derives from the same truth and the ultimate purpose is identical. In fact, these teachings are identical in purpose but given different labels. The truth is disseminated selectively and in different forms.

2.3 The Dhamma and the Socio-political Changes

The principle of ever-changing nature or the impermanent condition of the society is a very important consideration when one studies the relationship between Buddhism and society. It is argued that at the time when the Gotama was seeking enlightenment there had been rapid socio-political changes in the homeland of Buddhism, i.e., present Northern

⁸ Phra Rajavoramuni, **The Buddha Dhamma: Law of Nature and Virtues for Life**, (Bangkok: Sukapharbjai Press, 1983), pp.11-12.

India. The Buddha considered that the ever-changing or impermanent conditions were causes of suffering and societal problems. He therefore devoted himself to the search for truth to remedy human suffering. The suffering and problems, which the Buddha perceived, were: (1) natural changes in human beings and (2) changes caused by man.

Firstly, natural changes in human beings, these causes of suffering inherent in human beings are, for example, birth, sickness, death, happiness, suffering, satisfaction, disappointment, etc. Though they are natural phenomena, they can cause suffering to people. The Buddha believed that there must be a remedy to end or at least to minimize those causes of suffering. Thus, he set forth in search of the truth. Secondly, changes caused by man, are included: (1) political changes and (2) socio-economic changes.

Firstly, political changes during the lifetime of the Buddha and the political environment could be characterized as pertaining to two major forms of government. The first one was absolute monarchy. The other was a system based on co-operation between the ruling elites of small principalities within the states. This form of government is said to be equivalent to a loosely structured republican system and the mode of government was democratic. The absolute monarchy form of government had been adopted by the four northern states of India and they proved to be very politically strong and stable. Among these states, two of them had adopted democratic procedures in their government. Legislation, policy making, and judicial processes were based on consultation in the assembly of the assigned ruling elite. Majority opinion was adopted to arrive at final decisions and resolutions. However, the democratic form of government was gradually weakened by the stronger authoritarian governments and finally became absorbed by the absolute monarchical system.

Secondly, it is the socio-economic changes. The expansion of the absolute monarchical states contributed to the expansion of trade. The growth of trade generated the bourgeois and capitalist classes. Those who were economically strong became politically influential and dominated the government⁹.

⁹ Phra Rajavoramuni, **Buddhism and Thai Society**, (Bangkok: Komol Kreamthong Foundation Press, 1982), pp.21-22.

The characteristics and nature of socio-political and economic changes became integral parts of the teachings of the Buddha. Since the Buddha gave heavy importance to the forces of socio-political and economic change, this contributed to Buddhist ability to adjust to changes without losing its essence.

2.4 The Dhamma and the Social Order

In the context of socio-political changes, Buddhism has played a very important role in regulating and organizing society for the survival and continuity of the society. These functions can be summarized as followings:

1. Socialization function. In Buddhist societies, culture, values and customs are deeply rooted in Buddhism. Although there are normative and substantive socializing agents, the monks and monasteries are another important socializing institution. They have served as ethical and moral socializing agents. They persuade the people to follow social rules and regulations and to lead their lives according to the Buddhist way of life. Such virtues as loving and kindness (*Mettā-Karuṇā*), kind-heartedness, being helpful to each other, courtesy and social relationships between persons of different status constitute this way of life.

2. Social control function. Social control is indispensable for human society. In order to keep society in order and its members behaving correctly, so as to maintain peace and order, there must be laws and regulations governing the society. It is necessary to have an authoritative body, i.e., a government to enact and enforce such secular laws and regulations. In addition there are also traditions and customary laws that enhance the social control of any society.

However, those secular social control mechanisms are aimed at regulating men's activities and overt behavior. They will be effective only when men feel morally obligated to follow the laws and regulations. Religion can play a very important role in instilling in the people a sense of morality and edifying them. The monks and monasteries are essential religious socializing agents that train Buddhists to be good citizens. Buddhist principles, which function as a social control mechanism, are, for example, the Five Precepts, *Brahmavihara* (sublime states of mind), *Sangahavathu* (virtues making for group integration and leadership and

principle of services), Nāthakaraṣadhamma (virtues which make for protection), Sāraṣāyadhamma (virtues for fraternal living), Adhipateyya (dominant influence, supremacy), Diṣṣhadhammikattha (sources of happiness in the present life), etc. People who are trained, edified, and keep to the teachings of the Buddha will have shared norms and follow a common way of life. Such a society will face minimal conflicts, people will live together with reason and social problems are minimized.

3. Buddhism serves as a unifying force for the society. The fact that the faithful follow the teaching of the Buddha, and adopt Dhamma as guidance in their life, reinforces national integration and solidarity. Good racial integration and a healthy religion enhance national security. In addition to the teachings of the Buddha, religious rituals and calendar festivals foster the unity of the people.

2.5 The Buddhist Concept of Political Authority

In the past the claim that Buddhism was the source of political ideology of the state and the authority of the ruler was undisputed by the subjects. At present those, who believe in the separation of religion and state, have contradicted such a claim. They are of the opinion that Buddhism seems obsolete in dealing with complicated social problems. It is irrelevant to the progress of modern technology. Its principles and nature are remote and incomparable with political, social and economic activities. They conclude that Buddhism is incapable of having influence on the social, economic and political life of the present society.

On the other hand, there are scholars who strongly believe in the latent and influence of Buddhism on the political arena. They hold that the political potential of Buddhism can be mobilized to meet the demands of the society in various capacities regardless of the time and place. This is because the interaction between the religious domain and the political realm is a continuous and natural phenomenon. Political power transfers from the religious realm to the political domain coincide with social changes. They postulate that religion does not lose its influence totally but still maintains a latent power in different forms.

It is argued that so long as the existence and continuity of the society needs moral and ethical support, religion will play an important role and can exert its influence on the political body of the society. It must be

understood that moral authority and ethics are deeply based on the religion. The religion therefore supports the existence of the society, fosters growth and prosperity, and maintains balance within the society. It also provides the ruler with political legitimacy. We shall now consider Buddhist concepts of social evolution, which lead to the development of social and political organization.

In Buddhist scriptures, political authority is viewed as being established because of the imperfection of man and the need for social order. This belief is best understood if one examines the creation myths. In the beginning, the world evolved as part of the universe¹⁰. From fire came solids, liquids and gases, which became the earth, the moon and the sun, the planetary system and stellar constellations. Plant and animal life evolved, and, over time, became increasingly differentiated. Eventually, human beings became differentiated from other animals and fed on rice after they evolved. They then became stronger, and differences in physical type and sex appeared. At this stage, fragrant and cleaned grained rice in unlimited supply was naturally available in open spaces and became communal property. Every human being enjoyed as much of it as his body required. Some males and females became interested in sexual intercourse; they developed in themselves passion and lust, which were considered immoral. These immoral persons were expelled from the existing settlements; they lived in separate huts to conceal their immorality, and, yet, were still allowed to have a share in the communal property. Then, there appeared greedy persons who collected and hoarded rice. As passion, lust, immorality, and greed increased, rice ceased to grow spontaneously, and its quality degenerated. Men then divided rice fields among themselves as private property and created boundaries. Disputes over property arose; men proceeded to steal others plots; and censure, lying and punishment became known.

As men became increasingly immoral and greedy for private possessions, conflict, violence, and disorder grew. This led men to gather to discuss how their lives should be regulated in order to ensure decent survival. They then agreed that they needed a ‘certain being’, who should give order to society, who should censure that which should be censured, and who should banish those who deserved to be banished. They also agreed to select the most handsome, best favored, most attractive and most

¹⁰ SiddhiButr-Indr, **The Social Philosophy of Buddhism**, (Bangkok: Mahamakutarajavidyalaya Press, 1979), pp.142-145.

capable from among them; and they invited him to be their ruler and to regulate society. In return, the ruler was given a share of the rice produced by the people.

The ruler was called Mahasammata “the great elect” because he was chosen by the many; he was of high birth ‘Khattiya’, or the Lord of the Field, because he protected the people’s fields; and Rājā ‘ruler’ because he was righteous and guided by the Dhamma. The political ruler since then was generally embodied in kingship.

In this manner, the Buddhist concept of political authority suggests that kingship was established because of the imperfections of man and the need for social order. Buddhist scripture such as the Pali Canon and the Jataka emphasized the need for a king, if order was to prevail. The relationship between the king and his subjects is described as one where he has reached his exalted position because he was a great merit-maker in his former lives. Such accumulation of merit entitled him to the kingship, or else he could not have been born a king¹¹. He governed the kingdom and reigned over the people and was endowed by them with authority to reprove, rebuke, punish or destroy anyone who transgressed a royal command¹². He was the receiver and enjoyer of tax from the people¹³. He was their source of happiness and potential protector¹⁴. He was the upholder of the Dhamma through which he watched over and protected his subjects¹⁵. The king was also endowed with five qualities: physical strength, material strength, and the strength of official, the strength of nobility and the strength of wisdom¹⁶.

On the part of the subjects, they needed the king for protection and went to him for the sake of honor and security. They esteemed him and obeyed him without challenge¹⁷. Therefore, a person who cared for his life should refrain from despising the king, and should conduct himself properly towards him¹⁸.

¹¹ SN. Vol.I, p.93.

¹² MQ. (Milindapaṇṇāsa) Vol.35, p.226.

¹³ AN. Vol.III, p.45.

¹⁴ DN. Vol.III, pp.93, 97.

¹⁵ AN. Vol.I & Vol.III, pp.109, 149.

¹⁶ JK. Vol.V, p.120.

¹⁷ JK. Vol.IV, p.269.

¹⁸ SN. Vol.I, p.96.

Thus, Buddhist kingship was essentially based on the concept of righteousness. To maintain his political authority and to regulate state affairs for the benefit of the kingdom and hence reaffirm and enhance his authority, the king has to be a righteous ruler, the Dhamma Rājā. The ethics of Dhamma are of universal relevance, applicable as much to individual conduct as to the principles of government.

Thus, the king existed to uphold the righteous order, and should not act arbitrarily. He was also advised to shun the four wrong courses of judgment and decision that might arise through favoritism, malice, delusion or fear (*chanda, dosa, moha, bhaya*). He should also constantly observe the Ten Royal Virtues¹⁹ (Dasarajadhamma).

He must care for the morality and righteousness of the Dhamma Raja is closely related to the prosperity of his kingdom and the physical and mental well-being of his subjects. The king's conduct and his action has far-reaching consequences since they affect not only his own kingship but also the fortunes of his subjects, who were almost entirely dependent on him. We are told that:

When the kings are not righteous, neither are princes, Brahmins, and householders, townfolk and villagers. This being so, the moon and the sun deviate from their courses, as do constellations and stars day and night...months, seasons and years; the wind blows wrongly...the god 'of rain' does not pour down showers of rain, the crops ripen in the wrong season; thus men who live on such crops have short lives and look sick and weak. Conversely, when the king, or the rulers, are righteous, the reverse consequences follow²⁰.

This concept of Buddhist kingship appears to suggest that the king is not only the ruler but also the mediator and regulator of the social order. Thus, if he was unrighteous, he brought disaster on his subjects; a king who did not adhere to Dhamma and take it as his master, and who failed to observe the royal virtues, would lead his kingdom to ruins. He would no longer be a worthy king and the people would dethrone or kill him²¹.

¹⁹ For detailed of the Ten Royal Virtues (Dasarajadhamma) see, Payutto, P. A., **A Constitution For Living**, (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation Publications, 1997), p.27-30.

²⁰ AN. Vol.II, p.74

²¹ MN. Vol.II, p.88.

Rulers of Buddhist kingdoms in Southeast Asia absorbed the concept of an ideal ruler, the Dhamma Raja, as part of their own traditions. They realized that the maintenance of their power rested on adherence to the Dhamma. It was necessary for them to keep Dhamma alive by supporting the Sangha, which perpetuated and disseminated Dhamma. By patronizing and supervising the Sangha, the ruler preserved the Dhamma, and in doing so ensured that his duty as a righteous king could be fulfilled. Knowledge of the teachings of the Buddha should never die, for with it would die the norms against which the ruler's conduct could be judged.

It would require a lengthy discussion to explain why Theravada Buddhism had such great appeal to the rulers of the newly emerging kingdoms of Southeast Asia, where it was adopted as their national religion. However, Trevor O. Ling suggests that Theravada Buddhism was attractive to the rulers of these kingdoms because it possessed a number of valuable features like the followings:

Firstly, it has what seemed to them to be a sophisticated system of psychology and ethics, sophisticated, that is to say, by its compassion with the indigenous spirit-cults and debased Indian priestcraft, which had until then constituted the spiritual powers of the religion.

Secondly, the professional carriers of this form of Buddhism were non-priestly. They did not claim to command supernatural forces nor were they likely to invoke supernatural sanctions. They relied on the good-will of the people, the attractiveness and uprightness of their philosophy and the uprightness of their own conduct. What did they seek, beyond these advantages, was the protection and support which the kings could afford them and their way of life. For their part, kings were by no means unwilling to guarantee such support, once they came to see the potential value of this cult of the Buddha²².

Ling further points out that from the point of view of the ruler, Theravada Buddhism was attractive as a socio-political system which provided the people with (1) perspective within which human existence could be seen as the working out of moral gain and loss in previous existences and (2) a scale of moral values in which equanimity, peacefulness and generosity rated high and (3) it also embodied an

²² Somboon Suksamran, **Political Buddhism in Southeast Asia**, (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1977), pp.x-xi.

organization of voluntary teachers and moral preceptors (the Sangha) whose main concerns were strictly non-political and who would be economically supported by the people, but were also prepared to cooperate with the ruler and advise him on religious and social matters in return for guaranteeing them a virtual monopoly as the spiritual and religious professionals of the kingdom. The relationship between the king and the Sangha was reciprocal. The king desired the cooperation of the Sangha because he saw that this would provide his kingdom with moral legitimacy and considerable assistance in matters of social control. At the same time, the Sangha sought to secure the king's adherence to the Buddhist values for this would guarantee his support. Thus, it is possible that these two interests more or less coincided: an ideology, which needed a supportive political power and a political ruler looking for a legitimizing ideology.

CHAPTER III

BUDDHISM AND LEGITIMATION OF POWER: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THAILAND

It has been suggested in the preceding discussion that Buddhism not only provided the state with an ideological basis and the political leader with political legitimacy but it could also be used to facilitate the government and to maximize legitimacy of traditional government. Thailand has provided the best illustrative example of the political nexus between Buddhism and traditional political rulers. The interaction of Buddhism²³ and political rulers in Thailand is taken as a case of reference for several reasons. Firstly, since the formation of the Thai State in Sukhothai, Theravada Buddhism has uninterruptedly been the dominant religion of the great majority of its people. Secondly, unlike Laos and Cambodia, Thailand has not experienced the undesirable impacts of colonial rule on its religion and thus its traditional mode of government continued for many centuries. Thirdly, in the history of Cambodia not until fourteenth century was Theravada Buddhism a prominent religion in the country. Prior to this period, Hinduism and local cults were the dominant sources of belief and the cultural system upon which the ideology of state and mode of government were based. Buddhism was from time to time introduced to the society but is not recognized as having dominantly influenced the form of Khmer government.

Thailand²⁴ is the new name of the country known as ‘Siam’ in the early time of this Nation-State. Thailand is located in the Southeast Asia at the latitude 95°-105° and longitude 6°-21° of the world map. It is bordered by Burma and Laos in the North, Laos and Cambodia in the East, Gulf of Siam and Malaysia in the South, Burma in the West. It was called: “Suvarnabhūmi” in the ancient time. The land consists of 513, 115 square kilometers. It is divided into 76 provinces. The capital is Bangkok. Populations of Thailand are 60,000,000 (1997 A.D). The majority of the

²³ Somboon Sukamran, **Buddhism and Political Legitimacy**, pp.33-34.

²⁴ **Academic Essays On Buddhism And Philosophy**, for the celebration of the 50th years of Mahachula University, (Bangkok: M.C.U. Press, 2540/1997), pp.265-266.

population is Buddhist (93%). Muslim, Christian, Confucious, Sikh and Hindu (all together 7%) are minority.

Looking back on the Thai history we can see clearly the close relationship between Buddhism and the Thai-Nation. The history of Thai-Nation is also the history of Buddhism. The Thai-Nation originated over 2,000 years ago. Also in that period Buddhism came and has played an important role in the Thai history ever since. The Thai nation settled firmly in present day Thailand 700 years ago. And about seven centuries ago, it adopted the present form of Buddhism. Both Thai-Nation and Buddhism has passed the three great periods of the history; namely-Sukhothai (B.E.1800-1900), Ayudhya (B.E. 1900-2310) and Bangkok (B.E. 2310-now). Thonburi period (B.E. 2310-2325), however, was included in the Early Bangkok period because it was a capital for a short time. The location of the above mentioned capitals can be seen from the map of Thailand. Proceeding further, it would be fair to state here that before travelling of Buddhism to Thailand which kind of belief existed in the mind of Ancient Thai.

3.1 Buddhism and Kingship at Sukhothai

Khun Bangklangthao and Khun Phamuang who held the governorship of Ban Yang and Rad respectively decided to join their forces together and to overthrow the Khmer rule. Following their refusal to send any further tribute, including water, to the Khmers, which was interpreted as a defiance of their authority, they inflicted, in 1238, a crushing defeat on the Khmer commander at Sayam later known as Sukhothai, the administrative center for the northern part of the Khmer Empire. Through the great support of the Thais, Khun Bangklangthao was proclaimed King Sri Inthrahit of Sukhothai. Thus was born the Thai Kingdom²⁵ of Sukhothai. If the name of Sukhothai thus spelt is accepted as the phonetic form of the Pali Sukhodaya, it means 'Dawn of Happiness'. Meanwhile the Khmers exerted no efforts to subdue him, probably because they had weakened themselves in undertaking to carry out a vast building programme such as the construction of Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom, and also in their wars against Champa. However, they maintained their stronghold at Lavo or Lop Buri, and although they were no longer a formidable force, they might at any time become again hostile to the Thais.

²⁵ Office of the Prime Minister, **Thailand Official Yearbook 1968**, (Bangkok: Government House Printing Office, 1968), pp.13-15.

The victory of Sri Inthrahit over the Khmers at Sukhothai was an event of far-reaching importance, as it created a profound impression among the people who credited him with extraordinary ability and heroism. They humbly give him the name of 'Phra Ruang' meaning 'Glorious Prince'. 'The name of Phra Ruang is, in fact, conferred without discrimination upon all the kings of Sukhothai'. The dynasty, which ruled Sukhothai, is therefore known as the Phra Ruang dynasty, which should be recognized as 'the first historical Thai dynasty'. It has a double claim to this title, both because its cradle was precisely in the country designated by foreigners as Siam and it is this dynasty which, by freeing the Thai principalities from the Cambodian yoke and by gradually extending its conquests as far as the Malay Peninsula, paved the way for the formation of the Kingdom of Siam properly so-called. Sri Inthrahit was succeeded by his second son, Ban Muang, as King of Sukhothai, his first son having died young. Ban Muang elevated his famous brother, Ramkhamhaeng, to an exalted position by appointing Maha Uparaj (Deputy King) of the city of Jalieng, which had its name, changed to Sri Sajjanalai. Apart from a petty war with the Prince of Chot, nothing happened to disturb the peace of Sukhothai under its two kings. At the death of Ban Muang in 1277, Ramkhamhaeng who was Sri Inthrahit's third son ascended the throne.

Ramkhamhaeng proved himself to be valiant warrior, a wise statesman, a far-sighted scholar and a brilliant diplomat. For these reasons, he truly deserved the title of the Great, being the first Thai King to be accorded such a great honor. His attributes as a warrior were revealed long before his accession to the throne, beginning with his victory in his combat on elephants over Prince Chot. Since then, he had been busily enlarging his dominions and during his reign, Sukhothai was an extensive kingdom, bordering in the north on Lanathai and in the east in Vientiane, covering in the south the Malay Peninsula, and including in the west Tennesserim, Tavoy, Martabam and Pegu.

As an absolute monarch, he governed with justice and magnanimity his people. Their welfare received his unfailing attention. Whenever they wished to submit a complaint to him, they rang a bell at the palace gate. He could then grant them an audience so as to afford an opportunity to find out by himself the causes of the complaint, and he then decided it according to its nature. Thus a custom grew up, whereby a person who had suffered wrong could appeal to the King, and it continued to the Bangkok period beginning in 1782. He evinced considerable interest

in the moral education of the people. He persuaded them to observe the simple Buddhist precepts, to make merit and give alms, and to attend a sermon regularly. He was, in fact, responsible for the introduction of the Hinayana or Theravada Buddhism of the Ceylonese school or Lanka Buddhism from Nakorn Sri Thammarat to Sukhothai from which it has been spreading and flourishing till today. He had a stone seat or Manangasila throne erected in the midst of a palmary grove, where, at his request, a priest preached a sermon on every pre-sabbath day and sabbath day, and where he conducted the affairs of the state on other days. In short, Ramkhamhaeng's rule of Sukhothai was endowed with the characteristics of a paternal government.

The paternalism²⁶ of Sukhothai may have been reinforced by certain Buddhist values. For example, the Buddhist principle regulating the social relationship between parents and children delineates the rights and duties of the two parties. Here respect, gratitude, obedience, and love towards parents are strongly emphasized. Parents are advised to care for their children by expressing their parental love for them, by restraining them from doing evil deeds and exhorting them to do good. It is very probable that the kings of Sukhothai utilized the Buddhist concept of kingship to enhance and maintain their political power. King Ramkhamhaeng and his successor espoused the notion that the Dhamma was the supreme code for regulating the social order and a moral guide for government. Ramkhamhaeng, for example, was said to have believe that:

If society is morally sound and the people have a high spirit by keeping steadfast to Buddhism and adhering to Dhamma; the kingdom will be tranquil and prosperous.

To demonstrate their righteous rule and thereby constitute the norm for the society, the kings of Sukhothai took a leading role in religious activities, promoting and protecting Buddhism, and in patronizing the Sangha. King Ramkhamhaeng, for instance, not only showed his subjects his own dedication to Buddhism but also taught Dhamma to the people. On each *Uposot* day (Buddhist holy day) he invited a learned monk to teach Dhamma at his palace. He personally led the people to observe the Buddhist precepts strictly during the season of *vassa* retreat. At the end of *vassa* he presented *Kathina* robes and presents to the monks. He gave donations to monks who were proficient in Dhamma and in propagating

²⁶ Somboon Suksamran, **Buddhism and Political Legitimacy**, pp.34-39.

Buddhism. He built monasteries and religious places and encouraged his subjects to follow his example. Buddhism in his reign was said to have prospered because of the king's devotion.

His successor, King Loethai (or Lodaiya) followed Ramkhamhaeng's mode of government and continued to support Buddhism. This King is also said to have been a patron of Hindu cults and as a consequence the Brahmanical tradition seems to have been strengthened during his reign by influences from South India. Despite the fact that he was a fervent Buddhist, little is known of his manipulation of Buddhism for political ends during his long reign (1298-1347 approximately). When he died in 1347, his son Lithai (Lidaiya) succeeded him. It was this king who made extensive use of religion to facilitate his rule.

According to Griswold and Pasert, King Lithai, while following King Ramkhamhaeng's method of government, may have made more use of Hindu traditions of government than his grandfather. He believed to have known the Dharmasastra (the Hindu treatise on the science of kingship) well and made use of it. For example, at his coronation the Brahmanical ritual (Abhiseka) was performed to complete the ceremony. As a Buddhist King, he proclaimed himself Maha Dhammaraja (King of Righteous Kings). He is said to have thoroughly studied the Three Pitakas. During his reign, Buddhism appears to have prospered because of his devotion. He was recorded to be the first Thai King who donated land slaves, probably prisoners of war, to the monasteries, a practice that was followed up to early Bangkok period.

Probably the most important religious act of Lithai was his ordination. He was the first Thai king who temporarily left his throne to enter the monkhood, an act that in Thai belief gains the highest merit. Besides being the action of a religious man, the king's ordination should be seen in the light of the political conditions of Sukhothai in this period.

When Lithai came to the throne he was confronted with at least two heavy responsibilities; first, to ward off an invasion from the newly emergent and expansive Ayudhya, and second, to recover his father's territories and to pacify rebellious vassals. In both cases he needed alliances with independent neighboring rulers. By promoting Buddhism, and establishing himself as a righteous king, exemplified by his ordination, Sukhothai became the center of Buddhism. At his ordination it was

recorded that the rulers of Lanna and Nan came to participate in merit-making. They and some other rulers in the North sent diplomatic missions to Sukhothai in order to bring Singhalese Theravada Buddhism to their homelands. In this fashion Lithai succeeded in cementing strong alliances against Ayudhya or, at least, in ensuring the neutrality of his neighbors. His devotion to Buddhism also assured his vassals that they would be treated with kindness and compassion, the essential virtues to be observed by a righteous Buddhist king. We are told that Lithai's policy of pacification of his vassals involved a military campaign followed by a generous peace. When he succeeded in subduing the vassals, he assured them that they could rely on his justice and mercy. He taught them to be good Buddhists.

Lithai's use of religion as an ideology to support the status quo and for the purposes of social control is well exhibited in his own book called *Traiphum Phra Ruang* or *Traibhāmikathā* (The Three Worlds of Phra Ruang). The text describes the structure of the universe (the *Traiphum*) cosmography, the relationship between the merit and power, the destination of each category of beings and deities as determined by the *Kamma* of each being. All beings were ranked, from demons to gods, in a hierarchy of merit, which accrued according to *Kamma*. It describes the cyclic processes of birth, death and rebirth of deva, human beings and animals of various forms. Their three worlds were divided into 31 levels. The highest world contained four levels inhabited by the high grade Brahma (*phrom* in Thai) deities. The middle world contained 16 levels inhabited by lower grades of *phrom* deities. The lowest world consisted of eleven levels with human beings dwelling in the fifth level from the bottom. The six levels above the "world of mankind" were inhabited by beings of higher status than humans. Below it were creatures of less merit. The text describes the nature of each level, the conditions of existence for its inhabitants, how they came to be there and how they might change their status.

The central emphasis of the *Traiphum* is on the effects of good and bad *Kamma*. It stresses that the people who have good *kamma* are rewarded, in contrast with those who acquire bad *kamma*, after death. Rewards and punishments for certain kind of good and bad *kamma* are described. For example, when a person who has accumulated great merit dies, he goes to a higher level in the three worlds, depending on the amount of merit acquired while he was alive. He might even go straight to a *phrom* level, if he has sufficient merit.

This powerful statement of the king's view of the entire world was intended to be propagated throughout the kingdom. It makes some major points that are of direct relevance to our study.

In the first place the notions of good and bad kamma, and merit and demerit were employed to promote and regulate the social order. The promised reward for good kamma was intended to encourage people to do good and be moral, thereby promoting social order. The concept of merit and demerit serves to justify the social and economic position of individuals in the hierarchy of the society. Secondly, the concept of religious sanctions reinforces social sanctions as an overriding coercive force on population. Thirdly, the fact that the prescription of punishment for acts of demerit varies according to the status of the person serves to regulate the social relationships between people of different statuses. For example, punishment for the people of high status is more severe than for the people of lower status who commit the same act of demerit. The Traiphum also prescribed the appropriate relationship between people of different status. For example, it delineated the proper conduct of members of the family to each other, and the relationship between clergy and laity, between superiors and subordinates.

Apart from using the Buddhist values expressed in the Traiphum as an instrument for social control, Lithai appears to have used the concept of merit to justify his right to rule. This is succinctly expressed in the following concepts:

One who had made and accumulated merit in previous lives by paying homage, honoring and revering the Triple Gems (The Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha), as well as having gratitude to them, adhering to the Dhamma, observing moral precepts (Sila), practicing Bhavana (concentration of mind on the Buddha and his Dhamma), when he dies, goes to heaven. When he is reborn, he is born a ruler or in a higher caste with power, wealth and subordinates...with greater merit than others. He became Chakraphat (Chakravartin-king of kings)...Those who are born in the ruling class, or king, should be aware that it is so because they had good kamma and had accumulated merit in previous lives. It is not so because of natural causes...It is merit that determines one's destination; (that is why) some people are born with wealth, wisdom, beauty, power, and have long lives as against the ones who are born with poverty, suffering, ugliness, idiocy, and have short lives. Merit

and demerit determine who will be the rulers and who will be the slaves or servants or governed.

Associated his righteousness and the right to rule is his authority. His subjects have the duty to obey and to serve the ruler, the text states:

Whenever the Chakraphat emerges people all over the realm come to revere, pay respect and obey him. Whatever the king commands, it is legitimate because he is righteous...the lesser lords come to pay him homage and offer themselves as his subordinates and render their territories to him.

Following this discussion, it is possible to consider the Traiphum as a political as well as a religious treatise, for it shows how religion can help stabilize the social order and maintain the political power of the ruler. By inculcating the fear of hell in the minds of the people, it discourages social and political protest. It also encourages either meek acceptance of suffering and present status or withdrawal from the tribulations of human society.

After the death of King Lithai, which occurred some time between 1370 and 1374, Sukhothai gradually declined and fell under the control of Ayudhya.

3. 2 Buddhism and Kingship at Ayudhya

The founder²⁷ of Ayudhya as the capital of the Thai Kingdom in 1350 was Ramatibodi I, who before his accession to the throne, had distinguished himself as the Prince of Uthong of Suphanaphum (now a district in the province of Suphan Buri). Due to a scarcity of water, which caused an outbreak of an epidemic, he abandoned Uthong and moved his people to Ayudhya, which was a growing town, centrally located, so that he could control his expanding principality more effectively. During his reign (1360-1369), the government assumed the form of absolute monarchy, the main structure of which was similar to Sukhothai, but it was inextricably tinged with strong Cambodian influences. The Thai King became an autocrat, no longer in paternal relationship with his people in the same way as in the Sukhothai period. The land in the whole country belonged to him and a court language grew up to designate anything

²⁷ Office of Prime Minister, **Thailand Office Yearbook 1968**, pp.16-17.

concerning himself or his possessions. But his autocracy was tempered by the observance of ten Buddhist kingly duties: liberality, piety, charity, freedom from wrath, mercy, patience, rectitude, mildness, devotion, and freedom from enmity. Ramatibodi I consolidated his kingdom through the adoption of the expansionist policy, the appointment of four Great Officers in charge of the Royal Household, Local Government, Finance, and Agriculture, and the proclamation of laws such as the Law on Offences against the Government, the Law on Offences against the People, and the Law of Evidence.

Most of Ramatibodi I's successors continued his expansionist policy. Boromaraja I (Pha-ngua) (1370-1388) annexed the Kingdom of Sukhothai, while Ramesuan (1388-1395) compelled Chiang Mai to make a temporary surrender to him. In relation against frequent Cambodian raids on the Thai towns in the eastern part of his Kingdom, Boromaraja II (1424-1448) put himself in command of an army, which penetrated to Angkor Thom, which he captured after a siege of seven months in 1431. But his intention to convert Cambodia into a vassal state of Ayudhya was frustrated and the country slipped back into its former status.

The religio-political ideology, the concept of kingship, the administration, and political institutions of Ayudhya were influenced by the interwoven traditions of the Khmer and Mon, of Hinduism and Buddhism working in combination. From Khmer-Hindu tradition, Ayudhya inherited its concept of divine kingship (Devaraja). The king was considered as a receptacle of divine essence. He was Lord of Life and Lord of the Land. As the sovereign of the kingdom, his absolute power and authority were beyond challenged. The king was described thus:

Only the king is the highest in the land, because he is godlike. He can make the superior person (*phu yai*) be the subordinate person (*phu noi*) and vice-versa. When the king gives an order, it is the axe of heaven. If it strikes trees and mountains, the latter cannot withstand it, will be destroyed²⁸.

Hindu tradition manifested itself in the form of royal ceremonies such as rituals associated with the oath of allegiance and the coronation. The Kings of Ayudhya introduced and adapted from the Khmer many

²⁸ Somboon Suksamran, **Buddhism and Political Legitimacy**, p.40.

features²⁹ of their political institutions and administration, their arts, their honorific court language, and much of their system of honorific titles and social ranking.

The influence of the Buddhist concept of the righteous king manifested itself in the Pali Dhammasatthas, the Theravada legal code for guidance in government. However, it must be emphasized that although the Dhammasattha was of Hindu origin, it was the Mon version that guided the Thai kings. The Mon Pali Dhammasattha sought legitimacy not from Hinduism but mainly from the Buddhist genesis myth contained in the Aggaṃṃa Sutta. Lingat makes clear the Buddhist content:

In composing this literature, Mon writers took for their model Hindu Dharmasastras, and this is why many provisions of the new code may be found in the Indian Manu code or other similar works. But (Buddhist) Dhammasattha are quite different from Sanskrit Dharmasastras. First of all their authors left aside every matter which in Hindu codes were connected with Brahmanical religion or traditions. They were Buddhist people, and their codes were first to be applied to Buddhist people...The substance of law was not entirely taken from Hindu codes. They introduced, as was natural, a few customary rules prevalent among the indigenous population.

Prince Dhani Nivat also quotes the Dhammasattha as suggesting that the Kings of Ayudhya had to follow the principles or Buddhist righteous kingship:

The ideal monarch abides steadfast in the ten kingly virtues minimum, constantly upholding five common precepts and on holy days the set of eight precepts, living in kindness and goodwill toward all beings. He takes pains to study the Thammasat and to keep the four principles of justice, namely: to assess the right or wrong of all service or disservice rendered to him, to uphold the righteous and truthful, to acquire riches through none but just means and to maintain the prosperity of his state through none but just means.

The king was also thought of as a potential Bodhisattva; that is, he was seen as one who had temporarily given up striving to achieve Nirvana, so that he might serve his fellow men in their quest for religious and

²⁹ Ibid, pp.40-41.

material satisfaction in this worldly life. Thus it is recorded that when King Ramadhipati and his successors died, they entered Nirvana. This concept is probably of Mahayanist origin.

The political uses of Buddhism by Ayudhya kings were manifold. The examples that follow are intended to illustrate this. At the oath of allegiance ritual, which was of Hindu origin and performed by Brahmins, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha were invoked to complete the ritual. From Ayudhya to the early Bangkok periods this ritual was performed in Buddhist monasteries in which the monks took an equal part with the Brahmins for the completion of the ritual.

Another aspect of the political exploitation of religion was manifested in the unification of Ayudhya and Sukhothai in the reign of King Trailok of Ayudhya (1448-88). Prior to his reign, though Ayudhya had ruled over Sukhothai, it had failed to absorb it. It has been suggested that King Trailok succeeded in integrating the kingdom because he understood the importance of the Buddhist religion and recognized that military dominance alone was fruitless. He sought to build a religio-political base in order to secure support from the Sangha, and to reach the peasants through the Sangha and religion. In order to win the hearts and minds of the people of Sukhothai, the king made great efforts to restore and build monasteries in the North. Among these activities, which afforded him the reputation of being a good Buddhist king and greatly impressed the Sukhothai population, was the restoration of Wat Buddha Jinarat. This was once the spiritual center of the kingdom, where the image of Buddha Jinasi was housed. Following the example of King Lithai of Sukhothai, King Trailok temporarily left the throne to enter the monkhood and stayed in the North. Politically, his ordination and his stay in the North must have pleased the Sukhothai folk, for the action followed the good example of the great Sukhothai king. On his ordination, the kings of Chiang Mai, Pegu and Luang Prabang sent him gifts. Charnvit suggested that the King's ordination might have been planned so that the king could penetrate and take command of the Sukhothai Sangha. The idea was that his 2,348 men who were ordained with him remained in Sukhothai and became the critical link between the political authority and the rural population of the North.

Another religious act, which suggests that the king sought legitimacy from Buddhist tradition was manifested in his composition of a royal version of a Jataka, a story of the Buddha's former lives. The political significance of this literature was that it emphasized the religious acts of

the king as a prime qualification for a righteous ruler. It was also intended to follow the local tradition of King Lithai who composed the Traiphum.

It is interesting to note that Buddhism was also used to legitimize the usurpation of the throne. For example, when King Songtham of Ayudhya seized power from a rightful heir and established himself as king (1610-1628), he sought legitimacy through his religious acts. The Supreme Patriarch of the sixth reign described it thus:

The king realized that he had illegitimately seized power, and he had to be conscious of his unpopularity among the masses. Although at that time there was no one who dared to challenge his power, he sought support from the masses. Being accomplished in Buddhism and knowing that it was held in esteem by the people, he sought popularity and legitimacy through the religion. He encouraged ecclesiastical education and devoted his efforts to promote Buddhism. The king revised the Jataka, and ordered the compilation of Tripitaka. He encouraged the people in the court to adhere to the Dhamma. He himself regularly attended the sermons.

The interaction of politics with religion in the Ayudhya period may be summarized as follows. The Khmer-Hindu and Buddhist influences had converged in Ayudhya and achieved a complex reworking there. Each gave legitimation to the polity. Buddhism affirmed the role of kingship as the expression of Dhamma and righteousness, and as the fountain of justice, as well as the ordering principle of society. Its moral principles ensured that the king should be measured against the law. The Hindu-Khmer notion of divine kingship, in its modified form, conceptualized the king as the embodiment of the law and provided him with a majestic aura of mystery and a place in the cosmic order. Both traditions buttressed the political authority of kingship.

It should also be noted that the religious concerns of the kings of Sukhothai and Ayudhya were examples for their successors to follow. Their interest in supporting Buddhism and the Sangha for us is not only because some of them were good Buddhist kings but also because they realized that Buddhism could afford them legitimacy. There is also a continuity of the political uses of religion for various purposes up to the present day.

3.3 Buddhism and Kingship at Thonburi

After the shattering defeat, which had culminated in Ayudhya's destruction, the death and capture of thousands and Thais by the victorious Burmese, and the dispersal of several potential Thai leaders, the situation seemed hopeless. Ayudhya finally fell through the Burmese invasion of 1767. The capital was looted and burnt, and many of its population, both monks and laymen, fled. It was a time of darkness and of troubles for the Thai nation. Members of the old royal family of Ayudhya had died, escaped, or been captured by the Burmese and many rival claimants for the throne emerged, based in different areas of the country. But out of this national catastrophe emerged yet another savior of the Thai state: the half-Chinese general Phraya Taksin, former governor of Tak. Eventually General Taksin forced back the enemies and restored Thai freedom. He became king and moved the capital to Thonburi³⁰.

In the early years of his rule, King Taksin shouldered the heavy tasks of pacifying the dissidents and unifying the kingdom. Among the rebels was a group of dissident monks led by a high ranking monk, Phra Fang. These monks organized themselves in army style. They led their lives as if they were laymen, observed no Vinaya, and managed to seize power in the northern capital of Pitsanulok, but were soon attacked by Taksin. Phra Fang escaped but many of his followers were executed. In the South Taksin also succeeded in pacifying another group of dissidents led by the ruler of Nakhon Sitthammarat.

In his efforts to unify the kingdom, Taksin sent highranking monks from the capital to assume important supervisory positions in the northern Sangha. After pacifying the Southern rebels, he invited the leading monks to receive gifts. He built new monasteries and restored ruined ones. Since Nakhon Sitthammarat was the center of Buddhism in the south, these religious acts could be seen as an attempt by the king to utilize religion to justify his political intervention and to acquire support from the southern people.

As a king seeking legitimacy through religious values, Taksin devoted his efforts to restore the prosperity of Buddhism, which had suffered from the Burmese invasion. Following King Lithai's example and

³⁰ Office of Prime Minister, **Thailand in the 90s**, (Bangkok: National Identity Board Publications, 1995), pp.27-28.

that of Songtham, he ordered the revision of the Traiphum and commanded a new edition of the Tipitaka to be compiled. He built and restored many monasteries in the country.

Taksin lived in an age when Buddhism assumed aberrant forms due in part to the lack of proper support and supervision resulting from the perennial war with Burma. In consequence, the behavior of the monks had deviated far from the conventional norms of Buddhism³¹. The King set out to purify the Sangha and unworthy monks were ruthlessly purged. For example, in order to distinguish virtuous monks from the unworthy, some northern monks were tried by ordeal. Taksin himself seriously took up the study of meditation and claimed to have acquired supernatural powers. Moreover, he saw himself as a *Sodaban* (Pali-Sotapanna) or stream-winner, a type of being so elevated as to have embarked on one of the stages on the road to enlightenment. Because of this illusion, he claimed superiority over the monks and ordered them to bow to him. Those who refused to accept his claims were flogged and sentenced to menial labor. The supreme patriarch and two other senior monks who would not yield to his demands nor recognize his claims were demoted. It was Taksin's assumption of *Sodaban*, and his unorthodox treatment of the Sangha that partly contributed to his downfall. Because of his unorthodox behavior, he was seen as insane and as a potential threat to the unity of the Thai nation. He was forced to abdicate and afterwards was sentenced to death by his successor, Rama I. As far as the belief that the king was the one who possessed the greatest merit is concerned, the downfall of Taksin was described thus:

When the king (Taksin) ran out of his *bun* (merit), he died at the age of 48.

There was not much to say about Buddhism³² in the short-lived Thon Buri Period (1767-1782 AD). During the prelude of fifteen years, a greater part of which was occupied in driving out the enemy and restoring the peaceful situation of the country, what could be done to Buddhism was merely a general revival of Buddhism, not to say the compiling of new texts and other measures for the propagation of Buddhism. In the reign of King Thon Buri he had several temples repaired, monastic rules settled, religious texts collected and the study and practice of Buddhism revived to

³¹ Somboon Suksamran, **Buddhism and Political Legitimacy**, pp.44-45.

³² **BUDDHISM IN THAILAND**, in commemoration of the 13th General Conference and the 30th Anniversary of the WFB held and celebrated in Thailand on November 21-29 (1980), p.12.

some degree. With regard to the texts such as the Tripitaka, Commentaries and Sub-commentaries destroyed by fire, he had them borrowed or copied from those of the neighboring countries such as from Cambodia. It is safe, however, to say that Theravada Buddhism in the form of that of Ayudhya was still prevailing in Thon Buri Period.

3. 4 Buddhism and Kingship at Bangkok (Or Ratanakosin Period)

King Rama I

King Rama I assumed the throne in 1782 and began the Chakri dynasty. He moved the capital of Thailand to Bangkok. However, during his reign significant change in pattern of government was slow. Organization of government followed that of Ayudhya. The concept of Dhamma Raja was given heavier emphasis than Deva Raja Kingship. The virtue of righteousness was highly ranked. He himself had to be a good Buddhist and understand Dhamma. Thus religious sanction of political legitimacy had shifted. On the one hand the Hindu tradition began to decline in importance. For example, in a Royal Decree of 1782, the king ordered that *linga*, a central feature of Hindu worship, be destroyed. In many state ceremonies, Buddhist rituals were superimposed on Brahmanical ones. For instance, in the oath of allegiance ceremony, the initial ritual became the worship of the Triple Gems instead of the former Brahmanical ceremony. Yet in his government, Rama I, despite some adaptations, largely followed the model of Ayudhya. For example, the Buddhist Dhammasattha was still his guide in the administration of justice and government. His approach was paternalistic.

When Rama I succeeded Taksin he set himself to restore the moral tone of the kingdom, the acts that established him as a Buddhist righteous king. As a strong king who sought legitimacy and stability for his rule in the orthodoxy of Buddhism, he declared that it was one of his main priorities to restore the prosperity of Buddhism and the purity of the Sangha, which had suffered from the Burmese invasion and the unorthodox acts of King Taksin.

One major act was the revision of the Tipitaka in 1788. The king appointed a council of 218 learned monks and 32 Buddhist scholars for this task. They took five months to complete the revision, the ninth since the Buddha's enlightenment. The Tipitaka was said to be correct.

The Tipitaka revision had manifold implications. Symbolically, it was merit-making on the grand scale, the greatest merit accruing to the king as sponsor. Politically, since the Dhamma was contained in the Tipitaka, the revision led to the revival of the moral tone of the kingdom and indicated Rama I's intention to be a righteous king.

The king also ordered the revision of the Traiphum so that the text was in accordance with the Tipitaka. His intentions in doing so were in line with those of King Lithai. It was meant to be primary instrument for educating the people in Buddhist values. As we have already seen, this effectively reaffirmed the values of kingship³³ and justified hierarchy in the established social order.

In order to purify the Sangha and restore its prestige, the king issued a number of decrees on monastic conduct. The 10 decrees specified the correct behavior, which the monks had to observe. They laid down the relationship between the monastic community and lay society, and between monks and civil authority. Punishments for disobedience were also prescribed.

The fourth decree prescribed that the monks must study seriously the Vipassanadhura (insight development, contemplation) and Ganthadhura (Buddhist Scriptures). It meant to insure that the monks and novices were thoroughly cognizant of Dhamma for this would deter them from becoming lax and prevent Buddhism from deteriorating.

In his legislation and administration of justice, the king, as did his successors, closely followed the prescriptions in the Dhammasattha. If there was any doubt about the merit of a law, the laws were to be examined with regard to their agreement with the Pali cannon, and in cases where they did not agree; they were to be altered accordingly, in order to restore what was believed to be the original text. King Rama I's own behavior was intended to be exemplary for his officials and his subjects. Thus we are told:

In the morning the King used to come out to offer alms to monks on their morning rounds, after which he had a set of monks invited by regular turns to partake of food in the Audience Chamber...In the

³³ Somboon Suksamran, **Buddhism and Political Legitimacy**, pp.46-54.

evening the King took his meal early and then came out to Audience Chamber to listen to the daily sermons delivered by a monk.

The King, moreover, instructed his officials and the royal household to observe regularly the five and eight precepts in the monastery.

Examining the religious activities of Rama I we can see that there was a slight shift in the concept of kingship from one of divine kingship towards that of the Dhammaraja or Buddhist kingship. In a sense, it reflected the Buddhist Kingship of Sukhothai. From now on Thai kingship was sacred because it symbolized the Dhamma, the principle upon which the order of the kingdom depended, and it became less and less dependent on the Hindu myth of divine kingship.

After the death of Rama I in 1809, it could be said that the condition of the religion and the Sangha was healthy and stable as a result of his restoration and purification of the faith and the Sangha. He had also established the close relationship between kingship and religion, which continues to the present day. The main religious tasks remaining to his successors were to maintain the prosperity and purity of Buddhism and the Sangha, and to secure the peoples' adherence to the Dhamma.

King Rama II

King Rama II, formerly called Phra Buddha Lert Lah, came to the throne in B.E. 2352(1809). Buddhist activities during his time were noted in sending a religious goodwill mission group to Ceylon and organizing the research and study of Buddhism³⁴. Thus it was during this time that the course for studying Buddhism in Pali language was divided into nine grades as such had once been done in Ayudhya period. Other activities included the repairing of the existing temples and the building of new ones. The latter included the 'Prang' of Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn), symbolic of Thailand for all foreigners.

King Rama III

Phra Nang Klao, the third of the Chakri dynasty, succeeded his father in B.E. 2367(1824). Having a natural bent for architecture besides being a pious king himself, he had more temples built both inside and

³⁴ BUDDHISM IN THAILAND, p.12

outside Bangkok. The temple of Jetavana in the reign of King Rama I became a treasure of religious knowledge for Buddhist scholars and the symbolic 'Prang' of Bangkok was perfectly completed in his reign. Also two groups of goodwill missionary Bhikkhus, one after the other, were sent to Ceylon. His piety in Buddhism may be seen in his pioneer undertaking to translate the Pali Tipitaka and some other Pali texts into Thai. Nevertheless, his reign came to an end before they were all completed.

In B.E. 2372(1829) there was a religious movement³⁵ which marked a cornerstone for study and practice of Buddhism in Thailand, the birth of the Dhammayutta group of Bhikkhus. This was due to Prince Mongkut, the King's younger brother who had been ordained as a Bhikkhu for 27 years. Through this long period of secluded life he was endowed with a thorough knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures, including the Tipitaka, its commentaries, Sub-commentaries and other Pali texts as well. With such a wealth of knowledge gained and digested as a result of long and profound thinking, he was able to distinguish more clearly between what is right and what is wrong in the Master's doctrine. He then set out putting to practice what is mentioned and regarded as righteous in the Tipitaka. By doing so, he unwittingly made a great impression on those who, inspired by his conduct, took it up themselves to follow his way of life. This group of people, in course of time, grew bigger and more popular and became a separate gathering of Bhikkhus called the Dhammayutta group as distinct from the former group who was called the Mahanikaya. Thus there have been since that time two groups of Bhikkhus in Thailand. Besides being proficient in religious knowledge, Prince Mongkut also had a good command of Sanskrit and English, and in his establishing the Dhammayutta group of Bhikkhus, his movement might be compared with that of the Venerable Rahula Thera, who through his exemplary mode of practice had founded the Lankavamsa group of Bhikkhus at the town of Nakhon Sri Thammarat (some 800 kilometers south of Bangkok).

Of the religious literature in Thai, one was "Pathom-Som-Bodhi-Kathā" (life of Buddha) compiled by the Supreme Patriarch Prince Paramanujit Jinorasa of Jetavana Temple. Of the works in Pali, one called "Sīmā Vicāraṣā" (Treatise on Sima or boundary of a main shrine) compiled by Prince Mongkut himself has won high respect in Ceylon.

King Rama IV

³⁵ Ibid, p.13.

King Rama IV, or Prince Mongkut who had to disrobe himself after his brother's passing away, come to the throne in B.E. 2394 (1851). He was formally known as Phra Chom Klao. During his reign Bhikkhus were greatly encouraged in their study and practice of Buddhism, so that they were well-behaved as well as well-educated in the Buddha's doctrine. Some rules and regulations for the betterment of the administration of the community of Bhikkhus as a whole were laid down; a group of religious goodwill mission was sent forth to Ceylon; and the community of Dhammayutta Bhikkhus was also established in Cambodia³⁶.

Never was the construction work neglected. The Raj-Phra-Dit Temple, one of the most important temples of Bangkok was an evidence of the fact. The greatest and highest "Chedi" or pagoda of Nakhon Pathom, called "Pathom Chedi" second to none in its design and decorations, also bears witness of his constructive genius and serves to remind the Thai people of its historical importance.

As a result of earnest study in Buddhism there were more books expounding the tenets of the Buddha's doctrine in Thai language. This movement opened up a new trend of modern thought in disseminating the Dhamma to the people on a broader scale instead of the former, which seemed like monopolizing it for the realization of the few intelligentsias. Of the Pali literature, a volume by the Supreme Patriarch Prince Pavares Variyalongkorn, named 'Sugatavidatthividhāna' is the most important of the time.

As King Mongkut thought of himself as being essentially a man not a superhuman as held by the concept of divine kingship³⁷. He was very skeptical about the legendary stories, which glorified divine kingship such as the Jataka and the Traiphum. He rejected everything in religion that claimed supernatural origin. He was also very skeptical about the notion of heaven and hell, which was prominent in Traiphum.

It has also been suggested that the public image of the king from this reign onwards gradually changed from that of divine king buttressed

³⁶ At the present, there are two Supreme Patriarchs in Cambodia viz. H. H. Tep Vong is the head of Mohanikaya Sect, and H. H. Bour Kry is the head of Dhammayutikanikaya Sect as this was introduced to Cambodia by King Ang Duong when he was crowned by the Thai King at Krong Udong (the former city of Cambodia).

³⁷ Ibid, p.13.

by the Brahmanical cult and ritual to that of the leading human, the defender and patron of the Buddhist monastery. The old customs and ceremonies associated with divine kingship were questioned, reinterpreted in Buddhist terms, secularized, or neglected and gradually forgotten. Buddhist rituals were introduced to replace the Brahmanical rituals in the royal ceremonies or superimposed upon them. However this does not mean that the Chakri Kings had lost their interest in the classic Dhammaraja concept of kingship, or that they were entirely averse to the glorification of the king as Devaraja. As Tambiah has pointed out, King Mongkut, like his predecessors, while striving to justify and legitimate his position by capitalizing on the Buddhist concept of kingship³⁸, also relied on Brahmanical rites, which glorified the king as Devaraja. This view is shared by John Blofeld who said that although the ceremonies were associated the Brahmanical cult, the context was essentially Buddhist. The two elements were in harmony. Each dealt with different compartment of life. As he put it:

It would be going too far to say that King Mongkut permitted the Brahmin ceremonial merely because it lent splendor to royal occasions...One turned to the Buddha to understand how to pursue the great task of liberation, and to the Hindu gods to obtain various mundane favors affecting the welfare of the individual and of the kingdom as a whole. As a pious man, who was nevertheless the king, it was his duty to pursue his own liberation and at the same time solicit the protection of the Hindu gods for his throne and his country.

It appears to be difficult to measure the degree to which the kingship was divorced from the Hindu cult. We can only speculate that from the time of King Mongkut, Thai Kings have been more identified with Buddhist vales than previously, but have no means totally discarded the tradition of Hindu Kingship. Brahmanical ceremonies are still used to complement Buddhist rituals in royal ceremonies today.

During King Mongkut's reign, manifold cultural, economic, and social changes had been initiated. After Mongkut's death in 1868, his son Chulalongkorn succeeded him and launched further modernization programs.

King Rama V

³⁸ Somboon Suksamran, *Buddhism and Political Legitimacy*, pp.49-50.

King Chulalongkorn was very concerned with the task of modernization³⁹ of the country. His long reign (1868-1910) brought administrative, judicial, and financial reforms; the development of modern communications; the first stirring of political development; the growth of social services and bureaucracy; and great economic development. Administrative, social and economic reforms in this reign constituted a great leap in the transformation of the society. The King nevertheless did not neglect the traditional legitimizing functions of a Buddhist king, namely the promotion and purification of Buddhism and the Sangha.

Being no less devoted to Buddhism than his predecessors; he managed to found two Buddhist Universities for the sake of increasing the progress and stability of the education of Buddhism. These two were Mahamakutarajavidyalaya and Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, both of which have played a very important role in the field of Buddhist studies. He also enacted a law concerning the administrative system of the community of Bhikkhus, declaring that the Buddhist Monastery should be a self-governing holy community, while the state would be the patron under the direction and for the welfare of the Monastery. Of other major construction work, one is Wat Benjamabophit, which is well-known among foreigners for its impressive Buddha image in the Uposatha.

In B.E. 2431 (1888) a Council of Bhikkhus under the chairmanship of the Supreme Patriarch Prince Pavares Variyālongkorn was held for the purpose of transliteration the existing Tipitaka from the palm-leaf books in Cambodian characters to printed books using Thai characters. This required 39 printed volumes for each set of the entire Tipitaka. Besides the Message itself, some Commentaries and other Pali texts were also transliterated from Cambodian to Thai characters and then printed in the form of paper books. The king himself paid privately for publication of 1,000 sets for distribution to monasteries in the kingdom and to libraries abroad. He entered the monkhood temporarily in 1874. In 1883, the king received the Buddha's relics found at Kapilavatthu in India from the Viceroy of India. It was in his reign that a great reform of the Sangha was launched to unify the Sangha organization and to systematize its administration. This reform, as part of the attempted modernization of the country, significantly aimed at nationwide integration, of which educational and provincial administrative reforms were a part.

³⁹ Ibid, pp.51-52.

One of the king's elements of religious success, however, undoubtedly comes from the zealous efforts of one of his great helpers. This was no other than his own half-brother, the Supreme Patriarch Prince Vajirañāṣavarorasa, who had a profound knowledge in English as well as Pali and Sanskrit. Thus, by virtue of his ability plus his high position (as the king's brother and as chief of the whole community of Bhikkhus), the theoretical sides of Buddhism under the far-sighted and able patriarch were greatly encouraged. Most of his noble works are still now studied by the public as well as by the students, and it is never an over-estimate to say that he has blazed a trail for modern thought in the study and practice of Buddhism.

In B.E 2437 (1894) Mahamakutarajavidyalay University published a religious periodical, called "Dhammachakshu", which now reaches its 86th anniversary and is therefore the oldest and most long-lived religious periodical in Thailand.

King Chulalongkorn died in 1910 and was succeeded by his son, King Wachirawut (Rama VI) who ruled the kingdom between 1910 and 1925. The concept of divine kingship continued to decline, and many customs associated with it were curtailed or abolished. For example, King Chulalongkorn abolished the practice of prostration in front of the monarch. From this reign, the king's traditional duty of adhering to Dhammasattha was extended so that the king was no longer just an executor of traditional laws; he became a legislator with unlimited powers to change Thai government and Thai life. The change in the conception of kingship in this respect was attributed to the impact of Western notions of modern government.

King Rama VI

The new king perpetuated the traditional legitimizing function of a Buddhist. Despite the absence of significant religious acts of purification and promotion of Buddhism and the Sangha equivalent to his predecessors, the political exploitation of Buddhism by this king was unmistakable. In the face of threat from the colonial powers, King Wachirawut was very concerned about national unity⁴⁰; it was essential to maintain the independence of his kingdom. In order to realize this goal, he injected into

⁴⁰ Ibid, pp.52-53.

the Thai collective consciousness a spirit of nationalism and national allegiance. He developed a sense of nationhood composed of Nation (*Jati*), Religion (*Sāsana*), and Monarchy (*Phra Mahakasat*). These three symbolic components constituted the pillars of the Thai nation; each depended on the other and had to be preserved if the Thai nation was to survive and progress. The king implored the Thai to unite in body and spirit to defend the nation, the religion, and the monarchy from the incursions of enemies, mainly Western colonial powers. In the course of defending and protecting the three institutions, the king maintained that it was legitimate if the soldiers killed enemies. As he put it,

For those who have to fight in war in the defence of our nation, some may think that it is against the teaching of the Buddha which prohibits killing...But we are not intending to wage war against one another, but to protect ourselves. In this case, the Buddha once said that it was the duty of able men to fight against enemies who invade with the intention to take our land, to jeopardize Buddhism, and to destroy our sovereignty... Let's make it known to the world that we, the Thai, are determined to protect our nation, religion, and monarchy, and to preserve them as they were in our ancestors' time... We shall fight with swords and guns, sacrifice our bodies as fences for protecting and preserving them...It is not against the Buddha's teaching...Protecting our nation is indispensable, just as we have to protect Buddhism and Dhamma.

The king furthermore tied national independence to the survival of Buddhism. He reminded the Thai that Thailand was the last line of defence for Buddhism; he emphasized that the first and second lines (Burma and Ceylon) had already fallen and now it was up to the Thai to make the last stand. If they did not take this responsibility, they would ensure the end of Buddhism. This would be a great disgrace for the generations of Thai to come. Buddhism, in the eye of the king, could provide basic principles necessary for preserving the moral order of the society and thus he encouraged the people to adhere to Dhamma. By adhering to Dhamma, the king said, people would live in peace and be happy. In order to strengthen people's adherence to Dhamma and Buddhism, the king introduced Buddhist daily prayers in schools, police stations, army garrisons, government departments, and even in prisons and mental hospitals.

The innovation of the concept of nationhood as composed of the nation, the religion, and the monarchy by Wachirawut has continued to play a crucial role in Thai religio-political ideology. It has become the foundation of the “civic religion” of Thai socio-political life. The political exploitation of the religion in this respect has been followed by later Thai rulers, especially in the 1960s, to mobilize the support of the Thai people for politically defined ends. More recently, the symbolic slogans of nation, religion, and the monarchy have been invoked by certain political movement and activists of the 1970s to provide legitimacy for their political ideology and activities.

King Rama VII

King Wachirawut died in 1925 and was succeeded by King Pracha Thiphok (1925-1932), the last absolute monarch of Thailand. The 1932 Revolution brought an end to absolute monarchy, which was replaced by constitutional monarchy. Thailand now embarked on a more democratic form of government. However, the Thai King still played an important, through mainly symbolic role in Thai Buddhism.

Besides preserving all the movements for the promotion of Buddhism as King Rama VI had done, he also had a Council of Bhikkhus convened under the chairmanship of the Supreme Patriarch Prince Jinavara Sirivatthana for the sake of revising and checking the contents of the 39 Tipitaka volumes printed in the reign of King Rama V with the Tipitakas from Ceylon, Burma, Europe and Cambodia. Then a reprinted was done. This time the contents were divided into 45 volumes, of which 8 were the Vinaya, 25 Suttanta and 12 Abhidhamma. All these were printed in B.E. 2470 (1927). This new set of Tipitaka was called “the Siam-Rath Edition”.

King Rama VIII

King Rama VIII or King Ananda Mahidol succeeded King Rama VII in the year B.E. 2477 (1934). The administrative system for the community of Bhikkhus was during this time altered in compliance with that for the State, so that there were Ecclesiastical ministers and prime minister.

Of the events worth mentioning, one was the construction of Wat Phra Sri Mahadhat by the Government and another was the study of

Buddhism, which became more popular in neighboring lands such as in the Federated Malay States and Singapore.

King Rama IX

The reign of King Rama IX, formally called King Bhumibol, began in B.E. 2489 (1946).

A special hospital for Bhikkhus was built and Two Buddhist Universities⁴¹, in the real sense of a university, were established. These two are Mahamakuta University, situated in the temple of Bovaranives, opened in B.E. 2489 (1946), and Mahachulalongkorn University, situated in the temple of Mahadhat, opened in B.E. 2490 (1947). These two Buddhist Universities were really managed by Bhikkhus, with a subsidy from the Government and contributions from the public. Also studying in these two universities are Bhikkhus from neighboring countries such as Laos and Cambodia. Up till now there have been several groups of graduated students. This is in a way a good omen for Buddhism in this age of trouble and turmoil.

In B.E. 2499 (1956) King Bhumibol temporarily renounced the throne for the purpose of ordination. During the period as a Bhikkhu he had attentively studied Buddhism both in its theoretical and practical side. This moved the people to a general appreciation and rejoicing and on this occasion there was also an amnesty of many prisoners. The Supreme Patriarch was the Preceptor (Upajjāya) in this roya ceremony of ordination.

The King now is both the high protector and patron of Buddhism and the constitutional head of government. Unlike the absolute monarch for whom protection and promotion of Buddhism and the Sangha was a prerogative, the Thai King nowadays, as constitutional monarch, acts in accordance with the wishes of the cabinet.

3.5 Political Mobilization of Thai Buddhism for National Integration and Development

3.5.1 Introduction

⁴¹ BUDDHISM IN THAILAND, p15.

The intrusion of Western power in nineteenth century weakened the traditional mode of government in Southeast Asia. The sacral nature of government was challenged and the ideological basis of the state, which was formerly provided by religious beliefs and values, was questioned. The colonization of Indochina by the French in the nineteenth century had the effect of weakening not only the traditional mode of government but also traditional elites. The French no longer relied on traditional mandarins whose mode of thought was deeply rooted in religious orientation. The colonial master, instead, employed French educated indigenous people whose horizons were exposed to Western models of government. The disruption of these traditional integrative systems caused by the intrusion of Western power and Western ideas had, as a consequence, the effect of separating religious and political components. Under Western rule, the colonial countries were held together by vastly superior military, technological, economic and administrative power. Yet there were liberation movements in those countries whose leaders were drawn from both Western educated patriots and indigenous leaders. In their struggles for independence Western notions of equality, liberty, self-determination, etc. were employed to legitimize their quest for independence. At the same time the liberation movement would also mobilize mass resistance by inflicting into the minds of the masses the humiliation of religion and traditional values by the colonial masters.

With the demise of colonial rule, the newly independent states were faced with the full impact of a legitimacy crisis. The Western notions of representative government were an important part of the external attack on Southeast Asian States' traditional religio-political modes⁴² of government in the early nineteenth century. After independence, many of newly independent countries adopted Western representative government as their model, while some of them were attracted to secular theories of authoritarianism. However, only a small group of ruling elites exposed to Western education developed a real comprehension of and commitment to the new secular political values. The masses still remained steeped in traditional religious modes of thought and became alienated from the political process.

In a situation where people were divided into secularized ruling elite and a largely traditional religious oriented mass, the political leaders were confronted with a cruel dilemma. To keep up with socio-economic

⁴² Somboon Suksamran, **Buddhism and Political Legitimacy**, pp.60-62.

and political changes of the modern world, and to live up to the expectations of modernized communities, respective aspects and traditional culture of the society had to be secularized. This is a process, which is totally foreign to the traditional masses. Conflicts and tension often escalated when social and political as well as cultural secularization was imposed on them. This inevitably led to a legitimacy crisis of the ruling elite and their policies of political and administrative modernization.

Under these circumstances, the leaders of newly independent countries had to turn once again to religion and society's religious based values for assistance. National religion was invoked to initiate, explain and legitimize the actions, political institutions and programs of the ruling elite. Thus we witnessed in post independent Southeast Asia the parallelism of new religio-political phenomena and the secularization of socio-politics. While secular political participation of the masses was encouraged, religious interest groups, religious political parties, and religious communal groups became prominent actors in politics. We see strong religious based parties in such a country as Indonesia, playing an important political role in Indonesian politics. The Burmese political elite found it convenient to mobilize Buddhism to legitimize their political ends. After independence in 1944, U Nu, the Prime Minister of Burma, asserted that Buddhism was compatible with and supportive of socialism, which was the main stream of the ideology of his political party. In hope of stabilizing his rule, U Nu sought legitimization for his government by proclaiming Buddhism the state religion in 1961. In Cambodia, we are told of Prince Sihanouk and his Buddhist approaches to government and the running of state affairs, both domestic and international. We find in independent Laos those political leaders of conflicting ideologies made full use of Buddhism to legitimize their claim to power. In Thailand the mobilization of traditional institutions, notably Buddhism and the monarchy, in aid of political stability has been remarkable. We shall now turn to examine these phenomena.

3.5.2 Political Mobilization of Thai Buddhism for National Integration and Development

We have seen in the preceding discussion that the interdependent relationships of Buddhism⁴³, the Sangha and lay society has continued throughout Thai history. The relationship has been evidently reciprocal.

⁴³ Ibid, pp.62-67.

The political nexus between the religious domain and political authority is not unnatural. Despite its esteem and prestige, the Sangha has not been able to exercise its influence over the political authority. Rather, the Thai Sangha has been loyal and subservient to political authority in return for protection and patronage. This has been manifested in the mobilization of the faith and the Sangha for political ends.

Since the 1950s, the Thai Sangha has been involved in political activities both directly and indirectly, formally and informally. The direct involvement of the Sangha has been their participations in government programs for the promotion of national integration and national development.

National integration and development were part of the ideology of Sarit Thanarat, the Thai Prime Minister between 1958-1963. Sarit Thanarat took political power by means of a coup. He abolished constitution and the democratic process. Political parties and labor unions were banned. In order to stabilize his authoritarian rule Sarit sought legitimacy for his government by proclaiming national development and integration as his goals. The ultimate aim was to respond to people's material needs and to foster national unity from which would ensure government stability and national security.

The development policy placed great emphasis on economic development, mobilized the people's sentiments to national values and symbols, and called for people's loyalty to the government and national institutions. It encompassed the building up of armed forces, road and dam construction, rural development, the extension of bureaucracy, and the sponsoring of economic development schemes by ministries and departments. National integration has comprised the policy of integrating the ethnic minorities in the country politically, socially, and economically. It has ranged from appeasing and developing the relatively poor and undeveloped Northeast, and spreading the Thai language, religion, and custom among the ethnic and cultural minorities in the North, Northeast and South to the coercive resettlement of migratory hill people. It is believed that the national development and integration policies will help the government to mobilize popular support and to legitimize the government's campaign against antagonistic ideologies i.e. Communism. In its development efforts, the Thai government has continuously invoked and popularized the most potent of Thai collective symbols, religion and the monarchy. Buddhism and the Sangha have been used to initiate,

explain, and promote the government programs. The Sangha has also been mobilized to help in these programs.

The cardinal reasons for political mobilization of Buddhism by the political rulers came from the belief that national security and integration were threatened to the extent that the government's legitimacy was challenged. The threats, in the eyes of the government, were coercive as coming from the two major overlapping problems of Communist subversion and a lack of national integration arising from regionalism and ethnic minorities, especially the hill people in the North.

The leaders of the governments during the 1960s and 1970s justified their mobilization of Buddhism in several ways.

1. The prosperity of Buddhism and the Sangha was closely related to that of the nation and the government. Thus the monks should adjust their roles to help the government in national development.

2. People were becoming materialistic and neglecting their religion. In consequence, ties of kingship and community were weakening, rendering village society more prone to Communist infiltration. A reassertion of religious values would strengthen the community base of Thai society in its fight against Communism. Thanom Kittikachorn, the Prime Minister from 1963-1973, dramatically expressed the fear of Communism and the need to strengthen the people's attachment to Buddhist values in 1969, as mentioned in his speech:

At present people in some parts of the country are threatened by Communist terrorists, and some people are particularly vulnerable to the propaganda of insurgents...It is obvious that the enemy wants to enslave us, to destroy our freedom, our religion, and our king.

Later, the Director of the Communist Suppression Operation Command (CSOC) elaborated that to ward off the "Communist Danger" monks should help the government by promoting the people's morality and teaching them positive and creative Dhamma. The monks should also promote understanding between the government and the villagers and teach the people the danger of Communism.

3. The government policy was following the teaching of the Buddha that a government should promote the well-being of the faith. The

Thai Sangha had responded well to the political mobilization. Rationales for cooperation in government's development and integration programs were given as the following:

First, it was consistent with the Sangha's responsibility to serve society. The ideological legitimation for this was alleged to be Buddha's teaching that, because monks depend on the material support of the laity, they are morally obliged to promote the well-being of laymen. Consequently, if monks do not contribute to the well-being of society, they will be regarded as social parasites.

Second, it was maintained that the government and the king supported and protected the Sangha, which enable it to enjoy the satisfaction of monasticism. In return the Sangha should render every possible assistance to these institutions and be loyal to the interests of the nation.

Third, according to Sodej Phra Wanarat, there were obvious threats to Buddhism. These included the animosity of hostile forces; for example, Communism opposed Buddhism and there was the danger of invasion by hostile foreign countries (that is, North Vietnam, China, and the Communist Pathet Laos). Furthermore, there were materialistic Thais who did not adhere to Dhamma and exploited others. All of these jeopardized Buddhism, so the Sangha's involvement in national development and integration programs would help to defeat the internal and external subversion of the faith and to restore Buddhism.

Fourth, the Sangha's involvement in integrating the hill peoples was especially meritorious. Somdej Phra Wanarat asserted that the hill peoples had always needed Dhamma, but no one had taught them. The missionary monks were following the Buddha's example as well as earning merit. Moreover, merit would accrue to the government who sponsored the program while the hill people, being exposed to Dhamma, would also gain merit. Finally, the propagation of Buddhism to these people not only strengthened their morality; it also helped to ward off other undesirable forces (that is, Communism).

Fifth, the Sangha's participation in government policies, especially the Phra Dhammatuta program, was a way to strengthen and restore people's loyalties. This was clearly stressed by Somdej Phra Wanarat:

Through the strengthening of the people's attachment to Dhamma, the people will be loyal to the Nation, the King, and the Government; by adhering to Buddhism the people will better understand each other, thereby promoting national integration; through national integration people will be unified. Moreover, the monks will lift up the villager's morale and will help them in their development.

Finally, the Sangha's involvement was necessary because Thai society was changing rapidly and the Sangha had to take part in order to maintain its status. In other words the monkhood had to change or become obsolete and injure the faith. These views were promoted by some prominent monks, who were the architects of plans employing monks in community development programs.

Based upon these rationales, the Thai government, with the cooperation of the Sangha, instituted a series of schemes to win the hearts and minds of the rural people. The basic aims of the schemes were identical.

They were to use the Sangha to promote both Buddhism and socio-economic development and thereby deter subversion and pacify rural dissent. These programs⁴⁴ primarily serve three functions as described below:

1. The Sangha in the community development program

The government program of community development was to win the hearts and minds of the people. It was part of the counter-insurgency measures used in sensitive areas, especially the North and Northeast, as a way to avert Communist subversion and secure the villagers' loyalty to the central government. The objectives of the programs were to increase rural production and income; expand rural public works; promote health, sanitation, education, recreation and youth training; preserve village culture; and more effectively extend government services to reach the people.

The program was also based on the officials' belief that if the people's material needs were met, they would feel grateful to the government for their assistance and their loyalty and support would

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp.67-71.

become automatic. The people would not only become disillusioned with the alien ideology but would also turn against the Communists.

The monks who participated in this program would be trained in rural and community development and the subjects pertaining to the objectives of the programs before being sent off to the assigned area. They were expected to instill a sense of loyalty to the Nation, Government, Religion and the King. They were also to convey the government's policies and its concern for the villagers' well-being. At the same time the monks were to inform the government of the people's needs and attitudes, and advise the villagers on how to contact government's agencies to meet their needs. The role of the monks in this program enhanced the success of the government's policy.

2. The Dhammaāta Program and National Integration

This was set up in 1964 and monks participated in the government effort of national integration. It involved more direction from the government and was initiated on the assumptions that (a) people's attachment to Buddhism was a safeguard against Communism and (b) those who were not adherents of Buddhism or with weak attachment to the faith were a potential threat to national security and integration. Such people were vulnerable to subversive propaganda. In this program trained monks were supposed to strengthen the people's faith and adherence to Buddhism, to teach the people correct and useful but simplified Buddhist tenets and the application of Buddhism to everyday life, including the relevance of religious practices to the development goals of the nation. The ultimate objectives of this program were:

1. To restore Buddhism and protect the prestige of the Sangha from deterioration, and to save the people from demoralization and vulnerability to Communist propaganda.
2. To mobilize people's loyalty to the Nation, the Government, and the King.
3. To create a better understanding among the people and between the people and the government, thereby promoting national integration.
4. To strengthen the villagers' morale and help them in development.

The selection of monks to participate in the Phra Dhammaāḍāta program was done jointly by the Department of Religious Affairs and the Sangha's Supreme Council of Elders (Mahatherasamakom). The Dhammatuta monks were chosen from devoted volunteers. Most of them were monk-students at the Buddhist Universities in Bangkok. There were fewer volunteers from upcountry.

In carrying out their assignments, the Dhammaāḍāta monks traveled from village to village in groups or separately by foot, car or bus. They stayed in a village for a few days up to a week, giving sermons and talking to the villagers. At meetings the monks gave a sermon or lecture on Dhamma that imparted specific government policies on the duties of good citizenship and loyalty to the Government, Nation, and the King, and taught them about development efforts. The lectures were usually accompanied by distribution of medicine, textbooks on Dhamma, and other commodities. Films were shown about government programs and the Royal Family visiting the people, opening new buildings, and carrying out state ceremonies.

In cities the monks taught the Dhamma to prison inmates to improve their moral standards and prepare them to be good citizens. The Police Department also asked the monks to teach villagers that crimes such as manslaughter, robbery, drug trading, prostitution, and involvement in illegal lotteries not only cause social disorder but also are acts of great demerit (*bab*).

3. Dhammacarik Program and the Hill Tribe

This program's underlying suppositions were that attachment to Buddhism provides a safeguard against Communism and that those who are not adherents of Buddhism pose a potential threat to national security and integration. The Thai government has, since the 1960s, considered the non-Thai and non-Buddhist hill people as posing such a threat, and so in 1965 the Department of Public Welfare initiated the Phra Dhammacarik Programs, the Buddhist mission to the hill people, and called upon the Sangha to carry out this program.

The program's main aims were to integrate the hill people into Thai culture and the national social and administrative order. On the one hand this meant making them loyal to the Nation, Religion and the King

through strengthening their belief in, or converting them to, Buddhism. On the other hand, this meant strengthening the sentimental ties that other Thais had with the hill people.

Since 1965 the Phra Dhammacarik Program has been run as a joint endeavor to the Department of Public Welfare and the Sangha. The government provides necessary financial and material assistance while the Sangha recruits the monks. By and large, the majority of the Dhammajarik monks are Bangkok-based voluntary recruits, although local monks are also chosen.

The main task of the Dhammacarik monks is to convert the hill people to Buddhists. Their methods include teaching the hill people about religious customs and the basic tenets of Buddhism. The hill people are taught how to pay respect to the Triple Gems and make merit by giving alms to monks, and they are encouraged to take vows as Buddhists and be ordained as monks or novices.

Apart from attempting to convert the hill people, the monks teach good hygiene and how to develop the community. To promote good relations between the people and the government, the monks try to impress on them the government's concern for their welfare and that its policy is for their benefit. They teach the hill people elementary facts about the government organization, Thai language, customs and traditions, and their duties and responsibility towards the government and the king. The monks distribute medicine and other commodities and tell them that these gifts are provided by the government. Before and after giving them these things, the monks instruct them to pay respect to the Triple Gems. The practice of giving things to them is said to constitute a very effective means of approach to the hill people.

The government's policies of national development and integration have been well supported by the Two Buddhist Universities. The monks who have actively helped the government in mobilizing the rural populace's loyalty to the government and to national collective symbols. They have also facilitated the government's expansion of its services, influences and administration at the village level. The cooperation of the religious domain and the political authorities in development and integration efforts was aimed at mobilizing popular support and eradicating political, economic and social ideologies that were antagonistic to the

government. Communism and Communist activities were then regarded as the most dangerous enemies of the people and the government. Communist danger and hostility has served as a convincing rationale for succeeding governments to mobilize Buddhism and the Sangha to support and legitimize the government and its political actions.

CHAPTER IV

BUDDHISM AND LEGITIMACY OF POWER: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF CAMBODIA

The brief discussion, on the preceding chapter 4, clearly showed that the religious ideals have been shaped by the realities of Khmer life, resulting in cultural beliefs and values unique to the Khmer people. It is nearly two thousand years in this country of great glories and sorrows since the first kingdom of Funan was founded until the decline of the Khmer Empire. Khmer Kings had embraced the successive beliefs of Buddhism and Hindu Brahmanism, combining them with their own distinctive type of the spirit worship. It is the ancient worship of spirits of the earth, the sky, the water and the fire. These religious values have pervaded Cambodian life for nearly two thousand years, with one gap during the country's tragic Khmer Rouge period when religion was banded and pagodas were neglected or damaged and the scholarly monks were killed.

It would be impossible to try to understand Cambodia without starting with these two religions of Buddhism and Hinduism, just as it is impossible to visit Cambodia without encountering them-literally everywhere. Therefore, to get a clear scope of the Khmer Buddhism, it had better to look at the religious history and trace its important roles in the Khmer society until present day.

The present territory of Cambodia_Kambuja, Srok Khmer⁴⁵ is only a fragment of the Empire that some 800 years ago stretched into what are now Thailand, Laos and Vietnam, and even into the Malay Peninsula. Sprung from a kingdom of Indian civilization on the Mekong Delta called Funan, the Cambodian monarchy is generally dated from the time when King Jayavarman II (802-850 AD) founded his capital near Angkor and proclaimed himself a "universal monarch".

⁴⁵ Far Eastern Economic Review, **Golden Guide to South & East Asia** (Hong Kong: Toppang Printing Co. Ltd., 1971), p.65.

Cambodia's modern day culture has its roots in the 1st to 6th centuries in a State referred to as Funan. It was the oldest Indianized State in Southeast Asia, and from this period come Cambodia's language, which contains remnants of Sanskrit, its ancient religion of Hinduism, later transforming to Buddhism, and other cultural traditions. It reached its zenith in the reigns of King Suryavarman II (1113-1150), builder of Angkor Wat, and of the Buddhist King Jayavarman VII (1181-? 1219), builder not only of the Bayon but of 102 hospitals throughout his kingdom. Then came a slow decline caused largely by continual wars with the Thais, who finally replaced the Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism of the great days by their own Hinayana (Little Vehicle) Buddhism. Angkor was abandoned in 1432 and the capital removed to the region of Phnom Penh, where it has since remained. Early in the 17th century the Nguyen rulers of southern Annam began to encroach on the territory of Cochinchina. From then on Cambodia, ruled by two Kings supported respectively by Siam and Vietnam, was distracted by the conflicts of these powerful neighbors, the Siamese annexing the provinces of Battambang and Siemreap.

Cambodia became a French protectorate in 1864, which saved it from being partitioned. Independence was declared in March 1945, when the Japanese abolished the French power in Indochina, but after the War, the French returned. King Norodom Sihanouk, whom the French had placed on the throne at the age of 19 in 1941, therefore waged a campaign for complete independence, which was finally achieved in November 1953. At the same time, he strove to ensure that Cambodia should remain neutral in the war between the French and the Vietnamese Communists.

In March 1955, he abdicated in favor of his father, King Norodom Suramarit (died 1960) believing that he could most effectively lead the country in this way. He was also an outspoken exponent of neutralism, and sharply criticized American policy in Vietnam.

In March 1970 a coup d'état launched by General Lon Nol, the Prime Minister, ousted Prince Sihanouk from power. The revolutionaries were especially angered that the Prince had allowed the Vietnamese leftists to use the Eastern Cambodia as a corridor from North Vietnam and Laos into South Vietnam. American and South Vietnamese troops then came in to attack the "Vietcong" forces in the country. The Americans left by June 30 but the South Vietnamese stayed on. Meanwhile North Vietnamese armed bands spread westward through much of the country; they were

aided by Khmers professing loyalty to Sihanouk, who had set up a government in exile in Peking.

Then, on April 1975, Lon Nol's weakened government was pushed out by the Khmer Rouge⁴⁶. They immediately emptied the capital of its residents and brought Prince Sihanouk back to a deserted capital to live under house arrest. The ensuing four-year reign of terror under Pol Pot resulted in the deaths of more than one million Khmers.

In 1979 the Khmer Rouge were overthrown by the Vietnamese-backed People's Republic of Kampuchea. Throughout 1980s, Cambodia began rebuilding, while retaining Vietnamese military and political protection. In 1989, the Vietnamese withdrew the last of their troops and the government renamed itself the State of Cambodia. SOC ruled independently until the Paris Peace Agreements of 1991 created the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). Supported by the presence of some 22,000 UN troops, UNTAC in May 1993 supervised free elections in Cambodia. A new constitution was adopted and in 1993, King Norodom Sihanouk assumed the throne once again. It was 52 years since he had been crowned King the first time. King Sihanouk remains a symbol of national unity to his people. Cambodia now is a constitutional monarchy with two prime ministers who shared the power, HRH Samdech Krom Preah Norodom Ranariddh as the First Prime Minister, and Hun Sen, the Second Prime Minister. The election was held again in 1998 and Hun Sen became the Prime Minister since then.

Cambodia covers 181,035 sq km, about the same size of the Washington State. The country's maximum extent is about 580 (east-west) and 450 (north-south). It is bounded on the west by Thailand, on the north by Thailand and Laos, on the east by Vietnam and to the south by the Gulf of Thailand. The country is divided into 19 provinces. The capital city is Phnom Penh. The populations of Cambodia⁴⁷ are 10 million (1996 AD). The majority of the Khmer populations is Buddhist (97%). The remainders are Islam (about 500,000), and Christianity (about 20,000).

As has already been pointed out above that Khmer people have rooted from the heritage of the two religions: Buddhism and Hinduism. These two religions are the two mainstreams have been flowing to

⁴⁶ **Cambodia: Journey of a life time** (Phnom Penh: Ministry of Tourism, 1996), p.29.

⁴⁷ Nick Ray, **Cambodia** (Singapore: Graft Print Pte Ltd., 2000), p.29.

Cambodia by Indianization. However, these two religions had lived together peacefully and created many great masterpieces as the gift to Khmer generations. They have become the fundamental factor in all aspects such as: architecture, art, literature, traditions, language and the way of life of the Khmer people.

Historically speaking, Buddhism was introduced into Indochina Peninsula more than two thousand years ago, when this territory was known as Suvarābhāmi and was still inhabited by the Mon-Khmers and Lawas. At that time one of the nine missions sent by King Asoka of India to spread Buddhism in different countries, came to Suvarābhāmi. This mission was headed by two Arahants named Sona, Uttara, and they both succeeded in converting the rulers and peoples of this region into Buddhists.

In the course of their journey by land from India, they must have passed Burma first before going on to other southeastern countries. In Thailand the antiquities at the town of Nakhon Pathom⁴⁸, 50 kilometers west of Bangkok, seems to give practical evidences as to where Buddhism was first settled down. These include stone inscriptions, the Buddha Images, the Buddha's Foot-Prints and the great Pagoda itself which, stripped of its later-constructed top, would be of the same design as the "Stupas" of that Great King Asoka at the town of Sanchi in India.

On the other hand, some scholars said that at the time of the introduction of Buddhism into Suvarābhāmi, the Thais were still in the south of China. There also, through the friendly relationship with China in the reign of Emperor Mingti, the Thais were converted to Buddhism. Khun Luang Mao, who ruled over the kingdom of Ailao at the beginning of the seventh Buddhist century, was the first Thai ruler who declared himself a Buddhist and the upholder of the faith.

It was at first doubtful how the missionary Bhikkhus managed to make themselves understood by the people of the place where they landed or reached. But in the case of the two holy ones who arrived in Thailand that time, it was rather fortunate for them that there had been Indian traders and refugees living all along the Malay and Indochina Peninsulas. Some of these Indian tribes were known to have fled from Asoka's invasion before he was converted to Buddhism by the horrors of war. Thus it was not

⁴⁸ **Buddhism In Thailand**, p.5.

without reason to say that the first preaching of the Message would be at first among the Indian themselves and then through these Indian interpreters to the people of the country who were supposed to be at that time a racial stock of peoples known as the Mon-Khmers and Lawas.

Now, opinions differ as to where exactly is this land of Suvarābhāmi⁴⁹. Thai scholars express the opinion that it is in Thailand and that its capital was at Nakhon Pathom, while scholars of Burma say that Suvarābhāmi is in Burma, the capital being at Thaton, a Mon (Peguan) town in Eastern Burma near the Gulf of Martaban. Still other scholars of Laos and Cambodia claim that the territory of Suvarābhāmi is in their lands. Historical records in this connection being meager as they are; it would perhaps be of no avail to argue as to the exact demarcation of Suvarābhāmi. Taking all points into consideration one thing, however, seems clear beyond dispute. That is Suvarābhāmi was a term broadly used in ancient times to denote that part of Southeast Asia, which now includes Southern Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Malaysia. The term Suvarābhāmi is a combination of the words “Suvarā” and “Bhāmi”. Both are Sanskrit words; the former means gold and the latter stands for Land. Suvarābhāmi therefore literally means Golden Land or Land of Gold.

Therefore, it is clear enough that Cambodia was also part of Suvarābhāmi in the former time, because this country is in Southeast Asia. Cambodia⁵⁰ is the Europeanized form of Sanskrit name ‘Kambuja’-the land of Ṛṣi Kambu. In vernacular of the country the region is called Khmer. This Khmer has been differently pronounced in different languages: in Chinese they called it Kihmich, in Javanese Kmir and in Arabic Qimara. This name Kambuja originally meant only the northern portion of Cambodia. Under the name Chenla, Cambodia was a kingdom subordinate to Funan. After the fall of Funan it was applied to the whole of Cambodia. The Chinese name Funan represents the old Khmer word Vnam or B’iu-Nam (in modern Khmer Phnom), which means a hill.

The Empire of the Khmers grew from earlier kingdoms in the region: first the state called Funan, then the realm of Chenla, and finally Kambuja, when the Khmers attained their glory. Each in turn succeeded its

⁴⁹ Karuna Kusalasaya, **Buddhism in Thailand** (Bangkok: Mental Health Publishing House, 2001), p.7.

⁵⁰ Mahesh Kumar Sharan, **Studies in Sanskrit Inscriptions of Ancient Cambodia** (New Delhi: Abhinan Publications, 1974), p.7.

forerunner by a process of dynastic usurpation or conquest, yet all are stages in a coherent, unbroken, evolutionary political and cultural development leading to that final climax at Angkor. There are five main periods in the history of Cambodia⁵¹, namely:

1. The Funan Period (from the early 1st century A.D. to near the middle of the 6th century A.D.).
2. The Chenla Period (from the later half of the 6th century A.D. to 802 A.D.).
3. The Kambuja or the Angkor Period (from 802 A.D. to 1432 A.D.).
4. Independent Cambodia (from 1432 A.D. to 1864 A.D.).
5. The Modern Period (from 1864 to date.).

The purpose of this research study is focused on Buddhism and its important roles in each period and, therefore, to begin at the beginning is to start with Buddhism at Funan period.

4. 1 Buddhism and Kingship at Funan

We have learnt how Buddhism⁵² prospered in the Indochina Peninsula, which to some extent may be rightly called ‘Suvarābhāmi’ (Lit. the Golden Land). The inhabitants of this region at the time, however, were supposed to be the Mon-Khmers and Lawas, whose superiors or rulers were either the Indians themselves or of Indian blood or lineage by marriage. From this fact it was certain that Indian culture and civilization were prevailing all over the land. Thus to the exclusion of the northeast which is now the Northern part of Vietnam, Theravada Buddhism had spread all over the Indochina Peninsula and when in course of time the Burmese and the Thais evacuated from Tibet and Yunnan, they were also impressed and later on adopted it as their religion.

With the rise of Mahayana school in India in the sixth Buddhist century, missionaries were sent abroad both by sea and by land. Traveling

⁵¹ Ibid, p.24.

⁵² **Buddhism In Thailand**, p.5

by land they made their journey through Bengal and Burma, while in their voyage they first landed at the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra where they made the second part of their voyage to Cambodia. Also, during this time, there arose a “Funan” or a Phnom Kingdom covering the land of Cambodia and also the northeastern and the central part of Thailand.

Historically speaking, Cambodia came into being, so the legend goes, through the union of a princess and a foreigner. The foreigner was an Indian Brahman named Kaundinya (Hun-tien in Chinese). The princess was the daughter (Nang Nagi Soma) of a dragon king who ruled over a watery place.

Funan⁵³, therefore, was the beginning of it all. Its origin is related in a tale in which legend and history engagingly mingle. One night sometime in the first century A.D., it is related, a divine spirit visited an Indian youth named Kaundinya in his sleep, advising him to fetch a bow, board a ship and sail eastwards. Next morning Kaundinya remembered the dream and visited the temple where his midnight counselor was supposed to reside. Sure enough, he found a bow and a quiver of arrows lying in its courtyard. Distinctly encouraged, he took the weapon, embarked on a merchant junk and set forth upon the ocean. The wind blew his vessel across the Bay of Bengal, through the Straits of Malacca, round the Island now called Singapore, and up the South China Sea to Indochina’s coast. He sighted land at a place where a native queen named Willowleaf (Liuyeh in Chinese) ruled a tiny country. A lady of enterprise and vigor, she launched her war canoe with intent to pillage the foreign merchantman. Kaundinya raised his magic bow and shot an arrow, which pierced her craft from side to side. Taking fright, she submitted to this impressive representative of the stronger sex.

As was the custom amongst her simple, Her Majesty was completely naked. Willowleaf did not even wear a figleaf. Deploring this evidence of savagery, Kaundinya at once presented his prisoner with a roll of cloth in which to wrap herself. Despite this prudery his capture of her was soon followed by her captivation of him, and they got married and lived happily ever after. In need of a dowry, her father drank up the waters of his land and presented them to Kaundinya to rule over. The new

⁵³ Malcolm McDonald, **Angkor and the Khmers** (Singapore: Oxford University Press Pte Ltd., 1987), p.35.

kingdom was named Kambuja. As king and queen, they consolidated their dominion, which became the historic state of Funan.

Funan⁵⁴ remained the dominant power in that corner of Asia until about the year 550. During those centuries it became an empire ruling extensive vassal territories, and as it grew in physical strength, it developed also in artistic attainment. From the humblest citizens to the kings, its people lived in wooden dwellings of which no trace remains today, but sometimes religious shrines were built of brick, and occasionally perhaps a temple was raised partly in stone. A few relics survive. We learn, too, that the populations were skilled at working gold, silver, bronze, ivory and coral. Their styles of art and architecture were borrowed from India, for the most potent stimulus to their progress was the continuous arrival of Indian lordlings, priests and craftsmen amongst crowds of other colonists from the motherland. Many social customs and the two faiths of Hinduism and Buddhism were also imports from India.

Chinese visitors came periodically to Funan, but their concern was to trade, not settlement; so their influence was largely confined to commercial matters. Nevertheless, it is from Chinese travellers' writings, incorporated in later Chinese histories, that we learn most of what we know about Funan.

The indigenous, popular Funanese way of life was preserved in the people's homely habits and amusements; but these made little contribution to the higher forms of culture. The Funanese were a less creative race than the Khmers, who at that time lived further north. In the Funanese centuries the predominant influence was Indian, and during that period were laid the Indian foundations on which rose afterwards the grand edifice of Khmer civilization.

Among the Kings of the Funan dynasty, Kaundinya Jayavarman⁵⁵ (478-514 AD) sent a mission to China under the leadership of a Buddhist monk named Nagasena. The history of the Southern C'hi dynasty (479-501), which contains the account of Nagasena's mission to the Imperial Court, goes on to give more information about the people of Funan and their customs as stated in the following:

⁵⁴ Ibid, pp.36-37.

⁵⁵ Lawrence Briggs Palmer, **The Ancient Khmer Empire** (Bangkok: White Lotus Co., Ltd. 1999), p.29.

The people of Funan are malicious and cunning. They take by force the inhabitants of the neighboring cities who do not render them homage, and make them slaves. As merchandise, they have gold, silver, and silks. The sons of the well-to do families wear sarongs of brocade. The poor wear a piece of cloth. The women pull a piece of cloth over the head. The people of Funan make rings and bracelets of gold and vessels of silver. They cut down trees to build their houses. The king lives in a storied pavilion. They make their enclosures of wooden palisades. At the seashore grows a great bamboo, whose leaves are eight or nine feet long. The leaves are tressed to cover the houses. The people also live in houses raised from the ground. They make boats 8 to 9 chang (80 or 90 feet) long and 6 or 7 feet wide. The bow and the stern are like the head and tail of a fish. When the king goes out, he rides on elephant-back. The women can also ride elephants. For amusements, the people have cock-fights and hog-fights.

They have no prisons. In case of dispute, they throw rings or eggs into boiling water. They must take them out. Or a red hot chain must be carried in the hand for seven steps. The hands of the guilty are burned; those of the innocent are not. Or they are thrown into the water. He who is innocent, floats; he who is guilty, sinks.

They have sugar cane, pomegranates, oranges and much arica nuts. The birds and mammals are the same as in China. The character of the inhabitants is good. They do not like to fight. They are ceaselessly invaded by Lin-yi and have not entered into relations with Giao-Chau (Tonkin). That is why their embassies so seldom come. Nagasena reported to the emperor that the doctrine of the Buddha prospered in Funan side by side with the worship of Maheśvara, the great spirit who constantly descended upon a mountain in that kingdom.

The history of the Lian dynasty⁵⁶ (A.D. 502-556), which followed the Southern Chi in China, adds:

Actually, the men of this country are ugly and black, with curly hair. Where they live, they do not dig wells. By tens of families, they have a basin in common where they get water. The custom is to adore the

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.29.

spirits of the sky. Of these spirits, they made images in bronze; those which have two faces, have four arms; those which have four faces, have eight arms. Each hand hold something—a child, a bird, or quadruped, the sun, the moon. The king, when he travels rides an elephant. So do his concubines, the people of the palace. When the king sits down, he squats on one side, raising the right knee, letting the left knee touch the earth. A piece of cotton is spread before him, on which are deposited the gold vases and incense burners.

In the case of mourning, the custom is to shave the beard and the hair. For the dead, there are four kinds of disposal: burial by water, which consists in throwing the body into the water; burial by earth, which consists of interring in a grave; burial by birds, which consists of abandoning it in the fields; burial by fire, which consists in reducing it to ashes. The people are of a covetous nature. They have neither rites nor propriety. Boys and girls follow their penchants without restraint.

The contradictory statements regarding the character of the people, even in the same paragraph, show the custom of the Chinese dynastic historian⁵⁷ of copying information from earlier sources without trying to reconcile it with later data. Some of the data given above, however, are timely and are sometimes cited to show how complete was the Indianization of Funan at the end of the later Kaundinya dynasty. While it is true that the divinities and the religious practices, as well as the storied house of the king, the custom of the king in riding and sitting, show Indian influence, other characteristics, such as houses on piles, long boats, amusements, and freedom of the sexes are native or Monogoloid rather than Indian.

According to the Chinese accounts, Kaundinya Jayavarman sent another embassy to China in 503 A.D., bringing as a present to the Emperor a Buddha image made of coral. During the same year, and again in 506 A.D., two learned monks arrived from Funan to take part in the translation of Buddhist texts at the imperial court. Their translations are said to be still found in the Chinese tripitaka. One, called Sanghapāla, or Sanghavarman, was born in 460 and, having heard of the C'hi dynasty, went to China on a junk. As he knew many languages, Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty ordered him to translate holy books, and during sixteen

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.29.

years, 506-522, he engaged in this work in five places, one of which was aptly called the Funan Office. He died there in 524. The other Funanese monk who went to China at this time to translate Buddhist texts was named Mandra, or Mandrasena. He arrived at the capital in 503. Later, Emperor Wu ordered him to work with Sanghapāla; but he could never acquire a good knowledge of the Chinese language. Several other Buddhist monks went from Funan to China.

In 539 A.D., King Rudravarman, Kaundinya Jayavarman's successor⁵⁸, sent an embassy to inform the Emperor of the existence of the Buddha's hair-relic in his kingdom. An envoy from the imperial court arrived in Funan between 535 and 545 A.D., to request the king to collect Buddhist texts and to send Buddhist teachers to China. The Indian Paramārtha (or Guṣaratna), native of Ujjayinī, who was at Funan at that time, was chosen for this mission. He arrived in China in 546 A.D., bringing with him 240 bundles of texts.

An inscription found at Ta Prohm of Bati confirms the Chinese testimonies on the prevalence of Buddhism in Funan during the reign of Rudravarman. It was issued by an Upāsaka living during the reign of that king, and the text, written in Sanskrit, contains an invocation to the Buddha and the Triratna. Sculptural finds from Funan also include a number of Buddha images, dated stylistically from the second half of the sixth century A.D. They show prominent influences of the southern schools of the Indian subcontinent, which may have arrived some time earlier, or freshly from overseas. The majority of the material remains of Funanese culture, however, attest to the predominance of Vaiṣṇavism in the kingdom.

As far as the present evidence goes, Funanese Buddhism displays no recognizable Mahayana features. Monks from Funan were known to the Chinese as being well-versed in Mahayana Sutras, many of which they translated into Chinese, but this does not necessarily imply that they were adherents of Mahayana doctrine. Learned monks, as a rule, possessed a good insight into the philosophies of other doctrines besides their own. Their mastery of the Sanskrit language does not necessarily imply doctrinal inclinations, since it was apparently an essential part of their training. Buddhist images made in the art style of Funan are exclusively those of the Buddha, and there is no evidence for the worship of Mahayana deities. The

⁵⁸ Nandana Chutiwongs, *The Iconography of Avalokitesvara in Southeast Asia* (Bangkok: Publications, 1942), pp.306-307.

‘Bodhisattva’, whose virtues were extolled by Nagansena at the imperial court in 484 A.D., is apparently the Buddha Sakyamuni prior to his enlightenment.

Rudravarman does not seem to have reigned long after the embassy of 539-probably not longer than about 540. A longer reign would be acceptable in the light of what follows, but seems to be precluded by what precedes.

A Sanskrit inscription at Ta Prohm of Bati, Province of Takeo, in southern Cambodia, begins with a pean of praise to the Buddha and mentions both Jayavarman and Rudravarman as Kings, the latter of whom seems to have been reigning at the time the inscription was made. The inscription is not dated, but, on paleological grounds, it seems to belong a little before the middle of the sixth century.

Although Rudravarman appears to have been a Buddhist, he was careful to maintain the state-worship of Siva. On the central mount, Ba Phnom, near his capital, Vyādhapura, he maintained Siva-linga, possibly under the vocable of Girisā. It was he who first engaged the services, as court physicians, of the brothers Brahmadata and Brahmasiṅha, of the famous family of Ādhyapura, about eleven kilometers south of Ba Phnom, a family which furnished ministers to four succeeding kings.

After the death of King Rudravarman, which occurred sometime between 540 and 545, Funan gradually declined and fell under the control of Chenla.

4.2 Buddhism and Kingship at Chenla

Rudravarman’s death may have been the occasion of some disorder. He was a usurper, and there were probably legitimate claimants. At any rate we are told that Bhavavarman, who had become King of Chenla, a vassal state to the north of Funan, seized the throne by force and made Funan, in its turn, the vassal of Chenla.

Funan as has been seen, was a maritime empire. Some of its vassal states, as well as the mother country, seem to have paid tribute to China. The conquest of Funan by Chenla seems to have resulted in the independence of these vassal states. But this result did not immediately

appear. As long as Funan existed, most of its vassals seem to have remained loyal. It was not until the reign of Isanavarman that these states, former vassals of Funan, began to send embassies to the Imperial Court.

Funan seems to have lasted awhile as a vassal of Chenla, with its capital at Vyādhapura, probably under the descendants of its old line of kings. The Chinese tell us that the new king of Funan fled to the South and established his kingdom at Nafuna, but this may not have been immediately after the overthrow of the kingdom by Chitrasena. Pelliot suggests that a Sanskrit transcription of Nafuna may be Navanakar and that it may have been in the region of Kampot Province. As will be seen later, there are reasons for thinking that the definitive annexation of Funan did not take place until the reign of Isānavarman.

The disappearance of Funan, even as a vassal state, seems to have taken place soon after 627. After its absorption, the deposed kings may have sent missions of protest to the Imperial Court. Other mentions were probably due to out-of-date information. In a few years, the name disappeared and was forgotten.

The name Chenla⁵⁹ first appeared in history when, according to the Sui-shu (A.D. 589-618), that country sent an embassy to China in 616 or 617. Isanavarman I was ruling in Chenla at that time. The paragraph on Chenla says: "It was originally a vassal state of Funan...Chitrasena attacked Funan and subdued it." Pelliot adds that Chenla was Cambodia.

At the time of the embassy mentioned above, Chenla already had a history perhaps two centuries old. Its original dynasty had disappeared, and Isanavarman was the third king of a new and apparently foreign dynasty.

Chenla was the next-door territory of Funan lying further north. More important, its fertile plains and valleys were the home of the Khmer people, a race of exceptional vigor. As often happens when an upstart dynasty first emerges, the earliest kings of the new line were men of fresh, remarkable ability. Bhavavarman himself, his successor Mahendrarvarman, and the next ruler, Isanavarman*, appears as memorable military and political leaders who organized, expanded, and consolidated Chenla until it

⁵⁹ Lawrence Briggs Palmer, **The Ancient Khmer Empire**, p.37.

* The suffix "varman" become common to all the kings of Chenla and, later, Kambuja. Derived from Indian title, it can be translated as 'protector'.

exerted widespread authority. At first it was a loose-knit confederacy in which subordinate states still enjoyed a degree of autonomy, and Funan continued in that position for sometimes after its light was dimmed; but eventually Isanavarman, a masterful administrator, subdued it completely and incorporated it with other previously independent regions into a tightly unified, highly centralized Empire.

Its first capital was on the river Mekong near the mouth of Se Mun. According to the history of the Sui, before the subjugation of Funan the Chenla capital⁶⁰ was situated near a mountain named Ling-kia-ho-po i.e. Linga Parvata. There was a temple on the Parvata consecrated to the God 'Po-to-li' i.e. Bhadresvara. The king annually offered a human sacrifice during the night to God Bhadresvara. Linguistically and ethnically, they were more akin to the Mons. After their mixing these Mon-Khmers lived together but we know about them only after their separation into two branches:

1. The first branch is of the Se Mons who settled in the Sittang delta (Burma) and in the Mekong-Menam delta (Siam).

2. The second branch (the Khmers) established their kingdom on the Mekong after defeating the Chams. There they were converted into Siva-worshippers by the Brahmanas from India. It was after this conversion that the Khmers started claiming their descent from the great hermit Kambu Svayambhūva. This hermit founded the royal family, which later ruled over the country. A nymph named Merā was given to him as his wife by God Siva, which is recorded in a 9th century inscription.

Bhavavarman and his brother Chitrasena who succeeded him under the name of Mahendravarman conquered the territory from the Mekong to the great Lake Tonle Sap. He also conquered the Se Mun valley, and celebrated his new conquests by establishing *lingas* dedicated to Girīsa, the lord of the mountain. His inscriptions have been found along the Mekong near Kratie and Stung Treng and to the west as far as Buriram and Surin. Mahendravarman's son, Isanavarman, established his capital at Isanapura. Its site was apparently about 12 miles north of the present city of Kampong Thom. This city is marked by the most impressive group of the ruins of Pre-Angkor Cambodia.

⁶⁰ Mahesh Kumar Sharan, **Studies In Sanskrit Inscriptions Of Ancient Cambodia**, pp.29-30.

An example of the impression, which they created on a contemporary observer, is contained in an account of life in Chenla during the reign of Isanavarman, written by a later Chinese historian from the notes of a visitor to his royal court:

Every three days the king goes solemnly to the audience-hall and sits on a bed made of five pieces of sandalwood and ornamented with seven kinds of precious stones. Above his bed is pavilion of magnificent cloth, whose columns are of inlaid wood. The walls are ivory, mixed with flowers of gold. The ensemble of this bed and the pavilion form a sort of little palace, at the background of which is suspended, as at Chih-tu, a disk with rays of gold in the form of flames. A golden incense burner, which two men handle, is placed in front. The king⁶¹ wears a girdle of *Ki-pei* cotton, dawn-red, which falls to his knees; he covers his head with a bonnet laden with gold and stones, with pendants of pearls. On his feet are sandals of leather and sometimes of ivory; in his ears, pendants of gold. His robe is always made of a very fine white cloth called *Pe-tre*. When he appears bareheaded, no precious stones are noticed in his hair. The dress of the great officials is almost like that of the king. The great officers or ministers number five... There are many inferior officers.

Those who appear before the king touch the earth three times with the forehead, at the foot of the steps to the throne. If the king calls them and orders them to show their degrees, then they kneel, holding their hands on their shoulders. They go then to sit in a circle around the king, to deliberate on the affairs of the kingdom. When the séance is finished, they kneel again, prostrate themselves and return. More than a thousand guards dressed with cuirasses and armed with lances are ranged at the foot of the steps of the throne, in the halls of the palace, at the door and peristyle.

The sons of the queen, legitimate wife of the king, are alone eligible to the throne. The day when the new king is proclaimed, all the brothers are mutilated. A finger is cut off on one, a nose on another. Then their subsistence is provided for, each in a separate place, without ever calling any of them to any charge.

The People

⁶¹ Lawrence Briggs Palmer, *The Ancient Khmer Empire*, p.50.

The custom of the inhabitants is to go always armored and under arms, so that the least quarrel entrains bloody combats. The men are small and black; but many women are white. All roll up their hair and wear ear pendants. They are of a live and robust temperament. Their house and furniture resemble those of Chi-tu. They regard the right hand as pure and the left as impure. They make ablutions each morning; clean their teeth with little pieces of poplar wood and do not fail to read or recite their prayers. In their food, there is much butter, curded milk, powdered sugar, rice and also millet, of which they make a sort of cake, which is steeped in the juice of the meat at the beginning of the meal.

Marriage and Funerals

Whoever wishes to marry, first sends some presents to the girl he desires; then the family of the girl chooses a lucky day to conduct the bride to the domicile of the groom, under the guard of a mediator. The families of the husband and wife pass eight days before setting out. Day and night, the lamps remain lighted. When the wedding ceremony is ended, the husband receives a part of the goods of his parents and goes to establish himself in a house of his own. On the death of the parents, if the deceased leave young children not yet married, those children take possession of the remainder of the goods; but if all the children are already married and doted, the goods, which the parents conserve for themselves enter into the public treasury.

Funerals are conducted in this manner: the children of the deceased pass several days without eating, shave the head in sign of mourning and cry loudly. The relatives gather with bonzes or bonzesses of Fo (Buddha) or the religious of Tao (Brahmanism) who accompany the dead, singing and playing various musical instruments. The body is burned on a pier formed of all kinds of aromatic woods; the ashes are collected in a gold or silver urn, which is thrown into the deep sea. The poor use an urn of baked earth, painted different colors. Some also are content to deposit the body in the midst of the mountains, leaving it to be devoured by wild beasts.

Religions: Sivaism, Buddhism

So far, we have seen that Chenla remained under the suzerainty of Funan for a considerable time. Although Chenla itself passed through pre-historic period, it inherited all the benefits of cultural activities of the suzerain. The king who came to rule the country introduced the worship of Siva.

Siva⁶² is one of the three gods of Hindu trinity, who occupies the most prominent position among the Hindu gods of Cambodia. He is highly praised and is given a place superior to both Brahma and Vishnu. He received homage from princes and peasants alike.

The king and the members of his family created foundation in which regular worship of the deity in the form of liṅga was performed. These installations were forerunners of the shrines and monasteries of the Chenla and Angkor periods, which served the purpose of educational institutions, place of public entertainments and social and cultural centers. In Saivite temples the Khmer people maintained almost similar method of worship as traditionally done in India even today. Principal liṅga of the shrine could be approached through other chambers. The liṅga was accessible only to the privileged persons. Levitations were poured over the phallic. Sacred books were recited which included the Rāmāyaṇa, the Purāṇas and the Mahābhārata. This worship became dominant in the early medieval period during which the deity came to be worshipped under the following names:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Bhadresvara | 8. Vardhamāna |
| 2. Sambhu | 9. Vijayesvara |
| 3. Girīsa | 10. Āmratakesvara |
| 4. Tribhuvanesvara | 11. Kedaresvara |
| 5. Gambhiresvara | 12. Pingalesvara |
| 6. Siddhesvara | 13. Naimisesvara |
| 7. Nrtyesvara | 14. Prahanatesvara |

Bhavavarman like his predecessors, in Funan was a worshipper of Lord Siva. He installed a liṅga under the name of Gambhiresvara. Mahendravarman commemorated his victory after the conquest of a wide

⁶² Mahesh Kumar Sharan, **Studies In Sanskrit Inscriptions of Ancient Cambodia**, pp.233-237.

area now forming part of Laos, by installing a liṅga under the name of Girīsa. Another liṅga under the same name was installed during his brother's reign to commemorate the victory of Funan. Briggs has ascribed two more inscriptions dedicated to the liṅga named Gabhiresvara to his reign. He also assigns the installation of the footprints of Siva mentioned in an inscription dated 604 to Mahendravarman. Isanavarman built a number of temples at Isanapura and Sambor Prei Kuk. His wealthier subjects also installed images of Siva-Vishnu and the liṅga of Siva and erected temples to enshrine them. Siva worshippers of the upper strata of the society were conscious of the fact that the liṅga was a mere symbol of the absolute and formless one.

Siva was worshipped both in human and phallic forms. Many religious foundations of King Bhavavarman are known from inscriptions. They were constructed principally in favor of Saivite gods. The complete set of the copies of ancient Sanskrit poems the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Purāṇas were supplied by him to a Siva temple. He prescribed their reading everyday and cursed them who ventured to steal those volumes.

Votive inscriptions regarding the setting up of Sivaliṅgas and footprints of the god have been found in large numbers. In the early 7th century A.D. during the reign of Isanavarman I, the name of the capital of Kambuja was changed to Isanapura, which means the city of Lord Siva.

For quite sometime Saivism remained the religion of the king. Many of the Buddhist rulers also believed in the doctrines of this sect. The principal religious beliefs and practices were:

1. The belief that the ruler (king) is representative of some God.
2. Establishing phallus at some elevated place.
3. Worshipping ancestors and installing their statues. Saivism united the nation and the religious institutions. This theory believes in ancestor worship identifying the king as a representative figure of some God besides the devotion of Siva.

During the whole period of Chenla, worship of Siva seems to have been the principal cult and, to some extent, state religion. The kings

expressed themselves in their inscriptions as devout Buddhists but they do not fail to invoke him.

Buddhism continued to prevail as a minor religion in ancient Cambodia (Chenla) during the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. The Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing reports that the Buddhists of Funan had been completely exterminated, so that there were none of them in that territory during the last quarter of the seventh century. Isanavarman I must have been the king, who I-Tsing, writing near the end of the century, says persecuted Buddhism until there were hardly enough Buddhists left to be worth mentioning. This statement appears to be erroneous, since another Chinese record contains reference to an erudite Indian monk who resided in Cambodia and enjoyed great veneration from the king and the people during that time. A number of inscription from Cambodia proper and North East Thailand also mention pious donations made to Buddhist foundations and congregations during the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. Mon words appear in some of these records, pointing to influence of the Buddhist tradition of Dvaravati in central Thailand. The Buddhist Creed written in Pali-a common feature in Dvaravati culture is also found in an inscription dating from about this time.

Evidence of Mahayana Buddhism began to appear in ancient Cambodia during the seventh century-about the same time as in Burma, Central Thailand and the Malaya archipelago. An inscription from Prasat Ampil Rolum, dated palaeographically for about the seventh or eighth century A.D., commemorates a donation of slaves to the triad of Buddha, Maitreya and Avalokitesvara. The style of this temple suggests that it may already have been in existence during the end of the seventh century, and that this dedication to Mahayana deities may also date back to about this time. Another inscription, found at Sambor, records the consecration in 639 A.D. of an image of a goddess named Vidyadharani, who is generally believed to be identical with Prajnaparamita. A dedication in 791 A.D. of a statue of Avalokitesvara is commemorated in an inscription from Prasat Ta Kam.

From an extraction above, one can gain an impression of the society in which a strong, absolute monarch is supported by a capable aristocracy and obeyed by an industrious populace.

The Chenla Empire represented only the prelude, the dawn, the springtime of Khmer greatness. It was a comparatively brief period, lasting

little more than two centuries. King Isanavarman I seems to have been succeeded first by a lesser monarch, and then by one more ruler of considerable but unreliable abilities named Jayavarman I. His long reign was marked partly by proud conquests and partly by humiliating civil strife which ended, about the time of his death, in the division of the kingdom into two parts, Upper and Lower Chenlas or Land Chenla and Water Chenla.

This fracture happened at a moment when another memorable offshoot of India, an Indianized Empire⁶³ farther south, reached the apex of its power. Its dominion covered all the territories of present-day Sumatra, Java and Malay; it produced the grand architectural masterpiece called Borobudur and dozens of other lovely temples; and it was governed by a dynasty of tremendous rulers called the 'Sailendras' or Kings of the Mountain. Their Malay subjects, with egos inflated no doubt by the sense of Imperial greatness in which they basked, went on buccaneering raids against foreign lands, ravaging the kingdoms of Champa and Annam neighboring Chenla. Then a similar fate almost befell Chenla itself.

Towards the end of the eighth century the reigning King of the Mountain was offended by a chance remark made by the king of Chenla, which was reported to him at his court in Java. A later Arab traveler tells the tale of the incident and its extraordinary sequel.

Abu Zaid Husan, an Arab writer of the early 10th century A.D., told us about a merchant named Sulaiman who traveled in this region in A.D. 851. He gave an account of the Javanese expedition against Chenla. The inscription, though legendary in character, threw sufficient light on the contemporary history of the land. According to this description of the Arab merchant, the ruler of Chenla once made an imprudent remark about the Maharaja of Zābāg, which is identified with Java. He expressed his foolish desire before his courtiers, to see the chopped head of the Zābāg Maharaja. Somehow, this reached the ears of Maharaja who entered the capital of Water Chenla as a friendly visitor, took this king of Water Chenla by surprise, beheaded him, and installed a new king on the throne as his vassal. History is not very clear and definite about the identity of either the Maharaja of Zābāg or the beheaded ruler of Water Chenla.

⁶³ Malcolm McDonald, *Angkor and the Khmers*, pp.40-41.

Some writers think that the Maharaja of Zābāg was a member of the Sailendra dynasty and the beheaded king was Mahipativarman.

This was the first time in the history that the Kambuja was attacked by the most powerful neighboring country, Java, and it was the first time also that the Kambuja became the vassal to the foreign country.

The history of the land is obscure following this catastrophe till the coming the Jayavarman II from Java. There was only a short night, however, between this clouded sunset of the Chenla kingdom and the brilliant sunrise of the Khmer Empire.

4.3 Buddhism and Kingship at Angkor

In the Angkor period (A.D. 802-1432), the Devaraja cult seems to have been the original religion. It is generally believed to have been introduced in Cambodia statehood by Jayavarman II-the founder of the Angkor dynasty of Cambodia. It is called “Kāmraten Jagat tā Rāja” in Khmer language.

An inscription at the sacred mountain of Phnom Kulen, to the north of Angkor, reads that in the year 802 Jayavarman II participated in a ritual that proclaimed him a “universal monarch”, or a Devaraja (god king). Who was Jayavarman II and what was he doing before this? It is thought he may have resided in the Buddhist Sailendras’ court in Java as a young man. One of the first things he did when he returned to Cambodia was to hold a ritual that made it impossible for Java to control the lands of Cambodia⁶⁴. From this point, Jayavarman II brought the lands of Cambodia under his control through alliances, proclaiming himself king in the process.

When Jayavarman II assumed office as a king he aspired to become a Chakravartī Rāja. Keeping this in view the king invited a Brahmana named Hiranyadāma from Bhāratavasra (India) for teaching Tāntric Vidyā to his royal priest Sivakaivalya.

The cult played a very important role in Cambodian state policy as many of the important aspects of the political life of the country depended upon it. It was implanted so firmly that its theory and understanding remained being carried over from one generation of the king to the other.

⁶⁴ Nick Ray, *Cambodia*, p.14.

The king was considered to be divine. It gave a sort of spiritual sanction for divinity. The hereditary character of a king was established firmly after the introduction of this cult⁶⁵. The king was apotheosized after his death. His ego was preserved and it was not allowed to diminish or extinguish after his death.

Temples commensurate with their greatness were constructed. A deity was enshrined in the temple, which was named after the deceased king. Such temples used to construct at places higher than the local level of the ground to give an idea of Kailāsa--the abode of the gods. The liṅga was regarded as the tutelary deity and the royal ego residing within the idol was considered to descend on the successors. After performing proper rites, ceremonies and invocation by the priest the royal ego residing within the idol was considered to descend on the successors. This transference of ego from the dead king to the succeeding king continued in the whole lineage.

Devaraja denoted not merely a particular liṅga but a ritual or ceremony mainly Tāntric in character. The suggestion is supported also by the evidence contained in the above inscription. A translation of the original text of the inscription of Jayavarman II inauguration this cult reads as:

His Majesty Paramesvara (Jayavarman II) installed the royal god (Devaraja) in the town of Sri Mahendra Parvata and established this family (i.e. the priestly family of which the history is given). There is a permanent priest of the god. Here is the history of the branches of this family. His Majesty came from Java to reign in the city of Indrapura.

Sivakaivalya, venerable and learned guru (spiritual guide) was the Royal priest of Paramesvara...His Majesty reigned then in the town of Hariharālaya. His Majesty came thereafter to reign at Mahendra Parvata...Then a Brahmana came whose name was Hiranyadāma. He came from a Janapada (town) and was well-versed in magical science. His Majesty invited him to perform a ritual in order that Kambujadesa (Cambodia) might no longer be dependent on Java and a Chakravatin (over all kings) might rule in Kambuja. This Brahmana performed a ritual...and installed a Royal God (Devaraja).

⁶⁵ Mahesh Kumar Sharan, **Studies In Sanskrit Inscriptions Of Ancient Cambodia**, pp.255-265.

The Brahmana taught several mantras he recited them from beginning to end in order that they might be written down and taught to Sivakaivalya. He also directed Sivakaivalya to perform the rituals of the Royal God. His Majesty Paramesvara and the Brahmana took solemn oaths that only the family of Sivakaivalya and no one else could perform the worship of Royal God. The priest Sivakaivalya initiated all his relations into this worship. Then His Majesty returned to Hariharālaya to reign and the Royal God also was brought there. His Majesty Paramesvara died at Hariharālaya. The Royal God was there and in all the capitals where successive kings took him as their protector.

The Devaraja became the divine protector of the realm because of the fact that he was in possession of the Royal ego. All the rites were intrusted to the priest. These rites included some black magic elements also. Brahmana Hiranyadāma taught Sivakaivalya the worship of Devaraja in Cambodia. His teachings included the four books known as: 1. Brahmavināsikha, 2. Nayottara, 3. Sammoha and 4. Sirachheda. It may thus be concluded that the state religion was based on the four Saiva Sastras.

It is evident that the primary objective of this cult was national in character. Jayavarman II the founder of this cult desired to declare his autonomy. The Khmer people were religious minded and therefore the nation which had a capital, a king and other necessary physical phenomena did require a national faith and national cult giving them a national understanding in their religion-oriented political life.

People worshipped many gods and many sects were prevalent in contemporary Cambodia. Belief in various gods and sects would have disintegrated the population and the country as a whole. This Devaraja cult was, therefore, very logically contemplated and implanted in the political life of the citizens resulting in orderliness, a singular belief and proper submission to the political chief (the king).

As it is obvious, the result was marvelous and the political aim was perfectly achieved as we find that during the days of trouble and attack from outside, people rose in a body, supported the political head, forgetting altogether that many of them had minute divergent religious opinions (Saivism and Vaisnavism). They moved from one capital to another along with the king wherever strategy and logistics demanded. Eliot calls the

Devaraja cult the most interesting and original aspect of Kambuja religion. It is interesting because it had a great influence on the political and social life of Kambuja.

Jayavarman II was the first of a long succession of kings who presided over the rise and fall of the Southeast Asian Empire that was to leave behind the stunning legacy of Angkor. The first records of the massive irrigation works that supported the population of Angkor begin in the reign of Indravarman I (reigned 877-889). His rule also marks the beginning of Angkorian art, with the building of temples in the Roluos area, notably the Bakong. His son, Yasovarman I (reigned 889-910), moved the royal court to Angkor proper, establishing a temple mountain on Phnom Bakheng.

There are no epigraphical references to the existence of Buddhism during the reign of Jayavarman II (before 770-850 AD), but it seems that the religion of the Buddha suffered no maltreatment from the founder of the royal cult of Devaraja, or from his immediate successors. An inscription from Ubon in North East Thailand, bearing a date of 886 A.D. that falls within the reign of Indravarman I (877-889 AD), commemorates the consecration of a Buddha statue and gives allusions to the co-existence of the Buddhist monks with the Brahmins. An inscribed record from Phnom Banteay Neang, containing a date of 981 A.D., refers to an image of Avalokitesvara, formerly erected by a Buddhist dignitary serving under Indravarman I.

Yasovarman I⁶⁶ (889-after 900), the founder of the Yasodharapura, also extended his patronage to Buddhism through his founding and dedicating of a Saugatāsrama simultaneously with a Vaisnavāsrama and a Brahmanāsrama. One of his inscriptions begins with an invocation of Siva, followed by that addressed to the Buddha. There obviously were Buddhist dignitaries at his court, since the inscriptions of Phnom Banteay Neang showed that the same Buddhist family that had served Indravarman I during the end of the ninth century, still prospered at the court of Angkor in 981 A.D. Some religious influences from North India may have arrived in Cambodia during the reign of Yasovarman I, simultaneously with the introduction of nāgarī alphabet, which is often used in his inscriptions instead of, or side by side with, the usual type of the

⁶⁶ Nandana Chutiwongs, *The Iconography of Avalokitesvara In Southeast Asia*, pp.308-311.

script. In any case, fresh inspiration from some Mahayana centers abroad must have been responsible for the appearance of a new form of Avalokitesvara and of his special mantra on an inscribed stone, which is believed to contain a date of 920 A.D.

References to Buddhist dignitaries serving at the court of the kings of Angkor regularly occur in the epigraphy of the tenth century A.D. The inscription of Kdey Char (953 AD) tell us of one Virendravikhyātā who served under Harsanavarman II (941-944 A.D.) and Rajendravarman II (945-968 A.D.). Buddhism attained a wider popularity than ever before during the time of Rajendravarman II and his successor, Jayavarman V (968-1001 A.D.), though it shows a marked tendency towards esoterism. Contacts with Mahayana centers abroad seem to have been maintained by the Buddhists of Cambodia throughout the Angkor period. Kīrtipandita, who served under Rajendravarman II and Jayavarman V, journey to a “foreign country” and brought home a large number of books on Buddhist philosophy many of which have been identified as belonging to the Vijñānavāda (or Yogācāra) shool.

During the reign of Rajendravarman II, one of his ministers, Kavīndrārimathana, founded a Buddhist sanctuary at Bat Chum, and in its foundation charter presents a fairly long list of existing Buddhist establishments. Buddhism, by this time, had penetrated into the royal circle. The king himself, in spite of his devotion to Siva and his preoccupation with the cult of Devaraja also made dedications of Buddhist statues.

The amalgamation of religious elements between Buddhism and Saivism began to be distinctive during the reign of Rajendravarman II, apparently because the tendency in both religions towards esoterism neutralized their major points of difference. Allusions to esoteric Buddhist philosophy appear in the foundation stele of Pre Rup, the Devaraja shrine of the reign, while influences of Saivism, on the other hand, are apparent in many Buddhist inscriptions of this period. Buddhism made extensive use of Hindu rituals, and Saiva donors occasionally dedicated gifts to an image of Buddha. The stele inscription from Don Tri records a donation, made in 966 A.D., of land and slaves to the deities Paramesvara and Ārya Maitri. The inscription of Kok Samrong (966 A.D.) apparently refers to a Buddhist statue with a typically Siva term.

By the turn of the eleventh century the kingdom of Angkor was losing control of its territories. Suryavarman I (1002-1049 AD), an usurper, moved into the power vacuum and, like Jayavarman II two centuries before, reunited the kingdom through war and alliances. He annexed the kingdom of Lupburi in Thailand and extended his control of Cambodia. A pattern was beginning to emerge, which can be seen throughout the Angkor period: dislocation and turmoil, followed by reunification and further expansion under a powerful king. The most productive periods architecturally occurred after periods of turmoil, indicating that newly incumbent monarchs felt the need to celebrate and perhaps legitimize their rule with massive building projects. Suryavarman I (1002-1050), whose posthumous name: Nirvā-*napada* may suggest his personal favor for Buddhism, maintained the royal cult of the *liṅga* in accordance with the tradition of the sovereign of Angkor. His inscription from Prasat Preah Khan of Kampong Svay begins with an invocation to Siva, followed by homage to the Buddha and verses that express an amalgam of religious views. Another inscription, recently discovered at Phimai in North East Thailand, contains an invocation to Siva on one face, and that to the Buddha on the other. The king extended his protection to Buddhist monks and Brahmins alike, and many of his dignitaries apparently followed the example set by their sovereign. The inscription of Prasat Sneng E. commemorates a donation to the Buddha by one Gunapativarman, who is known from other record as a worshipper of Siva and of other Hindu gods. Another Saiva devotee, Bhṛpatindravallabha, gave protection to Buddhist monks and constantly watched over their welfare.

Similar instances of religious tolerance and reconciliation are found till the end of the eleventh century A.D. and beyond. The inscription of Prasat Preah Khset (1067 A.D.) commemorates the consecration of a Sivalinga and of three statues, viz. of Vishnu, Brahma and Buddha. The stele of Kok Yay Hom, dating from the reign of Jayavarman VI (1080-1107 A.D.), records the founding of a Buddhist establishment and mentions that many members of the royal family were devout Buddhists. Influences of Buddhist tradition of *Dvāravatī* may still be observed in the style of the Buddha images, but the general character of Buddhist worship in Cambodia during this time seems to have been predominantly Mahayana.

From around 1066 Angkor was again riven by conflict, becoming the focus of rival bids for power. It was not until 1112, with the accession of Suryavarman II, that the kingdom was again unified. Suryavarman II

embarked on another phase of expansion, waging wars in Vietnam and the region of southern Vietnam known as Champa. He also established links with China. But Suryavarman II will mostly be remembered as the greatest king who, in his devotion to the Hindu god Vishnu, commissioned Angkor Wat.

Suryavarman II⁶⁷ defeated rivals and reunited the Khmer Empire after more than 50 years of unrest in 1113 A.D. Warlike and ambitious, he expanded the limits of Cambodia to include much of what is now Thailand; his kingdom stretched as far west as the frontiers of the Burmese state of Pagan, south to the coast of the Gulf of Thailand, and east to the kingdom of Champa in the southern part of what is now Vietnam. Khmer holdings also included part of the eastern coast of the Malay Peninsula.

Suryavarman II was officially crowned in 1113, with his guru, the powerful priest Divakarapandita, presiding. The king was a religious reformer who blended the mystical cults of Vishnu and Siva, supreme Hindu deities, and promulgated Vaisnavism as the official religion, rather than Buddhism, which had briefly flourished under his predecessors. One can still find traces of Buddhism within the art of Angkor Wat however.

Angkor Wat, dedicated to Vishnu, was begun in the early years of Suryavarman II's reign and was not finished until after his death. Surrounded by a wall and a moat, the building is decorated with sculptures portraying Suryavarman as Vishnu; he is shown reviewing his troops, holding audiences, and performing other functions of a sovereign. Suryavarman II also sponsored the construction of several other temples in the style of Angkor Wat. They are included: (1) Chau Say Tevada, (2) Thommanon, and (3) Banteay Samre.

It is generally accepted that Angkor Wat was a funerary temple for king Suryavarman II and oriented to the west to conform with the symbolism between the sunset and death. The base-reliefs, designed for viewing from left to right in the order of Hindu funereal ritual, support this function. Suryavarman II devoted the temple to Vishnu in the hope of being directly reborn after death in the paradise of Vishnu: hence his posthumous name Paramavishnuloka-He who will (be reincarnated) in the supreme paradise of Vishnu.

⁶⁷ <file://C:/WINDOWS/Desktop/KHMER BUDDHISM.htm>

An amalgamation of religious elements can be constantly observed in the epigraphs and monuments dating from the early part of the twelfth century A.D. Vaisnavism enjoyed the personal favor of Suryavarman II (1113-1150), but the official cult of the *linga* the worship of Siva still retained their prominence. The inscription of Trapean Don Ong (1129 A.D.) commemorates the donations made by a worshipper of Siva to Vishnu and the Buddha, whom he apparently regarded as emanations of Siva. Buddhist themes occur in the decorations of Vaisnava temples of Banteay Samre and Beng Mealea, which may date from the end of the reign of Suryavarman II or from the time of his successor.

Buddhism⁶⁸ began to attain the status of an important religion in Cambodia during the time of Dharanindravarman II (1150-1160 A.D.), who is described in an inscription of his son as an ardent Buddhist. The Buddhist temple of Preah Palilay apparently belongs this period. The themes, which adorn this monument, may have been influenced by Theravada Buddhism, the religion which prevailed in central Thailand from the beginnings of the history of that area. Theravada influences may have come to Cambodia from this adjoining territory, or else, directly from Sri Lanka. The Glass Palace Chronicle of Burma mentions a son of the king of Kambuja who received ordination from the monastic order in Sri Lanka around the middle of the twelfth century A.D. There exists no evidence of the prince's return to Cambodia, but certain influences of Sinhalese religious traditions may possibly be discerned in the extraordinary plan of Prasat Sasar Sdam at Angkor, which is ascribed to the early twelfth century. This monument consisting of a hall equipped with four large monolithic pillars enclosing a stupa, recalls the general principle of the stupa-shrines, best known from the traditional architecture of Sri Lanka.

Jayavarman VII was the last of the grand monarchs of Kambuja. After the death of his father, Dharanindravarman II, he had to struggle for obtaining the possession of the throne, which had passed to Yasovarman II. He had to live in exile (Annam) while his wife Yuvarajadevi, a Brahmana girl, lived the life of an ascetic in Kambuja. After four years of ceaseless struggle, he finally secured the crown in A.D. 1181.

The reign of Jayavarman VII (1181-1220 AD) witnesses the triumph of Mahayana Buddhism as the predominant religion of Cambodia.

⁶⁸ Nandana Chutiwongs, *The Iconography of Avalokitesvara In Southeast Asia*, pp.312-313.

Inscriptions dating from his reign constantly extol the king's great faith in the doctrine of the Buddha, his compassion towards his subjects, and his tireless efforts to increase their well-being. Like Emperor Asoka, the greatest Buddhist sovereign in history, Jayavarman VII built hospitals, rest-houses, and ponds for the benefit of all living beings in his empire. Bhaisajyaguru, the Medicine Buddha, is invoked to give protection to the hospitals and to cure the sick, while Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, also obtains a special worship. The king's main center of veneration, however, is the Primordial Buddha, the infinite cosmic principle which is the origin of all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and other supernatural powers. Combining his personal faith with the traditional Devaraja cult of kings of Angkor, he regarded himself as a living emanation of this Cosmic Principle: a Buddha on earth. Conforming to the apotheosis custom of Angkor, he ascribed to his mother the divine traits of Prajñāpāramitā and to his father the characteristics of Avalokitesvara, the Compassionate. His gurus, queens, sons and dignitaries also received the honor of apotheosis, and many were regarded during their lifetimes as earthly manifestations of those deities who are their origins and essence.

King Jayavarman VII⁶⁹ was a devout Buddhist and received the posthumous title, Mahāparamasaugata. The records of his reign express beautifully the typical Buddhist view of life, particularly the feelings of charity and compassion towards the whole universe. His role in the founding the religious institutions was magnificent. The account of royal donations contained in Ta Prohm inscription makes interesting reading and reveals the magnitude of the resources and depth of religious sentiments of the king. It concerns the Rajavihāra, i.e., the temple of Ta Prohm and its adjuncts where the king set up an image of his mother as Prajñāpāramitā. It is not possible here to record all the details, but a few facts may be noted:

Altogether 66,625 people were employed in the service of the deities of the temple and 3,400 villages were given for defraying its expanses. There were 439 professors and 970 scholars studying under them, making a total of 1,409 whose food and other daily necessities of life were supplied. There were altogether 566 groups of stone and 288 groups of brick houses. Needless to say, the other articles, of which a minute list is given, were in the same proportion, and they included huge quantities of gold and silver, 35 diamonds,

⁶⁹ Nagenda Kumar Singh, **International Encyclopaedia of Buddhism**, Vol.8: Burma and Cambodia (New Delhi: Anmol Publications PVT. Ltd., 1998), p.1.

40,620 pearls and 4,540 other precious stones. All these relate to a single group of temples. In addition, the inscription also added that there were 798 temples and 102 hospitals in the whole kingdom, and these were given every year 117,200 khārikās of rice, each khārikās being equivalent to 3 mounds 8 seers. In conclusion, the king expresses the hope that by his pious donations, his mother might be delivered from the ocean of births (bhavābdhi).

In a newly established state hospital in the kingdom a passage from the inscription of Jayavarman VII⁷⁰ has been cited which reads:

The bodily pain of the diseased became in him (King Jayavarman VII) a mental agony more tormenting than the former. For the real pain of the king is the pain of his subjects, not that of his own (body).

RC. Majumdar further says, “This noble sentiment which combines the idealism of the Kautilyan king with the piety and humanity of Asoka was not a mere pious wish or thought, but actually translated into action by the elaborate system of remedial measures with a network of 102 hospitals as its nucleus.”

These hospitals were served by Physicians, Assistants and Nurses, both male and female. Ailments of the sedentary monks were also not overlooked. Among the medical provisions were the 2000 boxes containing a remedy for piles. These hospitals, which were situated at different places in the kingdom treated patients numbering 82,000 with free medicines. The sick were issued with mosquito-nets. A harmonious rapport was maintained between the king the subjects. Besides temples and palaces, a large number of rest-houses, libraries and schools were founded and roads and canals were constructed. Even now we find the prevalence of the worship of Bhaisajayaguru with a pot full of medicines.

Apart from being a pious Buddhist, King Jayavarman VII, was also a great conqueror who during his reign expanded the Khmer Empire to its widest limits. He annexed Champa in A.D. 1190 and exercised overlordship on a portion of Malay Peninsula and the Irrawady delta also.

⁷⁰ Mahesh Kumar Sharan, **Studies In Sanskrit Inscriptions Of Ancient Cambodia**, pp.37-38.

As David Chandler pointed out in his History of Cambodia, Jayavarman VII* is a figure of many contradictions. The base-reliefs of Bayon, for example, depict him presiding over battles of terrible ferocity, while statues of the king show him in a meditative, otherworldly aspect.

The second half of the twelfth century AD, Sri Lanka's fame as the fountain-head of Theravada Buddhism reached the Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia. The knowledge of Sihala Buddhism was so wide spread and the Sihala monks were so well-known to the contemporary Buddhist world. At this time, a Cambodian prince⁷¹ is said to have visited Sri Lanka to study Sihala Buddhism under the able guidance of the Sinhalese Mahatheras. Buddhism continued to flourish in Kambuja in the thirteenth century AD, but yet to become the dominant religious sect in the country. After then, Theravada became the main type of Buddhism.

Gradually, Theravada Buddhism, the new religion, was making headway and acquired more and more followers at Angkor. Serious interest in this type of Buddhism was already present in the court circles by the middle of the twelfth century. The progress of its expansion may have been rather slow, but quite steady and unhampered by the predominant cults. By 1296-1297 A.D., the Chinese envoy, Chou Takuan, came to Angkor and found there a large community of Buddhist monks who apparently belong to the Theravada faith. The earliest reference to the predominance of Theravada Buddhism is found in an inscription, issued in 1309 by King Srindravarman. It is the first inscription written in Pali, the canonical language of Theravada Buddhism, commemorating the king's donation to a Buddhist Vihāra, which had formally been founded at his own command. From this time onwards, the Pali language proceeded to replace Sanskrit in

* On the death of this powerful monarch, the Khmer Empire began to fall apart gradually. Champa regained its independence in A.D. 1220. The Thai began establishing themselves in the Menam Valley and their invasions got impetus after the conquest of Nan Chao by the Mongols in 1253-54 A.D. The Khmers had vacated the upper Menam and Mekong Valleys by the end of the 13th century. For sometimes the Khmers continued to defend Kambuja against Thai raids but finally in A.D. 1430-31 when the Thai raid came from its capital of Ayudhya aided by conspiracy and treachery from within the country, the Khmer capital fell, marking the end of a magnificent civilization.

⁷¹ It was said that his name is **Tamalinda Mahathera**, who most probably was the son King Jayavarman VII.

the inscriptions of Cambodia, and the worship of the historical Buddha gradually triumphed over the cult of Siva and that of the god-kings. The last inscription in Sanskrit, bearing a date of 1330 A.D., marks the end of Hindu and Mahayana periods in Cambodia.

Theravada Buddhism, the religion which has attained an unrivalled position in Burma and Thailand, becomes the predominant faith in Cambodia. Its progress and florescence must have been much stimulated by the traditions of Central Thailand, though Cambodia-like Burma and Thailand-may have maintained cultural contacts with Sri Lanka. Material remains of Cambodia culture dating from the fourteenth century A.D. to the present day, consist mainly of representations of the Buddha and scenes from his previous lives and last life. The iconography and style of the Buddha figures reveal unmistakable influences of the traditional art of Central Thailand. The center of worship is Buddha, the human teacher, while Hindu gods play subordinate roles as his worshippers and protectors of his devotees. Indian epics and mythology, relating valiant exploits of these divine beings, supply themes and motifs for the decorations of the Theravada temples. Brahmins and Hindu rituals remain essential features in all ceremonies until the present day of monarchy in Cambodia.

Buddhism continued to flourish in Cambodia in the sixteenth century AD. Ang Chan (1516-1566 AD), a relative of King Dhammaraja, was a devout Buddhist. He built pagodas in his capital and many Buddhist shrines in different parts of Cambodia. In order to popularize Buddhism Satha (1576-1594 AD), son and successor of Boram Reachea, restored the great towers of the Angkor Wat, the Vishnu temple, which was built by Suryavarman II, had become a Buddhist shrine by the sixteenth century A.D.

From about 1600 until the arrival of the French in 1863, Cambodia⁷² was ruled by a series of weak kings who, because of continual challenges by dissident members of the royal family, were forced to seek the protection-granted, of course, at a price-of either Thailand or Vietnam. In the 17th century, assistance from the Nguyen Lords of southern Vietnam was given on the condition that Vietnamese be allowed to settle in what is now the southern region of Vietnam, at that time part of Cambodia and today still referred to by the Khmers as 'Kampuchea Krom' or 'Lower Cambodia'. In the west, the Thais established dominion over the provinces

⁷² Nick Ray, *Cambodia*, p.15.

of Battambang and Siem Reap; by the late 18th century they had firm control of the Cambodian royal family.

Finally, in 1845 the Thai and Vietnamese agreed to compromise, placing on the throne Ang Duong^{*}, son of Ang Chan, who would pay homage to both Bangkok and Hué. In this uneasy peace, Ang Duong was encouraged by French missions (which had been operating in Cambodia since previous century) to appeal for French support. In 1853, he sent feelers to the French diplomatic mission in Singapore, but King Mongkut of Thailand made clear his displeasure and the French backed off, for the time being.

The relations between Ang Duong⁷³ and the new king of Thailand, Rama IV, who ascended the throne in 1851, was also very friendly and intimate. Ang Duong when in Bangkok, once as a priest, used to go and discuss religious matters with Rama IV before he ascended the throne, and when Rama IV was a priest himself, Ang Duong therefore knew him well. Rama IV was then the abbot of Wat Bovorn-nivet and the reformer and founder of a new religious sect called Dhammayutt, a sect which had as its aim the return to the original teachings of the Buddha in its purest form. This sect was also adhered to by Ang Duong, who wanted it to be introduced into Cambodia because when he became king in Cambodia, he wanted to purge Buddhism in his country which had become very lax during the war years, and had asked Rama IV for a Cambodian priest, Phra Sutha, to go back to Cambodia and help to establish the Dhammayut sect in his country. That is how there is also a Dhammayut sect in Cambodia, which has prospered up to this day.

Cambodia's dual Thai and Vietnamese suzerainty ended in 1864, when French gunboats intimidated king Norodom (reigned 1860-1904) into signing a treaty of protectorate. French control of Cambodia, which developed as an adjunct to French colonial interests in Vietnam, at first involved relatively little direct interference in Cambodia's affairs of state. However, the French presence did prevent Cambodia's expansionist neighbors from annexing any more Khmer territory and helped keep Norodom on the throne despite the ambitions of his rebellious half-brothers.

* Indeed, he was crowned in Bangkok and placed on the throne at Udong with the help of Thai Army.

⁷³ Manich Jumsai, **History of Thailand & Cambodia** (Bangkok: Wacharin Publishing Co., Ltd., 1996), p.84.

By the 1870s, French officials in Cambodia began pressing for greater control over internal affairs. In 1884, Norodom was forced into signing a treaty that turned his country into a virtual colony. This sparked a two-year rebellion that constituted the only major anti-French movement in Cambodia until World War II. This uprising ended when the king was persuaded to call upon the rebel fighters to lay down their weapons in exchange for a return to the pre-treaty arrangement.

During the next two decades senior Cambodian officials, who saw certain advantages in acquiescing to French power, opened the door to direct French control over the day-to-day administration of the country. At the same time French maintained Norodom's court in a splendor probably unequalled since the Angkorian period, thereby greatly enhancing the symbolic position of the monarchy. The king increased stature served to legitimize the Cambodian state, thereby pre-empting the growth of any sort of broad-based nationalist movement, a situation in marked contrast to that in Vietnam. Indeed, the only large-scale popular protest of any kind between the 1880s and the 1940s was essentially peaceful peasant uprising in 1916, which ended when the king agreed to consider their grievances.

King Norodom was succeeded by King Sisowath (reigned 1904-27), who was followed on the throne by King Monivong (reigned 1927-41). Upon the death of King Monivong, the French governor general of Japanese-occupied Indochina, Admiral Jean Decoux, placed 19-year-old Prince Norodom Sihanouk on the Cambodian throne. The choice was based on the assumption that Sihanouk would prove pliable; this proved to be a major miscalculation.

During WWII, Japanese forces occupied much of Asia, and Cambodia was no exception. However, with many in France collaborating with the occupying forces in mainland Europe, the Japanese were happy to let these French allies control affairs in Cambodia. However, with fall of Paris in 1944, and coordinated French policy in disarray, the Japanese were forced to take direct control of the territory. After WWII, the French returned, making Cambodia "autonomous state within the French Union", but retaining de facto control. The years after 1945 were marked by strife among the country's various political groupings, a situation made more unstable by the Franco-Viet Ming War then raging in Vietnam and Laos.

During the 17th and 18th Centuries, Thailand's interference in Cambodia's politics helped the former to influence the religious world of the latter. With the help of its Buddhist monks and Sangha, Cambodia developed her religion. Though Thailand disturbed Cambodia's politics and hampered its progress but the Thai kings and their Buddhist world made a great contribution to the progress of Buddhism in Cambodia.

4.4 Buddhism from the Fall of Angkor to the Early Nineteenth Century

For more than four centuries that passed from the abandonment of Angkor in 1432 to the establishment of a protectorate under the French in 1863ⁱ are considered by historians to be Cambodia's "dark ages," a period of economic, social, and cultural stagnation when the kingdom's internal affairs came increasingly under the control of its aggressive neighbours, the Thai and the Vietnamese. By the mid-nineteenth century, Cambodia had become almost helpless pawn in the power struggles between Thailand and Vietnam and probably would have been completely absorbed by one or the other if France had not intervened, giving Cambodia a colonially dominated "lease on life". Fear of racial and cultural extinction has persisted as a major theme in modern Cambodian thought and helps to explain the intense nationalism and xenophobia of the Khmer Rouge during the 1970s. Establishment in 1979 of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, a Vietnamese dominated satellite state, can be seen as the culmination of a process of Vietnamese encroachment that was already well under way by the seventeenth century.

The process of internal decay and foreign encroachment was gradual rather than precipitous and was hardly evident in the fifteenth century when the Khmer were still of powerful. Following the fall of Angkor, the Khmer court abandoned the region north of Tonle Sap, never to return except for a brief interlude in the late sixteenth century. By this time however, the Khmer penchant for monument building had ceased. Older faiths such as Mahayana Buddhism and the Hindu cult of the god-king had been supplanted by Theravada Buddhism, and the Khmer people had become part of the same religious and cultural cosmos as the Thai. This similarity did not prevent intermittent warfare between the two kingdoms, however. During the sixteenth century the Khmer armies, taking

ⁱ <http://countrystudies.us/cambodia/8.htm> pp.1-2

advantage of Thai troubles with Burmese, invaded the Thai kingdom several times.

In the meantime, following the abandonment of the Angkorian sites, the Khmer established a new capital several hundred kilometres to the southeast on the site of what is now Phnom Penh. This new centre of power was located at the confluence of the Mekong and the Tonle Sap rivers. Thus, it controlled the river commerce of the Khmer heartland and the Laotian kingdoms and had access, by way of the Mekong Delta, to the international trade routes that linked the China coast, the South China Sea, and the Indian Ocean. A new kind of state and society emerged, more open to the outside world and more dependent on commerce as a source of wealth than its inland predecessor. The growth of maritime trade with China during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) provided lucrative opportunities for members of the Khmer elite who controlled royal trading monopolies. The appearance of Europeans in the region in the sixteenth century also stimulated commerce.

King Ang Chan (1516-66), one of the few great Khmer monarchs of the post-Angkorian period, moved the capital from Phnom Penh to Lovek. Portuguese and Spanish travellers who visited the city, located on the banks of the Tonle Sap, a river north of Phnom Penh, described it as a place of fabulous wealth. The products traded there included precious stones, metals, silk and cotton, incense, ivory, lacquer, livestock (including elephants), and rhinoceros horn (prized by the Chinese as rare and potent medicine). By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Lovek contained flourishing foreign trading communities of Chinese, Indonesians, Malays, Japanese, Arabs, Spanish, and Portuguese. They were joined later in the century by the English and the Dutch.

Because the representatives of practically all these nationalities were pirates, adventurers, or traders, this was an era of stormy cosmopolitanism. Hard-pressed by the Thai, King Satha (1576-94) surrounded himself with a personal guard of Spanish and Portuguese mercenaries, and in 1593 asked the Spanish governor of the Philippines for aid. Attracted by the prospects of establishing a Spanish protectorate in Cambodia and of converting the monarch to Christianity, the governor sent a force of 120 men, but Lovek had already fallen to the Thai when they arrived the following year. The Spanish took advantage of the extremely confused situation to place one of Satha's sons on the throne in 1597. Hopes of making the country a Spanish dependency were dashed, however,

when the Spaniards were massacred two years later by an equally belligerent contingent of Malay mercenaries.

The Thai, however, had dealt a fatal blow to the Khmer independence by capturing Lovek in 1594. With the posting of a Thai military governor in the city, a degree of foreign political control was established over the kingdom for the first time. Khmer chronicles describe the fall of Lovek as a catastrophe from which the nation never fully recovered.

It is more than four hundred years since Angkor was abandoned in 1432 until the French established a protectorate in Cambodia in 1863. Therefore, to get a clear understanding of Buddhism in Cambodia within this very long period we should look at the religious history and trace its important roles in the Khmer society until present day. So far we have seen that Theravada Buddhism has been the religion of the great majority of Khmer people since the fourteenth century, although Hinduism, Mahayana Buddhism, and, most of all, indigenous animist practices have left their own important traces. This new faith developed a popularity and social significance which Hinduism could not match.

First, Buddhism rejected caste, the elaborate pantheon of the Hindu gods, and the priestly functions of the Brahmans. It offered instead the model of the Buddhist saint who was both a recluse and a sage. Buddhism also affirmed for everyone the possibility of escape from the endless and burdensome gyrations of life's wheel of existence through the conquest of desire and the following of the eightfold path of righteous living.

Second, the essential spirit of Buddhism represented "The Middle Way of Life", dialectically rejecting the evil aspects of the above mentioned extremisms; or rather transcending them. Buddhism stands for the welfare and well-being, physical as well as mental, of all mankind. The need for physical or material welfare was acknowledged, but in the final analysis of human existence it was not made the ultimate end of humanity; the highest, deepest, and absolute of human value lied in the moral, mental, and spiritual.

For these reasons Buddhism has traditionally provided the Khmer people with a strong belief and has permeated their entire life ever since.

4.5 Buddhism in the Post-independent Era or in the Prince Sihanouk's Time

In January 1953 Prince Sihanouk⁷⁴, who had been at odds with the dominant Democratic Party, took decisive action, dissolving the parliament, declaring martial law and embarking on what became known as the “royal crusade”: his traveling campaign to drum up international support for his country's independence.

Independence was proclaimed on 9 November 1953 and recognized by the Geneva Conference of May 1954, which ended French control of Indochina. However, internal political turmoil continued, much of it the result of conflicts between Sihanouk and his domestic opponents. In March 1955, Prince Sihanouk abdicated in favor of his father King Norodom Suramarit to pursue a career as a politician. His newly established party, Sangkum Reastr Niyum (The People's Socialist Community), won every seat in parliament in the September 1955 elections. Prince Sihanouk dominated Cambodian politics for the next 15 years, serving as Prime Minister until his father's death in 1960, when no new king was named and he became chief of state.

In the modern history of Cambodia since the 1950s, Khmer Buddhism has continuously been mobilized to achieve the political goals of the ruling elite. Prince Sihanouk was one of the leaders who was said to have made extensive use of Buddhism to legitimize his “Buddhist Socialism”. According to the Prince, his Buddhist Socialism⁷⁵ was formulated in accordance with the fundamental principles of Buddhism, which was the basis of Khmer cultural and social structure. He asserted that his Buddhist Socialism was in fact based on his understanding of Khmer ways of life and culture. It was compatible with and supportive of the Khmer's penchant for living collectively and for relying on traditional mutual help. He stated his commitment to follow the Buddhist principles in his Buddhist Socialist effort to establish equality, promote the well-being of the poor in Khmer society, and to strive toward national identity.

⁷⁴ Nick Ray, *Cambodia*, pp.16-17.

⁷⁵ Somboon Suksamran, *Buddhism and Political Legitimacy*, pp.111-112.

Cambodia may be compared to a cart supported by two wheels, one of which is the state and the other Buddhism. The former symbolizes power and the latter religious morality. These two wheels must turn at the same speed in order for the cart, i.e., Cambodia, to advance smoothly on the path of peace and progress.

This metaphor⁷⁶, used on several occasions by Prince Sihanouk, is a most apt description of the deal relationship of these two realities. Prince Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia from 1941 to 1955, the Head of Government from 1955 and then Head of State from 1960 until he was overthrown by a coup in 1970, has played a major role in the life of his country, not only in the political sphere but in all aspects of Cambodian life, including the religion. In addition to serving as a monk himself on two occasions, in 1947 and 1963, he was the founder of the Buddhist University, which bore his name.

Most significant in terms of Buddhism, however, is the fact that he chose to define his policies in terms of Buddhist principles. Prince Sihanouk promoted a policy of socialism he called Buddhist in contradistinction to other forms of socialism, both Eastern and Western. His policy of political neutrality was conceived of in terms of the Middle Path in accordance with Buddhist teachings.

“We are socialists,” he declared, “but our socialism is inspired far more by Buddhist morality and the religious traditions of our national existence than by doctrines imported from abroad.”

In reviewing the country’s achievements, he declared:

The progress we have made in the secular domain has not in any way caused us to neglect our religion, to which we have consistently devoted our fullest attention. Our Sangkum was well aware that the task of national education could only succeed by placing equal emphasis on both the material and spiritual, and that a harmonious national development could not be realized unless our religion progressed at an equal pace with our national polity—just as a cart cannot roll unless it has two wheels.

⁷⁶ Nagenda Kumar Singh, *International Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, pp.19-20.

Prince Sihanouk customarily gave the opening address at the annual conference of high-ranking dignitaries; in his speech, as on other occasions, e.g., when he attended the inauguration of new pagodas, or major religious festivals, he invariably gave a description of the national sociopolitical and economical situation in order to awaken the consciences of the monks and obtain their moral support.

In his battle against Communism, Prince Sihanouk evoked Buddhism to support his campaign. According to Buddhism, he asserted, the ruler must respect the ruled and treat them with empathy and goodness. This concept, said the Prince, was in contradiction to Marxism, which encouraged the weak (the ruled) to overthrow the strong, and to exercise a proletariat dictatorship rather than finding ways to co-exist. With regard to ownership of property, Prince Sihanouk's Buddhist Socialism disagreed with the idea of Marxist Socialism, which encouraged state rather than private ownership. The Prince also said that if his Buddhist Socialism dispossessed the rich, it would be only through persuading them of the meritorious value of charity.

However, King Sihanouk's Buddhist Socialism seemed to offer too little in the way of a solution to overcome the serious political and economic crisis at the end of 1960s. He was deposed by General Lon Nol on 18 March 1970, the date which marked the end of the Khmer monarchy. In October 1970, Lon Nol officially proclaimed the New Republic. Prince Sihanouk acknowledged the failure of his Buddhist Socialism and attributed this failure to the weakness of its theory of non-violence, Middle-Path and Metta-Karuna (loving and compassion) as being too soft to combat the critical and serious problems of the country. However, his opponents attributed his downfall to his religious misconduct. He had, they asserted, allied himself with the forces of evil violated the teaching of the Buddha by opening a state casino in the country and ordered the execution of his enemies in the Free Khmer Movement. The new ruling elite of the New Republic assured the Khmer people that the government upheld and supported Buddhism as the national religion and respected Khmer traditions. They also placed the blame on Prince Sihanouk for manipulating Buddhism for his own political purposes. As Boun Chan Mol declared:

Cambodia is a country in which Buddhism is the state religion; Cambodia has also made Buddhism into a system of government, which we gave the name "Khmer Buddhist Socialism," as opposed

to ordinary socialism, and in particular to Marxist Socialism. However, this Khmer Buddhist Socialism was unfortunately unsuccessful: this admission comes from the mouth of he who was (or claim to be) its animator if not its very promoter-Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the man who is now allying himself with the forces of evil and acting as a traitor to his country. This failure should not be taken to mean that the concepts of Buddhism are either unrealistic or impractical to the country. We consider that, in the field of foreign relations, to take an example, a policy embodying the concept of the Middle Path between the two blocks, i.e., a policy of true nonalignment, is surely the best of possible approaches. Prince Sihanouk's neutrality, however, was not a true neutrality, but one which leaned to the left. His socialism was Buddhism in name only; it was diverted from its original correct path-in other words, the teachings of the Buddha were not adhered to. The ex-dictator merely sought to use Buddhism as an instrument for his personal Machiavellian, autocratic, and despotic policy.

4.6 Buddhism under Gen. Lon Nol

By 1969, the conflict⁷⁷ between the army and leftist rebels had become more serious and Prince Sihanouk's political position had greatly deteriorated. In March 1970, while Sihanouk was on a trip to France, General Lon Nol and Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak, Sihanouk's cousin, deposed him as chief of state, apparently with US consent. Programs against ethnic Vietnamese living in Cambodia soon broke out, prompting many to flee.

On 30 April 1970, US and South Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodia in an effort to rout some 40,000 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops who were using Cambodian bases in their war to overthrow the South Vietnamese government. As a result of the invasion, the Vietnamese Communists withdrew deeper into Cambodia, thus posing an even greater threat to the Lon Nol's government. Savage fighting quickly engulfed the entire country, bringing misery to millions of the Khmer people; many fled rural areas for the relative safety of Phnom Penh and provincial capitals. During the next few years the Khmer Rouge came to play a dominant role in trying to overthrow the Lon Nol's regime.

⁷⁷ Nick Ray, *Cambodia*, p17.

Between 1970 and 1975, several hundred thousand people died in the fighting.

Although the policy⁷⁸ of the Lon Nol's government was not presented in Buddhist terms, it gave the people the impression that it respected Khmer tradition and continued the role of the government as protector and patron of the national religion. The religious roles formerly performed by the royalty were now the prerogative of the President of the Republic. The Sangha was assured of being able to maintain its prestige and status, and that the radical change of political rule was not meant to be prejudicial to Buddhism. To assure the Khmer people of its fervent adherence to Buddhism, the traditional root of the Khmer way of life, the First Republic had the following words inscribed on the Republic Monument erected in front of the Royal Palace as the national slogan:

Buddhism teaches us to be honest, to reject selfishness and to promote mutual assistance. Above all it is a symbol of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, Progress and well-being.

Thus, when the new rulers proclaimed Cambodia as the “Khmer Republic” on October 9, 1970, the Head of the Government sent a message to the two Buddhist religious leaders, in which he affirmed: “I would like to make it clear that the present radical change of political rule is not meant to be prejudicial to Buddhism, which remains the state religion as it has been up till now.”

The ceremony⁷⁹ in which Field Marshal Lon Nol took the oath as the President of the Khmer Republic on July 3, 1972, took place in the presence of religious dignitaries who recited the liturgical texts in honor of the Buddha. Lon Nol himself had made it explicit to the people that he would follow the teachings of the Buddha in governing the country and that he strongly believed in the Law of Karma and was convinced that justice, and morality would prevail.

Once again, it was clearly shown that the political mobilization of Buddhism was put into practice in Cambodia. Buddhism was now invoked to explain the downfall of Prince Sihanouk in terms of his sinful deeds thus he was no longer qualified as the ruler. The new ruling elite justified their

⁷⁸ Somboon Suksamran, **Buddhism and Political Legitimacy**, pp.114-115.

⁷⁹ Nagenda Kumar Singh, **International Encyclopaedia of Buddhism**, p.21.

dethronement of Sihanouk by accusing him not only of mismanagement of the country's economy and inability to maintain political stability but also of committing serious crimes against the national religion.

Lon Nol had also declared a holy war against the Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese. He persuaded the Khmer people to believe that the war with these enemies not only was a war against aggression, but it was also a war against the atheist devils. He urged his people to stand firm and fight against these Communists, for if their rule was ever established in the country, there would be no place for Buddhism. Monks and officials who had good knowledge of Buddhism were now mobilized to help in an anti-Communist campaign to raise the awareness of the Khmer people to the dangers of Communism. The people were harangued with the slogan:

If Communism comes, Buddhism will be completely eliminated.

Ideological conflict in Cambodia during the 1970s intimately involved Khmer Buddhism and the Sangha in the civil war. The Lon Nol's regime found it natural to justify their counter action against the Khmer Rouge in Buddhist terms. The notions that the communists were *Mara* or *Dhml* (atheist devils) and that, "there is no place for Buddhism if Communism comes" were powerful arguments and generated fear and hatred in the minds of the Khmer people.

On the other hand, with the intention of alienating the people from the old conception of society and government and their bondage to Capitalism and Colonialism, the Khmer Rouge accused Buddhism of being like opium, which impaired the people's talent and power both physically and mentally. The teachings of the Buddha were said to make people see life negatively and accept suffering without making an effort to improve their own fate. Therefore, poverty and exploitation were perpetuated. Differences in ways of living between the monks and laymen were exploited by the Khmer Rouge to undermine the prestige and importance of the monkhood. The monks were accused of being unproductive and thus parasites of society. Merit making activities such as contributing to the building of monasteries and religious places and the catering to the need of monks were considered as squandering the people's wealth in unproductive programs, which weakened national economic growth.

4.7 Buddhism under Khmer Rouge

Despite massive US military and economic aid, Lon Nol⁸⁰ never succeeded in gaining the initiative against the Khmer Rouge, which pursued a strategy of attrition. Large parts of the countryside fell to the rebels and many provincial capitals were cut off from Phnom Penh. Lon Nol suffered a stroke in 1971 and failed thereafter to give strong leadership to his factionalised and increasingly demoralized power base. On 17 April 1975-two weeks before the fall of Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City)-Phnom Penh surrendered to the Khmer Rouge.

Upon taking Phnom Penh, the Khmer Rouge implemented one of the most radical and brutal restructurings of a society ever attempted; its goal was to transform Cambodia into a Maoist, peasant-dominated agrarian cooperative. Within two weeks of coming to power the entire population of the capital and provincial towns, including everyone in the hospitals, was forced to march out to the countryside and placed in mobile teams to do slave labor-preparing the fields, digging irrigation canals for 12 to 15 hours a day. Disobedience of any sort often brought immediate execution. The advent of Khmer Rouge rule was proclaimed “Year Zero”.

Under Pol Pot, the CPK devised a ferociously radical program of reform for Cambodia. In April 1975, the country was sealed off from the outside world. Phnom Penh and other urban centers were forcefully evacuated and left mostly to decay. All Cambodians were to become farmers under the direction of Angkar⁸¹ (Khmer Rouge Organization). Angkar dictated people’s movements, activities, food allowances and dress. Markets, private trade and the use of money were abolished. Professional activity ceased. Books were forbidden and education was abandoned except for propaganda sessions. Angkar’s Communist leadership was not made explicit until September 1977 when the existence of the CPK (Communist Party of Kampuchea) was announced. A new communist constitution was promulgated. Religious freedom was recognized in article⁸², which reads:

Every citizen of Kampuchea has the right to hold any belief in religion and has, as well, the right to have neither belief nor religion. Any reactionary religion interfering with Democratic Kampuchea and its people is strictly prohibited.

⁸⁰ Nick Ray, *Cambodia*, p.20.

⁸¹ Peter Church, *Focus On Southeast Asia* (Singapore: KHL Printing Co Pte Ltd, 1995), pp31-33.

⁸² Somboon Suksamran, *Buddhism and Political Legitimacy*, pp.116-117.

Buddhism, the former national religion of the Khmer, though not prohibited, had to undergo a radical reorientation. This involved a change of roles and functions of the teachings, the Sangha and the monastery. The Dhamma (the teachings of the Buddha) had to be reinterpreted to support revolutionary causes and actions. The professional carriers of Buddhism, i.e., the monks, were not encouraged to continue their career. Those who remained in the monkhood had to undergo reeducation and were treated as badly as the laity. The monks were subjected to hard labor in the field as well as in the construction of roads and irrigation systems. Their former religious prestige and status and privileges were removed. They were looked down on as burdens of society who only eat but do not produce. Not only were the monks humiliated, they were also hardly given any support either by the government or by the Khmer Buddhist citizenry. It was the policy of the Khmer Rouge to shrink the religion and finally eliminate it. On the part of the people, the government made it impossible for them to support the monks. Because of the extensive work assigned to them by the government, villagers no longer had time to tend to the monks' needs. Because of the shortage of food, the villagers themselves hardly survived. It was impossible for them to make merit by offering alms to the monks. The world also learned about the destruction of monasteries and the burning of religious texts and statues of the Buddha.

The brutality of the Khmer Rouge against Buddhism and the Sangha became widely known throughout the world. Within a period of four years of their rule, Buddhism almost disappeared. If there was any saffron robe left in Cambodia it was a deformed symbol of the religion, no longer genuine Khmer Buddhism. At the beginning of their rule there were about 2,680 Buddhist monks in the country; at the end, 70. The ones who survived had to flee to the neighboring countries, especially Thailand.

The consequences of the Khmer Rouge's program were catastrophic. Conditions of life varied from province to province, but hardship was severe to extreme everywhere. While an estimated 500,000 Cambodians⁸³ had died during the 1970-75 war, over one million more would die under Khmer Rouge rule, from brutality and callousness, mismanagement, malnutrition, diseases and the virtual abolition of medical services. More than 100,000 ethnic Vietnamese, 225,000 ethnic Chinese,

⁸³ Stanley L. Kutler, *Encyclopaedia of the Vietnam War* (New York: Scribners Publications, 1996), pp.265-266.

100,000 Cham (Muslims), and 12,000 Thais were also killed as part of Khmer Rouge's program of ethnic cleansing in Cambodia.

Pol Pot and the other Khmer Rouge leaders such as Ieng Sary⁸⁴ (Minister of Foreign Affairs) and Son Sen (Defence Minister), who have not only killed people but they also sought to rid Cambodia of its Buddhism. They were the real genius devils of the "Killing Fields". As General Lon Nol had said in his holy war against them, that if they came into power there would be no place for Buddhism; his prophesy became true. They were the real *Dhmils*, who dared even to commit the heavy offence (Anantariya- kamma 5 "actions with immediate destiny") against Buddhism as stated in Tika-paññāna:

1. Mātughātaka kamma: Matricide (killing mother).
2. Pitughātaka kamma: Patricide (killing father).
3. Arahantaghātaka kamma: killing an Arahant.
4. Lohitupādaka kamma: Causing a Buddha to suffer a contusion or to bleed.
5. Sanghabheda kamma: Causing schism in the order (TP.II: 168).

As his venerable Pang Khat Bhikkhu said in his *History of Buddhism in Cambodia*, Buddhism came to Cambodia more than twenty centuries ago. Within this very long period, Buddhism has deeply rooted in the Khmer Culture and Civilization. Buddhism is the symbol of unity, development and prosperity. Khmer Buddhism can be compared to a very big bodhi tree, which can be not only the refuge of the majority of the Khmer people, but it can also be the source of their bright happiness.

Who chopped down this big shady tree? The Khmer Rouge leaders; they are not only the genius architects of the killing fields, but they are also the real *Mara* or *Dhmil* (atheist devils) who destroyed the religion.

On 2 December 1978 the National Front for the National Liberation of Kampuchea (KNUFNS) was formally launched by Vietnam two miles inside the Cambodian border, with Heng Samrin⁸⁵ as its president and Hun Sen as foreign minister. Of the fourteen members of its

⁸⁴ Indeed, Ieng Sary and Son Sen are not the Khmer people. The original name of Ieng Sary is Kim Trang; he was born in Vietnam in 1930 and so was Son Sen. They are both Vietnamese. For detailed information of the other Khmer Rouge leaders, please read: *Genocide and Democracy in Cambodia* by Ben Kiernan.

⁸⁵ Benjamin Frankel, *The Cold War* (Detroit: Gale Research Inc. 1992), pp.292-293.

central committee, six were ex-leaders of the Khmer Rouge and four were Cambodian communists with longstanding ties to Vietnam. At the same time, Vietnamese forces, aided by KNUFNS troops, moved deeper into Cambodia. Having failed in its diplomatic endeavors to persuade Pol Pot to cease the border raids, and with thousands of refugees streaming into the country, Vietnam decided it had no option but to invade Cambodia. The expected resistance did not materialize. Demoralized by Pol Pot's purges and executions, the Khmer Rouge almost disintegrated in the face of the advancing Vietnamese, and Phnom Penh fell on 7 January 1979. A new government was announced in the form of a people's revolutionary council, with Heng Samrin as president. He changed the name of the country to the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) and opened it to foreign visitors, showing a shocked world for the first time details of "autogenocide" practiced by Pol Pot. It was the darkest time in the history of Cambodia.

4.8 Buddhism under Heng Samrin

The invasion by Vietnam and the takeover of Phnom Penh on January 7, 1979 marked the end of the Khmer Rouge rule. A government backed by Vietnam with Heng Samrin as President was installed. The Heng Samrin government's policy concerning Buddhism has been, on the surface, more positive than that of the Khmer Rouge. It has shown its concern for the controlled restoration of Buddhism. However, the development of Buddhism has been closely monitored and kept subservient to the state. It is observed that the state has carefully planned and structured the size and growth of religion. Ordination is not directly discouraged but there are constraints by age. That is, a male adult under 50 years old is forbidden to enter the monkhood. The government asserts that this is due to the 40 percent decrease in the male population. If the number of monks swelled out of proportion, there would be a shortage of young active adults in the work force. The devout Khmer Buddhists construe the government's policy relating to the religion as a way to weaken Buddhism in the long run. In addition, to allowing limited ordinations, the government has shown its intention to repair damaged monasteries and religious statues.

In contrast to the Khmer Rouge, Heng Samrin has attempted to capitalize on the reverence and loyalty of the Khmer people toward Buddhism and the Sangha. Instead of condemning Buddhism⁸⁶ as the

⁸⁶ Somboon Suksamran, *Buddhism and Political Legitimacy*, pp.117-120.

opium of the people, he has highly praised it as one of the most important social and moral forces conducive to the building of a desirable society. He said:

Buddhism was established in Kampuchea in the third century and has flourished ever since. It will last forever. People worship and observe Buddhism because they realize that Buddhism is a religion which advises people to abstain from wrong and perform only good acts; a merciful humanitarian religion which preaches hard work, endurance, restraint, non-violence, non-exploitation, non-oppression, sound conduct, non-corruptibility, and the refusal to take bribes. This religion teaches us to live in a spirit of democracy, collectivism and harmonious unity, and to think of the interest of the majority rather than personal gain. It teaches us to know how to help ourselves and to save others from hardship. It accords well with the yearning of human society for peace and happiness.

Under the communist regime of Heng Samrin, the monks were no longer officially viewed as social parasites but rather as benefactors of the country. They were praised as follows:

A number of our Buddhist monks who strictly observed Buddhism have turned this into positive action as a contribution to serving society in ways and means which do not contravene the Buddha's regulations. In many regions, the monasteries have expanded their traditional role as centers for instilling ethics and the rules of an honest, clean and healthy life in society, and have become places where Buddhists are taught to strengthen unity and to preserve the mores and customs, civilization and culture, script, and literature of the nation.

The Heng Samrin government has made extensive use of Khmer Buddhism and the Sangha for politically defined ends. Monks have been urged to join in revolutionary training courses where they are indoctrinated in Vietnamese and Russian communism, and where they are installed with fear and hatred for imperialist oppression and exploitation of their minds. The monks have to adapt and adjust their role and reinterpret the teachings of the Buddha to suit the revolutionary beliefs, practices, programs and policies of the government. They must keep strictly in line with the government policy. Heng Samrin reminded everyone that:

Religion has been born because the country has been reborn. If the fatherland is attacked and oppressed by the enemies and perishes, religion will also be destroyed.

The monks were also reminded that the strategy for survival of the state is of as much importance as that of the monkhood and Buddhism. Thus, a war against the enemies of the country is the strategy for self preservation of the Sangha. The monks must join hand in hand with the government and fight against the enemies of the country. They are also warned:

Buddhist monks must strictly observe religious regulations and abide by the provisions of the constitution and lines of the People's Republic of Kampuchea government. Anyone who uses Buddhism and the beliefs of our people to carry out activities to sabotage the correct lines, subvert national and international solidarity and destroy the fruits of the Kampuchean people's revolution will be punished.

The government also tightly controls the organization and administration of the Sangha. The Dhammayut and Mahanikai sects are now merged into one order. The high-ranking administrative monks are political appointees and play an important role in revolutionary activities. However, the government exercises a heavy hand in assuring that the monks comply strictly with the Buddha's authentic teachings and the 227 rules of conduct for monks (Vinaya). The ordination is also closely controlled by the local authorities. Monks do not have much freedom of mobility. Religious rituals and ceremonies are also subjected to control.

4.9 The Preservation of Khmer Buddhism under Son Sann

The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia brought the atrocities of Pol Pot to the attention of the international community. In exile, Pol Pot reunited with Sihanouk whom he kept under house arrest for several years. The two, along with the noncommunist Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), led by Son Sann, formed a new resistance coalition. Backed by China, the United States, and the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, it was recognized as the legitimate government⁸⁷ of Cambodia by the United Nations (UN). As the Cold War escalated in the 1980s, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the

⁸⁷ Benjamin Frankel, *The Cold War*, pp.272-273.

Heng Samrin regime was increasingly isolated internationally. In addition, China provided military backing for the Khmer Rouge, which set up camps along Thailand's border with Cambodia and began a guerrilla war against the Vietnam-backed Heng Samrin regime.

So far, it is seen that although the condition of Buddhism under the Heng Samrin government seems more relaxed than it was under Khmer Rouge, the great majority of the Khmer, especially those who are outside Cambodia, feel uncertain and doubtful of the policy of the communist regime toward Buddhism. They are of the opinion that what the Vietnamese and the Heng Samrin government have been doing for Buddhism and the Sangha is just a stage play and a part of the regime's political mobilization for mass participation of the Khmer Buddhists.

There has been a vigorous attempt by the Khmer under the leadership of His Excellency Son Sann to preserve the Khmer Buddhism⁸⁸ in its original form. In their exile along the Thai border in Prachinburi, Khmer communities of about 150,000 have admirably tried to preserve their Khmer roots. Khmer traditional art and culture are preserved, disseminated and handed down to the younger generation. Young children are trained in Khmer classical dance forms as well as in Khmer folk dance. Khmer craftsmanship has also been revitalized. Masters of these arts are highly regarded and treated with respect. The training in these arts has always been kept alive, whether the Khmer is in exile, or in a war situation or in the jungle, as they believe that all these traditional cultural forms are part of their unique Khmer identity.

The Prime Minister of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, Son San, evidences a strong belief that Buddhism is the foundation of Khmer culture and way of life and could provide the most vital integrating force for Khmer unification. He attributes the disintegration of the Khmer nation partly to the un-Buddhistic conduct of the Khmer. This, he has elaborated, involved a misunderstanding of the Dhamma, a decline in keeping themselves steadfast to the teachings of the Buddha, the pervasive invasion of materialism, and the attack of communism on already weakened Khmer Buddhism. The Prime Minister sincerely believes that if Khmer Buddhism is resurrected in its original form, then the task of unifying the Khmer is not impossible. He, therefore, actively supports the restoration of Khmer Buddhism. The Research Center

⁸⁸ Somboon Suksamran, **Buddhism and Political Legitimacy**, pp.120-122.

of the Khmer Buddhist Association in the border camp has been the organization that shoulders this important and heavy task.

The Research Center is in charge of looking after the Sangha organization and tending to the needs of the exile monks and novices. The administrative committee of the association helps in the organization of the research and studies relating to the restoration of Buddhism. They have tried to acquire Buddhist scriptures and texts both in Khmer and foreign languages. Buddhist scholars who were forced to disrobe by the Khmer Rouge have been reordained and have become teachers of the new monks and novices. About 50 acres of land was allocated to construct living quarters for monks, novices, and other religious structures for ceremonial purposes. These buildings, though simple and inexpensive, are indispensable for religious function and rituals. They are the centers and symbols of Khmer unity. The approximately 140 monks and novices are essential to the well-being of the Khmer population and are treated with reverence.

The attempt to preserve Buddhism by the Khmer in exile manifest their strong will to maintain their Khmer identity. For the Khmer, Buddhism and Khmer identity are synonymous. Thus, being a Khmer is being a Buddhist. Without Buddhism, one hardly can conceive of Khmer culture and tradition. It is therefore beyond imagination that the Khmer could live under a political system whose ideology is strongly hostile to Buddhism and which strictly adheres to its ideological imperatives.

4.10 The situation of Khmer Buddhism after the General Election until the Present Day

In September 1989 Vietnam, suffering from economic woes and eager to end its international isolation, announced that it had withdrawn all of its troops from Cambodia; however, evidence suggested that Vietnamese soldiers wearing Cambodian uniforms remained in the country well into 1990. With most of Vietnamese gone, the opposition coalition, still dominated by the Khmer Rouge, launched a series of offensives, bringing the number of refugees inside the country to over 150,000 by the autumn of 1990. In the first eight months of 1990, over 2000 Cambodians lost their lives in the fighting between the Khmer Rouge dominated coalition and government forces.

Diplomatic efforts to end the civil war in Cambodia⁸⁹ began to bear fruit in September 1990, when a plan agreed upon in Paris by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (the USA, the former USSR, China, France and Britain) was accepted by both the Phnom Penh government and the three factions of the resistance coalition. The plan, costing between US \$ 3 to US \$ 5 billion and requirement up to 20,000 officials and troops, is the most ambitious such mission ever taken by the United Nations.

According to the plan, the Supreme National Council (SNC), a coalition of all factions was formed under the presidency of King Sihanouk. Meanwhile the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was to supervise the administration of the country and to create an atmosphere in which free elections could take place.

UNTAC, which came to consist of 22,000 personnel, two thirds of them military, from a number of nations. The main task of these UN peace keeping forces were to disarm the forces of all four Cambodian factions, repatriate the refugees, monitor the coalition administration of the country (in practice the SOC administration and security apparatus retained great power) and prepare the planned elections. UNTAC's achievements were mixed.

The refugees were repatriated but the disarmament process collapsed in May 1992 when the Khmer Rouge, and then SOC, refused to participate. UNTAC⁹⁰ also failed to deal with charges that the SOC security forces were using violence against their coalition partners, especially Sihanouk's FUNCINPEC. King Sihanouk himself played an unnerving role in this period, appearing in Cambodia to warm popular acclaim but disappearing back to Beijing or Pyongyang with expressions of displeasure and foreboding.

UNTAC won plaudits, however, for its handling of the election in May 1993. Nearly 90 per cent of enrolled voters (close to 5 million) went to the polls, despite threats of Khmer Rouge violence. The Khmer Rouge had decided to boycott the elections, presumably fearing a dismal rebuff from the people. FUNCINPEC candidates won 58 of the available 120 assembly seats. Candidates from the former SOC government contested the

⁸⁹ Nick Ray, *Cambodia*, pp.22-23.

⁹⁰ Peter Church, *Focus On Southeast Asia*, p.35.

election as the CPP (Cambodian People Party) and won 51 seats. Son Sann's group, now the BLDP (Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party), took 10 seats, and a minor party the one remaining seat.

Elements of the CPP disputed these results but others manoeuvred to retain a prominent role in government—a role they were virtually guaranteed anyway, given CPP strength in the bureaucracy, military and police. The following months of deal-making seemed to many observers to decline into scramble by all parties for the perks of office, a scramble complicated by factionalism within each of the parties.

Two months after the election an interim coalition administration was formed, which in September became the Royal Government of Cambodia—in the same month the Assembly recognized Sihanouk as Cambodia's King once more. Heading the coalition government were Prince Norodom Ranaridh (FUNCINPEC) as 'first' prime minister and Hun Sen (CPP) as 'second' prime minister. Similar balances had been constructed throughout the various ministries. Once the coalition government was formed, the new constitution was promulgated with Buddhism as the state religion. The constitution declared, in the Article 43,

Khmer citizens of either sex shall have the right to freedom of belief. Freedom of religious belief and worship shall be guaranteed by the State on the condition that such freedom does not affect other religious beliefs or violate public order and security. Buddhism shall be the state religion.

And Article 68, states:

The State shall provide primary and secondary education to all citizens in public schools. The State shall disseminate and develop the Pali schools and the Buddhist Institutes.

As seen in the previous discussion, during Heng Samrin's regime the Dhammayut and Mahanikai sects were merged into one single order with His Holiness Tep Vong as the Sangha President, but when King Norodom Sihanouk returned to Cambodia in December 1991, he once again created two Sanghareach: H. H. Tep Vong taking control of the Mahanikai and H. H. Bour Kry becoming his Dhammayut equivalent. Once again, Cambodia has two Buddhist sects, as does her neighboring country i.e., Thailand.

Today Buddhism is struggling to re-establish itself, but the lack of Buddhist scholars and leaders and the continuing political instability is making the task difficult. Khmer Buddhism is in the long process of rebuilding her own Buddhist institutions and developing the monks as national resources. This is the only means and goal for the future of the Khmer Buddhism.

CHAPTER V

Comparison of Thai and Khmer Buddhism

5.1 Comparison of Thai and Khmer Buddhism

Through its long history, Thai culture has been nourished and shaped by a variety of concepts. Some, like Buddhism, have been imported and been adapted to Thai forms. Others, the routines of village life, for example, are indigenous, and as far as we know have remained comparatively unchanged from ancient times. A third group, including the Thai language itself and numerous art forms, are hybrids in which an indigenous core has been enriched and diversified by outside influences.

Over the centuries these forces have interlocked to form a powerful, individual and complex culture which retains the ability to renew itself as the world changes and new developments exert their various pressures. The central concepts of religion, family and village structure, language and artistic expression remain firm, but permit the Thai culture they support to adapt and develop into new forms and expressions. By understanding these concepts and their effect on the way Thai perceive the world, it is possible likewise to comprehend where the country's multi-fold culture came from, where it is now, where it is going.

Through the centuries Buddhism has been the main driving force in Thai cultural development. Much of classical Thai art, particularly architecture, sculpture, painting and early literature, is really Buddhist art. Then as now, Buddhism coloured everyday Thai life.

As Buddhism's benign influence spread countrywide, Thais of all classes submitted to its moral authority. Thai monarchs subscribed to the Buddhist ideals of kingship found in the original Theravada scriptures, while farmers serenely accepted their station and fortune, or misfortune, as logical karmic consequences of previous lives.

With its emphasis on accepting human foibles and shortcomings as inevitable, Buddhism helped forge and crystallize the Thais' remarkable tolerance and lack of prejudice, a major factor which was to allow smooth, peaceful assimilation of captives during medieval Thailand's almost

perpetual conflicts with neighbouring countries. It is also allowed the Thais to embrace diverse cultural influences regardless of origin.

Responding to this openness to new ideas, European missionaries could propagate their faiths in Thailand. Because Buddhism answered so many of the people's needs, they found few converts.

Although Buddhism became the primary religion, Thais have always subscribed to the ideal of religious freedom. While Thai constitutions have stipulated that Thai kings must be Buddhist, monarchs are invariably titled 'Protectors of All Religions'. Consequently, the government, through the Religious Affairs Department, annually allocates funds to finance religious education and construct, maintain and restore temples, mosques and churches.

Today, Theravada Buddhism is the professed religion of over 90 per cent of the Thai people, and profoundly influences everyday life. It finds expression in the Thais' tolerance and kindness towards their fellow men, regardless of race, creed or nationality. It is visibly strengthened by the close daily contact the laity enjoys with Buddhist monks during morning food collections and casual meetings. People acquire 'merit' by donating food to the monks; by building and renovating temples; by constructing hospitals; and by showing kindness and compassion to all living creatures. Such merit favourably affects one's present as well as future incarnations.

All major Buddhist holy days are national holidays. These include Makkha Bucha (commemorating the miraculous occasion when 1250 disciples gathered spontaneously to hear the Buddha preach); Visakkha Bucha (the holiest day in Thailand, marking the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death); Asalaha Bucha (commemorating the Buddha's first sermon to his first five disciples); and Khao Phansa (the commencement of the annual three-month Rains Retreat when all monks stay inside their monasteries to study and meditate).

Buddhist monks chant auspicious stanzas blessing the openings of new businesses. They officiate at housewarmings. They chant and anoint new ships, airplanes and even cars. Brides and grooms make meritorious offerings of food on their wedding days and are blessed and sprinkled with holy water. Monks also chant prayers during nightly rites preceding cremations.

One fundamental reason for the Thai laity's generous support of the Sangha (the Buddhist monastic order) is that there are few Buddhist families in which at least one member has not studied the Buddha's teaching within monastic surroundings. Not uncommonly, a man, after discharging his worldly duties and family obligations, will spend his remaining years as a Buddhist monk.

It has likewise long been a Thai custom for Buddhist males over twenty to be temporarily ordained as Buddhist monks, generally during the annual Rains Retreat. Government offices, certain sections of the armed forces and large private companies make temporary ordinations easier by granting their employees three months' leave with full salary.

Temporary ordination, ranging from five days to three months, is not the exclusive privilege of any one class. Everyone from a farmer's son to royalty may take this unique change for self-improvement. Both H.M. King Bhumipol and his son, Thailand's Crown Prince, H.R.H Prince Vajiralongkorn, have been monks for short periods. Their acts continue a tradition in which Buddhism unites all Buddhist members of society. This is Thai Buddhism and what about Khmer Buddhism?

Is Khmer Buddhism similar or different from Thai Buddhism?

Has Buddhism played any vital roles in the Khmer society?

Are there any points that Khmer Buddhism can be compared to Thai Buddhism?

To answer these questions, we should look at Buddhism and observe the role it has played in the Khmer society. Buddhism is Cambodia's state religion. Over ninety per cent of the Khmer people are Theravada Buddhists. Historically speaking, Buddhism was introduced to Cambodia between 13th and 14th centuries and was the state religion until 1975. There are two sects of Buddhism in Cambodia: the Mahanikai and the Thammayut. The Thammayut sect was brought from Thailand into Cambodia by 19th century Khmer kings and princes. Thammayut monks wear darker robes than their saffron-clad Mahanikai counterparts.

Archaeologists have determined that before the 9th century, a period during which Sanskrit was used in ritual inscriptions, the Theravada school

constituted the prevalent form of Buddhism in Cambodia. Inscriptions and images indicate that Mahayana Buddhism was in favour after the 9th century, but was replaced in the 13th century by a form of Theravada Buddhism, which arrived, along with the Pali language, from Sri Lanka via Thailand.

Through the 1960s, the Kingdom of Cambodia was commonly known as a peaceful, Buddhist country. It was tolerant of the other faiths-Muslim, Chinese, Christian, as well as indigenous peoples that constituted approximately ten per cent of the population. At the Sixth World Council of Theravada Buddhists in Rangoon in 1955-56, the Khmer Sangha, or monastic community, was singled out for its strong adherence to the Vinaya, or Buddhist discipline. But soon thereafter, it became caught in and the victim of the ideological conflicts (the “isms” such as nationalism, whether of “left” or “right,” and communism) that swept through the region.

To this day, about 85 per cent of the Khmer people live in villages whose symbolic centres are still the Wats, or monasteries. The Wat was not only the moral-religious centre of village communities, but served important educational, cultural, and social functions as well. Until very recent times, the monasteries were the main centres of learning with schools and libraries where the Khmer culture and language was preserved and transmitted from generation to generation. While Buddhist institutions are currently weak, Wats (monasteries) traditionally have been central in schooling, moral education, community decision making, political advice, spiritual counsel, and conflict resolution. For the Khmer-Buddhist majority, Buddhism is the only institution that cuts across all political and social divisions in Cambodia. The Buddhism clergy evokes widespread popular deference, and has exceptional power to sway people at the grassroots level. Buddhism is deeply connected to Khmer national identity. Abandonment of Buddhism is often seen as abandonment of Khmer identity.

Khmer Buddhism has been the endemic religion of the Khmer people since the thirteenth century. Khmer Buddhism includes traditional ideas that historically have been part of Khmer culture, including ideas about ethical governance, peace, forgiveness and justice. Some Buddhist concepts have been seen to foster apathy, inequalities, and injustices such as the Buddhist doctrine of Karma and some interpretations of Buddhist

teachings about forbearance and forgiveness. Buddhist concepts of peace, forgiveness, and justice have been politically manipulated in Cambodia.

Buddhist revival over the past decade means there are about 50,000 monks in Cambodia. About 4,000 pagodas have been restored using villagers' lay offerings. In general, however, Buddhism is very weak in Cambodia largely because of destruction of religion during the Khmer Rouge period. Internal weakness within the Buddhist clergy means increased ability of political players to manipulate Khmer Buddhism. Nevertheless Buddhism maintains strong popular support, and monks have strong public influence.

Since the UN-brokered peace plan in 1991 and election in 1993, Khmer society has begun a process of opening up and democratization, in part through the prodding of an international community still operating for the most part on European time, reason, and logic. At the same time, the new freedoms and aid dollars have helped foster a growing climate of greed, corruption, and all licentiousness in a country whose social fabric remains frayed. The rebirth of Khmer culture and society, not to mention political renewal, depends to a great extent on the renewal of standards in the Buddhist Sangha. In this context, it must be remembered that the western concept of "church" and "state" separation is meaningless in Cambodia and the Theravada lands of Southeast Asia. For the Khmer Sangha to resume its traditional role as the moral conscience and spiritual guide of the people, it is necessary for the new generation of monks and novices, not to mention the younger lay devotee nuns and laypeople, to receive the best possible training and education. Bereft of the moral and cultural leadership base of the Sangha, it is difficult to imagine the Khmer people overcoming their inner and outer conflicts and charting a peaceful, tolerant course for rebuilding and developing their country.

Well-trained monks as well as nuns are needed to minister to the people's psychic, cultural and social needs in ways that the western development agencies and the state are unable to do. Based on historical precedents, Buddhism in Cambodia can play a critical role at both the village community and societal level in promoting a meaningful peace, healing, and reconciliation process; in guiding a people-centred development that is culturally and environmentally sensitive and based on social equity; and in contributing to the wider moral, intellectual, and political regeneration of the country. The Buddhist Sangha and network of temples have been in the forefront of regenerative forces in the past; in

spite or because of materialistic globalization/development pressures, it can, with help and encouragement from sympathetic friends, again play a leading role in shaping a better future for all the Khmer people.

The research studies and comparison of Buddhism in the two countries clearly show that both Thailand and Cambodia are Buddhist countries and the ways of livings of the Thai and Khmer people are very similar although they speak different languages but the system of beliefs that they hold is exactly the same i.e. Theravada Buddhism. The research also shows that Buddhism has played very important role in the Thai society as well as the Khmer society. Buddhism is an indispensable institution in social and political life of Buddhists in Thailand and Cambodia. Buddhism constitutes the core of traditional culture, serves as integrative forces of the societies, and provides the states with an ideological basis and political leaders with legitimacy. It has profoundly influenced the cultural, social and political development of these two countries. The political leaders of Thailand and Cambodia have mobilized Buddhism and its associated values including the monkhood to assist in the achievement of their political goals. It must be emphasized that Buddhism has permeated the entire life of these two Buddhist nations.

Unfortunately, however, there is one point that Khmer Buddhism cannot be compared to Thai Buddhism because of socio-political change in Cambodia in 1975 exemplified change that was caused by revolution. The socio-political and economic structure of the country was destroyed and replaced by new structure and system based on communism. These abrupt changes brought about radical changes in the structure, roles and functions of Buddhism and the Sangha in Cambodia.

In Thailand the nature of socio-political and economic changes has been evolutionary rather than a radical one. The essence of socio-political and economic structure has not been overturned but has adjusted to the change. Adjustment to such a change inevitably compels the modification and to certain extent the reinterpretation, of the role and functions of Thai Buddhism.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

6.1 Conclusions

It can be observed that throughout the history of Thailand and Cambodia, the separation of the state from Buddhism and its Sangha as distinct entities was not easily made. This was primarily because of the nature of their symbiotic relationship. The Sangha sought to secure the adherence of the political rulers to Buddhist values, for this would guarantee the religious domain political patronage and protection. The political leaders on their parts needed to secure the cooperation of the religious domain as this provided the state with moral legitimation and facilitated social control. However, there was an imbalance in this reciprocal relationship in that the secular political power has always had authority over the religious domain, and the organizational structure of the Sangha has, in fact, been created by the state, subjugated to it, and thus easily manipulated to achieve politically defined ends.

The interaction of Buddhism and political rulers in Thailand is taken as a case of reference for many reasons. First, since the formation of the Thai state in Sukhothai, Theravada Buddhism has uninterruptedly been the dominant religion of the great majority of its people. Second, unlike Cambodia, Thailand has not experienced the undesirable impacts of colonial rule on its religion, and thus its traditional mode of government continued for centuries. Third, in the history of Cambodia not until fourteenth century was Theravada Buddhism a prominent religion in the country. Prior to this period, Hinduism and Devaraja Cult were the dominant sources of belief and the cultural system upon which the ideology of the state and the mode of government were based. Buddhism was introduced from time to time to the society but is not recognized as having dominantly influenced the form of Khmer government.

While Thailand has encountered several crises through the centuries, Buddhism has never even once suffered any ill fate in this country. On the contrary, it has flourished here from the earliest times. It has had a profound influence over the Thai arts, culture, tradition, and learning; more important still, it has dominated the character of the vast majority of the Thai people. The Buddhist way of life is an integral part of national life. Today 95 per cent of the whole population are Buddhists.

The Government deems it a duty to protect and promote Buddhism. The identity of the Thais is based on three pillars: nation (*Jāti*), religion (*Sāsana*), and the monarchy (*Phra Mahakasat*). The religion, Buddhism, is the moral tone and social force of the society, while the monarchy provides the morale and bond of unity of the Thai nation. It is further held that these entities form a threefold moral bond and cohesion; that they are the pillars of freedom; and that Buddhism is the most important symbol of, and primary base for, a feeling of national and cultural identification. Thus, the prosperity and stability of Buddhism and the nation cannot be separated.

Because of these important qualities of Buddhism, Thai rulers have been deeply concerned with the prosperity and uprightness of Buddhism. The survival and meaningfulness of Buddhism in turn largely depends on a sound and uncorrupted Sangha which preserves, continues, studies, and disseminates the teachings of the Buddha. It is thus a vital traditional function of political ruler to promote, support, and protect Buddhism and the Sangha. It has always been maintained that if this function is not successfully performed, the Thai would lose faith in the Sangha, in Buddhism, and ultimately in society's moral foundation.

For the Thais who are Buddhists, the Sangha is one of the greatest, most traditional, and most important institutions in the society. The members of the Sangha have played a prominent role in, and are closely involved with, the life of almost every Thai, in both religious and secular matters. They are held in esteem, respected, revered, and are considered indispensable. Because of the recognized qualities of the monks, it is likely that they can provide the integrative force in the social and cultural life of Thai Buddhists, and help induce solidarity by providing a set of basic Buddhist values for the regulation of the life of the society. If they wanted to exercise their powers to mold the social and political behavior of Buddhists, that would be possible. Nevertheless, it would be a serious error to assume that the Sangha can exercise a form of socio-political control at its discretion. In fact, the Sangha is hampered in achieving an independent socio-political role because it receives recognition and patronage from the state.

With its strength at the village level, it might ideally be an autonomous ecclesiastical hierarchy, which could exert considerable influence on government. But this, in fact, has never been the case in

Thailand. Rather, the Thai Sangha has been loyal and subservient to the political authority in return for protection and patronage. The hierarchical Sangha organization is a government creation modeled on, and part of, the civil services.

The cooperation of the monks in government programs of Thailand and Cambodia from 1950s to the 1970s clearly reflected the mutual interests of the government and the Sangha. The governments needed religious sanction and cooperation to legitimize their political programs and ideology. On the part of the Sangha, the belief that “if the Communists come, Buddhism will be destroyed” was sufficiently powerful to instill fear in the monks. This inevitably made them susceptible to political manipulation, which they rationalized, as necessary to their survival.

While state authorities take the initiative in manipulating the Sangha, the monks themselves may be more or less susceptible to such manipulation depending on the extent to which the Sangha is dependent on the government for its well-being. In addition, if the Sangha was involved in the movement for independence, as in the case of Cambodia, a political role will have been legitimized and thus the monks themselves will be more predisposed to playing a political role. Such monks will also be more likely to initiate such political activity.

Manipulation of Buddhism and the Sangha by the state is inevitably counter-productive as a politically involved Sangha and religious groups can easily turn against the state if dissatisfied and destabilize existing ruling power. In addition, the faithful citizenry may lose their respect and loyalty to the Sangha as they rebel against the Sangha’s divisive political activities. The Sangha itself will also be compromised and inevitably will try to manipulate the Dhamma for political purposes.

The Sangha and Buddhism in the present day will inevitably change, readjust, and adapt to social, economic, and political realities. However, there is a crucial difference between, on the one hand, the Sangha and Buddhism responding to the pressures of modernization on its own initiative and making itself more relevant (e.g. involvement in village community service programs and initiating and developing alternative models of development) and, on the other hand, being manipulated by an outside entity, the state, and forced to adjust for political purposes, largely

ideological in nature. In the later case, the Dhamma is reinterpreted to serve ideological rather spiritual purposes.

We have seen that Sihanouk, Lon Nol, Pol Pot, Son Sann, or Heng Samrin of Cambodia; all have attempted to use Buddhism for their own purposes and to legitimize their political control. The advantages in terms of creating national support are obvious. However, at the same time, the charisma and purity of the Buddhist faith was compromised and the spiritual development of the population sacrificed. In using Buddhism as a political tool the ruling power should realize that the tool can be turned against them as well. The political leaders should also recognize that if they are to mobilize religion for their legitimacy, they must not remold religion, which through such a transformation would lose its identity and sacred nature. If Buddhism becomes perverted in the perception and understanding of the faithful it will cease to be a socializing and acculturating force as well as a unifying ideology for all classes within Theravada Buddhist societies. Factionalism and polarization will occur and national unity based on spiritual values will suffer. It is hoped that the future leaders of Theravada Buddhist countries will not repeat the mistakes of the past, recognizing that the best prophet of the future is the past.

6.2 Suggestions for Further Research Work

So far the researcher has attempts to research Buddhism and politics in Cambodia. To get the research work done, I studied the subject carefully by using historical, anthropological and cultural approaches for data collection and analysis. However, sources on the Khmer Buddhism are not as plentiful as those on Thai Buddhism. This is because of Cambodia has suffered civil wars for more than the two decades. During these wars, especially during the genocidal regime of the Khmer Rouge, the national infrastructure was destroyed, property and possessions were wiped out and the people were maimed and massacred. When the communist Khmer Rouge took control of the country, they tried to get rid of Buddhism completely and very nearly succeeded. When their regime was toppled and replaced by a new government backed by Vietnam with Heng Samrin as the president, the country experienced another civil war for one more decade. By the time of the Vietnamese invasion in 1979 nearly every monk and religious intellectual had been either murdered or driven into exile, and nearly every temple and Buddhist library had been destroyed, especially Buddhist scriptures and textbooks.

While the country was at war there was no academic community that dared to conduct any research in any field of study, especially Buddhism. Since the end of the wars, many books have been written about Cambodia and its people when the country was opened to the outside world again. Only then were data and information suitably available. However, sources of information on Khmer Buddhism are very limited. Therefore, the researcher would like to suggest that a thorough comparative study of Thai and Khmer Buddhism has not been attempted. However, it is hoped that this research will be beneficial for the future research work.

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