DEVELOPMENT MONK NETWORKS IN MODERN THAI SOCIETY

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Abstract— This research purposed to study knowledge integration of “religion” and “development” in terms of sociological view, as guided in connection and analysis between two academics, and to understand Buddhist network and its development process in the present Thai society, with changed principle of operation and adjusted aspect toward social development and local mechanism of network building in order to maintain Buddhist organizations to be updated to the change of society, economy and culture.

This study demonstrates four roles of Buddhist organizations 1) The roles of Thai Buddhist organizations toward Thai society as specified in Sangha Organizations under the Sangha Act B.E. 2505 (Amendment in B.E. 2535) and volunteering role of the organization, 2) The network procedure of Buddhist organizations, in education, social welfare and conservation of natural resources, is collaborating group to achieve their target goals, 3) The driving of the organizations continuing their activities sustainably, influencing factors is an organizational leader, development of work in conformance with contemporary society and building working network group.

In terms of the purposes of the study, it reveals that we should improve social development to encourage their roles in two social development’s aspects 1) In terms of knowledge integration: there should be a research on connection of knowledge management from their works with state policy and particularly conservation of Buddhism and other religions, including support Buddhist organization takes an important role to educate virtue, morality, quality of life development, peace and union among Thai society and participation in social development, 2) In terms operation: there should be a promotion to establish official institutes or organizations of the developer monks by assigning Sangha Supreme Council and National Office of Buddhism to support the activity in order to promote Buddhist network organizations for social development and for their better roles and activities.

Keywords— Development Monk, Buddhist network and Modern Thai Society.

I. INTRODUCTION

Modern Thai society is facing the challenges of the current economic and social development that bring about a considerable effect on people’s way of life and their definition and values given to the words “Goodness and Prosperity.” The adoption of western culture in the Thai society exerts an immense influence and creates rapid changes in consumption patterns, roles of parents in raising their children, and interactions of social institutions at various levels.

Socialization processes that are deprived of cultural roots and ethical perspective contribute to core structural problems that exist on relationships at all levels. Thus, the current government has invested efforts into the development of people’s attitudes toward society, as well as the preparation and evaluation of the National Economic and Social Development Plan in order to reduce the bias of the mainstream development, strengthen and improve the process of creating social harmony, promote a peaceful coexistence, and consider Thailand’s cultural roots which will leverage the quality of living in Thailand’s society in the future.

JakkritSangkhmanee et al (2013) had stated that the circumstances of "Modernization" are likely to entail a loss of faith in religious institutions and doctrines as well as the decline of religious activities in our daily lives. The major causes of the relations deterioration between votary and religious organizations came from several modernized factors whether it be the increasing interests in materialism and capitalism, the engrossment with daily struggles, time limitation, individualism, as well as the spiritual needs which are closely linked with various secular ideologies and the complexity of life issues that differ in each individual.

Modernity and materialism are regarded as having a negative effect on the society, the context where religion exists but religious organizations themselves are also regarded as part of this declination affected by those factors from modernization.

Through religious perspective, Phra Raja DhammaNitade (PhraPhayomKallayano), the notable preacher and developer monk, suggested that the status of Buddhism in Thailand is going “into a state of crisis” because not only Buddhists but also Buddhism monks and many temples are being “Slaves of possession” and competing for building immense religious places so as to attract the middle class and wealthy people in the city to visit and donate. The view is similar to that of Stanley Tambiah, the religion anthropology professor, who had previously suggested that the relationship between the Buddhist and the religion organization since 1977 was reduced to only making "donations" in order to acquire "merit" as a guarantee for a better life in this world and the Hereafter.

Although the role of religion organization is challenged with the changes in society and culture, the developer monks networks are still considered a community network that should be focused on and explained about their social work guidelines to provide a clearer view of such works. Therefore, this article will review the knowledge on the community...
development monk network as well as study the roles and operations in creating social networks of community development monks in Thailand in order to understand the community development monk network and its role and social influences in the society.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research study is a qualitative research, using collected field data through interviews and focus groups as the main tools for gathering information. It also focuses on the documentary research in order to provide useful data which would be analyzed and presented as an overview of the community developer monks’ network operations in Thailand.

III. MONK AND THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTS AND CURRENT SOCIAL SITUATION IN THAILAND

As for the perspective on religion and social and cultural changes in the present, Giddens and Sutton (2013) proposed the Secularization concept, the process whereby religion loses its influence over the various spheres of social life. They studied the Sunday religion rituals in each Europe country’s churches. The result from the survey showed that the average number of people regularly going to churches is quite low while the majority of people goes to church only for the wedding ceremony or the funeral. In Thailand, the Secularization concept continues to be controversial. The visions about a process or method of separating symbiotic relationship to which the Church and the Kingdom adhere are still being argued. In many cases, the law enforcement to promote certain ethics in society overlaps with the liberated areas and the beliefs of some groups of other religions which are not the main religion of the country. The uncertainty has conjointly resulted in legislative efforts to monitor or control the affairs of the Church. Consequently, there is a disagreement among the overlapping of such relationship.

In modern Thai society, PhraMahaSutitApakaro’s study (2013) had divided monks and religion organizations into five types; namely 1) a group of monks and organizations that focus on propagation of Buddhism in practice to develop mind and intelligence, 2) a group of monks who devoted to life and social development 3) a group of monks who convey Buddhism through social communications 4) a group of educational monks and religion organizations, and 5) a group of administration monks and brotherhood. Each group plays a main role in the Buddhism propagation and social development beneath an equivalent goal, which is to bring about benefits and happiness according to Buddhism to people in society through various development processes for example promoting learning, community development, ethics strengthening, and meditations. But overall, it aims to improve every individual and the society through learning from simple acts, exhibiting appropriate behaviors and using mental and intellectual abilities to develop and manage yourself for a better life.

The study of “the developers” groups, for instant the priests who have worked to develop the quality of life and social in the senses of public health, environment, culture, and economic such as PhraUdomPrachathorn (AlongkotTikapanyo) Wat Phrabat Nam PhuLopburi Province, PhraSubinPaneeto Wat PhaiLornMuang District Trat Province, PhraKruPitakNantakhun Wat ArunyawasMuang District Nan Province etc., and groups or network of developer monk such as the developer monk network in Northern part of Thailand (Photiyalai Institute Chiang Mai), Sekiyadhamma group, the monk network focusing on environment, the monk network focusing on culture, and Sumbuddhajayanthi etc., found that these developer monks had applied Buddhism, focusing on everyday life and social development, together with local wisdom and sustainable development on personal and social levels aiming to bring individuals a better quality of life, economic, social, cultural, and environment self-reliance, intellectualness to lead a simple life, and a focused mind on social improvement to promote amelioration and support fellow human beings with difficulties in the society.

To conclude, the developer monks in Thai community in the present are regards religion as a thinking system that fosters mental stability. It is also a mechanism that leads to the prosperity of the society in the era that such religions occurred. Lastly, religions operate through the mechanism that manages relationships between doctrines, missionaries, and disciples. These religions are having the affiliations of structure, role, and function as part of their heritage. Nevertheless, each religion has different patterns, rituals, and ultimate goals. However, religions that could co-exist with society in the future need to be the ones that adapt to changes in the society and culture as well as having the operations and networks that recognize the value of social development.

IV. THE RESULT OF THE STUDY

First Buddhism Organizations in Thailand play a major role in society development as the network of the developer monks continues to make improvements for the communities. The role is defined in the Sangha Act B.E. 2505 (1992), stated that the monks are responsible for public assistance in order to develop a better society. Additionally, the formation of a developer monk’s network in various dimensions such as the Buddhism propagation, the sufficiency economy, and the public health care are promoting the role of Buddhism in Thailand to be accepted as part of the community with processes and network that contribute to social development.
Development Monk Networks in Modern Thai Society

Second the implementation of the developer monks which had been advanced into a network is more likely to succeed. That is, the social worker monks had developed various kinds of working network in terms of functionality and dimensional workspace. As a result, there were both successful and unsuccessful cases. However, it can be seen that distinctive groups of developer monks in modern Thai’s society with outstanding works are relied on being a network and local interaction as important mechanisms to push forward operational issues. The well-known Buddhism network for society in the Northern Thailand which has an important role for more than 20 years is Hug Muang Nan foundation which was found and has implemented the trial and error process to continuously promote the conservation of local natural resources and environment. The success of the Hug Muang Nan Foundation came from the practices of organization’s leaders who emphasize a sense of ownership and companionship of the people who confront the same problems in Nan province. Meanwhile, in the Northeastern Thailand today, there are several learning networks and development work. The highlight of the Buddhism network for society in the Northeastern Thailand is that the network aims at local learning management. In the past, the Northeastern Thailand had been facing with poverty, resulted from unequal distribution of development from the state while another reason was its geographical features which do not yield plentiful resources like other regions. Therefore, the recent execution of developer monks’ network in the region is promoting social wellbeing and focusing on expanding the role of Buddhism which lead to spiritual enhancement. The activities include gathering people to practice Dhamma together with health care promotion and creating youth cultural network to encourage them to conserve their local way of life and to be grateful to their ancestors. For the Central Thailand, Buddhism networks with work processes that are more likely to remain sustainable is the Eastern Satcha Om-Sub Network (Truth Saving Network) particularly in Chanthaburi and Trat provinces. The study of PhraKruPipitsutrathorn et al. (2013) concluded that after the economic crisis in 1997, people faced unemployment and the capital shortage. Consequently, PhraSubinPaneeto and PhraKruSuwarnanapathiworadham (Manus Kantidhammo) have founded the Saving Network to promote community funding for community development and for welfare and public affairs in partnership with the government. The community has made use of the economic capital and social capital as the driven force to boost the circulation of the local economic cycle.

Third the factors that result in the sustainability of Buddhism Organizations are the leader, the adaptability to the contemporary society, and the network building. The aim is to revise the roles of Buddhism organizations in current Thai society to achieve the definite goal as a religion for the society, or in other words, to be a Practical Buddhism. It also focuses on creating activities that develop individual’s knowledge, the society, and encourage the propagation of dharmic principles that learners can apply to their everyday life with greater understanding. It can be seen that whether it is driven by internal or external factors, Buddhism organizations have been attempting to develop activities for monastery institutions and temples to keep one’s faith and spread their existing benefits and resources to the society whether it be Buddhism network for society in the region that highlights the work in a local level and on public issues associated with their organization or the new Buddhist movement that focuses on communication in modern society aiming to make a better understanding of the changing visions of the middle class in the cities.

V. THE TURNING POINT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF DEVELOPMENT MONK NETWORKS IN MODERN THAI SOCIETY.

CONCLUSION

In order to improve the developer monk network to promote social works, it is essential that the clergy organization administrators, the Ecclesiastical Institutes and Buddhists appreciate the significance of empowering intellectualness and knowledge in the society through the alignment between public problems and dharmic principles. The important mechanism is the realization of the importance of social dynamics that the Buddhism organizations
should strengthen the currently operating Buddhism networks for social development, promote knowledge and develop people through the Clergy Institutes, promote education reform to link with social development mission for sustainability. At the same time, they should provide a learning opportunity and build associated network with external organizations. In many cases, for example, in five areas of Southern border provinces of Thailand, they should listen to other religion congregations and confront with challenges based on Buddhism knowledge which will be the significant key to the acceptance of any differences in the society. Also, they should take those suggestions and improve Buddhism organizations for effective management as well as establish more strategic operational guidelines for cooperative social development.

REFERENCES

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