The Propagation of Buddhism: The Development of the Format and Method of Approached Strategy of Thai Sangha

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted with three objectives, (1) to study the pattern of Buddhism propagation made by Thai monk ensemble in Thai society during the past-to-present days, (2) to study the problems of implementing the former pattern and methods of the said Buddhism propagation, and (3) to develop proactive pattern and methods of the said Buddhism propagation for Thai monks ensemble. The 138 monks/persons were selected as research samples through purposive sampling technique. Four main research methods for data collection included participatory observation, in-depth interview, focus group discussion and workshop. The results were the three following parts; (1) during the past-to-present days, the most practical ways of Buddhism propagation or Dharma teaching included seven modes, namely; (1.1) direct moral conversation pattern, the same as the Buddha’s, the founder of Buddhism who made in an ancient era towards one or more of the visitors, (1.2) morality discussions for finding the truly practical ways, (1.3) occasional training and notifying as requested in guiding good-or-bad things for public’s determination, (1.4) direct morality teaching in overall topics for public audience, (1.5) idea exchanging about morality or “Dharma” practices in specific occasions (1.6) question-and-answer forum (Q & A Forum) and (1.7) in-depth explanation about morality and enlightenment among knowledge seekers, (2) the problems of implementing the former pattern and methods of the said Buddhism propagation were; (2.1) less harmonious way of Buddhism propagation policy formulation among

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central and regional related units in the country, (2.2) less potential human resources for religious teaching, (2.3) less effective and society-responsive methods for Buddhism propagation in modern era, and (2.4) less attractive and effective teaching media, (3) the recommended proactive pattern and methods of the said Buddhism propagation for Thai monks ensemble included “the Three New Dharma Centers Establishment”. The first Center should be an academic-based department to conduct Research and Development tasks (R & D mission) for innovative methods launching. The second one should be an action-based department for networking tasks to broaden the partnership for Buddhism propagation. The last one should be media development-based department for media creation to response to the Buddhism propagation in modern society.

KEYWORDS: Buddhism Propagation; Propagation Pattern; Propagation Methods; Proactive Buddhism Propagation
การเขียนบทความลงวารสารหรือหนังสือพิมพ์ การเป็นมัคคุเทศก์ การเป็นครู อาจารย์ หรือวิทยากร การจัดรายการวิทยุและโทรทัศน์ และการสอนธรรมผ่านกิจกรรม

สภาพปัญหาของรูปแบบและวิธีการเผยแพร่พระพุทธศาสนาของคณะสงฆ์ไทยในปัจจุบัน ๔ ข้อ ได้แก่ ปัญหาด้านนโยบายเผยแพร่ โดยคณะสงฆ์ไม่มีการระดมความคิดร่วมกันจากพระสงฆ์ในส่วนกลางและส่วนภูมิภาค ทำให้นโยบายเผยแพร่พระพุทธศาสนาไม่สอดคล้องกับวิถีชีวิตของชุมชน ปัญหาด้านบุคลากร โดยไม่มีการกำหนดการเผยแพร่พระพุทธศาสนาในข้อตกลงกับคณะสงฆ์ที่ขาดหายไป นอกจากนี้ พระสงฆ์ที่ทำการเผยแพร่พระพุทธศาสนาเข้มข้นด้านทักษะในการเผยแพร่ด้วยทักษะ ปัญหาด้านรูปแบบวิธีการที่ใช้ในการเผยแพร่ ไม่สอดคล้องกับคำนิยมและไม่ตรงตามความต้องการของสังคมปัจจุบัน และปัญหาด้านสื่อที่ไม่ทันสมัยและขาดประสิทธิภาพในการสื่อสาร

การพัฒนารูปแบบและวิธีการเผยแพร่เชิงรุกของคณะสงฆ์ไทย ผู้วิจัยเสนอการพัฒนารูปแบบการเผยแพร่ โดยเสนอให้มีการจัดตั้งศูนย์การเผยแพร่ธรรม ๓ ศูนย์หลัก ประกอบด้วย ศูนย์วิชาการ มีหน้าที่รวบรวมและพัฒนาข้อมูล ให้บริการข้อมูลด้านพระพุทธศาสนา ศูนย์ปฏิบัติการเป็นต้น รวมทั้งจัดการฝึกอบรมวิชาการเผยแพร่พระพุทธศาสนา สามแห่ง อุบัติการ ศูนย์ปฏิบัติการ เชิงเครื่องข่าย เป็นศูนย์พัฒนารูปแบบการปฏิบัติในลักษณะเครื่องข่ายบุคลากรด้านการเผยแพร่พระพุทธศาสนา โดยเป็นศูนย์รวมบุคลากรที่มีคุณภาพด้านการเผยแพร่ธรรมอย่างถูกวิธี และปฏิบัติการเชิงรุกในการเผยแพร่ธรรมอย่างต่อเนื่อง และศูนย์วิทยาการด้านสื่อ เป็นศูนย์พัฒนารูปแบบการเผยแพร่พระพุทธศาสนา โดยจัดตั้งเป็นศูนย์ประจำจังหวัด และกลุ่ม รวมทั้งเป็นศูนย์สำหรับสื่อสาร ระหว่างคณะสงฆ์กับคณะสงฆ์ ระหว่างคณะสงฆ์กับพุทธบริษัท ระหว่างคณะสงฆ์กับรัฐหรือหน่วยงานที่เกี่ยวข้อง และผลิตสื่อธรรมทุกชนิดออกเผยแพร่แก่ประชาชน เพื่อให้หน่วยงานที่เกี่ยวข้องพร้อมทั้งรัฐ พระสงฆ์ ได้นำสื่อไปประยุกต์ใช้เพื่อการเผยแพร่พระพุทธธรรมความเหมาะสมต่อไป

คำสำคัญ: การเผยแพร่พระพุทธศาสนา, รูปแบบการเผยแพร่, วิธีการเผยแพร่, การเผยแพร่เชิงรุก

1. Introduction

Buddhism has been the national religion of Thailand since the ancient Kingdom of Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, Krunghthonburi and Rattanakosin Reign. In addition, the religion has been the fundamental factor which led to harmonious linkages among Thai culture, way of living and the religious practice. The linkage
instances include Buddhism-based rituals, Buddhism-based laws, Buddhism-based architectures, and Buddhism-based cultures.

At present, Buddhist monks play their religious roles less than ever in Thai society which caused by people’s changing way of living in diversified circumstance, such as less practices of religious activities in temple. Additionally, Buddhist monks cannot propagate the essence of Buddhism effectively owing to uninteresting and noncurrent teaching styles. The mentioned ineffective style originated from the weaknesses including insufficient knowledge and skill of the monks, non-quality teaching technology, and poor network for Buddhism propagation. As a result, the monks’ propagation role cannot lead people in a modern society to perceive the right value of Buddhism essence. In this regard, the researcher decides to conduct the research titling “THE PROPAGATION OF BUDDHISM: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMAT AND METHOD OF APPROACHED STRATEGY OF THAI SANGHA” to inspect the problem-causes and to recommend the ways of problem solving.

2. Research Objectives

1) To study the pattern of Buddhism propagation made by Thai monks ensemble in Thai society during the past-to-present days

2) To study the problems of implementing the former pattern and methods of the said Buddhism propagation

3) To develop proactive pattern and methods of the said Buddhism propagation for Thai monks ensemble.

3. Research Methodology

Population included the informants in Central, Northern, Southern, Eastern, and North Eastern region of Thailand; (1) monk deans in religious administration areas, classified by regional, provincial, district and sub-district level, (2) abbots, (3) scholars in related field, and (4) administrators in a Buddhism propagation field. The samples were selected by using a purposive sampling technique and divided into 3 groups, namely; an academic group with 10 members, a practitioner group with 40

\[1\] Munkiet Kosolniratwongse, Buddhism: Theory and Consulting Techniques, (Bangkok: Siwiriyasarn, B.E.2541), p. 28
members and a general group with 88 members. Research tools included Survey Form, Observation Form, Interview Form, Focus Group Discussion Form, and Workshop Recording Form. Data analysis was carried out by using analytic induction and a typological method. The results were presented as a descriptive analysis.

4. Discussion

1) The pattern of Buddhism propagation made by Thai monks in Thai society ensemble during the past-to-present days. The results reflect in-depth information about particular pattern of Buddhism or Dharma propagation in each region of Thailand. In Central Thailand, the outstanding pattern in each sampled temple includes; (1) Prayurawongsaward Temple has a pattern of “SERMON” with an unique style of “A Food Feeding Manner of A Bird” (Sarika Pon Yuer), initiated by Honorable monk Choa Prakhun Somdej Praputhakosajan (Gee), (2) Benjamaborpich Temple has a pattern of using Buddhism History illustrated in mural painting as an teaching media paralleled to Dharma conversation. (3) SuanKaew Temple has a pattern of using calm and peaceful place surrounded by Holy White Flower Forest (Suan Moke) as a stage for Dharma conversation and discourse activities. and (4) Buddhism District Office and Buddhism Youth Association have their outstanding patterns of monthly and annually religious activities conducted for all groups of people in wider areas in Central Thailand. In Northern Thailand, the outstanding pattern of Buddhism propagation in each sampled temple includes; (1) Srisoda temple has a pattern of conducting Dharma Road Show and (2) Prathatsrijomthong Temple has a pattern of Meditation Training Course conducted by the famous Abbot as an personnel media of the course. In Eastern Thailand, the outstanding pattern of Buddhism propagation in each sampled temple includes; (1) Mai Temple has a pattern of “SERMON” with an unique style of “A Praying with Soft Melody” and (2) Kaosukrim Temple has a pattern of Dharma Teaching in calm and natural environment. In North-Eastern Thailand, the outstanding pattern of Buddhism propagation in each sampled temple includes; (1) Thart Temple has a pattern of “A Fine Rhythmic Praying” in a good scenery place within a temple boundary (2) Pohnohntun Temple has a pattern of “A Formal Learning Center for Religious Knowledge Distribution” within the temple and (3) Thamrata Meditation Center has a pattern of “A Meditation Center” surrounded by calm waterpool-and-tree
landscape. In Southern Thailand, the outstanding pattern of Buddhism propagation in only one sampled temple, Manaowan Temple, includes a pattern of conducting “A Buddhism Propagation Program” consisted of four major Dharma activities, namely: Sermon, Lecture, Practice Training, and Teaching in Schools.

Additionally, the critical factors influencing an achievement of Buddhism propagation should include (1) a strong fundamental of Buddhism propagation practice (2) an existing Buddhism inheritance made by the later generation (3) sufficient numbers of related personnels and (4) up-to-date teaching style for Buddhism propagation in modern society.

However, a mission of Buddhism propagation made by Thai monks ensemble found in this research, is in an association with conceptual assumption of Structural–Functional Theory which explained by Sanya Sanyawiwat. The theory describes that a society is a structure composed of specific functions. Human society is also a structure that composed of specific functions and the humans need to perform their functions for overall existence. In this regard, the Thai monks’ mission in Buddhism propagation should be considered as human’s function performed for society’s existence as well.

Focusing on the research finding reflected that Thai monks performed the Buddhism propagation in several areas of the country, this finding is in an association with Cultural Diffusion Theory discovered by Franz Boas. The theory explained that a major characteristic of cultural diffusion was a process of one culture moving from one to another place and then adjusting to a new culture. In this regard, Thai monks’ mission of Buddhism propagation in several areas of the country should be considered as an activity of cultural diffusion which made from one to another place for people’s morality promotion in various places. Additionally, for this mentioned case, the monks should be considered as valuable persons responsible for being an inheritance of Buddhism propagation as an inevitable mission of the Buddha’s followers.

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2 Sanya Sanyawiwat, Sociology, (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 8th edition, B.E.2543), p. 17

3 Faculty of Management Science, Phetchaburi Rajabhat University, Management Science Journal, (Phetchaburi Province: Phetchaburi Rajabhat University. B.E. 2551), p. 30

The critical outcome of Buddhism propagation made by the monks has
became a task of “noble man creation”, led to noble way of living that most
people performed in daily lives. One from many factors that brings about an
achievement of “noble man creation task” should be an up-to-date teaching style
made by the monks. This mentioned opinion is in line with a research result of
Phramaha Bunjob Thiwongso (Sripaengmon)\textsuperscript{5}. The result describes that an effective
teaching method should be adjusted to a new circumstance in order to construct
an effective mean for Buddhism propagation among a dynamic circumstances.

2) The problems of implementing the former pattern and methods of
the Buddhism propagation. The findings includes four aspects of problems,
namely; policy formulation, human resources, teaching methods, and teaching
media.

(2.1) Policy formulation problem The problem may be caused by less
harmonious way of policy formulating acted by central and regional related units in
the country. In the central unit, such as Sangha Supreme Council of Thailand, play
a major role of policy formulation and control overall performance of Buddhism
units in every area of the country. As a result, an announcement of Sangha
Supreme Council of Thailand has been considered as an absolute command for
doing Buddhist activities within the whole country as well.

(2.2) Human resources problem The problem may be caused by less
quality and quantity of human resources for religious teaching. In quality
dimension, the monks may have less potential skills of explanation that led to an
uninteresting religious lesson. In quantity dimension, there may be insufficient
numbers of monks for conducting Buddhism propagation activities.

(2.3) Teaching methods problem The problem may be caused by less
effective and society-responsive methods for Buddhism propagation in modern era.
At present, modern technology and changing lifestyles are crucial factors to inspect
for any improvement of lesson teaching technique, as well as of Dharma teaching
methods.

\textsuperscript{5}Phramaha Bunjob Thiwongso (Sripaengmon), “A Study of Roles and Performance in
Buddhism Propagation of Phrakrusutasarnpimol”, Master of Buddhism Studies, (Bangkok:
Mahachulalongkornrachawitayalai University. B.E. 2549).
(2.4) **Teaching media problem** The problem may be caused by less attractive and effective teaching media. In modern society, personnel media have been a key factor to persuade targeted persons to behave in a needed direction. In this regard, Buddhism propagation in modern era should be made by a key person who possesses charismatic and noble traits.

The four problems mentioned above reflect that the monks still have their weakness of Dharma communication. Especially, the finding of “Teaching media problem” is in an association with a research result of Pannudda Noppanawan as well as Ray Robert’s quote of communication essence which focused on major factors of successful communication, and one from four factors include “reliability of speakers”. In this regard, the monks should apply this quote of communication essence to conduct the activities of Dharma communication.

3) **A development of proactive pattern and methods for Buddhism propagation for Thai monks ensemble.**

The recommendation emerged from this research is “A development of proactive pattern and methods for Buddhism propagation for Thai monks ensemble.” This development focuses on establishing three major centers which called “the Three New Dharma Centers Establishment”.

The first Center should be an academic-based department to conduct Research and Development tasks (R & D mission) for innovative methods launching and effective Dharma Communication. This first Center’s mission is in an association with key substances of Communication Theory explained by Saman Ngamsanit of which the effective communication should focus on messages with five qualities including truth-based (Sajja), non-bias (Tathata), right time-based (Kala), satisfaction-based (Piya) and public-based (Utta). Additionally, this Center’s mission is in line with a research result of Nikamanon who found that an effective Dharma communication...
Communication should focus on positive changing process emerged from the right methods.

The second one should be an action-based department for networking tasks to broaden the partnership for Buddhism propagation. This second Center’s mission is in line with a research result of Khun Tokhun ⁹ who found that an effective networking tasks was a major solution to broaden the partnership for Buddhism propagation. Additionally, this Center’s mission is in line with a research result of Phrapornchai Kontasaro (Kaewwichien) ¹⁰ who found that the networking mission was a main activity to call for cooperation from various stakeholders for Buddhism propagation.

The last one should be media development-based department for media creation to response to the Buddhism propagation in modern society. This third Center’s mission is in line with a research result of Sanit Srisumdaeng ¹¹ who found that an effective teaching method for religious subject should be supported by useful and wide-range media including mass media as well. Furthermore, this Center’s mission is in line with a research result of Nattaya Kaewsai ¹² who indicated that the information technology should be a significant factor for media creation to proceed the activity of Buddhism propagation.

5. Research Results

The results include the three following parts;

1) The pattern of Buddhism propagation made by Thai monks ensemble in Thai society during the past-to-present days

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During the past-to-present days, the most practical ways of Buddhism propagation or Dharma teaching include seven modes, namely; (1.1) direct moral conversation pattern, the same as the Buddha’s, the founder of Buddhism made in an ancient era towards one or more of the visitors, (1.2) morality discussions for finding the truly practical ways, (1.3) occasional training and notifying as requested in guiding good-or-bad things for public’s determination, (1.4) direct morality teaching in overall topics for public audience, (1.5) idea exchanging about morality or “Dharma” practices in specific occasions (1.6) question-and-answer forum (Q & A Forum) and (1.7) in-depth explanation about morality and enlightenment among knowledge seekers.

2) The problems of implementing the former pattern and methods of the Buddhism propagation

The problems of implementing the former pattern and methods of the said Buddhism propagation include; (2.1) less harmonious way of Buddhism propagation policy formulation among central and regional related units in the country, (2.2) less potential human resources for religious teaching, (2.3) less effective and society-responsive methods for Buddhism propagation in modern era, and (2.4) less attractive and effective teaching media.

3) A development of proactive pattern and methods of the Buddhism propagation for Thai monks ensemble.

The recommended proactive pattern and methods of the said Buddhism propagation for Thai monks ensemble include “the Three New Dharma Centers Establishment”. The first Center should be an academic-based department to conduct Research and Development tasks (R & D mission) for innovative methods launching. The second one should be an action-based department for networking tasks to broaden the partnership for Buddhism propagation. The last one should be media development-based department for media creation to response to the Buddhism propagation in modern society.

Additionally, the researcher proposes two main recommendations for the future development. The first one is to apply this research result as a fundamental data for making a new pattern of Buddhism propagation within an appropriate circumstances for each organization. The last one is to conduct the future research
with a focus on new modern pattern of Buddhism propagation in domestic and foreign countries.

**Bibliography**


