

SEED OF PEACE

Vol. 4 No. 1 JANUARY 2531 (1988)

LIVING AT THE CENTRE OF UNIVERSE



INNER AND OUTER PEACE MAKING :
THE BUDDHIST CONTRIBUTION

NEW ECONOMIC THINKING
SHOULD DRAW ON BUDDHISM

DOING THEOLOGY WITH ASIAN RESOURCES

Seeds of Peace

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Objectives of TICD

1. To coordinate work among individuals, groups of individuals and various agencies dealing with religions and development in course of working together.
2. To share experience in and knowledge of religions and development as well as exploring ways and means of working together.
3. To offer training and secure resources in terms of man-power and materials to support and enhance the agencies that need help.

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Cover

LOVER

by Prawat Laucharoen



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Editorial Note



Since this issue is due on the new year, we send you our greetings for peace and happiness. But unfortunately so many of our brothers and sisters are suffering so much in so many parts of the world. In Malaysia, many are in gaol. In Tibet basic human rights are still being abused. In Vietnam, many leading religious persons are in troubles. In Bangladash the Chakmas are still being treated very badly. And the list is indefinite. Yet, we must practise our loving kindness to all beings, including those oppressors in every land. However, we must raise public consciousness among those who are more fortunate that we must do what we can to lessen unjust systems and to share

some sufferings with others so that compassion will not be only on our lips but be a part of our livelihood.

On a more cheerful side, we would like to inform you that the Ven. Phra Bhadramuni, Chairman of our advisory board and former Chairman of our Commission, was promoted by the King on His Majesty's 60th birthday anniversary 5th December 1987. So his new title is now Phra Rajasudhi. Likewise was the Ven. Phra Rajavaramuni, the most eminent young Buddhist scholar in Siam. So was the Ven. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, who was raised from the title of Phra Devavisuddhimedhi to be Phra Dhammaghosacariya promoted to the new title of Phra Devavedi. We extend to the Venerable monks, our sympathetic joy.

By the end of this year, UNESCO and the Thai Government will also celebrate the centennial birthday anniversary of the late Phya Anuman Rajadon, we will have more to say about this later on, since he was the founder of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, which is the umbrella of our TICD.

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OBITUARY

John Blofeld

(1913-1987)

John Blofeld, born an English man and spent the first part of his life in his mother land. As a young man he went to China out of great fascination in orient. John lived in China long enough to speak and write the language well, and developed a fine taste for Chinese cuisine and along with it he gathered a vast knowledge of Chinese history, religions, culture, etc.

When China was closed to foreigners John came to Thailand and took five years before he could get permanent residential permit, he could have taken the easier way but rather insisted to do it the proper way. While in Thailand, John lectured at Chulalongorn University where he had many students, later he worked as a chief editor at ECAFE from 1961 until his retirement in 1974. He spent the third phase of his life in Thailand until his death on June 17, 1987.

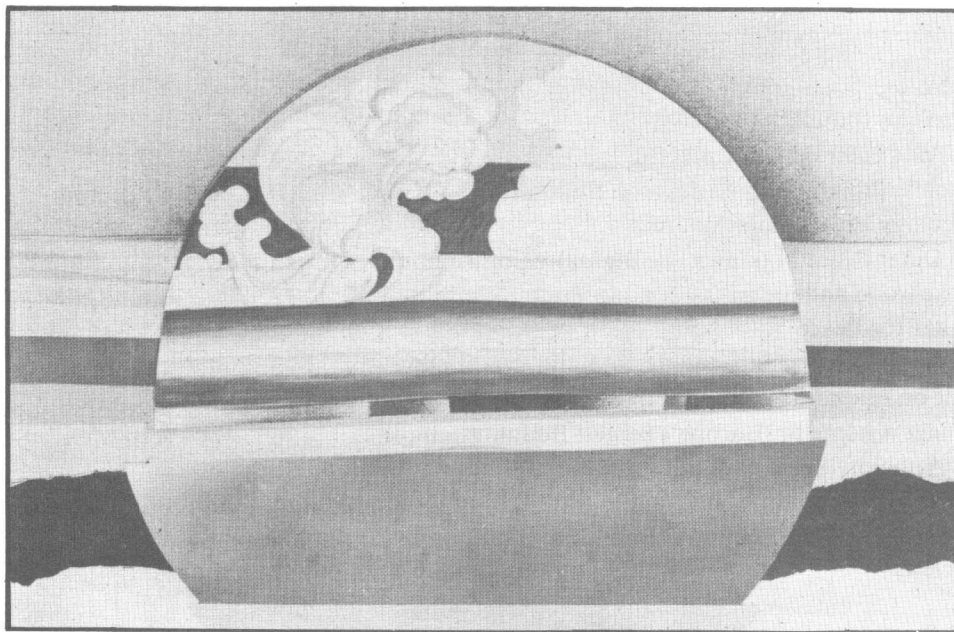
John was a very good story-teller, and also a scholar-writer. He put his culminated know-

ledge in various valuable books i.e. **The Wheel of Life**, his spiritual biography, **The Jewel in The Lotus**, **The Chinese Art of Tea**, **City of Lingering Splendor**, **I Ching**, the introduction of which is often considered the best, etc. The last book before his death was written in Chinese, mainly aimed at educating younger Chinese generation about the glory of China in the past.

His Thai style house in Lardprao is furnished in Chinese style and decorated with Chinese artifacts, the most favourite was an image of Kwan-In (Goddess of Mercy) carved in Chinese style dated back around 14th Century A.D. In the latter part of his life John was more and more of a Chinese sage both in his appearance and his spirit.

John was cremated according to Buddhist tradition in Bangkok on June 25, 1987. Besides his friends and students, a great number of readers all over the world shared the sorrow of his departure.

Chatsumarn Kabilsingh



LIVING AT THE CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSE

Bodh Gaya - most buddhists consider it the centre of the universe. For me it's been home for the past seven years- I've lived there longer than anywhere else since I was a child. Generally I love it, and realise how lucky I am, what freedom I have, and the advantages of living in such a powerful, holy place. I feel like I've had several lifetimes of learning in the few years that I've been there.

It was MEDITATION PRACTICE which first brought me to Bodh Gaya. Since then I have become deeply involved in life there in many ways, and gone through many changes. Through ups and downs, my practice has continued, in varying intensities, and it continues to be a central and stabilising part of my life, drawing it all together, sustaining me through the hardest times. And life there can be difficult and frustrating, even for a privileged foreigner. Bodh Gaya is in Bihar state, one of the most oppressed and backward in all of India. All pervasive corruption, exploitation and injustice keep the vast majority of the lower castes in object poverty.

Yet it is precisely the difficulties and problems which keep me there, draw me back when I go away, and which are the stimulus for my own inner growth and development, and for my involvement in social development in the area. It is through the difficulties and challenges of life in Bihar that I have discovered strength I never knew before. Learning to deal creatively with the difficulties seems to have become my practice.

At present I have stepped out of it, for a few months, back into the West, and so this seems a good chance to evaluate how the practice of awareness relates to my life and work - my experience of the practical value of buddhist philosophies and teachings. I find that in both my work in outer, social development, as well as in inner, personal development, there needs to be a constant, or often repeated, PROCESS OF OBSERVATION AND EVALUATION, seeing what needs to change or be adjusted, and being open and ready to change what's needed.

Of course I am very privileged in Bodh Gaya to be offered the best of both Theravada

and Mahayana teachings available (not excepting even California!). Every year I have the opportunity of doing a three week intensive vipassana (insight) meditation retreat with Christopher Titmuss, which I call my annual revival, and teachings from His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, as well as many other teachers in the various buddhist schools. I find this range extremely useful, as I can be elective and choose what seems most appropriate and suitable for me at that particular time, without the disadvantage of becoming 'stuck' in any one tradition or in the 'cultural trappings'.

What do I do there? - well, many different things, but somehow they are all connected, making a cohesive whole. I don't generally have a job, as such, but I have a lot of involvements with both local families and communities and visiting or resident foreigners. As Bodh Gaya is a place of international pilgrimage and tourism, people come there from all over the world.

I fill in the official forms as 'social health worker', and explain that as doing anything which I hope may contribute to the health and well-being of the society. I think of myself as a healer, working for health, and WHOLENESS, at different levels-physical, mental, psychological, spiritual - of individuals, communities, peoples, and society.

When I came to the area, I was fortunate to have a background of experience in many areas of health and healing, which gave an immediate and practical opening into local village life. My original training had been in dispensing allopathic medicines, which I had found to be unsatisfactory for real healing. As luck would have it, I was soon introduced, by a good friend, to the art and science of HOMEOPATHY, which I found the most effective, comprehensive, and safe of all the systems of medicines which I had explored. As it works on the whole person, the body, emotions, mind and spirit, I found it most compatible with my training and practice of meditation and yoga, and so it became part of my life, work, and practice. HATHA YOGA has also for many years been an integral part of developing awareness in action and I use it

for healing and teach it at any opportunity.

For the first few months I lived in an ashram with 50 young harijan girls, learnt some basic hindi, and became interested in village development work. A friend and I went to stay in a very poor harijan village for a short time. I knew immediately it was where I wanted to stay and work - at grass-roots. Initial health and medical work, including health education, expanded into relief, family and child welfare, and then to organisation and facilitation of agriculture and general village development.. All this involved liaison with government and other officials, connecting us into the community at deeper levels, and teaching us more of how the system worked, and how to go about working within it. Of course, as foreign females there were difficulties, but also advantages - we could, by polite insistence, sometimes get things done, which for the local people were virtually impossible, or could only be done by paying bribes.

All our activities with the villagers were kept as simple as possible, with minimum expenditure and as much involvement of people themselves as we were able to handle, which wasn't easy. However, we learnt a lot as we went along, and shared any skills we were able to, with whoever was interested. We tried to look to both the short term and the long-term aspects, doing what seemed most appropriate and possible for the immediate needs, but with thought also of the future, of how the situation could be avoided or dealt with better in the future. We also tried never to take away a person's or family's self-reliance in providing for their absolute basic needs of daily food unless they were in dire need; rather supplementing what little they had or helping with other needs such as treatment and clothing. The encouragement and facilitation of self-help and self-sufficiency, along with people's education and motivation, developed together with understanding of the local people, area, and conditions. My political education has been and is a gradual process, deeply rooted in experience.

I consider that training in INSIGHT MEDITATION was a good preparation for life

there, training in observing what is actually occurring, and in the generation of compassion. I felt lucky not to have been trained in western ideas of social work or sociology, much of which would have had to be 'unlearned'. Even then, we had to give up many of our western ideas, expectations and planning - life there, particularly for the poorer and lower levels of the society just didn't fit into any plans, but changed with the seasons, with the availability or the non-availability of work, of food, and other resources. If we wanted to work with the people, we had to try to be as pliable to the prevailing situations as they were. We learnt to use every opportunity. Years of travel had been good education in adjusting to different cultures, but these were lessons in NON-ATTACHMENT of a different intensity.

At a deeper, more personal level there have been many lessons in letting go. I have had to leave places where I lived and was very deeply involved with families and individuals. Lies and political action have been used by a few people against me, as they see my involvements as a threat to the status quo, which is heavily in their favour. However, despite their coercive efforts, somehow I have been protected and seem to have the support of local police and officials, without paying for it either! There are also the times of happily letting go, when there is no longer need of support, somewhat like a mother whose children are grown up and leaving home, which brings a sense of freedom to be able to move onto other areas.

One of the great advantages of living in India is a simpler lifestyle. At the material level, many things which we take for granted in the



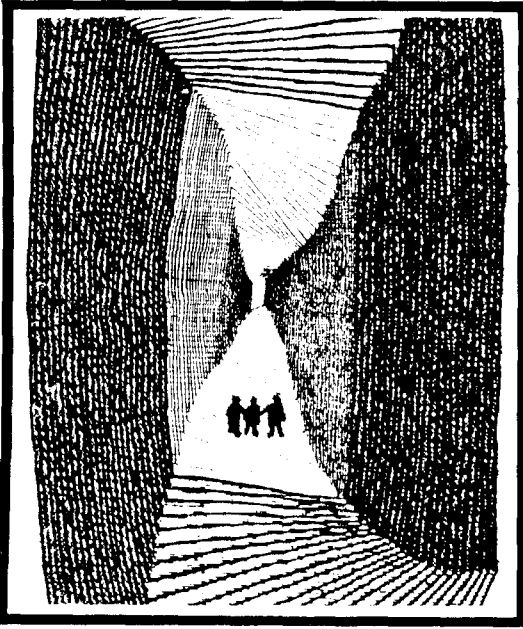
West are simply not available, so one learns to live without them, and not to miss them. LIVING SIMPLY allows for seeing reality more clearly, for getting one's priorities straight. When I return to the West, I find that the intensity of consumerism, the pressure of the media and the values of society in general to increase that, and even the overwhelming choices available, can become so involving and take up so much time and attention - the 'good' life is seductive. By the simple life, I mean VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY, the luxury of being able to give up what one already has, as distinct from poverty and deprivation, where all one's energy goes into merely meeting the basic needs such as food, shelter, and medicine, as is the situation for the majority of people in the world today.

Where there is such need, there are wonderful opportunities for practising GENEROSITY. It all began with a little money left by my aunt who had lived for many years in India, and been deeply involved with Indian dance. Since then, through the generosity of friends and family, there has always been just enough to do what was needed, without ever asking. My tiny room is a storeroom of resources that come and go, others give and I am happy to distribute as the need presents itself - As the Burmese say, what opportunities for making merit!

I have found that the more generous I can be, with any resources, the more flows through my hands. So it's like hurting oneself not to be generous. I have come to believe that I already have all that is needed, and it's a very powerful belief, it happens.

Seeing as much SUFFERING and exploitation as one does in India is a great aid to the practice of GENERATING COMPASSION - they are so obvious and intense that one cannot close them off, and at some time one feels compelled to act to relieve at least a tiny fraction of that misery in whatever way one is able to. And the longest journey begins with the first step.....

COMPASSION towards those who knowingly and deliberately exploit and oppress those who already have so little, was much, much harder to generate, but has come with practice,



starting with the very easy and joyful act of lighting candles for them in the Mahabodhi temple. I now consider them not as enemies, but as opponents who stimulate greater understanding and further action. If they only realised what a service they have actually done me, I'm sure they would be very disturbed!

Seeing gross political exploitation makes it easier to become involved in support of those who are exploited, even when one is aware that it will mean difficulties for others and oneself. I am deeply committed to supporting and documenting the struggle of a group of local communities for self-determination and freedom from exploitation and oppression of those who hide behind the facade of 'helping' and 'developing' these communities. NON-EXPLOITATION at a subtle level, how one uses one's personal power, how one interacts with those over whom one has power, even if one has not sought after that power, is harder to see.

'The only real power is no power' read a great book 'Ridley Walker'. Not trying to hold the power, going with the power, (power with rather than power over). Letting it use you instead of using it, you are part of the power, and there's no need for more.

Learning to deal with emotions such as ANGER, AVERSION and FEAR are more lessons of India. Many visitors have experienced

how the constant contact with vast numbers of people seems to intensify all emotions. In the Chinese system of medicine, anger and depression are emotions associated with the liver. Many of those who stay longer in India suffer from hepatitis, and I have several times observed that friends contracted hepatitis after times of greater than normal anger and/or depression.

There are so many things which we are averse to which are accepted facts of life in a country such as India - pain, sickness and suffering, death, not getting what one wants, lack of comforts and choices that we normally take for granted. If one stays for more than a brief time, one has to come to terms with at least some of them! To deal with anger and frustration. I learnt, albeit slowly, to be a better actress, how to put on a show of being angry or upset, (which is often the only way to get something done), without 'losing it' inside, for example when dealing with officials who are not at all willing to co-operate, or take responsibility for making a decision. The practice of NON-VIOLENCE, non-killing, has a profound effect on reducing levels of anger and aversion.

My independence is a great freedom, allowing me to put my energy where I feel it can be most effective. I don't have to compromise ideals, but can pull out of something I no longer feel is worth-while, and I have done so. However, as well as the advantages of independence, I also have those of INTERDEPENDENCE, and have become connected, linked, joined, with many wonderful people - a living, growing, network. As well as working closely with local groups and individuals, many contacts have been established and continued throughout India and in several other countries, with aid and development organisations, funding agencies, information sources, social activists, friends and other interested people. I attend many discussion groups, workshops and seminars, particularly those which are concerned with women's issues and the politics of aid and development.

We are all part of NETWORKS, each of us the centre of our own network, and part of the whole enormous net of Indra-each of us

jewels where the webs cross, connecting with and part of the whole. And the more there is outer wholeness, the more our inner wholeness is nourished. Through the network, connections are made between East and West, North and South, between the haves and the have-nots, on the various levels of finance and material resources information and education, and cultural exchange.

And these connections through material goods are also often far more than that, deeper exchanges are happening. One example - Children at the Turntable school collect sweaters themselves and send them for poor children in Bihar, via me. In turn, they learn about the lives of other children and have a more personal connection than through school books.

Cross-cultural INTER-CONNECTIONS are meaningful and enjoyable ways of learning. As well as assisting in arrangements for meditation retreats and accommodation for many westerners who come to Bodh Gaya every year, I help to run a three month study tour for young people interested in buddhism and indian culture - helping to orient them, facilitating their contact with local people, teaching hindi language and hatha yoga. It's a great way to use my experience there.

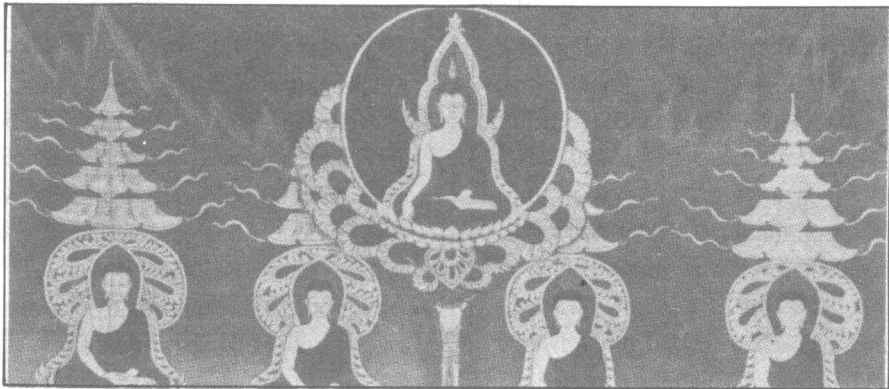
Nowadays I'm sometimes called a local, and asked if I will stay there always. Who knows, while I have the chance I'll take it, but wherever I go, part of my heart stays in Bodh Gaya.



Ms. Mary Light foot
Burmese Vihar, Bodh Gaya
India.



New economic thinking should draw on Buddhism



“How on earth can Buddhism have anything to do with economics?”

The question comes from a well-known western-educated economist who is obviously bewildered by the calls from social critics to apply Buddhist thought to alleviate widespread rural poverty, hunger, and indebtedness.

“Religion and economics are two things on completely different planes,” he insisted.

But two noted contemporary thinkers, Prof Dr Prawase Wasi and Dr Preecha Piamongsarn, think differently.

The present economic system of capitalism, they said, has changed the structure of farmers' lives from self-reliance to cash crop farming

resulting in economic dependency, bankruptcy and a break-down of their rural communities.

"Never before have our rural people suffered so much. But this is time we have a new mode of thinking that may help our society to survive," Prof Prawase told a gathering of Buddhist monks, voluntary development workers and university academics who met to discuss Buddhist economics recently at Thammasat University.

The meeting aimed at encouraging policy makers and modern economists to apply the essence of Buddhist thought on harmony and compassion to create a humane economic system.

In contrast to seeing capital accumulation as an end goal, Buddhism stresses sharing through compassion so that wealth can benefit both the owner and the public.

Being avid advocates of "Buddhist Economics" the two acharn urged modern economists to step out of the capitalist framework to learn that it is possible to create a humanistic economic and social system where money is not god.

Their criticisms are part of the ongoing social movement to break the country away from external forces following widespread disillusionment with the process of modernisation through capitalism, which only helps the poor to get poorer and the rich richer.

Prof Prawase, a highly-respected scientist and thinker, said capitalism results from a fragmented world view that narrows life's complexity to only a concern for profit and loss.

He suggested that the "new thinking" in economics should be based on the essence of Buddhist philosophy that sees life in all its aspects — mind and body, human beings and environment — as being interrelated. "And harmony can only occur when they are in balance," he said.

For Dr Preecha, an outspoken political economist, a desirable economic system must be one that fosters compassion and self-fulfillment and which ultimately leads to freedom from illusions.

The fault of capitalism, he said, is that it has allowed the stronger to rob the weaker in the name of profit.

At the same time, it has extolled materialism as the new religion. Material comfort is the ultimate goal. To consume is the sole reason for being.

While happiness and contentment can only occur when there is a balance between desire and gratification, materialism constantly fuels and fans up desires to the extent that they can never be satisfied.

Its disastrous impact on rural life is evident, added Prof Prawase.

Because resources in rural areas have been piped out to feed the urban cities and world market needs, eighty five per cent of our 50,000 villages have been bankrupted. Meanwhile, only 20 per cent of Thailand's forest area, so vital to the rural population, remains unspoiled.

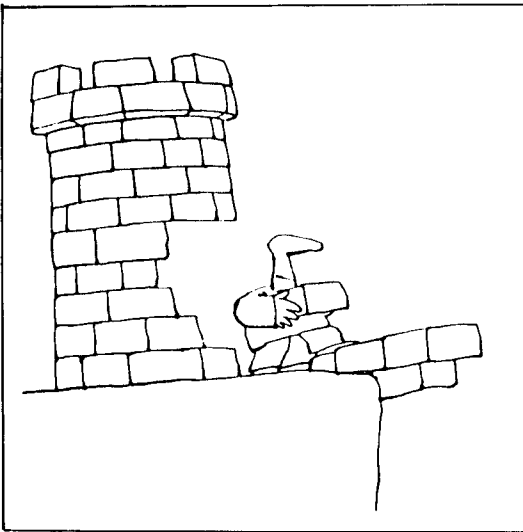
In addition, mono cash crops and the use of fertilisers and pesticides have had a destructive effect on the soil, creating further catastrophic problems for farmers.

To solve those problems, Prof Prawase said the "new economics" must apply Buddhist thinking on the interrelatedness of all matters (idappaccayata); the five dependent and causal elements of life (benjakhan); self-reliance; self-control and group disciplines (vinaya); and insight wisdom (panya).

This world view sees all matters as interrelated and dynamic because their composite elements are ever changing. Thus, everything is transient and the clinging to material things as a source of happiness dooms one to suffering.

"The policy implication is that development in all sectors must be interrelated and harmonious," said Prof Prawase. "Economics is not an isolated sphere of activity. Instead it should be part of the system that fosters harmony between humans and their environments".

Following a Buddhist philosophy that life consisted of five dependent elements — body, feelings, perception, mental formation, and consciousness, Prof Prawase stated that human community life is also dependent on five interrelated elements : a modest mind, technology in harmony with nature, self-reliance, community bonds, and insights into the laws of nature.



He cited villages in Chachoengsao and Surin Provinces where villagers have successfully freed themselves from indebtedness by quitting growing cash crops.

"A mind freed from greed determines their mode of production. They no longer have to use pesticides and fertilisers to accelerate crop production. With diversified crops, the balance of nature has returned. The quality of soil has also improved.

"Being contented with having enough to eat, the farmers who are now self-reliant, don't have to sweat as much to make profits. They then have time to go to temples and pay attention to others' needs. The aged and the young are taken care of. The traditional social security system has been revived."

On a national level, meanwhile, Prof Prawase stressed that self-reliance, social disciplines that guards ecological balance, and wisdom are the interrelated factors the country should maintain should it want to be independent.

The present system, meanwhile, aggravates dependency, he commented. "Thailand spends more than 250,000 million baht a year to import technology and capital the easy way instead of concentrating on developing local potentials through science and creating an indigenous technology.

Foreign investment promotion is another aspect of national development that aggravates dependency on external resources and technology, he said.

"We provide cheap labour and land and in return get only crumbs of the profits which for the most part are sent back to mother companies overseas.

"And yet we fool ourselves by taking the figures of exports from foreign investment as our own and are delighted because it has made the figures look good on the books," he commented.

To achieve balance between man and environment and natural surroundings, economists or policy makers, he said, can borrow the Buddhist concept on vinaya or group disciplines which sets a limit to the exploitation of humans and natural resources.

"Without limiting desire, natural resources can be quickly exhausted, because while demands are unlimited, the supply is finite."

The Buddhist concept on panya, or wisdom, which sets liberation as the ultimate goal in life can also be used in economic philosophy to create a compassionate society, he added.

"Physically, we need to be free from hunger and injustice. This is why we have to talk about even distribution of income instead of the aggregate growth economists are so fond of.

"This physical condition is essential if one is to be able to pursue the higher goal of being spiritually liberated from attachment to illusions through wisdom. One cannot exist without the other."

"To achieve both kinds of liberation, we need insight wisdom," he explained. "According to Buddhist teaching, there are three sources of wisdom : information, reasoning and insight intuition."

This intuitive wisdom which can be gained by insight meditation, he said, will help free human beings from being imprisoned by their own thoughts, beliefs, theories, and biases.

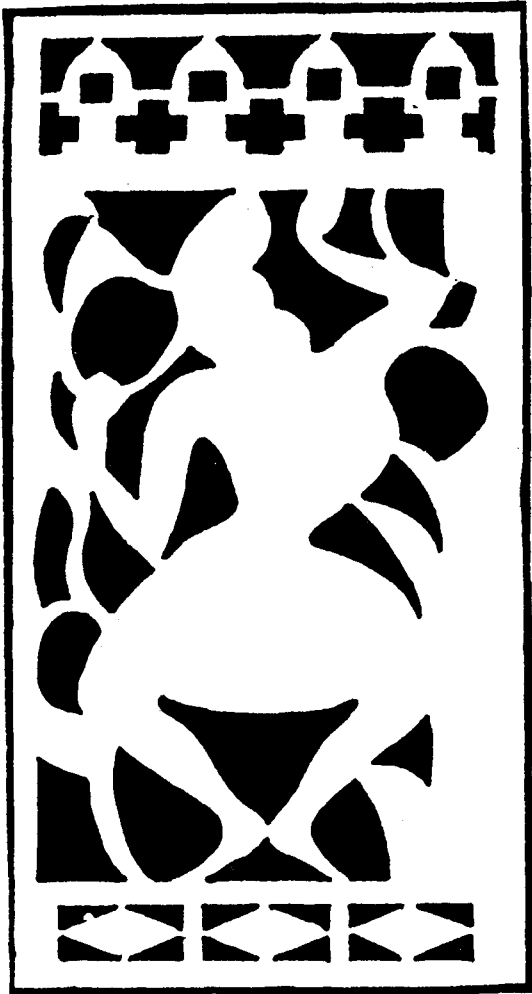
"If only economists understand the essence of our religion, they can apply the age-old wisdom to create an economic system that can lead to freedom, socially and spiritually."



Ms. Sanitsuda Ekachai

*From Bangkok Post
September 15, 1987*

DOING THEOLOGY WITH ASIAN RESOURCES



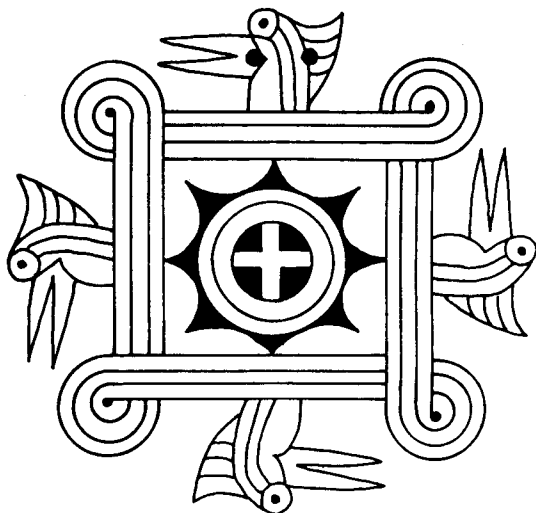
During the past two decades, theologians both Protestant and Catholic have been continuously discussing about what they call “inculturation”, “contextualization”, “indigenization”. “Doing Theology with Asian Resources” was the title of another seminar of this nature. It was held in Sukabumi near Jakarta, Indonesia, from the 9th to the 13th of September, 1987. About 25 representatives,

mostly Catholics and Protestants with only one Muslim, of institutes and organisations from Southeast Asian and East Asian countries. Country reports and reflections were given by representatives from Indonesia, Philippines, Korea, Thailand, Taiwan and Malaysia.

It was a forum of exchange of reflections and experiences of a group called “Interreligio” that happens every two years. The Jakarta seminar was the fourth one. Discussions were grounded on concrete situation and reality in each country.

Country reports and reflections have shown that although Catholic and Protestant Churches as such may still remain very cautious in their moves in dialogue with other religions there are groups, institutions and individuals that are making efforts to reflect their faith in their own context and with their resources. There are still many obstacles from both inside the Churches and from dialogue partners.

It is easy to talk about the necessity of relationship with other religions, but it is difficult to talk about “equal partnership”. The Christians still have, consciously or unconsciously, in one way or another, a “superiority complex” towards other religions. On one hand, words such as “inculturation”, “contextualization” and “indigenization” may mean the recognition of the Churches of being westernized and therefore try to adapt themselves to local reality. On the other hand, for many, it may mean to “use” (and therefore, to “manipulate”) local culture and context to better express Christian faith and to become more acceptable to local people; although this may not always mean the efforts to convert them to Christianity. Some participants of the seminar suggested that these terms should better be avoided if there should be real dialogue.



The question of "equal partnership" in interreligious dialogue was suggested for a new orientation in the process of "doing theology". The Christians should acknowledge also the "universality" and "absoluteness" of religious experiences of the others. Some even suggested that why can't a Christian in Asia think like the other Asians who believe that all religions are equal path towards liberation. The universality and absoluteness are finally "relative". If for the Buddhists Jesus of Nazareth is "equal" to Prince Sidhattha, and the Risen Christ to the Enlightened Buddha, why can't a Christian in Asia believe also that way?

This question is not that easy as it seems to be. The twenty centuries of traditions of the Churches are "burdens" that cannot be changed within a few years or decades. The fourth Inter-religio seminar did not offer any declaration or even guidelines for further practices. However, it has inspired the participants, who shared their witness and reflections in depth. They did not feel to be less Christian than the other Christians, and they did not want to feel less "Asian" than the other Asians.

The road will remain long for the Christians to make a real dialogue with other Asians as long as they remain only at the superficial level of "forms", and not at the depth of the "content". It is the Spirit of Asia that they have to learn to live with.



Seri Phongphit

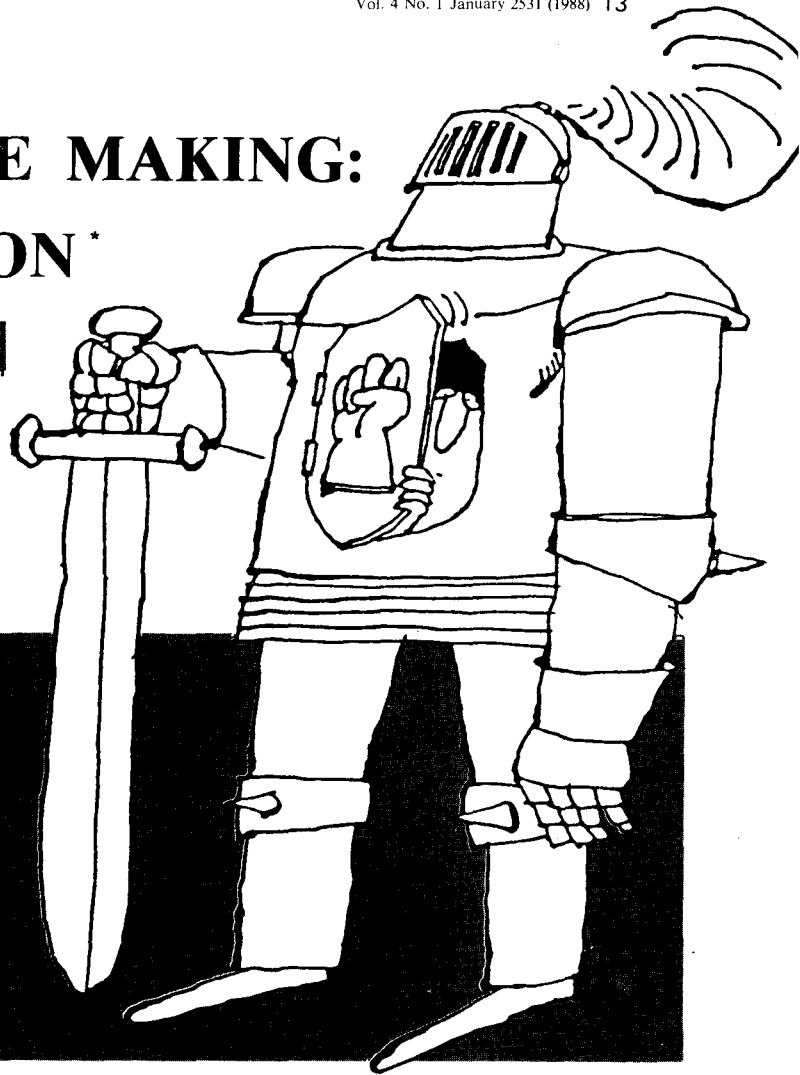
INNER AND THE BUDDHIST

Today, under pressure of the times, growing numbers of spiritual seekers and social activists are converging on the great question of how to combine the work of inner and outer peace making. How can mysticism and militancy be made one? How can we open ourselves to a socially engaged spirituality which is truly spontaneous and unselfconscious yet profoundly worldly wise? If we are honest, trying in our lives to unify inner spiritual cultivation and radical social activism can be a painful and difficult experience. Yet it has great potential for both self transcendence and for more significant social action. For all great truth and transformation lies in learning to open to the painfully paradoxical and contradictory nature of life. It is there that the real cutting edge lies, and not in tidy and self-confirming ideologies and doctrines.

In both East and West growing numbers of Buddhists are in course of developing a socially engaged Buddhism, and are keen to share and exchange experience with Christian activists.

Buddhism offers both a diagnosis of the human condition and a system of psycho-spiritual training to remedy the disease. What it has to offer has wide appeal and can evidently be serviceable to people of other religious and humanistic beliefs without infringing the integrity of those beliefs, for Buddhism is non-dogmatic and non-missionary. For the spiritual practices of the world's great religions are as similar and as unifying as their doctrines are conflicting and divisive. In my experience it is not difficult for people working out of different traditions of engaged spirituality to find a common vocabulary.

OUTER PEACE MAKING: CONTRIBUTION*



Buddhists maintain that, because we are deluded as to our true nature and potential, we endeavour to escape the emptiness, fragility and finitude of life by fortifying an illusory kind of selfhood. Ultimately, it is in this unavailing struggle that human suffering originates. This struggle takes the characteristic forms of acquisitiveness and aggressiveness, of a search for dependent belongingness, and other behaviours and beliefs to buttress the sense of self, mine, us, ours. The biography of each of us could be written out in those terms, if we were but aware of the underlying impulses. Dedication to a great cause can give meaning to my life, a strong sense of self-identity and a warm feeling of group solidarity, and these needful gratifications can filter out an awful lot of reality! Similarly, doing good to other people (on my terms, of course) can make me feel good at the expense

of undermining their autonomy and dignity. Again, nonviolence (especially if it's 'spiritual') may serve only to demonstrate to ourselves our heart-warming moral superiority without convincing anybody else.

These personal struggles for self-affirmation have been hugely amplified socially and historically. Much of human history is about how some people have got together and systematised and refined collective acquisitiveness and aggressiveness which put down and exploit other people, as well as the 'natural environment'. My nation, my sex, my ideology, my social class, my race, my movement exalts itself at the expense of

**Ken Jones is a Zen Buddhist trainee of eight years standing who is active in the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. His book *The social face of Buddhism* is to be published by Wisdom in UK.*

yours. **Existential** suffering has thus been **socially** supercharged, to a point where the continued existence of our planetary civilisation is put in question.

As with other religions, for Buddhism the fundamental remedy for the above seemingly terminal condition is that of working for self-transcendence. But this is, to say the least, discouraged by social conditions which are the collective consequence of existential delusion and which confirm and sustain that delusion. It is therefore needful to work for a society which nurtures our humanity instead of debasing it. Moreover, a huge amount of gross human suffering is created by the exploitation, oppression and war which characterise the existing social systems. Both individually and collectively, our root, clinging fear prevents us opening to real awareness of others and impels rejection, separation and violence. Reason not the need! Compassion is the cardinal Buddhist version and its great heroes are the **bodhisattvas**, those who are dedicated absolutely to the relief of suffering. It is said of the Buddha that he declined to teach a hungry man until he had first been fed.

Buddhism offers a system of meditation and round-the-clock mindfulness practice through which it is possible to become aware of the root fears and underlying self-needs by which we are driven, gradually to feel them gentled and freed from their impulsion, and to experience an inner serenity and fearlessness. We no longer cast our shadow over others, or feel impelled to possess or reject. Through this previously inconceivable liberation we are freed of the burden of self-need and free to give ourselves absolutely to the spiritual and material liberation of other beings. It is not that we elect to do so; we can do no other. Unseparated from others, to do them violence would be to violate ourselves.

More immediately, our efforts to serve others and effect radical social change do in themselves provide experience which can be used in the work of self-transformation, if we know how to go about it and sufficiently determined. Meditation and retreat periods need to be combined with the cultivation of **awareness in action**.



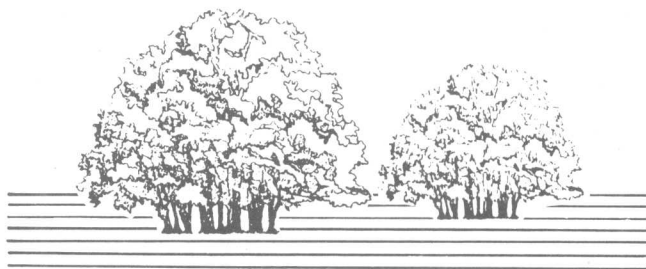
The anger, frustration, guilt, self-pity, despair and triumphalism which so easily embody us are to be observed and suffered through in their rising and falling, without either self-judgement or rationalisation. Exposed to the light of bare awareness these emotions slacken their grip on us and begin to move us less powerfully. There is then more energy and openness for the work that has to be done. We begin to be freed of the various antics, inhibitions and evasions which, largely unbeknowningly, restrict our humanity--let alone our spirituality. Just to become a little more human is a very long way along the spiritual path!

Similarly, peacework and similar groups need to spend more time bringing to the surface the various hidden, emotionally-laden agendas which, under the guise of business, consume so much time and energy and make for so much frustration and disillusionment.

Buddhist social action is thus woven into an ethically directed lifestyle of non-manipulative self-awareness, set in a framework of gentle but firm discipline. We cannot feel compassion for others if we do not feel it for ourselves. What we have to do is fearlessly to do our best, and to take responsibility for what we do, but without guilt or anxiety. At the heart of the matter is the need for a courageous and unrelenting **honesty** and realism, inward and outward, emotionally and face-to-face, psychologically and ideologically.

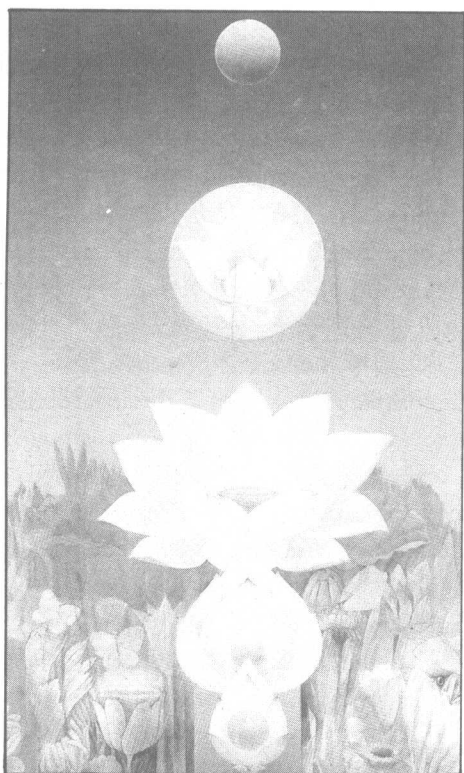


Ken Jones



See both the wood and the trees

reports on a remarkable attempt to unravel the cultural foundations of environmental issues.



*Who would dare trade skies and oceans?
Wondrous creation is this world of ours.
These corporal parts shall be laid
Betwixt earth and sky in the final hours.
We are not owners of clouds or air,
Or the heavens or any elements of earth.
Man has made neither moon nor sun.
Nor a single atom in a grain of sand.*

- Angkam Kalyanapongse

Translated by Chamnongsri Lamsan Rutnin

Somewhere on the arid plains of Thung Kula Rong Hai is a eucalyptus woodlot guarded by seven armed watchmen. The eucalyptus trees were planted by the Forestry Department. The guards were subsequently called in when local people allegedly set fire to the woodlot.

But, according to Dr. Akin Rabibhadana, director, Khon Kaen University's Research and Development Institute, this official attempt at forest conservation is not all it seems. Akin says that in order to plant the eucalyptus trees the Forestry Department had to cut down an existing wood, one with indigenous trees that had little commercial use but where the local people hunted small game, gathered wild fruits and other food, and cut branches for fuel.

And, he argues, the older wood existed in balance and harmony with the local people who could make use of it and conserve it. The local people were protesting when they set fire to the eucalyptus.

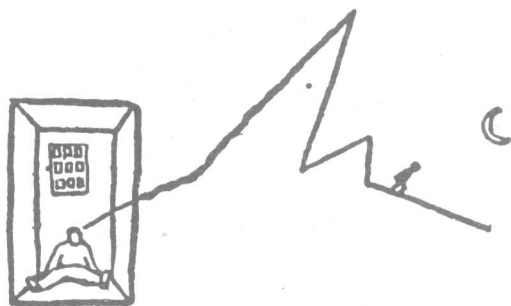
Time and again during a remarkable week-long symposium speakers described examples of official insensitivity to local needs, however well-intentioned. The symposium was remarkable because its organizers, the Siam Society, were attempting to piece together components of Thai culture and society in order to create a better understanding of environmental issues, and avoid that kind of insensitivity.



Participants at Wat Boke Krok Luang.

37,000 and 38,000 years ago, to cooling after 32,000 years ago, back to warming around 18,000 years ago and then back to cooling around 9,000 or 10,000 years ago," Anderson said.

Archaeologists now have a clearer picture of the changing environment in the region and can make better guesses about human adaptation.



NO PARADISE

Ten thousand years ago Thailand was not "in any sense a paradise," according to Dr. Bennet Bronson of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. Agriculture developed slowly but eventually it became an "astonishing" success. "No farmers in any region outside southern and eastern Asia could produce as much food with as little labour from the same amount of land."

One controversial subject is how and when wetland rice farming developed. But the heat generated is nothing compared with the controversies over the later developments of towns,

cities and eventually states in this part of the world. Inside the symposium all was politeness and civility. Outside, an outburst: "When will people of the older school face the facts?"

Forget Thai chauvinism, the younger generation of historians and anthropologists say. Forget the idea of a Tai race migrating downwards conquering those in their path. Sukhothai was not a Khmer city that was taken over by the Tai. It was unique, but it was not the capital of anything remotely resembling Thailand because such a state did not exist, they say. Even the dating, interpretation and authenticity of that foundation stone of conventional Thai history, the Sila Charuek stone inscription, is questioned.

In her symposium paper which concentrated on the lower Chao Phya basin, Dr. Dhida Saraya of Chulalongkorn University, identified the seventh century AD as the turning point when moated sites in the area began to take "an urban form that can be defined as cities." These were: U Thong, Nakhon Prathom and Kubua in the Thachin-Maeklong river basins in the West and Si Mahosod on the Bang Pakong river in the East.

But, "from the 7th century there existed neither isolated city-states nor a single dominant state in Chao Phraya area. On the contrary, big and small states had already developed and they were likely to be more or less interacting culturally and politically." Different geographical conditions or religious beliefs kept some degree of separation.

Nakhon Prathom "was the largest among ancient cities in Thailand before the rise of Ayudhya in the 14th century AD." Dhida said Nakhon Prathom was almost as large as the later Ayudhya and added she was certain that at the time there was no other city as large in Southeast Asia. It became the important port of the region and "the symbolic and political centre of the state."

But earlier scholars had misunderstood it, she said. They concentrated on the ancient stupa and erroneously located the site of the ancient city 2 km too far to the West. "Many scholars of Southeast Asian history have been

preoccupied with the idea that religious monuments were important indicators of the emergence of cities," Dhida said.

"Other areas connected to the city were neglected, and mostly destroyed by the construction of the railway and highways and the exploitation of land for sugarcane planting. Srisakara Vallibhotama estimated from his survey study that there were nearly 100 religious monuments big and small scattered all over the city and the surrounding areas. Over 80 per cent of them were completely destroyed."

Dr. Srisakara, anthropologist at Silpakorn University and editor of *Muang Boran* magazine, was similarly regretful of what has happened at Sukhothai: "newly made by the Fine Arts Department into a Disneyland," he said of the construction of the historical park. Out of ignorance all traces of city planning, dykes and canals and other evidence of adaptation to the environment are being destroyed. "They repaired only the religious monuments."

Other participants warned that the proposed Nam Choan dam could also destroy valuable archaeological sites in Kanchanaburi as well as flood precious forests.

Living human evidence of different ways of adapting to the environment is also disappearing and causing concern. Dr. Richard Englehardt, an anthropologist working with the UN, described the changing ways of life of the Mlabri of the Northern forests, the Sakai of the Southern mountains and the Urak Lawoi sea gypsies of the Andaman coast.

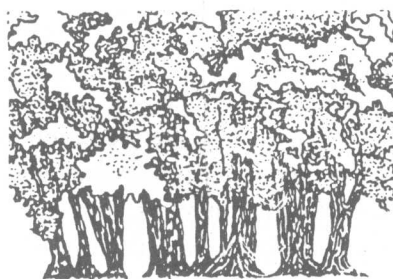
"We are fortunate to have remaining in Thailand today some bands of hunter-gatherers. By studying their evolved modes of adaptation we can perhaps come to understand what economic alternatives are possible in the Thai environment and what are the implications of a variety of environmental management techniques," Englehardt said. But, he warned, "they are being engineered out of existence."

Also disappearing are some traditional beliefs. Some regret the dilution of beliefs about tree spirits because in the past these helped to maintain respect for trees and to conserve forests.



See both the wood and the trees

Suwanna Kriengkraipetch did not advocate a return to spirit beliefs. But she summed the situation up: "The spirit of the chain-saw is stronger than the spirit of the tree. So instead of giving offerings to the tree, people give offerings — perhaps to the governor."



THE WOOD

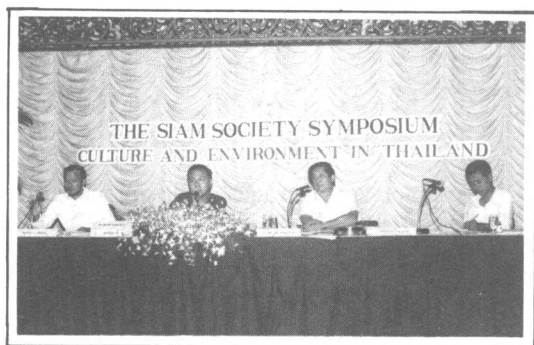
People down here see forests as a group of trees without people.

— Anan Ganjanapan

"Day by day, the destruction of the environment continues in the name of development. There is no sign of abatement in the rate of forest land loss, the conversion of scenic areas to receive tourism and, in the process, the destruction of the very amenity values that are expected to attract tourists," wrote Dr. Charit Tingsabadh, economist at Chulalongkorn University, in his symposium paper.

"The state in these cases often assists in the process of environmental degradation. It lauds the export earnings from maize and counts the tourist dollars. At best, it makes apologetic noises about the loss of resource values. But it does not recognize that the one is the cause of the other, and thus it shrieks the moral responsibility that is rightly its own — that resources degradation is due to the development policy pursued by the state itself," Charit said.

And yet some of those noises — if not the actions — are making themselves felt at the grass roots. A number of participants noted that villagers are beginning to take matters into their own



A panel discussion from regional perspectives.

Altogether about 50 papers and speeches were presented. The topics covered archaeology, anthropology, ecology, geology, history, economics, religion, science, literature, folklore, art. The time span ranged from over a million years ago to three million years from now, when Australia finally crashes into the coast of Southern China, squashing Indonesia and the Philippines in between like peanut butter.

Perhaps because the symposium was held in Chiang Mai, forestry dominated the environmental issues. In the background was the controversial Doi Suthep cable-car project, close to the hearts of the society's Chiang Mai organizers. But other subjects connected with the environment were also covered.

Although the quality of the papers varied, as the programme unfolded the relevance of such a diverse range of topics became apparent. The context of environmental issues and "development" built up, far more clearly than could be obtained from reading all six National Economic and Social Development Plans together.

The picture was incomplete, nevertheless. Summing up, Dr. Chayan Vaddhanaputi of Chiang Mai University, commented that the Chinese in Thailand and Muslims in the South had been "under represented." Others described the symposium as too pessimistic. Chayan concluded: "I think that we know more that we know less. We know there is a crisis."

The most moving presentation came from Dr. Michael Moerman, anthropologist from the University of California at Los Angeles. His plea for greater sensitivity among those in power

towards the different needs of different people in different localities is worth repeating. In it he summed up the purpose of the symposium:

"We cannot speak of the environment, cannot conceptualize it, and certainly cannot protect it, unless we take account of 'culture' both as an inseparable component of human ecology and as something to be preserved in its own right," he said.

Basing his arguments on changes he has found in a Thai-Lue village in the north of Thailand, Moerman said one of the most important problems facing Thailand is "how the understandings of local people can be translated into national policy; how the ears of power so unused to listening to local voices can be sharpened."



RETURN

He described his return to the village last year, 25 years after he first studied it. "I was moved and troubled by the loss of traditional culture. So were most who talked to me. But they, like me, were old men, students and guardians of tradition. And even the bitterest of them praised the new health services, the schools, and the television sets that bring in world news (and the boxing matches)."

Economic development had brought alternative occupations to a people once dependent on rice farming. But, to his regret, no one younger than 45 could read the Northern alphabet.

"The losses we mourn may represent what others less admiring of traditional culture call progress and vitality. My own experience may limit my perspective, but are not all of us saddened when a people once proud and confident of their distinctive practices becomes embarrassed by them?



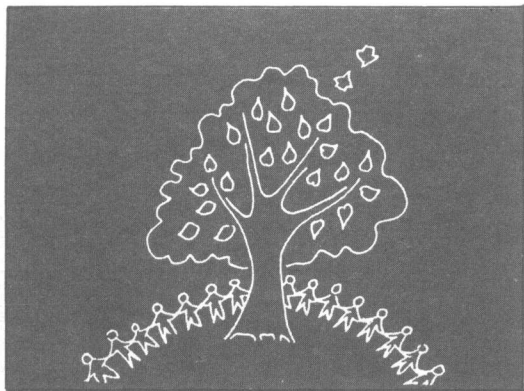
See both the wood and the trees

"My perception of changes in the integrity of the community is sharper, but hardly less ambivalent. The choice of metaphor between the 'expansion of free enterprise' and 'capitalist penetration' must not be made lightly.

"A village which prided itself on being 'muan kan mod' (every one the same), a village in which all dressed, ate and were housed more or less alike has become one in which most covet the colour TVs, pick up trucks, and 700cc motorcycles that only a few possess."

Moerman said he hoped the greater inequality in the village would not lead to conflict. But he was not arguing against change. "Like all Thai villagers, they have long lived with change, have always eagerly sought it, have always assimilated to their traditions and their values."

Amaret Sila-On, senior vice president of the Siam Cement Group, chairing the session, described Moerman's presentation as "a soulful plea from local people."



THE BEGINNING

In the beginning there was only "Phaa" or "sang," that is, god or spirit. There was nothing else. There was only water all around. Then the "Phaa," god, created land, with Khun-Thiw-Kham, a being, a gigantic crab to support the land, a serpent to stay above the crab, a male elephant, a mountain, threads of light, four gods, animals, a gigantic male spider whose excrement created earth and whose web created heaven. Following this, all the countries and thousands of islands were created.

- From Ahom cosmology
cited by Wilaiwan Khanittanan

Most ethnic Tai groups have myths tracing the origin of mankind to a big green gourd. In many versions a great flood receded leaving the gourd on a mountain. Perhaps the gourd ripened and opened, or it was struck open by a god. Either way, out poured thousands of people, in some versions with different coloured skins representing different races.

Dr. Wilaiwan Khanittanan, linguist at Thammasat University, and Dr. Suwanna Kriangkraipetch of Chulalongkorn University said at the symposium that the myths illustrate the importance the Tai people attached to nature.

"People and gods appeared after nature," Wilaiwan said. "The few natural elements that appear in the story reflect the Tai thought on nature, in a way, that they perceived these elements as important factors for life."

Suwanna's interpretation was slightly different: "The main theme is that all the human races came from the same origin that was believed to be a fruit (or vegetable), that is, the gourd. This story may confirm the attitude toward nature — that human beings originated from plants. Thus man and plants — which represent nature — are interrelated."

Archaeologists think there were people in Southeast Asia at least 37,000 years ago. Some say artifacts found in Thailand could date back more than a million years, although verification is disputed. The ocean did apparently really drop in level "especially between 22,000 and 16,000 years ago," according to Prof Douglas Anderson, chairman of Brown University's Anthropology Department. The result was "the joining of all Malaysia, most of Indonesia and much of the Philippines to the mainland" in a land mass known now as Sundaland.

Then the end of the last ice age melted the polar ice caps and the oceans rose. "Since 50,000 years ago climate has reversed itself four times, going from cooling to warming between

hands when they feel that their water supply is being threatened by illegal logging.

Dr. Somsak Sukwong, forest biologist at Kasetsart University, noted that local farmers in Nan recently protested against illegal logging in nearby watershed areas, and villagers in the South arrested illegal tree cutters. "These actions indicate the farmers' concerns about forest resources' conservation and the kind of land use practised," he said.

Villagers are not only running into conflict with commercial loggers. In the North, lowland villagers can be in conflict with hilltribes, while in many parts of the country villagers can be heard complaining that they are harassed by officials for minor infringements of forest conservation laws while larger illegal logging operations continue unhindered.

Dr. William Klausner, writer, anthropologist and lawyer, described the relationship between villagers and those in authority as "a battle of wits," with the villagers trying all they could to outwit the law-enforcers in order to maintain their own way of life.

Anthropologists at the symposium, in particular, pleaded for a better understanding of what the forests mean for the various groups of local people, how the forests provide food and shelter, and how local cultures and environments should be adapted to allow locals to continue to make use of forests while practising conservation.

Dr. Anan Ganjanapan, anthropologist at Chiang Mai University, pointed the finger at the law, which, he said, only recognizes state-owned or individual-owned land. There is a discrepancy, he said, between the state's view of land use and land use as actually practised locally.

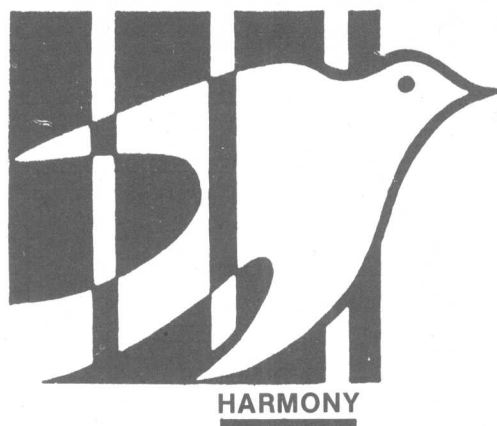
He advocated reform of the various types of title and tenure documents to enable new local relationships to develop. These would involve appropriate mixes of individual and community ownership of land around a village in order to develop a range of land uses that could sustain villagers and conserve forests. Rather than simply being groups of trees, he said, the forests are

full of people.

Dr. Dhira Phantumvanit, environmentalist at the Thailand Development Research Institute, described pressure on land as the main cause of deforestation. "We cannot talk about forests without talking about land. They are part and parcel of the same thing," he said. "But cultural factors are peripheral," he added, sounding a dissenting note to the theme of the symposium.

Hilltribes, slash-and-burn farming, tobacco drying, road building, cash crops such as maize and cassava and many other factors were blamed for deforestation in one way or another by various speakers. A few tried to elaborate more detailed schemes of how the various factors interact in order to sketch a clearer picture of where the causes might lie.

Dr. Shalardchai Ramitanondh, anthropologist at Chiang Mai University, said it was "too easy" to put the blame on hilltribes even though tribes people were cutting some of the trees. He pointed out that deforestation was taking place in areas where there were no hilltribes, and described complicated interlinking between corruption, inequality, lack of democracy, inappropriate development policies, the legacies of colonial timber business and regional war as contributing factors to deforestation.



Some, such as Dr. Rapee Sagarik, expert on orchids, described a past where there was greater harmony between people and the environment: "The forces of development of Thai society were created in a past that was full of freedom, a freedom from outside needs and desires and



See both the wood and the trees

He and a number of other speakers suggested that Buddhist monks should be brought into the conservation effort, although a few participants had reservations about what they saw as an over-emphasis on Buddhism in a society where culture and religious beliefs are diverse.

Gradually the different strands fell into place: the increasing awareness of how ancient and modern people fitted into and viewed the environment, even the idea that a chauvinistic view of history might be related to an insensitive and centralized view of how to tackle environmental problems.

"Policies created by the elite are created without any understanding of nature and the people," Akin Rabibhadana said, the "power obsession" leads officials to think they can do anything, including shooting villagers angry about losing their woodland.

Of course, conflicting views could not be resolved.

"Culture is not monolithic, but complex and differentiated," Chayan Vaddhanaputi said summing up. "Moreover, it is dynamic and changing." Therefore sweeping generalizations have to be avoided.

Scholars, too are complex and differentiated, but quite clearly members of the tribes of hunter-gatherers. They are gathering a wealth of information about society and the environment, and hunting for new theories and concepts – sometimes hunting each other. As with other hunter-gatherers, they offer some valuable lessons.

The Siam Society's symposium on "Culture and Environment in Thailand" was held at the Suriwongse Hotel, Chiang Mai, from August 17 to 21. The society plans to publish a book of proceedings early next year.



Peter Mytri Ungphakorn
from *The Nation*,
Sunday, August 30, 1987

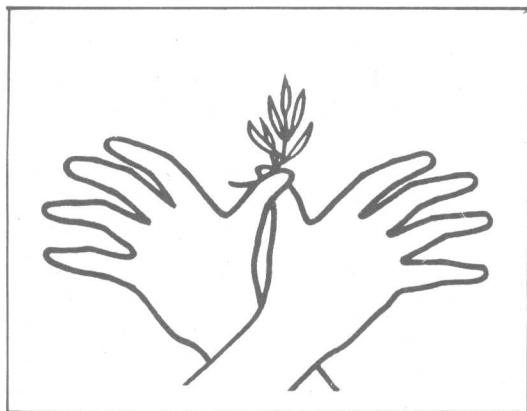
relationships. A past relying on the natural and cultural environment of a locality, a past which was like a self operating piece of machinery."

Others argued that people had always encroached on the environment and that the only difference now was the scale.

Dr. Warren Brockleman, zoologist at Mahidol University, was almost the only voice of optimism in the symposium. "The system of conservation areas now includes at least 112 units and encompasses about 10 per cent of the land area of the kingdom," he said.

"The areas have resident management and protection personnel and are nearly completely protected against encroachment, although not so well protected against poaching by local villagers.

"This puts Thailand among the most advanced nations of the world in terms of forest and wildlife conservation, and alongside other progressive nations in this part of the world such as Australia and India," Brockleman said.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

He, too, advocated a "community development" approach, but perhaps not quite the village-based model Anan Ganjanapan proposed. "In order to enlist the cooperation of residents near protected areas, economic benefits should flow from protected areas, such as jobs, within the areas, income from tourism and gate receipts, special extension help in managing tree plantations or wildlife species such as deer, or limited harvesting of products such as frogs, fish, bamboo shoots, etc," Brockleman said.

A PILGRIMAGE FOR PEACE



Recently, from August 13 to October 13, 1987,

Pracha Hutanuvatana, a dedicated Buddhist activist from Thailand, went to Sri Lanka for a "pilgrimage for peace". This trip is a follow up on the Bangkok International Symposium on Buddhism and Peace. (See detailed report in *Seeds of Peace* Vol.3 No.2 May 1987.) It is also aimed to provide Pracha with the opportunity to share with Sri Lankan bhikkhus his wide experiences in working with Thai bhikkhus using Buddhist values, meditation, and local cultures as basis for community development. This trip was made possible through guidance from valuable friends like Acharn Sulak, Mr. Upali, an ACFORD member, Pra Maha Somsiam, a Thai monk residing in Sri Lanka, Mr. John McConnell, a British quaker in Colombo, Ven. Chandraratna, Prof. Rohanadheera, Ven. Ananda and many others.

Temple Visits

Pracha's visit basically consists of two parts. First, he spent about two weeks visiting various temples in remote areas whose abbots have been very active in promoting programmes for community development. Second, he met with various bhikkhus and religious leaders to share experiences and to discuss possibilities for future collaboration.

During the first part of his mission, Pracha visited some 14 temples, most of which are in the Programme of Sri Lankan-Siam Bhikkhus' Linkage for Social Liberation. According to the kinds of works that the bhikkhus have been doing, he grouped these temples into 4 categories. They are: 1) the conventional development works, 2) the close-to-government development works, 3) the people-power-oriented development works, and 4) the interesting temples outside the programme.

Community development works in temples in the first category range from road construction, well-digging, bringing electricity into the village, to cleaning water tanks. In 3 out of 4 temples visited there are women groups organized to promote home industry, help members with funeral expenses or cultivate land to provide extra produce to the temple. In all these temples, there are expressed needs to set up vocational training programmes for the youth, many of whom are unemployed.

Temples in the second category are much bigger in size with better buildings and transportation facilities, some of which are directly provided by the government. Activities led by the abbots such as road construction, dhamma teaching and providing some vocational training are similar to those in category one. Other important features include a plan to do a biogas project in one village and a plan to build a town near a temple in another.

Apart from doing regular development works, abbots residing in temples in the third category also serve as advisors to local peasant congress and act as mediators negotiating with government officials. There is also a National Peasant Congress which provides lawyers for some court cases. Most notable characteristic of temples in this category is the high level of people participation in their common struggle for development.

Abbots of temples in the forth category are dynamic leaders who are respected by the people and act as mediators between the people and the officials. Abbot Dhammananda, for example, is the president of Bhikkhu Peace Foundation. Another, a snake-bite specialist, is a retired officer ordained at the age of 53 who wants to stay at his original temple to do development works with Tamil and Muslim villagers.

Meeting People

The second part of the trip was spent in and around the Jaffna area. During the visit,

Pracha had a chance to meet and discuss with local Buddhist leaders and human rights activists. Some of the activities include: meetings to discuss possible exchange programme between Thai bhikkhus and lay persons and their Sri Lankan counterparts. This will include sending some Thai samaneras (novices) to stay and study in Sri Lanka. Several concerned bhikkhus and lay persons have expressed willingness to provide lodgings for Thai samaneras. Concerning this matter, Pra Maha Somsiam suggested that before sending them to any temple, it is highly advisable to check carefully to ensure that the environment will be positive and appropriate.

Pracha also met with Sri Lankan bhikkhus who had earlier expressed their willingness to meet with Tamil leaders to discuss peaceful solution to the present conflicts. Although they had become rather hesitant after the intervention of India around the time of the signing of the Peace Accord, after meeting with Acharn Sulak who visited Sri Lanka around July, they expressed readiness for future talks. One of the bhikkhus, Ven. Sobhita, was reported to have privately arranged a meeting with some Tamil leaders. This could be a starting point for future dialogues.

Another organization Pracha visited was the Bhikkhus Peace Foundation (BPF) which

has set up a programme to train young bhikkhus to work for reconciliation and social reconstruction in areas where Tamils and Sinhalese live in close proximity. Other possible co-operation with various religious leaders include, a proposal for International Reconciliation, a training programme to equip bhikkhus with knowledge in modern mass communication, a programme for lay youth exchange, a search for Buddhist Socialism, and support for human rights activities.

It seems quite clear from Pracha's preliminary reports that there are numerous possibilities for exchange and co-operation for peace and development between religious groups in Sri Lanka and Thailand. Information collected from this trip will be used for the writing of a paper on the ethnic conflicts for the Thai audience, who, probably, are already waiting.

This is an abstract by Ms. Suwanna Satha-Anand. from Pracha's *Memorandum and Report on Visiting Selected Temples in the Programme of Sri Lankan-Siam Bhikkhus' Linkage for Social Liberation.*



100th Anniversary of Thai Japanese Diplomatic Relations

T : Interview with Khun Sulak Sivaraksa

his year marks the centennial celebration of the Thailand Japan pact on trade and amity. A number of events, including the official visit of Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone to Thailand, are being planned in the two countries. The Japanese diplomatic blue book points out that the current relations between the two countries are "extremely good." While the Thai government welcomes Japanese tourists as well as investors, a large Japanese presence has become inevitable. However, a certain group of Thai nationals are observing the bilateral relations rather coolly. Thailand's leading intellectual, Khun Sulak, has given our paper his frank view on Thai-Japanese relations. Khun Sulak has taught at the University of





London and has always been influential among Thai students and intellectuals.

He points out: I suppose bilateral relations are good for the government and concerned enterprises. From the Thai point of view, relations have been unequal ever since the treaty of trade and amity was signed 100 years ago. The bilateral relations have, in all aspects, including the psychological one, been unbalanced. Since we are friends, it is necessary to criticize each other in order to achieve better relations. However, the present governments of the two countries have been refraining from criticizing each other. How will they ever create appropriate bilateral relations?

Khun Sulak cites one recent example that deserves criticism National Cultural Centre for which the Japanese granted a total of six billion yen. The modern architecture, facing Rachadapisek Road, has apparently failed to gain popularity among the local Thai. Khun Sulak says: "I wonder how much the Japanese bureaucrats and businessman understand culture. The building designed and built by a Japanese construction company with a large amount of fund, is far from representing Thai culture. Thai officials and wealthy people may enjoy using the facility, but how many lower-income people can go there and enjoy themselves? I wonder how much they thought about these poorer Thai? Of course, there are many good aspects of our bilateral relations, but there are an increasing number of events that need to be criticised. Thailand

has been used by Japan and has lost a great deal of natural resources. This is still going on. My family owns a small bookshop. Because of the large Japanese investment, small Thai shops have lost their business. They talk about an investment and tourism boom, but in fact this means pollution export and sex tourism. Even though they construct roads and dams through aid programs, it never serves the people but destroys the rich nature of this country.

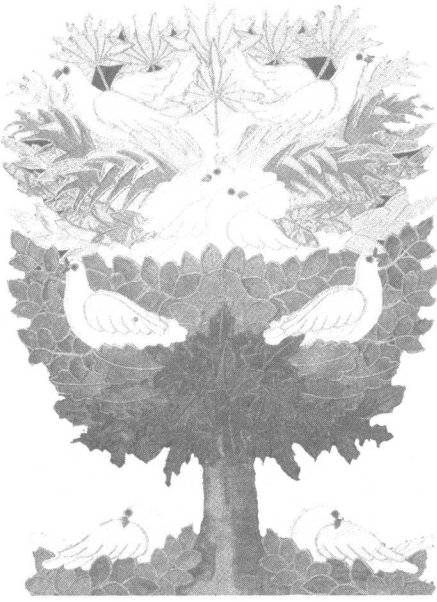
Khun Sulak is a devout Buddhist as well as an enthusiastic advocate of the royal family. He has critical eyes over the Thai society. He comments: "In fact, the US is making more profit than Japan in terms of sales of goods in this country. China is deeply involved in Indochinese affairs. Japan, however, can easily be a target of Thai criticism since the activities of the two superpowers are less prominent than those of Japan. There are now a number of programs being underway to promote understanding between the two countries. In Bangkok, a symposium is being planned on this matter, Khun Sulak concludes: "There are quite a few problems to be reviewed between the two countries. These problems include the occupation of Thailand by the Japanese during the last world war. Keeping the reflections of the past in mind, we want to make this year an opportunity to think about new values toward the next 100 years to come."

Comment by Khun Sulak: "The International House of Japan has been the frontier of Japanese Internationalization. Mr. Matsumoto has been the heart and soul of the project. The internationalization promoted by Matsumoto is based on broader and longer-term perspectives as compared with the official activities which tend to focus on exchange between the rich or poor people of the countries concerned. This year observes the centennial relations celebration of Thai-Japanese. Japan has always treated us Thai unequally, just giving us lip services. Now we are aware of Matsumoto's efforts since his perspective is beyond the short-sighted economic gains. Matsumoto international exchange activities through IHJ should be succeeded by the Japanese youth in the years to come.

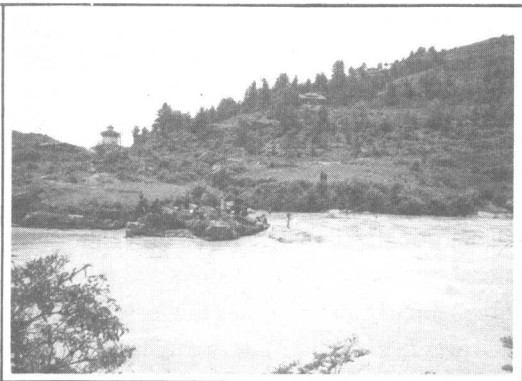
*Translated from Japanese in
The Asahi Shimbun 26 September 1987*



Reflections on Bhutan



By worldly standard, the Royal Kingdom of Bhutan is a poor, tiny country, tucked in between India and Tibet which is now under China. Her mountainous terrain, containing no oil or valuable minerals, produces just enough agricultural products to sustain her sparse population. Her GNP, (and also her international debts), is nothing to speak of. In Bhutan there are no television, department stores, automatic teller machines, Coca Cola, or fast-food chains. Materially, she is the backwater of Asia.



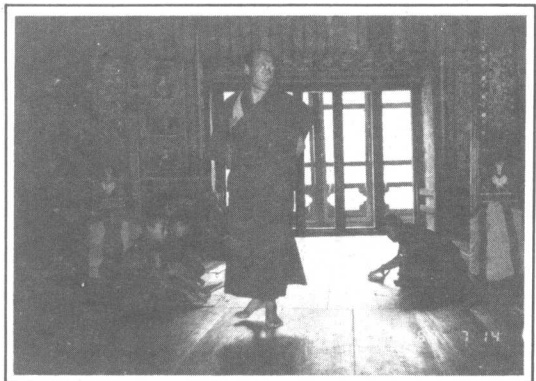
Monks taking bath.

But culturally and spiritually, Bhutan is a rich country, far richer than most countries in the world, including the so-called "Super-powers". This is a land of peace where there is no Ministry of Defence, where Buddhist prayer flags dot the countryside instead of flags of war or commerce. Mountain tops of Bhutan boast no casino resorts or radar stations, but uphold Buddhist monasteries where thousands of monks, nuns and novices dedicated their lives to the seeking of the Ultimate Truth.

The state religion of Bhutan is the Drukpa sect of Kagyupa, a branch of Mahayana Buddhism. Since its introduction eleven centuries ago, Buddhism has shaped Bhutan's history and played a major role in the life of its people. Every Bhutanese home has a chapel where the family prays each day before the altar.

Each village has as its focal point in temples, **chortens**, monasteries, some of which dated back as far as the eighth century, all of which have been erected by voluntary labour as part of merit making.

Each village in Bhutan has its own special celebrations and guardian deity and the most important event of the year is the **tsechu**, a religious festival held in their honour. Treasured **thangkas**, meticulously painted scrolls depicting scenes from Buddhist mythology, are taken out from sacred archives and exhibited for the people to worship, while dancers and musicians retell the age-old stories. Such festivities usually continue for several days.



Monks in a temple.

Monks are held in great respect and play an active part in community life. Senior monks are present at all important occasions and decision-makings. They hold seats both in the National Assembly and the Royal Advisory Council. No policy or project on communal, regional, or national level are formulated or implemented without the advice and consent of the Sangha.

Hence, Buddhism in Bhutan does not confine itself to mere passive, ritualistic role, but is an active force. While providing guidance and access to the Higher Life, it also help setting the right path in worldly affairs.

The state of the world today is such that situation like this is decried as anachronistic. If so, we should encourage and assist Bhutan to retain her anachronism. This tiny Buddhist kingdom should be the yardstick to measure how deep other countries, Buddhist or otherwise, have slipped into the mire of misguided materialistic development.

Of course Bhutan is no Utopia. She has her own problems; lack of skilled labour and civil servants, low standard of public health, etc. But these are minor, compared to problems her neighbors are facing. Her administrators are very cautious in developing Bhutan, trying to avoid the pitfalls of other nations. The gradual reduction of tourists after sensing detrimental effects on local people and culture is a wise and courageous move. The current planning to instil Buddhist doctrines into civil servants training programmes is another laudable attempt.

Bhutan is trying to learn from the world outside, but the world can also benefit tremendously if she can learn from Bhutan. With her well-preserved Seeds of Peace, Bhutan can also be the hope of mankind.



Sirichai Narumit



French village is home for Europe's biggest Buddhist temple

THE lush countryside of central France boasts an exotic new landmark — Europe's largest Buddhist temple.

Here, followers of the Dalai Lama teach and meditate in a Buddhist centre born of a Tibetan lama's inspiration and a Frenchwoman's determination.

The "Temple of 1,000 Buddhas", with its three tiers of sweeping roofs, multi-coloured paintwork and gleaming copper symbols, was recently consecrated in a series of complex ceremonies performed by eminent lamas and attended

by Buddhists from around the world.

Set in the grounds of a 19th-century chateau, it draws casual passers-by as well as devotees come to study meditation, Tibetan yoga or Buddhist philosophy. The temple has become the centrepiece of the institute, called Kagyu-ling.

Inside the main hall, three huge, brightly painted clay statues of the Buddha and two deities smile benignly as red-robed lamas lead people of all ages in rhythmic Tibetan chants punctuated by clashing cymbals, trumpet blasts and the beating of drums.

The centre's founder, former television editor Chris Gallot, said that people from the village of La Boulaye had learned to accept the Buddhists and relations with the local church and a nearby monastery were also good.

Not everyone in the region seems equally reassured. Many people from nearby towns, visiting the temple out of curiosity during inauguration week, were suspicious of the ceremonies.

"It is really a sect, isn't it?" said one middle-aged woman from Montceaux-les-Mines.

"That chanting makes me feel all strange," a woman from Le Creusot added. "I wouldn't like to go in there and not be able to get out."

Gallot, who lives in spartan conditions with her two children in the gatehouse of the Chateau, said the temple had been completed despite a lack of funds, after five years of work by dozens of volunteers, including the architect.

"It's fantastic. It's like a jewel that has risen out of the ground, like a flower," she said.

For Gallot the temple is a tribute to Buddhist art and architecture as well as its philosophy, a way of ensuring that they survive and are known beyond their traditional borders.

"Our motivation was partly to make sure that this tradition, which was really in danger in Tibet, did not die," she added.

Like many other people at the centre, Gallot could not say exactly what had prompted her interest in Buddhism.

"About 15 years ago I woke up and said 'I want to see the Tibetans'. It was something that imposed itself on me," she said.

She spent two years at a Buddhist centre in Scotland and an encounter there with an eminent lama, Kalu Rinpoche, inspired her to found a similar place in France.

Like the faith's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, Kalu Rinpoche fled to India from his native Tibet after China moved in troops to crush an uprising in 1959. Since then he has travelled widely, teaching at the invitation of Buddhist centres.

With little financial backing, Gallot bought the dilapidated Chateau of Plaige and its grounds

in 1974. Artists she knew donated works for sale to raise money and fellow-Buddhist volunteers helped restore the Chateau in record time and launch France's first Tibetan Buddhist centre.

It was also the first place in the West where people could go into retreat for the three years, three months and three days required to become lamas, or priests, competent to teach others.

The third such retreat is in progress, with 15 men and 12 women living in separate, enclosed communities in the grounds.

Estimates of the number of western Buddhists in France vary widely as no precise statistics are kept. But with anywhere from 50,000 to 150,000 followers of its various branches, the 25-centuries-old religion is well established.

The temple's support committee is headed by the British novelist Lawrence Durrell, a regular attendee. French writer Jacques Lacarriere, the committee's vicepresident, said Buddhism had expanded in France mainly since World War Two after being introduced by immigrants from Vietnam and Cambodia.

The spiritual leader of the centre, the Lama Sherab, was not surprised that the French should be interested in Buddhist philosophy.

"In France people are cultivated, they have an open mind. They become interested in the lamas, in outward aspects of the philosophy and then their interest deepens," he said.

Most of those gathered for the inauguration week were well-educated, middle-class professionals, from many walks of life. Apart from France, they had come from Britain, Germany, Spain, the United States, Argentina, Australia and elsewhere.

French Buddhist Brigitte, a secretary in her forties who comes one weekend a month and on holidays, said people who came to the centre were not all as serene as the lamas they sought to emulate.

"It's a microcosm here like anywhere else," she said, "But we do have in common that we are trying to get to know ourselves better".



**Michelle Wilbraham
Reuter, in France**

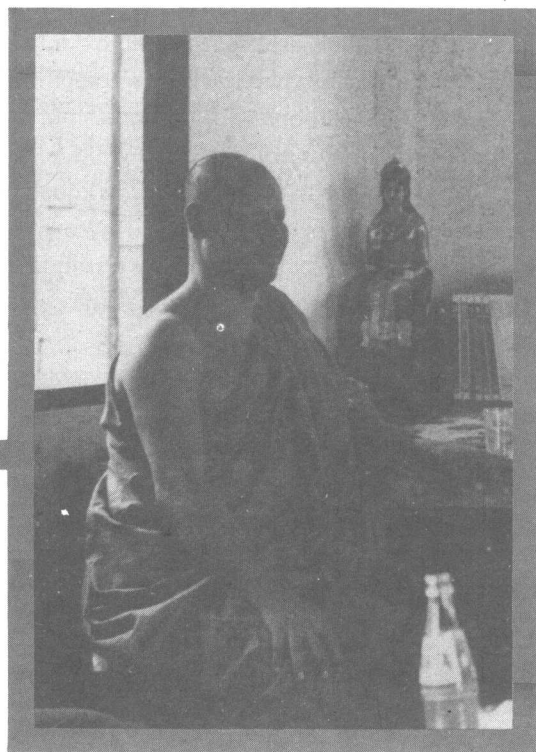
*From Bangkok Post
September 15, 1987*

Phrakhru Atthakitvikrom of Wat Plappla

Plappla Subdistrict is in Muang District, Chanthaburi Province. Being a big subdistrict, it has 13 villages, of which six dwell on Wat Plappla as center for merit-making and ordination. During Buddhist lent, 40-50 monks stay at this wat; for the rest of the year not less than 10 stay here permanently, the greatest number for the province.

Residents of Plappla Subdistrict formerly earned their living by rice farming in a low land reachable by floods. They lived their life self-dependently like most other villages in general. It was some 10 years ago when they changed their occupation to orchard gardening; every family owning a rambutan and durian orchard, because this occupation earns for them better than rice farming. The new occupation necessitates increased contacts with outsiders, and since recent days the costs of living have soared because of the need to use chemical fertilizers, pesticides, hormones for fruit-flowers, of various kinds; the need for water pumping machines, fuel costs; and with the expansion of orchard gardening, the need to compete for markets. Each family needed to own a truck to carry fruits to sell at various market places. Some families have to borrow money to invest and thus get into debts.

Viewed from outside, these people seems to be enjoying a good life because they own various facilities. But their real living condition is having just enough to spend, because their investment spending rises steadily every year, while the prices of fruit are uncertain, worsened by the spreading



of consumerism into villages in this area, and the rising cost of supporting children to study at higher levels has begun to draw a number of the villagers into indebtedness which is likely to increase steadily.

The villagers' cultural life has changed. Formerly, they used to depend on one another for instruments and labor and joined together in community events of merit-making and game-playing, with the wat as the center of their harmonious life. But orchard gardening has reduced interdependence. Competition has displaced cooperation. The sense of brotherhood has declined.

Even the Songkran tradition in which people used to have fun in building sand pagodas, with sand carried in all kinds of container from the stream running through the wat compound, has now become a competition in which sand is bought from construction material shops, loaded in dumping trucks and dumped down on the wat courtyard until sometimes sand is out of stock. Competition for fun has become competition of a serious nature, like the care of football having displaced the pitch-and-toss game, for example.

Phrakhru Atthakitvikrom is a native of this village. After he was ordained Bhikhu, he made trips to study dhamma to other locations. He was recalled to this wat in 1971 in order to assist in its restoration after a fire. Despite his love for higher levels of study, there was much to be done at the wat. He successfully passed an examination in the third course in Pali in the first year of his return and since then has had no opportunity to study further. He was appointed as the abbot in 1977.

He grew up at a time when community relations were not lacking as they are at present and when the relationship between the wat and the homesteads was closer than now. Particularly, at that time youngsters were familiar to the religion. But along with the increased popularity of the school system, youngsters and Bhikkhus now hardly know each other.

Shortly after his return, apart from his construction work, he devoted his time to youths by organizing a summer samanera ordination of a group, which he organised very well and carried out successfully. Since then, the villagers have cooperated with him increasingly, and even people from other locations brought their children to be ordained novices here, whose number range from 50 to 100 yearly.

After summer time passes by, there will be a number of novices who stay on in novicehood. He supports some of them with an aptitude for higher studies to learn at higher levels both here and elsewhere. He also trains his novices in other skills according to their individual aptitude to the effect that the novices of this wat are well known for the arts of decoration, flower arrangement and various styles of cloth pleating, as well as the arts of making posters and of drawing pictures. To those liking mechanics he has made available an automobile repair workshop, which will be later discussed. That is why his novices love to work and are responsible.

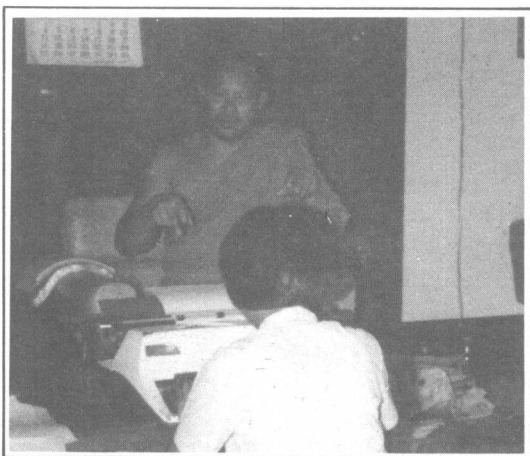
Another activity contributing to the improvement of the quality of life for the villagers is his support for the establishment of the Plapplasamakkhī Club in the wat by allowing youth to form themselves into groups of interest to be

trained in music, games and vocations by teachers whom he has acquired for them.

By evenings and on weekends these youth would come for training and rehearsals at the wat in groups. Well-known groups are the bands "**angkalung**", a traditional Thai style of music having been abandoned since a long time ago. The Phrakhru acquired a teacher to train the groups until they became musical bands. He has also formed a gamelan and tomtom orchestra band. These bands are hired to perform shows in various events, including ordinations, weddings and funeral gatherings. The children are very happy to perform shows, proceeds from which the Phrakhru would persuade them to save as funds for their education. At present there are two "**angkalung**" bands, each with 20-30 members.

In 1978 he opened a children centre, believing that if children know Bhikkhus when they are still very young, they will carry on this impression to their older ages and appreciate the religion. So he tries to be in close contact with children of all ages, be they monastery boys, novices or students. He assists them in various ways possible, regarding it as a worthwhile investment, because, to look at other communities outside his, youths are increasingly posing serious social problems.

Those preferring to send their children to learn with him are not limited to villagers only; there are also towns people who do so. At present, there are about 200 such children.



And from this care for children has sprung another very interesting activity having to do with improving the wat in modern society.

Since at its initial stage the children center was not so popular because of the presence of several kindergartens, particularly western-style ones run by Christian Missionaries which have long been popular with the people.

The Phrakhru, therefore, planned a school-bus service to ease the burden of parents and to transport children from faraway locations. But instead of buying new buses, he obtained old ones from donation, and had them repaired in the wat garage by his novices who lent helping hands until the garage gradually became a training workshop.

At present, the wat has five repaired micro-buses, one large two-row bus and two two-row mini-buses; three automechanics and five apprentices, and the villagers always employ the services of this garage. The wat also does metal works.

It is possible to expand the work to such an extent because the buses used to pick up children from home to town to attend schools in town and at the same time pick the Phrakhru's school children to and from their homes. In so doing, the wat earns about 40,000.- baht monthly, which is not enough to feed and to pay a total of 20

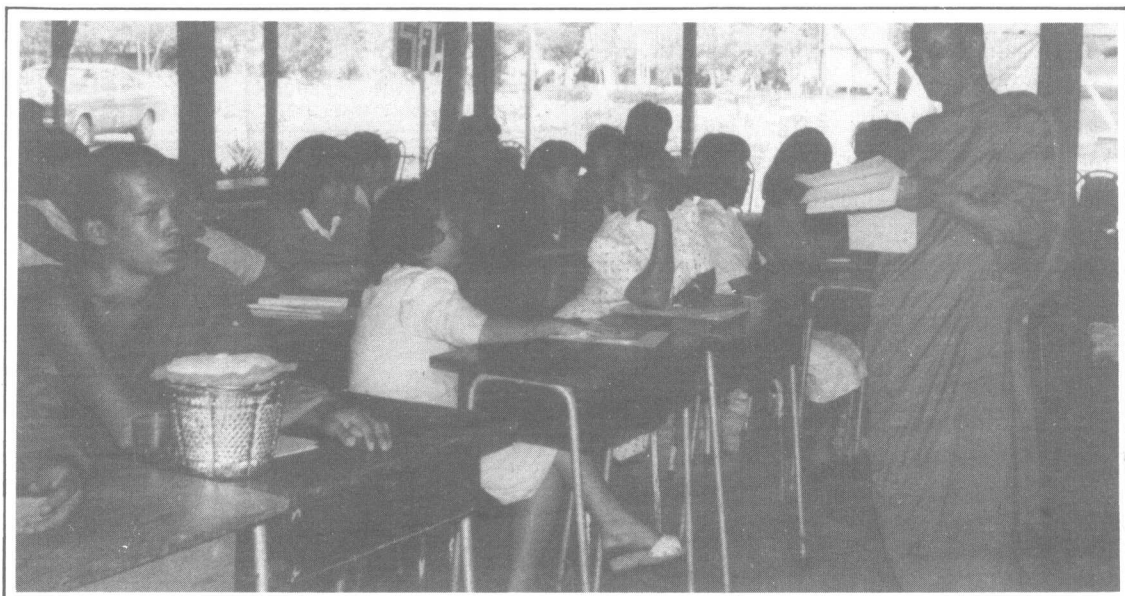
employees of the wat.

His purpose in accepting apprentices is to help village youths for employment and skills. He supervises these youths tenderly and closely, thus making them work cheerfully. All of them show him respect and awe but also intimacy and closeness. He does not pay them a high salary because he deducts a portion to deposit in a bank for their future. He himself receives not less than 5,000.- baht per month from donations on various occasions. He deposits this money for them as well. This gives them encouragement in their work and helps them live a meaningful life.

Another interesting achievement of his is the establishment of a group for mutual assistance in cremations. Due to the values of the modern time, villagers like to hold extravagant cremation rites; some people even allow themselves to get indebted. The Phrakhru felt that this attitude must be corrected.

At first he started with a small group in the subdistrict. Later, the idea became popular and so villagers of other subdistricts joined as members. At present, the initial group has to be divided into two groups, each with 1,000 members.

The principle of a group for mutual assistance in cremations is that when a member dies the committee will collect 50.- baht from each of



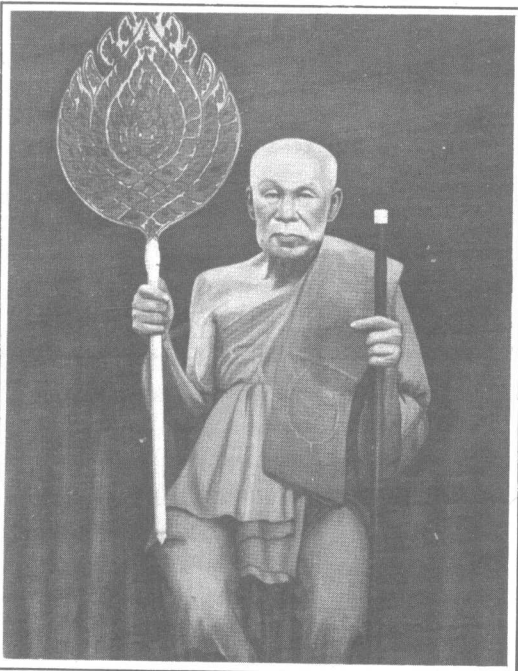
the surviving members in assistance of the family of the deceased member for the cremation rite. Of the total amount collected 80% goes to the family of the deceased member and 20% is set for operating expenses, including costs of materials and remuneration to committeemen who work on every Saturday and receive 150.- baht per head, and there is one employee in each group. This amount, after all deductions, nets 4,000-5,000 baht per case, which the wat and the committee use for activities of public interest, such as for children's education and the wat's children centre.

These groups for mutual assistance in cremations are better liked by the villagers than life insurance, because they involve less red-tape and pay more easily, being regarded as mutual assistance rather than profit-making.

Under Phrakhru's close supervision the groups are noted for their self-dedication and sincerity, having gained much credit from the villagers. At present they have hundreds of thousands of baht on hand, ready to be paid out at once in case of several deaths at a time. They are really strong groups. All these efforts of Phrakhru Atthakitvikrom have gradually brought members of the community together again. In addition, his preaching which always emphasizes unity and hospitality has brought the original values of the community come back to life again. Particularly, the youngsters of this community have remained satisfactorily safe from the values of modern society while most of their counter parts are posing serious social problems.



The Story of The Abbot of Wat Chalong



Originally Phuket came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence and was transferred to the Ministry of Interior only after I became the Minister of Interior. The first time I went down to inspect the various towns of Phuket Province was in 1892.

I was staying in the town of Phuket when Ven. Phra Khru Visudhi Vongsa Chariya, who was the Chief Monk of Phuket Province, residing at Wat Chalong, came to see me. I was puzzled by what met my eyes. On his shins were traces of gold leaves hanging half on, half off, like some Buddha image or ancient Hindu statues which people pray to and ask for favours. After we had exchanged a few words I saw that he was a perfectly normal, well-mannered and mature person--at that time I think he must have been around 60 years old.



LUANG-POR CHAM OF WAT CHALONG

When I asked him why he had gold leaves on his shins he said, "When I reached town, the people in the market asked to press gold on me." I was of course curious to know why people pressed gold leaf on the Abbot of Wat Chalong and so made inquiries about him. I shall put down here what I have been able to find out from the Abbot himself and from what the officials in Phuket were able to tell me from what they have heard and seen. It is indeed a strange tale.

This monk's original name was Chaem, a native of Ban Chalong village which is a few hundred sen outside the town of Phuket. He was a disciple of the monks at Wat Chalong from the time he was a young boy. When he was older he became a novice and studied at the wat until he reached the age of higher ordination. He then became a monk or bhikkhu, studied the scriptures and meditation as well as a whole host of magic spells and various occult formulas. Later, when he had been a monk for many years and had reached a suitable age, he became the abbot of Wat Chalong.

His biography to this point contains nothing extraordinary. However, he began to show supernatural powers and brought about miracles at the time of the trouble in 1886. The Chinese labourers down at the tin mines in Phuket staged a rebellion. At that time the government did not have enough troops to put down and wipe out the Chinese rebels. To hold the town was all that could be done. Outside the town in the villages the Chinese were able to go on a rampage of looting and killing at will without meeting any resistance. The province of Phuket was in chaos.

What follows now is an account of what happened in the words of the Abbot of Wat Chalong as he told the story to me. He said that when word got out to Ban Chalong village that the Chinese were on their way to loot, most of the villagers were afraid and decided to run and hide in the hills. A few men who had been his disciples came to the wat and urged him to flee with them. But he said, "I have lived in this wat since I was a small boy. Now I am old and I am the abbot here, how can I possibly leave the wat and run away? If you want to flee please do, but I am not going. If I must die, I am going to die right here in the wat. Don't you worry about me."

No matter how the men pleaded with him, he would not change his mind. When they understood that he really was not going to leave the wat, they said to one another, "Since the Old Father won't go, how can we possibly leave him here to die?" So they went in and spoke to him again.

"Since you won't go, Father, we will stay here to keep you company, but at least give us something to protect ourselves with." So he took some white cloth and drew magic formulas on each piece so that they were transformed into protective scarf, and gave each man one. The men left to look for reinforcement and in the end there were about ten of them.

The men invited the abbot to go into the chapel while they went about arming themselves and then returned to wait in the compound of the wat. After a couple of days a group of Chinese came on the rampage, but since they knew that most of the villagers had run off, they walked recklessly around. The Siamese were hiding behind the protective wall which surrounded the chapel. When the Chinese arrived the Siamese shot at them and easily managed to disperse them.

Word spread that the disciples of the Abbot of Wat Chalong had fought with the Chinese and won. This brought the people of Ban Chalong out of their hiding places and back into their houses. The men went to Wat Chalong and volunteered to help fight if the Chinese ever showed up again. But the abbot said, "I am a monk, I can't fight or kill anyone. If you want to fight you go and plot among yourselves. I will contribute by giving you the necessary

amulets and magic spells to protect yourselves.”

More men were recruited and soon they were over a hundred strong. The Abbot of Wat Chalong made a magic protective scarf for each man and it was agreed among them that they would tie this scarf around their heads as a kind of uniform. The Chinese later referred to them as “the white head gang”. The men organized themselves into groups each with a leader and each group had its territory. Wat Chalong was used as head quarters.

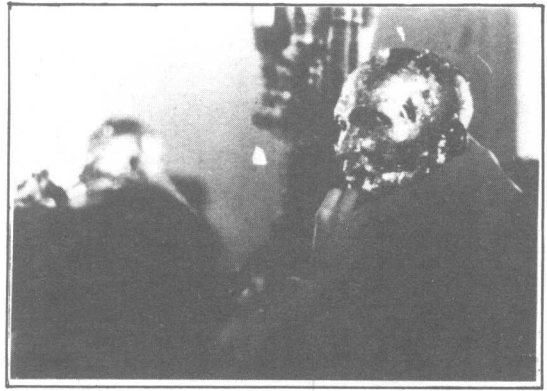
It did not take long for the Chinese to return. This time they arrived as a fighting force, flying a banner and equipped with a signal drum. The number of men involved were also larger than the previous time. The Chinese arrived at Ban Chalong in the morning. The Siamese stayed in their protective hiding places, firing to keep the enemy at bay. Since the Chinese could not enter the village of Ban Chalong, they stopped outside. The two forces exchanged fire until the sun was at noon, when the Chinese stopped fighting to eat their rice soup. The Siamese saw their chance. They surrounded and attacked the Chinese while the latter were busy eating lunch. In next to no time the Chinese were either killed or had scattered in all directions.

To quote the Abbot, “The Chinese were beaten by the Siamese because they had to eat their rice soup. The Siamese did not have to eat rice soup and so easily won.”

From then on the Chinese did not dare go to rob Ban Chalong again. Their leaders, however, set a price on the head of the abbot. 1,000 crowns would be paid to anyone who could produce the severed head of the Abbot. Which of course made him even more famous than ever.

After the government had successfully quelled the Chinese rebels, His Majesty King Chulalongkorn appointed the abbot of Wat Chalong to the title Phra Khru Visuddhi Vongsa Chariya and he was also to assume the position of Chief monk in charge of ecclesiastical affairs of Phuket. This was partly as a mark of recognition for the fact that he had led the defense against the Chinese rebels and partly because the position of Chief monk of Phuket happened to be vacant.

The people of Phuket were convinced that



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the Chinese were beaten by the Ban Chalong villagers because the Abbot possessed supernatural powers and was well-versed in the occult. They revered him as a kind of living saint all over the province.

What I have so far recounted occurred prior to the business of pressing gold leaf on to the person of the abbot, but it was because the people believed he was a kind of saint that led to gold leaf affair. Apparently 4 or 5 citizens of Phuket once went out to sea on a fishing trip and met with a fierce storm which almost wrecked their boat. The men feared for their lives and each began calling upon his holy image or supernatural being which had hitherto come to his aid. But the storm raged even more fiercely. The men were at their wits' end, not knowing where else to turn for help. One of the men suddenly vowed out loud that if he got out of this alive he would press gold leaf on the Abbot of Wat Chalong. The storm subsided as soon as the vowed was uttered.

When the fishermen got back safely they sought out the abbot and asked for his permission to honour the vow. The Abbot said, “But I am not a Buddha image! You can't go against tradition and press gold leaf on a living person. No, I can't allow that.”

The fisherman in turn said, “But I made this vow! If you won't allow me to press gold on you, the power of the (broken) vow could make me ill and I might die. What would you say then?” The Abbot was at a loss for an answer since he himself believed in the power of a vow. If something untoward happened to the man who made the vow, then the fault would surely fall on him. So he had to give in. Reluctantly



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he dipped his hand in water and wiped his wet hand along his shin; then he stretched out that leg for it to be adorned with gold. He would allow only one small leaf to be pressed there, as a token of goodwill. And when the people had left, he washed away the gold leaf.

When word got around that a boatman's life had been saved because he had vowed to press gold on the Abbot of Wat Chalong, others began to follow his example. In times of illness or danger others too would vow to press gold on the Abbot, who, not knowing how to prevent this, had to go along with their vows. And so came about the custom of pressing gold on the Abbot of Wat Chalong.

He himself confided in me that this business of being decorated with gold leaf was actually quite irritating because the skin always itched under the gold until it was washed off. Still, he was reluctant to prohibit it and so every time the abbot went into town, the people who had made this vow would look out for him and ask to press gold on him, just as they would wait to give him alms.

On the day he came to visit me for the first time he had had no time to wash off the gold which had so attracted my attention. From the time we first met on that day, the Abbot of Wat Chalong and I became very fond of one another. He never failed to call on me when he came to Bangkok. He even brought me one of his protective scarf. The workmanship of the design was excellent. He wrote beautiful Khmer scripts. Every time I went to Phuket I made it a point of paying him a visit at Wat Chalong.

Since the custom of pressing gold leaf on a living person originated with the Abbot of

Wat Chalong, it is hardly surprising that his fame soon spread far and wide. He was venerated in every town up and down Siam's western sea coast. Not only there, but even the population of the British colony of Penang worshipped the Abbot of Wat Chalong. This was due to the fact that the people of Penang also consisted of Siamese and Chinese of Siamese ancestry. The men are known as "Baba" and the women "Yoya" and they were nearly all practising Buddhists. These people had erected quite a few wats and Thai monks were invited to reside there. However, there were no senior monks in Penang and so the monks as well as the lay population appropriated the Abbot of Wat Chalong to be their most senior monk (**Maha Thera**). When a new chapel was built they invited him to go and mark consecrate the boundary. During the season of ordination before Buddhist lent he would be invited to preside as **Preceptor**. And even when there was trouble among the monks they called upon him to come and investigate and settle the matter. His judgement was considered final. He was to all intents and purposes the Chief Monk of Penang as well as that of Phuket, -only in Penang it was in a private capacity rather than official. All this because in those days there was no railway and the people of Bangkok and Penang were very much separated from one another, whereas between Penang and Phuket there was a boat service once a week so that communications there were simple. The Abbot of Wat Chalong lived to a ripe old age. He must have been over 80 when he died.

After I had retired from the position of Minister of Interior, I did not go to Phuket again for a very long time. Then, during the 7th reign, of Rama VII, I accompanied His Majesty King Prajadhipok to Phuket in 1928. The Abbot of Wat Chalong had long been dead but I rather missed him so I made a trip to Wat Chalong. The journey was extremely convenient for by now the town of Phuket had many roads for motor cars and it took very little time to arrive at Wat Chalong. There was a great deal more activity there than in the olden days and the wat itself had changed almost beyond recognition. The abode where the former abbot used to live had been transformed into a two-storied brick building and there were many more buildings

in the grounds than before. These were apparently all gifts to their abbot from the people. However, in spite of all the additions and changes which had taken place, no one had been allowed to touch the chapel where he had stayed at the time of the fight against the Chinese, or the wall behind which his disciples had hidden while fighting the Chinese. These stood as they did then.

In the abode where he had lived, an altar for worship had been set up. A large photograph of the late Phra Khru, under glass and in a handsome frame, dominated the scene. Gold leaves had been pressed to the glass, leaving only his face visible. It is indeed remarkable that even after his death people continued to vow to press gold on him. The walking stick which the abbot used to take with him everywhere he went was placed in front of the framed photograph and there were traces of gold on that too.

There is an amusing story involving this walking stick which an official in Phuket told me while the Abbot was still alive.

There was apparently at that time a young girl in Phuket who was very fond of rather obscene humour and this girl one day fell sick and made a vow that if she got better she would press gold on the private parts of the Abbot of Wat Chalong!

She recovered and of course did nothing to honour her vow which was only made as a joke in the first place. But soon she fell ill again. This time she was really sick and no matter what the doctors did her condition did not improve. Her parents suspected that this was due either to an evil spirit or to the power of a vow not honoured. When questioned the girl was naturally too embarrassed at first to admit that she had made such a vow. But when she could no longer put up with her aches and pains, she confessed the truth to her parents, who rushed to confer with the Abbot. The Abbot said it was an obscene vow to make and how could anyone possibly consent to have gold pressed there! The parents, afraid for their child's life, pleaded and pleaded until the Abbot finally came up with a solution. He placed his walking stick under his seat and allowed the girl to press gold leaf on to the end of the walking stick. According to my source, the girl recovered as soon as she had honoured



LUANG-POR CHAM OF WAT CHALONG

her vow.

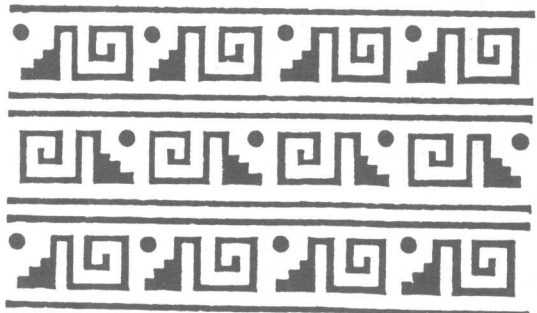
I once asked the Abbot if it were true that he had once allowed a girl to press gold leaf on the end of his walking stick. He neither denied nor confirmed it. He merely smiled. So most likely the story is true as claimed.

In 1934, when I went to live in Penang, I again came across evidence of the miraculous powers of the Abbot of Wat Chalong. At Wat Sri Sawang Aromana, on one of the alter tables next to the principal Buddha image in the chapel, was a framed photograph of the Phra Khru. As in Phuket, the pane of glass protecting the photograph was completely covered with gold leaves from vows honoured. This photograph is still there at Wat Sri Sawang Aromna.

Considering his life story, I think one would have to admit that Phra Khru Visuddhi Vongsa Chariya (Chaem) of Wat Chalong was indeed an extraordinary man.



Written by HRH Prince Damrong Rajanubhab
Translated by Ms. Sumalee Viravaidaya





SEEDS OF PEACE IN THE PHILIPPINES



AIDA OF PANDACAN BASE GROUP

"Once you've become a part of Alay Dangal movement, it becomes difficult to be blind to situations of injustice."

These were words spoken by Aida Martija, in an interview on what it means to live active non-violence in their locality.

Aida, together with her husband, Policarpio Martija, are both active members of the Alay Kapwa People's Council in Jesus, Pandacan, the Philippines. Also active members of their group are Lolita Gaviola, Lucera Castillejos and Greg Dalumias.

Every Wednesday, at four o'clock in the afternoon, they meet and discuss community issues that affect them as a people of God. Each meeting starts with a prayer, because they believe that the Lord serves to guide and shed light on any problem.

In the three years that the group has been meeting, they have confronted a number of problems. These include times when they had to patch up quarrels among neighbors. Sometimes, they would counsel drug addicts or wayward youth. At other times, they would be involved in cleanliness and beautification drives. An over-riding concern however, is their consistent involvement in a commitment to uphold a person's right for a place he can call a home.

Those living near the railway tracks in this part of Pandacan do not have a place they can call their own. For a long time, they have been declared squatters in their own country, just like so many urban poor dwellers. Many residents feel that the barangays where they presently reside should be declared Area for Priority Development.

To this end, the husband and wife team members have pledged themselves. They have been involved in the struggle to secure the rights of people to this land. In their efforts to attain this, they have endured hunger, fatigue and in one instance, the spite of some people who would rather take advantage of their deprivation.

They have endured and prevailed over these little trials and they continue to offer their care and service to the other members of their community.

(Reprinted from

ALAY DANGAL Newsletter, a monthly publication of Aksyon Para Sa Kapayapaan at Katarungan (AKKAPKA) an organization that seeks to promote and support active non-violence as an alternative expression of the Filipino peoples' resistance to all unjust, repressive, exploitative and dehumanizing systems.)



AACT

The meeting of Asian Active Non-violence Coordination Team (AACT) was recently held in Bangkok on October 31 and November 1. Participants included Fr. Klaus Beurle of Dipshika, Bangladesh, Tess Rami of Akappka, Philippines and Sulak Sivaraksa of COPDEV, Thailand. The main concerns of the meeting were the setting up of AACT office in Bangkok and an Asian non-violent training and seminar to be held in Bangkok during 5th to 19th of the coming April. AACT's office is now at 303/7, Soi Santipap, Nares Road, Bangkok. The seminar will be joined by participants from Bangladesh, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. There will also be an exposure program in which participants will, in groups, visit and stay in various places in Thailand, where principles of non-violence are being practiced and applied.

BOOK REVIEWS

A Socially ENGAGED BUDDHISM : a Controversial Siamese

Edited and with an introduction by Michael Shari

(Thai Inter Religious Comission for Development, Bangkok 1988)

Bht. 250 (hard cover) Bht. 160 (paper back)

Buddhist teaching, actively applied to practical politics is the foundation of a good and just society: this is the contention that S.Sivaraksa develops in a sequence of papers published in his volume: and he considers it from many perspectives. His writings are permeated by a quality that George Orwell would have called "decency" -and, in fact, it is likely that the two writers would have got on well. Orwell was a fair-minded man who loved his country but found much to criticize in its progress; he warned of the oppression that inevitably accompanies rule by the extremes of Right or Left; and he was an intellectual with a firm belief in the rights and welfare of "ordinary" people.

S. Sivaraksa considers the development of Buddhist teachings from "The Sermon on the Three Worlds" to the perceptive developments of King Rama IV, who saw that a return to the original teachings of the Buddha would enable Siamese society to withstand and survive the Western impact. In today's world, he regards the vision of Bhuddadasa Bhikhu as the most significant expression of Thai spirituality.

The alternatives offered by both Western and Communist models he sees as exploitative; excessive admiration of and reliance on technology and science lead to the loss of self reliance, critical awareness and cultural heritage.

But true development in a

society where neither rulers nor ruled exploit one another can be achieved by returning to what he calls our "rice roots" and to the teachings of the Buddha. His vision is of an outward-looking Buddhism that has a world view, since the good which is common to all faiths is more important than the differences of observance that divide them; and co-operation is always more desirable than competition.

S. Sivaraksa's style is vigorous and direct, personal but not idiosyncratic, and ultimately persuasive.

Although describing himself as "controversial", he does not write contentiously; on the contrary, his ideas are set out with calm, precision and tact. With decency, in fact.

B.C.

Duang Prateep Foundation

THE 1987 JOURNAL OF THE SIAM SOCIETY (JSS)

The Siam Society was founded in 1904. Since that time, it has played a unique role in gathering and presenting information on all aspects of cultural, artistic, scientific and political life in Thailand and its neighbouring countries.

This special 1987 volume of

the Society's journal is the 75th in its history; it is respectfully dedicated to His Majesty the King, and opens with Somdej Phra Nanasamvara's "Verses of Victorious Blessing to His Majesty King Bhumipol" in the original, and rendered into English.

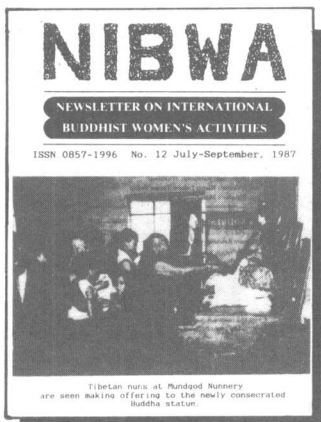
The Journal, as one would expect, contains a wealth of specialist information on a wide range of topics within the Society's scope; it is also, however, a thoroughly enjoyable companion for any reader who has a general interest in the history and development of Thai society.

Oskar V.Hinuben's paper on the Society's Pali manuscripts is a sine qua non for the scholar; On the other hand, S.Sivaraksa's "Thai Spirituality" can be appreciated by any non-specialist reader with an interest in the development of Buddhist thought in Thailand. There are fascinating insights into recent Thai history, too, which offer interesting perspectives to the general reader, in particular Thanet Aphornsuvan's analytical description of events leading to the 1947 coup.

Nearly 80 pages of book reviews open a series of windows through which the reader catches glimpses of a colourful spectrum of topics which, though the subject of serious academic research, nonetheless reflect the excitement of scholarly discovery and revelation.

I have stressed the appeal of this volume of the Journal to the more general reader because it will surely be required reading for the specialist; very rewarding reading, too, clearly presented and well-annotated. But its 340 pages contain so much that may be of interest to the lay-man as well as of value to the professional, that it deserves a wider circulation.

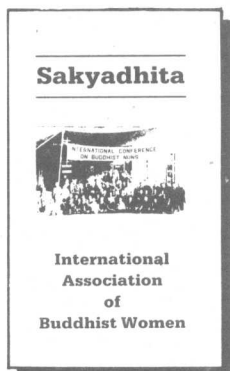
Bernie Cooper



NIBWA (Newsletter on International Buddhist Women's Activities)

NIBWA intends to give informations on Buddhist women's activities and studies on them from various countries around the world

NIBWA also intends to serve as a centre of communications among Buddhist women and people interested in Buddhist women's activities in different part of the world **NIBWA** is also interested to help for the establishment of bhikkhuni Sangha in various countries
c/o Dr.Chatsumarn Kabilsingh
Faculty of Liberal Arts
Thammasat University
Bangkok 10200, Thailand.



Sakyadhita

Sakyadhita is an international association, founded at the conclusion of the Conference, whose aims are to:

- work in harmony with all Buddhist traditions and their Sanghas
- create a network of communications for Buddhist women
- conduct research into Vinaya texts of the different traditions

- provide guidance and assistance for Buddhist nuns and those aspiring to ordination
- encourage and educate women as teachers of Buddhadharma
- promote world peace

The following committees were established:

- Executive
- Vinaya Research
- Meditation
- Training in Deportment and Ethics
- Education
- Communications
- Finance

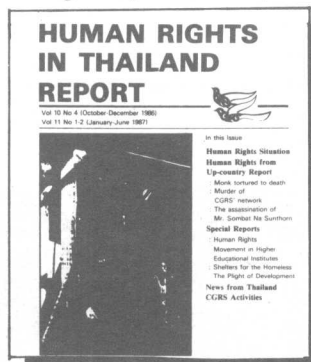
Sakyadhita welcomes members, regardless of creed, nationality or gender.

A year's membership includes four issues of NIBWA, the Newsletter on International Buddhist Women's Activities, which will inform members of current developments of the association.

The resarch, educational and publication activities of Sakyadhita will require generous support. Benefactors may direct their contributions to specific projects if they wish.

Sakyadhita

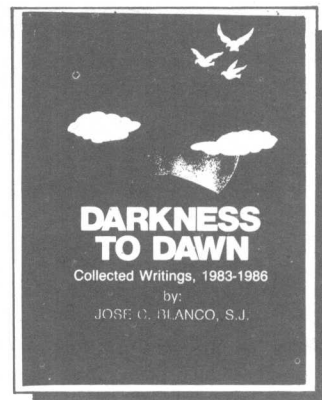
928 South New Hampshire Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90006, U.S.A.



Human Rights in Thailand Report

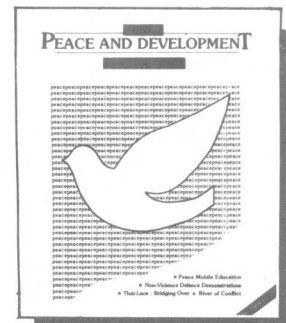
The report is a quarterly publication of the Coordinating Group for Religion in Society (CGRS).

For further details please contact CGRS, 495/44 Soi Yoomsin, Jaran-Sanitwong 40 Road, Bangkok 10700, Thailand.



Darkness to Dawn: Collected Writings, 1983-1986 by Jose C. Blanco, S.J. ed. by Gemino H. Abad and Teresita V. Ramiro
(*Aksyon Para sa Kapayapaan at Katarungan - AKKAPKA*)

The essays and notes in this book started with the martyrdom of Ninoy Aquino. They are reflections on the events as they tumbled forth since that historic event. They were not written then in order to unravel a story of the Filipino people. But reading them again as here gathered together, I began to realize that they do tell the unique story of our struggle over the last three years under Mr. Marcos.



Thailand : Peace And Development

A Communique On Peace Activities Of Coalition For Peace And Development

1987 : Aims To Promote Non-violence And Neighborhood Countries' better Relationship, R.D.P. Laos

Contact : Laddawan Tantivitayapitak, 4753/5 Soi Watthongnoppakun, Klongsarn, Bangkok 10600, Thailand. Tel. 437-9445, 437-9450

Chronology of Events and Campaigns Concerning the Refusal of the Thai Government To Permit H.H. the Dalai Lama to Enter Thailand

3 Sep. 1987

S. Sivaraksa's article, "Magsaysay and Politics" was published in the *Matichon* newspaper, giving information regarding the refusal of the Thai government to permit H.H. the Dalai Lama to enter the country to participate in the assembly of Magsaysay awardees, for fear that the permission might endanger the government's relations with China.

13-30 Sep. 1987

Siamese Buddhists for Peace pursued the matter to double check the information.

1 Oct. 1987

- Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa sent letters to people of various circles inviting them to join in a meeting to consult on the matter.
- Siamese Buddhists for Peace sent a bulletin to Buddhist groups and organizations abroad suggesting that they write letters to the Thai government and ask it to revise its policy in this case.
- Phra Phaisan Visalo wrote a letter to H.M. the King asking him to summon the government to revise its decision.

5 Oct. 1987

News regarding protests and riots in Tibet was publicized.

6 Oct. 1987

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially announced its decision to debar H.H. the Dalai Lama to enter Thailand.

7 Oct. 1987

Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa gave press conference disapproving the government's decision. Some academics expressed approval of the government's decision.

8 Oct. 1987

- Mr. Thongbai Thongpao, a Thai Magsaysay awardee, expressed his disapproval of the government's decision.
- Comments on the matter were widely made in newspapers.

15 Oct. 1987

- The Pridi Banomyong Institute and the Students' organization of Thammasat University arranged a discussion on "Dalai Lama and Human Rights in Tibet" at Thammasat University.

16 Oct. 1987

- Mr. Boonchu Rojanasathien, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of the Representatives, expressed disapproval of the government's policy on this matter.
- Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa, director of the Pridi Banomyong Institute, organized a meeting, inviting representatives from various groups, including National Students' Union, Buddhist Universities, the Inter-Religious Commission on Development, Siamese Buddhists for Peace, to consult on campaign possibilities. The meeting proposed that:

- 1) there should be a campaign demanding the government to revise its policy concerning H.H. the Dalai Lama's entrance.
- 2) there should be a campaign demanding the government of the People's Republic of China to stop its violation of human rights in Tibet. Letters should also be sent to Buddhists throughout the world so that they may take similar actions.
- 3) there should be consistent propagation of Tibetan Buddhism, disseminating the knowledge on the religion via lectures, discussions, and publications.
- 4) delegates should be arranged to negotiate with the government on the matter.

- A number of letters from Buddhist organizations abroad were sent to the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asking both to revise its policy on this case. There were altogether 17 letters, being sent from organizations in the U.S., Switzerland, France, India, Nepal, the Republic of China, and Hong Kong.

19 Oct. 1987

Siamese Buddhists for Peace issued a bulletin to various organizations abroad, asking them to join in the campaign for the cessation of human rights violation in Tibet.

27 Oct. 1987

Mr. Chang Te Wei, Chinese Ambassador to Thailand, commented in the conference on "Mutual Understanding among Nations," organized by the Asian Studies Institute of Chulalongkorn University that China had informed her allies that she would disapprove of any country's decision to allow the Dalai Lama to use its realm to promote his course in separating Tibet from China. The Ambassador emphasized that China would always object to the Dalai Lama's activities.

28 Oct. 1987

- Siamese Buddhists for Peace submitted an open letter to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of the Representatives. The letter included 840 signatories, comprising notorious persons such as Magsaysay awardees, members of the House of the Representatives, writers, academics, SEA Write-awarded poets, and student leaders. They demand that the government revise its policy in refusing to permit H.H. the Dalai Lama to enter the country.
- Mr. Chuan Leekpai, Speaker of the House of the Representatives, Mr. Boonchu Rojanasathien, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of the Representatives, as well as members of opposition parties such as Mr. Piyanat Watcharaporn, commented that the government should allow H.H. the Dalai Lama to enter the country. Opposition parties called for an urgent interpellation to examine the government's decision on the matter.

29 Oct. 1987

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press release reaffirming its decision, explaining that the presence of H.H. the Dalai Lama unavoidably involved politics, that any activity of his could not be separated from his political course, and that the Thai government did not want to commit any act contradictory to its policy in recognizing a single, inseparable, sovereign China.
- Siamese Buddhists for Peace were invited to hear the press release at the Department of Information, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They then submitted a letter requesting an audience with Air Chief Marshal Sitthi Sawetsila, the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

2 Nov. 1987

The National Students' Union submitted a letter to the Chinese Embassy to Thailand, protesting against the comment of Mr. Chang Te Wei, the ambassador, which characterized China's sanction in Thailand's foreign policy.

3 Nov. 1987

The Buddhist Research Institute of Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University at Wat Mahathat arranged an exhibition on the situation in Tibet and a discussion on "the Dalai Lama and the Human Rights situation in Tibet" as well as showing video movies- "The Last Mystery" and "The Bamboo Curtain Falls."

5 Nov. 1987

- The Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of the Representatives reiterated its proposal that the government revise its policy on the matter.
- Siamese Buddhists for Peace reissued its letter to the government.
- Newspapers publicized that Mr. Stephen Rockefeller had sent a letter to the Pridi Banomyong Institute, informing the latter that he would not participate in the assembly, and had also sent a letter to the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the latter letter, he had explained that the Magsaysay Awardees Assembly had no political concern; therefore, it would be improper to disallow H.H. Dalai Lama to enter Thailand.
- Many elder monks commented that the government should allow H.H. the Dalai Lama to enter Thailand.

6 Nov. 1987

The Department of Information, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press release, describing the advantages and disadvantages of allowing the Dalai Lama to enter the country. It also affirmed that Mr. Stephen Rockefeller's decision to withdraw himself from the Magsaysay assembly had nothing to do with the Dalai Lama's case.

8 Nov. 1987

The Chinese embassy issued a press release, stating that any country, which allowed the Dalai Lama to participate any activity in its realm, would be understood as interfering with China's domestic politics.

9 Nov. 1987

A letter from Buddhist monks, with 109 signatories, was submitted to H.M. the King, asking him to express concern over the matter.

10 Nov. 1987

National Students' Union and the Students' Organization of Thammasat University arranged a discussion on "The Influence of China on Thai Foreign Policy-making," inviting delegates from the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chinese Embassy to join. None of them sent a delegate to participate in the discussion.

12 Nov. 1987

- Siamese Buddhists for Peace, comprising 35 persons of various professions, went to greet Magsaysay awardees at the Regent Hotel, presenting bouquets and letters to them. A representative of the group then gave a speech welcoming all Magsaysay awardees, and expressed their regret that H.H. the Dalai Lama could not come to participate in the event. They affirmed that the Thais always welcome the Dalai Lama, and that the decision of the Thai government in this case did not represent the wish of the Thai people.
- Mr. David Rockefeller said in his press conference that H.H. the Dalai Lama is a leader in humanity, an honourable man and a Magsaysay awardee, who should have come to join the assembly. He, however, respected the decision of the Thai government on the matter.

13 Nov. 1987

Siamese Buddhists for Peace issued a letter to the government, protesting against its action, and to the Chinese embassy, protesting against the interference of China.

14 Nov. 1987

Three Magsaysay awardees sent letters to the Thai government and the Chinese embassy, protesting against their policies in this case.



Recommended Reading

- 1) **The Christ and the Bodhisattva** ed. by D.S.Lorez Jr. and S.C. Rockefeller (*State University of New York Press*) Albany 1987.
- 2) **Three of Life : Buddhism and Protection of Nature** with a declaration on Environmental Ethics by H.H. the Dalai Lama (*Buddhist Perception of Nature*) Geneva 1987.
- 3) **A Zen Life : D.T.Suzuki Remembered** ed. by Masao Abe (*John Weatherhill*) Tokyo 1987.
- 4) **Responding to the Cambodian Refugee Crisis** ed. by B.S.Levy and D.C.Susott (*distributed by Kled Thai*) Bangkok 1987.

- 5) **Catalysing Hope for Justice : A Tribute to C.I.Itty** ed. by Wolfgang R. Schmidt (*WCC/CCPD and CCA*) Singapore 1987.
- 6) Thai books in Tagalog translated by B.S. Medina Jr. and published by Solidaridad, Manila 1986.
 - (1) S. Sivaraksa : **Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society.**
 - (2) Buddhadasa Bhikkhu : **Dhammic Socialism**, which has also appeared in French as **Bouddhisme et Socialisme** translated by Maric Charlette Grandy (*Les Deux Oceans*), Paris 1987.

- 7) **Diakonia 2000 Called to be Neighbours** Official Report WCC World Consultation, Inter-Church Aid, Refugee & World Service, Larnaca 1986 Ed. by K. Poser (*WCC Publications*) Geneva 1987.
- 8) (1) **Teaching Zen to Christians** : Orientation Talks for Beginners by Elaine MacInnes, O.L.M. and
- (2) **Total Liberation** : Zen Spirituality and the Social Dimension by Ruben L.F. Habito, S.J. Zen Center for Oriental Spirituality in the Philippines Provident Village, Marikina, Metro Manila 1986.