



# CHAPTER I

## CHANTING FROM THE VEDAS TO RAMA IV

### 1.1 Introductory Remarks

Eight years into my decade of enlisted military service, I resolved to become a Buddhist monk, as a result of academic pursuits and attempts to become more wise. Apart from texts from the Dalai Lama, I often attended a Tibetan meditation center in Saarbrücken, Germany [under the spiritual guidance of a female lay-disciple of ‘Lama Ole’<sup>1</sup>]. I became familiar with Chinese Buddhism from two sources: Shaolin kung-fu movies and through Discourses with the female owner of my favorite Chinese restaurant in Germany. I learned about Japanese Buddhism from certain academics writing about Zen. Understanding the diversity in Mahayana Buddhisms, I ventured on a personal quest to find the real, or purest, form of Buddhism available; but at this time I was also exploring works by Karl Marx, Lenin, Mao Tse-Tung, Che Guevara, Sub-commandante Marcos and other inspiring thinkers. Through my academic and personal studies, I was led to believe that Thailand was a nation that still upholds the purest ‘Sangha’, and therefore, I was compelled renounce the ideological world, following the completion of my enlistment, and come to Thailand to ordain as a Buddhist Monk. In the meantime, I strictly studied the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, *Majjhima Nikaya*, and *Visuddhimagga*, alone, and often citing these texts in my undergraduate courses. However, I had never been to Southeast Asia before, and knew nothing of Thai culture or food, preferring spicy Chinese food.

While still on ‘terminal leave’ from the Air Force, I enrolled into the one-year, Thai Studies certificate program at Thammasat University. The day after the first term ended, I became a fully ordained Dhammayuttika-nikaya monk at Wat Pathumwanaram, in Bangkok. I was given the name: Phra Passanajitto – relatively meaning ‘purified mind’; but the name was something to aspire towards, rather than something possessed. If I did not become a monk, I surely believe my sufferings faced in life would increase, and I would probably have died. I had many experiences while I was a monk, many of which are not relevant to this thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.lama-ole-nydahl.org>, for more information about him and his lineage, if curious. For doctrinal reasons, I ceased going, largely because I could not identify with the either the Tibetan language or the chanting formula’s English translation.

I was urged to return to lay-society, because my monk-master holds two Ph.D.'s. He persuaded me to return to academic studies, telling me: I could always be a monk again, but without degrees, educated or modern-city people would look down upon me – as many laity seek advice from the ‘learned’ – monks should be more learned than laity, as historically evident in pre-modern Thailand. In these changed times, if monks were not wise, people would not seek them out. When the time came to enroll for the second semester at Thammasat, I had my disrobing ceremony, expressing to my master and four other monks: from this time forward regard me as a layman. I had to say this three times; by the third verse, I was shedding tears, because I never wanted to cease being a monk. I only wanted to complete my higher education; to this day, I still maintain this view, although I am married now with a newborn son.

I can break my life up into three parts: (1) ignorant [pre-ordained] ‘Buddhist scripture’ studying experience; (2) two-fold monastic experience: (a) book learned, city-dwelling monastic experience and (b) meditative, forest-dwelling monastic experience; (3) knowing Buddhism through intensive study at the university undergraduate and graduate levels as a lay-disciple. For this thesis, I will cover: aspects of my monastic experience, and the results of what I have learned from published accounts of Buddhism and personal meditative training.

When not sleeping, eating once a day, attending to myself in the bathroom, studying suttas or meditating, most of my monastic time was spent chanting. On the fewest occasions, I chanted twice everyday at the prescribed time in the several temples I lived at during my monkhood. Chanting was performed at: the twice-daily [morning and evening] temple ‘service’; someone’s house for blessings; cremation ceremonies; and office buildings. Often during these ‘outside’ activities, a meal would be offered, and I felt compelled to eat if the time was still before noon. Usually, I ate after returning from my alms-round, around 7:00am [I drank water throughout the day, and in the afternoon I might have some tea]; I thought eating twice a day [sometimes] was against the code of being a Dhammayuttika-nikaya monk, but the elders urged me, so I did, although I thought it was wrong. When I was offered money at ceremonies, I thought this was also wrong. After I addressed these ‘problems’ with my ‘master’ – I was gratefully sent away to a forest temple, where I could eat once a day, and concentrate on meditation, and not donations - although in the forest, I was taught to recite parittas. After some time, my views matured.

I did not know all of the chants that I had to recite in offices or homes and cremation ceremonies – although I tried my best. The chants I did learn were the morning and evening chanting ceremony written by Phra Buddhavajiranana [Rama IV - or King Mongkut, as known to Westerners], when he still ordained. I also learned the various chants for ‘blessing’ after food is offered. To study the other chants, I had to recite from a textbook purchased from the Mahamakut Foundation Bookstore, near Wat Boworniwet – the main temple of the Dhammayuttika-nikaya. I became fond of the *Tam Wat Chao/Tam Wat Yen*, as the twice-daily temple recitation is called in the Thai language. In one column was the Pali language text to be recited, and in the next column of my textbook was the English translation. Although I could identify with the translation, I was not satisfied with what I was learning, and wanted to learn more. Certainly, I knew of the Dhammayuttika-nikaya monastic tradition, but what I did not know was why we have to chant what we chant at temples. Recalling the personal problems with the Tibetan lineage meditation center, I decided to investigate the details contained inside the chanting ceremony, to determine if the chant is serving mystical or rational reverential purposes.

My work here might not be completely anthropological, sociological, philosophical, political, linguistic, or literature based; but because I do draw on several disciplines, my work can focus on Buddhism. This should be understood, because I pride myself on not limiting my knowledge to one academic discipline, which would blind my study. I have done extensive footwork: apart from walking barefoot in meditation for miles, I have also traveled to numerous temples across Bangkok, Ubon Ratchathani, Nakorn Ratchasima, and Kanjanaburi provinces for the sole sake of this study, although many other temples have been visited for other reasons which may serve as examples for additional topics covered within. My ‘data’ is derived from questioning monks and Thai laypeople that I have encountered throughout the years in Thailand and in Oregon – which also adds to the international aspect of studying Thai Buddhism. Thai people ‘abroad’ can attend similar ceremonies in their new land of residence, but without the convenience a temple in every village.

## 1.2 Pre-Buddhist Vedic Roots of Chanting

Vedic, pre-Buddhist mantras have been defined as meaning<sup>2</sup>: *an active form of thought that can be used as a saving instrument* - useful in times when protection is necessary. Many Vedic mantras, though, have meaningless syllables. Buddhism utilizes these ‘mind-tools’ or mantras, for protection as well, but transforms meaningless syllables and verses into lines recited for knowledge and development of wisdom. However, the protective chants in Buddhism are known as *paritta*, and there are many chants to choose from, offering protection for: victory in battle, from spirits, crawling insects and more. These parittas, though, only recount life-events or virtues of the Buddha.

If one uses their own wisdom, the paritta can only protect because of the aroused inspiration to perform, or have more fortitude, to continue. Mantras or paritta verses are invoked because the magical or mystical formula are used for various occasions in order to summon deities or power, with the hope of avoiding tragedy.<sup>3</sup> State administrations utilize mantras as well. Government ministers in Sanskrit are called *mantrin*, who not only perform as counsel to the king, but also use mantras for political ends.<sup>4</sup>

Progressing, mnemonic formulas were early textual transmission aids; chants resonate this primitive mode when each sentence links to the next. In early times, there was free transmission, during which the text would be rendered from memory. Memorized sentences, then, became couched in the form of verses. Passages would then become fixed formula as the religion became an established tradition. Common subjects are recalled using the same words, therefore fixing the established tradition’s textual canon.<sup>5</sup> The compilation and editing of the Theravada Buddhist Pali Canon took place over three monastic councils; some texts have been lost over the years and others suggest that many sutta’s have arguably undergone mass revisions; but some simple formulas still exist, such as the recollection [mind-tool] of: The Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha – as “Buddho, Dhammo, Sangho”

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<sup>2</sup> Andre Padoux, *Mantra* taken from *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism* [ed. Galvin Flood], (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003) p. 478-479 [further cited as *Mantra*, and page number]

<sup>3</sup> Anna L. Dallapiccola, *Dictionary of Hindu Lore and Legend* (London: Thames & Hudson 2002) p. 130-131

<sup>4</sup> *Mantra*, p. 483

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, p. 229-230, from a footnote

Interestingly, the Brahmin Sonadanda, when faced with Vedic questions from the Buddha, answered: ‘we could leave out mantras – for what do they really matter.’<sup>6</sup> Is this enough to make one cease the practice of mantra recitation when the Buddha, himself, recommends the practice? An in-depth study on the relationship between Vedic mantras and Buddhist parittas would detract from the aim of this study pertaining to the details contained inside Rama IV’s morning and evening chanting ceremony, irrespective of benefits. However: if mantra aids in concentration that generates wisdom and the keeping of noble virtues - the practice of useful mantra as the tool to calm the mind or generate wisdom should not be refuted.

### 1.3 Chanting: Promotion of Mantras

Understanding how the manipulators of the Vedas operated, the Buddha and many of his noble disciples, possessed knowledge of the Vedas. These earliest followers of the Buddha were able to defeat many brahmans in ideological ‘warfare’. Discussions with brahmans on various points of doctrine are illustrated in the Tipitaka. The early Buddhists understood the power of the mantra.

In fact, the Buddha said in a story: “By mantras awaken the people, Do good, Live the godly life, for the born there is no immortality.”<sup>7</sup> According to the Tipitaka and a website, the Buddha suggested to a group of monks to travel, stating that no two monks should travel the same road. He also stated for monks to go forward for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare of gods and men.<sup>8</sup> From one standpoint, stating Buddhist missionary activities started with Emperor Asoka would be an error maintained; numerous texts are guilty of this. Unfortunately, powerful official’s gesture stands as the first major effort. From a different sutta, the Buddha tells the monks: “Keep to your own preserves [pastures], monks, to your ancestral haunts [the range of your fathers]. If you do, then Mara will find no lodgment, no foothold.”<sup>9</sup> Here, one notices a conflict in teachings, namely: one instance of telling monks to spread out and teach the Dhamma, and during a second instance, the Buddha tells monks to stay in the land of

<sup>6</sup> DN, *Sonadanda Sutta*, p. 129-130 – virtue is of greater importance

<sup>7</sup> E. M. Hare. *The Book of Gradual Sayings – Anguttara-Nikaya* Vol. IV [1965]; (London: PTS) p. 91

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/pbs2\\_unit05.htm](http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/pbs2_unit05.htm) accessed 27 March 2006 – cited solely because I cannot recollect the exact sutta that I am trying to demonstrate. The Buddha suggested that the monks go in different directions to spread the dhamma, and that no two monks should travel the same road.

<sup>9</sup> Maurice Walshe. *The Long Discourses of the Buddha – A Translation of the Digha Nikaya*, (Boston: Wisdom Publications 1995) p. 395, 601 [further noted as DN, and page number]

their fathers. There was also a Brahmin injunction against traveling abroad, which halted the spread of various ‘Indic’ traditions. However, whether or not monks decide to be missionary or stationary, the Buddha utilized the tool of mantras primarily to awaken insight or mindfulness in his listeners. Restated: Buddhism utilizes mantras.

#### 1.4 The Buddha and the effort of Sariputta

General details covering the life of the Buddha [Siddhattha Gotama 623-543 BCE, or according to Gombrich: 484-404 BCE<sup>10</sup>], will not be reproduced here; instead, one specific event is re-covered, from the time the Buddha was traveling through the Malla region<sup>11</sup> with some five-hundred monks, shortly after the death of the leader of the Jain sect [according to Professor Gombrich, the death occurred within 10 years of the Buddha’s own death]. His death triggered a split, or a schism in the Jain religion, over a lack of unity in doctrinal issues. In the meantime, the republic of Malla had just completed the construction of a new meeting-hall, and the Buddha was invited to be the first to use it. Late that night, the elderly Buddha could not continue and chose to rest his aching back, giving his chief disciple Sariputta, an opportunity to give the evening’s discourse, the *Sangiti Sutta*, to monks in attendance. This sutta, illustrating the Buddha’s physical weakness, must be a late sutta; but also ‘we’ must take into account that Sariputta died before the Buddha – although I am not certain how many years earlier. However, in order to avert tragedy from duplicating itself in the Buddha’s doctrine and disciple, Sariputta issued a profoundly organized dissertation pertaining to matters, “perfectly proclaimed by the Lord, who knows and sees... so we should all recite together... for the benefit, welfare and happiness of devas [a sort of celestial being] and humans.”<sup>12</sup> As I assert from my direct experience with Theravada Buddhism, vocal chanting unites the body of members [congregation] towards the revered objective. Sariputta issues the sutta as ‘sets of Dhamma’ from one’s to ten’s [please see Appendix A – for the details of the *dhammas*]. This sutta is very long, covering nearly thirty pages, of material for recital, ‘without disagreement’,

<sup>10</sup> I must thank Professor Richard Gombrich, for providing me with the following two articles, after discussing the matter with him via e-mail: *Dating the Buddha [1992]* and *Discovering the Buddha’s Dates*. He personally sent the .pdf files, therefore I lack the publication information, but owe an amount of gratitude to him.

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.ambedkar.org/buddhism/Adivasis\\_Were\\_Buddhist\\_Naagas.htm](http://www.ambedkar.org/buddhism/Adivasis_Were_Buddhist_Naagas.htm) - The Mallas, are a group of people and their country, divided between Pava and Kusinara. The Mallas were an emerging non-Vedic culture/group rooted [through intermarriage] in the mixed warrior and trader class; as such, they neglected to go through Brahmin rituals and were often criticized for that. The Mallas worshipped in carved cave chambers, called chaityas, and highly respected the Buddha and other arahants.

<sup>12</sup> DN, p. 479-480

so that the future of the ‘religion’ will be secured and free from schism. Perhaps Sariputta wanted to organize the dhamma before he died, as his lasting legacy, but his gift is mere speculation. Restated: The Sangiti Sutta was issued for the purpose of recital, in a formula that could be chanted. Knowing the Dhamma is the revered objective. Archeological evidence has proven that the first objects of Buddhist reverence[pre-dating Buddha statues], were chariot-type wheels, representing the Wheel of Dhamma, having the power to overturn worldly ideologies.

One scholar noted that in the earliest phases of Buddhism’s expansion, the order was not closely organized. External perceptions sometimes determined that Sariputta was the leader of the sect, according to some Jains, themselves originating from a merger of two teachers. During the lifetime of the Buddha, the Sangha had already broken into competing groups, evident in the Culapanthaka Sutta. Leading monks went their separate ways with their own disciples, teaching what was understood to have come from the Buddha; some even neglected to attend the First Council. Sariputta, due to his liberal/nurse-like nature, tried to make the austerities more lenient and less strict, emphasizing compassion as a virtue, according again to the Jain tradition.<sup>13</sup>

Concerning the historical setting for Sariputta’s Sangiti Sutta with analysis influenced from Padoux’s essay<sup>14</sup>: The doctrine of the Buddha was likely to have undergone various refinements over the course of generations, even during his lifetime. The methods of praising the Buddha have changed over the generations as well – most people would not debate this notion. In several sutta’s, pertaining to what should be chanted [as mantra] by the monks, several varying ‘formulas’ have been approved; these mantras and chants have changed over generations. Some range from a one-word mantra to very-long and complicated expositions, like the Sangiti Sutta.

For instance, a young monk, Culapanthaka, could not remember a four-phrased verse given to him by his elder brother [who was also an elder in terms of being a monk], for praising the Buddha – comparing the Buddha to lotus flowers.<sup>15</sup> His elder brother expels him from the Sangha, because of his ‘stupidity’.<sup>?</sup> The

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<sup>13</sup> Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* (Delhi: Shri Jainendra 1999) p. 74 & 280: “The orders deriving from some ascetics such as Pasa and Mahavira merged into one as Jainism. The order centering around Sariputta developed as Buddhism.”

<sup>14</sup> See Bibliography

<sup>15</sup> *Abhinna*, p. 145-146

<sup>?</sup> I’m also taking notice to ‘Spirit Cults’, p. 121 – where he states one literate in the tradition is a ‘religious virtuoso’, thus this attributed stupidity could be one who is also not learned in doctrine, not necessarily

younger, being disheartened and about to ‘exit’ the order, happens to come across the Buddha. The Buddha happens to question the younger brother, asking him, “Where are you going at this time, Culapanthaka?” After a brief question and answer period, the Buddha persuades the ‘younger’ to stay under his ‘denomination’ and several moments later teaches the ‘younger’, the mantra of “*Rajoharanam*” while he must stroke a piece of white cloth. Later, after noticing the white cloth had become soiled, the ‘younger’ achieved a certain mind-state, where-upon the Buddha, clairvoyantly appeared before the ‘younger’ and uttered a verse comparing lust to dust. After the utterance of these verses [clairvoyantly], the ‘younger attained arahantship, simultaneously with the Fourfold Patisambhida (complete knowledge of the Tipitaka), as the most ‘powerful’ and simple example of Buddhist mantra found in the Tipitaka.<sup>16</sup> The most complicated formula found, is dependent on one’s perception.<sup>17</sup>

The *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, for example, is said to be originated from the Abhidhamma that the Buddha taught to his chief disciple, Sariputta [perhaps the first monk in records to convey what should be chanted together by monks] – who, in turn, teaches the abhidhamma to his own disciples [subsequent disciples write the texts]. This text, is difficult and complicated to recollect, as I tried, while being ordained.

It is likely then that the Abhidhamma’s formulation came from Sariputta’s ‘school’ of over 500 monks, through the Elder Moggaliputta Tissa during the reign of Emperor Asoka<sup>18</sup>; through Acariya Buddhaghosa<sup>19</sup>, to the author: Acariya Anuruddha – a disciple of a senior contemporary to Buddhaghosa.<sup>20</sup> In the seventh to eleventh centuries, Buddhist scholarship was abundant and much care was bestowed on the study of the Abhidhamma and other matters. “Special teachers were appointed to give instruction in the subject. Generous endowments were made to those who devoted themselves to Abhidhamma learning and recitals<sup>21</sup>,” which eventually inspired this student author to attempt to memorize [unsuccessfully], the

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one who cannot remember a chant. I know a few monks who are virtuoso’s pertaining to the chants, but they cannot explain the dhamma very well – able to recite like a parrot. Likewise, he also suggests: some memorize texts but do not have the corresponding understanding of them [p. 122].

<sup>16</sup> Abhinna, p. 145-154 – for the complete ‘story’

<sup>17</sup> Dictionary, p. 144-145: Four Patisambhida’s, as: analytical insight/discrimination – a) analytical insight of consequence/meanings; b) analytical insight of origin/ideas; c) analytical insight of philology/language; d) analytical insight of ready wit/initiative/creative and applicable insight. This is a much different perception of Phom Ratanasuwana’s *complete knowledge of the Tipitaka*.

<sup>18</sup> AS, p. 10; [http://www.ambedkar.org/buddhism/Adivasis\\_Were\\_Buddhist\\_Naagas.htm](http://www.ambedkar.org/buddhism/Adivasis_Were_Buddhist_Naagas.htm) - the dissemination of Buddhist religion is wholly due to the accident of its having been adopted by the low caste kings of Magadha, and to its having been elevated by one of them to the rank of the religion of the state

<sup>19</sup> AS, p. 13

<sup>20</sup> AS, p. 16

<sup>21</sup> G.P. Malalasekera, *The Pali Literature of Ceylon* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society. 1994) p. 167



Abhidhammattha Sangaha as a chant, before his monastic period concluded.

Recalling the effort of Venerable Sariputta to teach the Abhidhamma verses to his many disciples, certain sutta's in the Digha Nikaya come to mind: the Pasadika Sutta<sup>22</sup>, the Sangiti Sutta<sup>23</sup> and the Dasuttara Sutta<sup>24</sup> - which include intricate details of Dhamma. Even the shorter Pasadika Sutta's recommendation is extensive in detail if expanded, despite several items being similar. However, the Pasadika Sutta was told by the Buddha, to Cunda, witnessed by Ananda; The Sangiti Sutta was told by Sariputta to some 500 monks, and certified by the Buddha who heard/approved the discourse; the Dasuttara Sutta is given by Sariputta to some 500 monks as well. These three changes [thus far noticed] demonstrate the chanting ceremony's transition from simple to complex formulas, as well as what is suggested by the Buddha and the Arahant Sariputta, as to what is to be chanted in groups.

Thus, the contents of the Sangiti Sutta<sup>25</sup> have been confirmed as: approved by the Buddha, and witnessed by some five-hundred monks present for the occasion; not to mention the sutta's inclusion into the Tipitaka itself, as a result of the Buddhist Councils. Charles Prebish wrote an influential article pertaining to the Buddhist councils.<sup>26</sup> He mentions the coming together of monks following the Buddha's death as the first council because it was there that power was settled along with matters of disciple. A deeper look into the Sangiti Sutta should be conducted, which transpired after the death of the Jain leader near or in Pava, one of the important Malla capitals. This 'gathering' of monks listened to the Venerable Sariputta's discourse, sealed by the Buddha approval. The setting was in the Ubbhataka Meeting Hall, which had never before been used, and therefore deserves more respect as the first council. The setting for the Dasuttara Sutta's location, the Gaggara Lotus Pond in Campa, was

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<sup>22</sup> DN, p. 427-439: "*And what are the things you should recite together? They are: the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four roads to power, the five spiritual faculties, the five mental powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, the Noble Eightfold Path. These are the things you should recite together. And thus you must train yourselves, being assembled in harmony and without dissention.*" Accordingly, P.A. Payutto's Dictionary, and various passages inside the DN: *Four Foundations of Mindfulness*: a) contemplation of the body; b) contemplation of feelings; c) contemplation of the mind; d) contemplation of mind-objects. *Four Right Efforts*: a) one arouses one's will; b) makes an effort, stirs up energy c) exerts one's mind; d) strives to prevent the arising of unarisen evil unwholesome states. *Four Roads to Power*: a) concentration of intention accompanied by the effort of will; b) concentration of energy; c) concentration of consciousness; d) concentration of investigation accompanied by will of effort. *Five Spiritual Faculties*: a) faith; b) energy; c) mindfulness; d) concentration; e) panna. *Seven Factors of Enlightenment*: a) mindfulness; b) truth-investigation; c) effort; d) zest; e) tranquility; f) concentration; g) equanimity. *Noble Eightfold Path*, having correct: a) view; b) thought; c) speech; d) action; e) livelihood; f) effort; g) mindfulness; h) concentration.

<sup>23</sup> DN, p. 479-510

<sup>24</sup> DN, p. 511-521

<sup>25</sup> DN, p. 479-510, Sangiti Sutta #33

<sup>26</sup> Charles S. Prebish, *A Review of Scholarship on the Buddhist Councils*, (Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. XXXIII, No. 2, February 1974.

without the Buddha present. All other literature forgets this ‘fact’. Additionally, if one goes along with Prebish and other ‘scholars of old’ then: Rajagaha was the location of the council that took place after the death of the Buddha. The ‘Great Councils’ that took place after the death of the Buddha, might be distinguished from lesser councils as perhaps the occasion in the Ubbhataka Meeting Hall at Pava illustrates. Prebish inserts that Rajagaha was chosen because it had sufficient facilities to support the many monks. The setting for Sariputta’s Sangiti Sutta is a ‘lesser’ council, perhaps because it wasn’t ‘sponsored’ or held under auspice of authority, rather by invitation. This ‘claiming of sponsorship’ imposes on authority, undermining the original intentions of the Buddha. The Sangha has been forever altered by the decisions held at Rajagaha – the resultant history is too ‘long’ to explain now. The Sangiti Sutta is an extensive ‘illustration’ of rules and dhamma-concepts that were detailed and fully sponsored by the Buddha. The other councils held later, were influenced by external agents, before the ages of Buddhist schisms. The judgment here, serves as a basis for future considerations. Prebish imposes seven conditions, which I answer below:

- The essential function of the council was to recite together without disagreement so that the dhamma would last for a long time;
- Convocation of the council – in direct response to the death of the Jain leader, whose sect fell into schism This council was brought together to recite the dhamma, to protect against schisms so that all would hear what has been approved;
- The degree of universality of the council was spoken by Sariputta, supported by the Buddha before 500 monks and still maintained in the Tipitaka – should merit some universality;
- The ceremonial aspect of this council: the Mallas prepared this building for the Buddha to use first. The Mallas spread out 500 seats, put out water pots and oil lamps. After everyone entered with freshly washed feet and settled, the Buddha gave a long discourse, not mentioned in the Sutta for this occasion. The elderly Buddha lays down to stretch his aching back – and Sariputta gives an extensive discourse to the 500 monks who are free from sloth and torpor. The sutta ends with monks rejoicing and proclaiming that Sariputta’s words were well spoken, and this was further confirmed by the Buddha. Apart from ceremonial aspects of preparing seats and feet washing, there were few other ‘ritual’ aspects contained in this sutta;
- The functions and authority of the members of the council: The Buddha is the ‘great teacher’, Sariputta is one of his chief disciples, the discourse was given in the presence of the Mallas, and confirmed before 500 members of the order. Furthermore – Sariputta dies before the Buddha and the Rajagaha council, so fellow disciples must have retained memory of this event, most likely Ananda, because of the stock introductory phrase, “Thus I have heard”... and the insertion and maintenance of this sutta into the Tipitaka asserts further authority;

- The Judiciary power of the council: The 500 monks were subjected to the Patimokkha as understood up to that period of time, it cannot be determined if there was further training rules set in place following this occasion [or greater enforcement], as not all the rules were laid down at once – but after occasions arose for an additional training rule. The Buddha was in control of his Sangha, but if a monk might have done something ‘bad’ the monk was likely to be expelled or subjected to ‘authorities’ discretion. If the Dhamma was not unanimously accepted, the monks would have spoken up, or the Buddha would have rebuked Sariputta, as he did on other occasions or to those who needed corrected;
- The relation between the King and the council – as there appeared to be no direct ruler of the Mallas – all their verses are spoken as a ‘collective’ voice – there might not be a king governing the council, but by consent/influence by majority. All were in concurrence without argument.

That concludes the answers to Prebish’s seven stipulations for a council – thus it can be certain that this Sangiti Sutta’s occurrence warrants ‘recognition’ as a council – though minor in terms of what would happen in the future, following the death of the Buddha. In conclusion: It was in the territorial jurisdiction of the Mallas, that the Buddha attained his parinibbana – or physical death. The Mallas were one of the eight groups of people to receive relics and place them in newly erected chedi’s in honor of the Buddha.

The Sangiti Sutta in the Digha Nikaya is over thirty pages, and my revision appears as *APPENDIX A*. An interesting activity would be to compare both the Sangiti and Dasuttara sutta’s for similarities and discrepancies; because those are the formula’s secured in the Tipitaka for chanting. Regardless, the sutta was given by a chief disciple and approved by the Buddha, stimulated by the schism [over doctrinal differences] that occurred in the Jain sect, following their leader’s death. Perhaps this is what Hajime Nakamura, alludes to in *Indian Buddhism...* were it is written, “With the lapse of time the fear appeared that the Order might decline and that the teaching of the Buddha might be brought for naught.<sup>27</sup>” Thus, Sariputta offered this sutta as a summary of the Buddha’s doctrine for maintenance and prosperity of Buddhism, in order to prevent the Sangha from schisms, and to reinforce what should be recalled:

“Friends, this Dhamma has been well proclaimed by the Lord, the fully-enlightened One. And so we should all recite it together without disagreement, so that this holy life may be enduring and established for a long time, thus to be for the welfare and happiness of the multitude, out

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<sup>27</sup> Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism – A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* (Delhi: Shri Jainendra 1999) p. 74

of compassion for the world, for the benefit, welfare and happiness of devas and humans.

And what is this Dhamma that has been well proclaimed by the Lord?"

In the above case, Sariputta led that particular Sangha group [different major disciples had groups throughout 'India'], and this is perhaps a basis for the Jain confusion over his role in the Buddha's dispensation. Sariputta then issues forth various dhammas, expounded by numeral-sets: ones-through-tens. After this sutta was issued, the Buddha rose from resting his aching back, and proclaimed: "Good, Good, Sariputta! Well indeed have you, proclaimed, the way of chanting together for the monks!" In its entirety, this Sangiti Sutta is an impressive, lengthy work, covering all aspects of the Buddha's doctrine. To recite this fully would take a considerable amount of time. However, if chanting is conducted in one's own language, as during the days of the Buddha, the monks would gain insight/comprehension into all of the teachings. Now, in contemporary times, Tipitaka translations are very good, one does not have to rely on Pali; yet, the problem remains in the inaccessibility of the documents. Publishers seem to lack interest in making the Tipitaka mass-produced or easier to acquire, as Abrahamic traditions have done with the Bible and Qur'an. Sariputta's groupings do enable one to recollect the Dhamma more readily, albeit an extremely long mantra. Other occasional discourses praise monks who can recite the Buddha's dhamma.<sup>28</sup> My assertion is: early Buddhists recited suttas and mantras, but did not perform reverential chanting, which was a later development.

### 1.5 Importance of Devadatta

Devadatta was the brother-in-law of the Buddha. As an ordained monk, Devadatta was serious and lead a very strict/austere forest dwelling life, often speaking out against the excesses of monastic-dwelling bhikkhus<sup>29</sup> – a familiar theme in today's contemporary Thai Buddhism. He often approached the Buddha to adopt stricter vinaya practices upon the Sangha. Frustrated, Devadatta left the Buddha's denomination and set up his own, which lasted for several centuries. Devadatta was considered evil because: he wanted more rules enforced upon the Sangha; plotted against a King; and dropped a rock on the ground that splintered – a piece hit

<sup>28</sup> F.L. Woodward, M.A., [trs.] *The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon: Part II, Udana – Verses of Uplift & Itivuttaka – As It Was Said* (Oxford: Pali Text Society 1996) p. 68-72, concerning 'Sona'

<sup>29</sup> Reginald Ray, *A Condemned Saint: Devadatta*, from *Buddhist Saints in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994) from: [www.dharmaocean.org/Portals/0/documents/pubs/Devadatta.pdf](http://www.dharmaocean.org/Portals/0/documents/pubs/Devadatta.pdf) accessed 10 October 2005

Buddha's toe just hard enough to cause a drop of blood to come out. Therefore, Devadatta is 'hated' in almost every Buddhist texts<sup>30</sup>, although many teachings have some discrepancies between them. Devadatta is known to be a 'dissenter' and schismatic, because he wanted to become a Buddha and open the possibility for others to become Buddhas. Fa-hien (4<sup>th</sup> century CE), a Chinese Buddhist on pilgrimage, traveled to Sravasti and found Devadatta's order still residing there, worshipping three Buddhas of the past<sup>31</sup>, but not worshipping Siddhattha Gotama as the Buddha. Devadatta's denomination practiced stricter and more austere practices, and non-association with wealth/luxury. The Buddha suggested that the option for strictness is available to all but not necessary for every monk. The preceding is important to understand that Buddhism leaves the possibility of extreme 'fundamentalism' open for individual practitioners, but it not mandated for all the people.

## 1.6 Transmission From India into Thailand

In what is perhaps the oldest published account of chanting, the ancient Chinese Buddhist monk/traveler, I-Tsing, wrote<sup>32</sup>: "The custom of worshipping the Buddha by repeating his names has been known in [China] as it has been handed down and practiced from olden times, but the custom of praising his virtues has not been in practice. The latter is more important than the former because, in fact, to hear his names only does not help us to realize the superiority of his wisdom; whilst *in reciting his virtues in descriptive hymns, we may understand how great his virtues are.*" I-Tsing witnessed only an evening chanting service in the eight sacred Buddhist pilgrimage sites. He provides an overview of the evening ceremony: A short sutta is read; then there is a selection of verses that praise the Triple Gem, a second selection is read containing a portion of the Buddha's own words, then a portion of prayers wishing for more merit is expressed.<sup>33</sup> The three-part service concludes with all the monks proclaiming, '*sadhu*' – which means 'well-done'! While this is not what

<sup>30</sup> Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism – A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* (Delhi: Shri Jainendra Press 1999) p. 60; This work suggests that Devadatta's sect died out around 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, at the latest – see p. 82

<sup>31</sup> Lal Mani Joshi, *Brahmanism, Buddhism and Hinduism – An Essay on Their Origins and Interactions* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society 1987) p. 53 - suggests the Three-Buddhas as: Kakusandha, Konagamana, and Kassapa – because those three were recognized to have lived in the current 'world-period' [*kappa*], One wonders if these are the three Buddhas of Devadatta, because if Siddhattha Gotama could not recognize Devadatta as a Buddha, Devadatta would not recognize the present 'Blessed One' either, and the attention was directed to the three-previous Buddhas.

<sup>32</sup> I-Tsing, *A Record of The Buddhist Religion – as Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago (A.D. 671-695)* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal 1966) p. 152 [further cited as I-Tsing and page #]

<sup>33</sup> I-Tsing, p. 153

Sariputta recommended, nor what Asoka had carved into his rock edicts, it does provide some background as to what is important for reverence. What is interesting here is that I-Tsing noticed that after the conclusion of the ceremony, each individual monk, according to his rank bows before the image, and then departs. If there are several monks, this might take up a considerable amount of time. I-Tsing does notice in large monasteries, monks may individually practice, sitting alone on his mat, recite silently before the image and alter, as convenient to one's schedule.<sup>34</sup>

According to royal/political historical accounts, several times through the course of history, due to historical circumstances [not examined here], Sri Lanka and Thailand have exchanged 'Buddhisms' in order to purify their existing heretical Sangha. Kings, seeking political legitimacy, often purged monks and sponsored favored monks. These cross-cultural exchanges, brought with them, the chanting formulas and parittas that are recited today. There is no surprise to witness residual elements of Hindu-Brahmanism remaining in Thai culture, since the Kingdom's own roots originate from the many Hindu-Brahman or Buddhist dynasties that ruled in Southeast Asia. These former kings in ancient Thailand ruled as Hindu-Brahmanistic manifestations of deities into modern times. As such, one might be confused when going to a temple in Thailand to find numerous un-Buddhist elements remaining. One might even question the success of 'orthopraxy or orthodox' Buddhism in Thailand, and the official label as a Buddhist nation.

Many Thai superstitions can be found in the ancient text: *The Traibhumikatha*, attributed to King Lithai, influenced by Sri Lankan monks, following the years apart from Mongol rule, and the desire to establish himself righteously.<sup>35</sup> His influential text is a hybrid of abhidhamma and cosmological concepts, and was his attempt to legitimize or gain public allegiance to his 'new faith' against false or errant beliefs expressed by the public and monastics at the time. When Sir John Bowring observed Thai Buddhism, he found the sixty-volume, *Traibhumikatha*<sup>36</sup>, sponsored in 1654 by King Prasatthong<sup>37</sup> – a usurper, illegitimate son of King Ekathotsarot, still being used. Around this time, the Tam Wat Phra was known to have been recited. It is unknown

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<sup>34</sup> I-Tsing, pp. 154-156

<sup>35</sup> Sarassawadee Ongsakul [trans: Chitraporn Tanratanakul], *History of Lanna* (Chiang Mai: Silksworm Books 2005), many pages

<sup>36</sup> Sir John Bowring. *The Kingdom and People of Siam, Vol. I*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1969. p. 289

<sup>37</sup> Thadeus & Chadin Flood [trs./ed.]. *The Dynastic Chronicles – Bangkok Era: The First Reign {Chaophraya Thiphakorawong Edition} Volume Two: Annotations and Commentary*. Tokyo: Center for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1978, p. 198

specifically [due to the decay in palm-leave manuscripts] at this present stage, when the chant was developed. However, certain modern chanting textbooks still contain the contents of archaic Tam Wat Phra chanting formulas: as follows<sup>38</sup>:

We worship the Blessed One, Arahant, Supreme Lord Buddha  
 He sat with composure under a majestic Bodhi tree, and vanquished Mara and all his hosts  
 He had wisdom without end, abounding in this world  
 Reached supreme enlightenment  
 We worship him who attained intuitive wisdom  
All the Buddhas who have passed away  
All the Buddhas to come in the future  
All the Buddhas who are now manifest  
We Worship the Buddhas of these three groups on all occasions  
 Because the Blessed Lord is far from evil, he is worthy of worship  
 Of himself he knows what is right  
 He is full of understanding  
 Who comports himself well, who knows the world  
 Who teaches those who ought to be taught  
 No one transcends him, the teacher of gods and men, the joyous one who declares the Dhamma  
We come to the Lord Buddha as our refuge throughout life until reaching Nibbana  
No other refuge have I. The Lord Buddha is my excellent refuge  
With this true declaration may glorious victory be mine  
I worship the dust of his feet with my highest member (head)  
Whatever wrong I have done unto the Lord Buddha  
May the Lord Buddha withhold punishment  
 The Eightfold Path is an excellent way for all people  
 It is a straight way leading to Nibbana  
 This Dhamma is the teaching that brings tranquility  
 It is the Teaching that leads to release; I worship that Dhamma  
 All the Dhamma of the past, all the Dhamma of the future, all the Dhamma that is manifest now  
 I worship all three at all times  
 The Dhamma which the Blessed Lord taught well is that which men can see for themselves  
 Is that which is timeless, is that which others can be called to see and put in their hearts  
 Is that which wise persons can know for themselves  
I come to the Dhamma as a refuge throughout life until attaining Nibbana  
Other refuge have I none, the Dhamma is my excellent refuge  
With this true declaration may glorious victory be mine  
I worship two kinds of Dhamma with my head  
Whatever wrong I have done to the Dhamma, may the Dhamma withhold punishment  
 The Sangha which is spotless, composed of excellent ones  
 Whose members are tranquil, who have cast off evil  
 Who attained virtues of many kinds, who are without Asavas  
 I worship the Sangha  
 All the Sanghas of the past, all the Sanghas to come, All the Sanghas of the present  
 I worship these three at all times  
 All the disciples of the Blessed Lord, who observe the precepts without deviation  
 Who observe them correctly, who observe them rightly  
 The four pairs of men  
 Those in the eight stages  
 These are disciples of the Blessed Lord  
 These are worthy of worship, worthy to be received, worthy to be presented offerings,  
 Worthy to be venerated, who are the field of merit of the world, there is no greater field  
I come to the Sangha as a refuge throughout my life until attaining Nibbana  
Other refuge have I none; the Sangha is my excellent refuge  
With this true declaration may glorious victory be mine  
I worship the highest Sangha of two groups with my head  
Whatever wrong I have done to the Sangha, may it withhold punishment  
 I worship the Three Gem which deserve the highest worship like this  
 May the great store of merit and the power of the Three Gem banish all danger

<sup>38</sup> Somdet Phra Sangharat Phussathewa, *Suat Mon Chabap Luang* (Bangkok: Mahamakut Foundation 1995) p. 218 - mentions the chant has undergone revisions & Kenneth E. Wells, *Thai Buddhism – Its Rites and Activities* (Bangkok: Police Printing Press 1960) p. 63-65 & Phra Sasanason Jittasallo, *Suan Mon Plae*, (Bangkok: Mahamakut Rajavidyalaya 2547) p. 21-27

Early monarchs in Ayutthaya ruling parties were too busy ‘in-fighting’ to attend to matters concerning a just Buddhist society; and in the post-Ayutthaya and Ratanakosin period, rulers were concerned with establishing their reigns and collecting or reviving old forms of literature and Tipitaka revisions – nothing particularly innovative as far as ‘religion’ was concerned. Records that were kept on palm leaf ‘manuscripts’ suffered natural forms of deterioration in the tropical, humid environment. Furthermore, the historical wars with the Burmese [who attempted to liberate the Ayutthaya Kingdom away from Buddhist deviance], were not kind to preserving records – as many temples were burned or vandalized to some extent. Thai people had to rely on oral tradition, still the dominant method of instruction; and again, import Sri Lankan monks.

Into the reigns of the early Chakri Dynasty monarchs, Thailand maintained the widely popular chanting ceremony that recollected multiple past Buddhas as shown above, similar to Devadatta’s denomination, along with beings that will become future Buddhas, as objects of reverence [in the *Tam Wat Phra*]. Again, Sri Lanka’s chanting formula is similar to Tam Wat Phra and no need to duplicate<sup>39</sup> similar underlined discrepancies. Tam Wat Phra, however, was not chanted in all temples – regional influences are also noted here; and in some temples, it was only recited the chant during the yearly three-month long ‘rains’ retreat.<sup>40</sup> This is a key ‘factor’ to recall, as Devadatta expressed similar sentiments: that by staying to the forests, monks can avoid worldly troubles – although he worshipped other Buddhas.

### 1.7 Phra Buddhavajiranana<sup>†</sup>

Shortly after entering the order of monks, Phra Buddhavajiranana became disgusted over the lax disciple practices and wandered, until he found a temple austere enough for his expectations. He didn’t have to travel very far into the jungle, because

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<sup>39</sup> [www.buddhanet.net](http://www.buddhanet.net). H. Gunaratana Mahathera. *Bhavana Vanda: Book of Devotion*. Taipei: Bhavana Society 1990, p. 50-57

<sup>40</sup> Dhammayut Order and Mahamakuta Rajavidyalaya [Chants by King Mongkut, trans. by Phra Khantipalo], *In Commemoration of H.M. King Rama IV (Mongkut)* (Bangkok: 1968) p. 1-2

<sup>†</sup> My subject [in this thesis, as a monk: Phra Buddhavajiranana; and as king: Rama IV, or to westerners: King Mongkut.], and his son [Somdet Phra Maha Samana Chao Krom Phraya Vajiranavararasa] were great scholarly monks. For the duration of this study I will use Phra Buddhavajiranana as the name for him as a monk, and use Rama IV, for Mongkut as king. I will try my best to be consistent; in the event I am not certain as to the period, I may resort to the name of my choosing – although I am writing about the same person.



a Mon sect temple<sup>41</sup> [currently a Dhammayuttika-Nikaya temple, Wat Rajathiwat], was only a few kilometers away. Several of his relatives had previously stayed at the well-known temple, as monks. Phra Buddhavajiranana, in his ‘politically motivated monastic exile’, would frequently meet, converse, and study with foreign traders and missionaries that were attempting to win favors or conversion, from the prince-monk. From the ‘new’ scientific knowledge, Phra Buddhavajiranana could timely, re-assess the body of knowledge that Siamese wisdom rested heavy upon. Previous scholarly efforts on Buddhism were made only in the ‘reform of knowledge, for instance Tipitaka revisions; or the desire to re-copy the Traibhumikatha. However Phra Buddhavajiranana’s effort was a practical, scientific re-assessment, a revision that mandated ‘effort exerted’ to carry out and observe stricter dhamma-vinaya practice and dhamma-knowledge. Traveling around the kingdom as a monk, he learned<sup>?</sup>:

- He could rebuild the Buddhist ‘religion/society’ following the destructive Burmese invasion.
- He could ‘centralize’ the religion’s authority to a sole entity, Siddhattha Gotama
- Superstitions of the forest monks [with their own unique chants and protective verses] still held powerful influences over the people, expressing beliefs not entirely from the Tipitaka.
- In doing so above, he could gain greater influence/legitimacy, when rising to be King

Centralization of reverence was key in advocating his new ‘denomination’ because it could highlight a pristine Theravada doctrine or supremacy over widely-popular and superstitious Mahanikaya, still believing in an array of deities, ghosts and assorted superstitions. Phra Buddhavajiranana devised the new verses, to counter the many problems he saw in the older Tam Wat Phra verses, for<sup>42</sup>:

“People nowadays [who] follow Buddhism superficially without thought. They are Buddhists by inheritance and they do not know what are the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. They give... merely because they have heard that those three things are refuges and that by presenting a gift to [monks], one gains [merit]. They do not consider what this [merit] is, by what means it is gained, or why and how one should respect the [Triple Gem]. They neither think nor understand but just accept (these Refuges) as by inheritance. Such is not the method of following Buddhism; it is merely following the practice of their parents since they do not know the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, but practice according to hearsay. One who follows Buddhism should therefore understand clearly the true nature of the Three Refuges and Buddhism, then become a ‘servant-to-Buddhism’, so to speak, and accept the way of training which ends suffering. One should realize that just as there exist the hot and the cold,

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<sup>41</sup> B.J. Terwiel erroneously identifies the temple as Burmese, see *Thailand’s Political History – From the Fall of Ayutthaya in 1767 to Recent Times* (Bangkok: River Books 2005) p. 119

<sup>?</sup> I should thank Venerable Phra Dhammavisuddhikavi, Lord Abbot of Wat Somanas Vihara, for the personal dialogue ‘we’ held over issues pertaining to Phra Buddhavajiranana.

<sup>42</sup> Mongkut, p. 36

fire and water, suffering and happiness, so there is a 'place' where birth, decay and death is not found."

In fact, one of my monastic friends, stated: the chants have been passed down from ancestor teachers from very long ago, and that was the most precise answer received during inquiries. This 'reason' arose on several different occasions, so clearly few people really know, and my thesis provides a better answer. Phra Buddhavajiranana truly wanted to educate his people on Theravada Buddhism, but the public was not really listening to his message. In fact still today, the Dhammayuttika-nikaya can only claim about ten percent of Thailand's Buddhists. Phra Buddhavajiranana tried to express the following, to his subjects and disciples: restore interest in the Triple Gem away from Mahayana/Devadatta's lasting concept of worshipping the multiple Buddhas; eliminate chants that speak of the Buddhas of the past and future and the plurality of present Buddhas – which is an impossibility according to the Tipitaka; consider it pointless to revere the Buddhas of the future when they are not yet Buddhas; and going for refuge to the Triple Gem until one attains Nibbana is troublesome for those facing a lower rebirth, while those who have attained Nibbana no longer need to go for refuge [nor is it possible!]. The phrases concerning noble disciples; the concept of the Dhamma being beyond time was also considered for revision by Phra Buddhavajiranana. The phrases concerning Triple Gem refuge are flawed by design, as expounded upon, later in this thesis.

The underlined problematic lines stem from research in Theravada Buddhist theory and in accordance with Phra Buddhavajiranana's perceptions that could have been altered had he gained knowledge of Emperor Asoka's Rock Edicts. These edicts suggested certain suttas for recollection [not the Sangiti Sutta], but the edicts were not deciphered in English until 1837, sometime during Phra Buddhavajiranana's monastic career. A few years earlier, in 1833, Phra Buddhavajiranana found the famous and controversial Ramkhamhaeng stone, which took decades to decipher. The Ramkhamhaeng Stone and the Asoka Rock Edicts, are equally of socio-political nature, especially when depicting Buddhism.

His revision of the chant, should be equally recognized as one, in yet another line of revisions, such as: the Traibhumikatha and the Tipitaka, nothing novel, yet demonstrative of his authority and scholarship – much more of an original effort than simply rewriting the Traibhumikatha again. In this aspect, his authority was founded

on canonical knowledge, which enabled him to rule as yet another Buddhist King.<sup>43</sup> It is these imitations at scientific-rationalism or revisions in worldview, perhaps, that kept Thailand free of colonial domination<sup>44</sup>, throughout various historical periods.

## 1.8 Rama IV's Legacy

It should be stated, here, that Phra Buddhavajiranana was endowed with comprehensive knowledge of the Tipitaka, the commentaries, sub-commentaries and other Pali texts, based on his twenty-seven years of monastic experience. He took this experience with him, during his reign as King [1851-1868]. Thailand saw many outstanding events and reforms with religion [both doctrinal and institutional<sup>45</sup>], and in the administration of the country during this time, simply because the nation was still suffering from the after-effects of the Burmese destruction of Ayutthaya and other areas, as well as trying to keep pace with increasing amounts of foreigners conducting trade activities. Rama IV, as the 'great' Royal Patron, was able to oversee ecclesiastical development activity with great vigor and enthusiasm far beyond what his dynastic forefathers accomplished for the benefit, unity and solidarity of the Buddhist Sangha, and Thai nation as a whole.

King Rama IV had to defend Buddhism, from divergent folk beliefs 'appended to Buddhism' that underlay foreign/non-Thai's contempt for Buddhism<sup>?</sup> - especially those with knowledge of the defeated King Taksin [he proclaimed himself a *sotapanna*]. Recall, that in King Taksin's days: multiple Buddhas were recollected during Tam Wat Phra. Phra Buddhavajiranana's chanting reform was aimed at

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<sup>43</sup> Influenced by Nidhi Eoseewong, *Pen & Sail – Literature and History in Early Bangkok* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books 2005), particularly p. 380-381

<sup>44</sup> Influenced by Nidhi Eoseewong, *Pen & Sail – Literature and History in Early Bangkok* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books 2005), particularly p. 251-286

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.wb-university.org/research/article-tavivat.htm> : accessed on 31 December 2005 – *200 Years After King Mongkut's Birth: A Review of Reform Movements in Thai Buddhism*, by Dr. Tavivat Puntarigvivat

<sup>?</sup> This would imply Rama IV's despise for superstition was influenced from 'the outside', not a belief inherent to his own practice, although he later constructs a 'deity' - 'Phra Sayamdevathirat' to be the protectorate over Thailand. This small deity, shaped as a 'Buddha-image' statue is housed in the Grand Palace compound, and was recently moved to 'preside' over a ceremony for King Rama IX's newly born grand-son, the future or potential heir to the Chakri Dynasty. This ceremony was televised nationally. Contrast this to how he: "rejected a great many traditional beliefs and practices as superstitious interpolations into Buddhism. He rejected cosmology and cosmogony as represented in the Traibhumikatha, arguing that cosmology had to accord with empirical knowledge, and particularly with scientific views that he learned in his contacts with westerners." Yet he 'invents' his own deity – a questionable decision based on rationality. I interviewed a monk, who stated to me that despite his rationality, he created the deity because he believed that there really was 'something' external protecting Siam. Otherwise, see: A. Thomas Kirsch, *Modernizing Implications of Nineteenth Century Reforms in the Thai Sangha*, inside Bardwell L. Smith's, *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Laos and Burma* (ANIMA Books) p. 59

eliminating these multiple Buddhas and beings that will become future Buddhas [like Devadatta], as objects of reverence – to the current, single Buddha Gotama. This is a key ‘factor’ to recall. Why?

Following the Burmese attempt at eliminating deviant forms of Buddhism in Thailand, Rama I issued a 1782 proclamation to the people in his new kingdom: not to dependent upon supernatural beings and powers; cease worshipping lingas or phallic symbols; and not to be led astray by those who did; instead people should cultivate religious merit through acts of liberality and morality; monks are to refrain from all activities not pertaining directly to their religious profession as followers of the Buddha.<sup>46</sup> The proclamation is clear: eradicate errant practices from the past and focus on rational, Tipitaka Buddhism, and help rebuild the nation.

After a brief stint commanding his father’s troops, the eventual King Rama IV, exiled himself politically, becoming Phra Buddhavajiranana, after the death of his father. With knowledge of before mentioned deviance, Phra Buddhavajiranana could focus on accumulating great knowledge of the Tipitaka and various commentary texts, and learn what to eradicate and promote. He determined he could rebuild Buddhist institutions on his model; and that a rational and reformed Buddhism must begin ultimately with himself, since his former teachers couldn’t cooperate. With some supportive followers/attendants, these new monks became the Dhammayuttika-Nikaya. This group of reform-minded monks happened to dwell adjacent to an Abrahamic missionary. Consciously aware of Abrahamic traditions’ imposing their beliefs upon Siam’s Buddhists, Phra Buddhavajiranana working out rationalistic means to secure his land in defense of Buddhism, a Buddhism he already knew as corrupt and mixed with superstitions of Brahmin and forest traditions.<sup>47</sup> Phra Buddhavajiranana had to elaborate on doctrinal particulars to refute the challenges brought on by the Abrahamic traditions; “Failure to do so would mean the defeat of Siamese values and the undermining of the ruling class base.<sup>48</sup>” He wrote again: “This country belongs to the people who originally professed Buddhism. It is not the land of other religions. Those who profess other religions, both coming from other countries or staying in this country cannot feel hurt or jealous of Buddhism, since this is not the country of their religions. If they feel offended, they expect too much.<sup>49</sup>”

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<sup>46</sup> Dutt, p. 44

<sup>47</sup> Ishii, p. 160 – originating from a letter by Rama IV to a friend of his in New York

<sup>48</sup> Ishii, p. 158

<sup>49</sup> Ven. Phra Sobhan Ganabhorn, *A Plot to Undermine Buddhism* (Bangkok: Siva Phom Ltd. 1994) p. 12

Additionally, the contact with Abrahamic missionaries served as an important tool that forced Thai leadership to reassess themselves and their beliefs against the various pressures exerted upon society. Rational self-identity was at stake. The demystification of the *Traibhumikatha* text was one attempt, with the change in chanting being yet another attempt to bring greater knowledge to the people in the Kingdom. In a sense, the matter was a sort of clash between the older/established order centered at Wat Mahathat, and his newer, more scientific, effort at awaking the population. This change in worldview, built from the rise of the Chakri Dynasty, was able to bear greater legitimacy as Phra Buddhavajiranana served in the monkhood and put into ‘practice’ what he believed. The eradication of superstitions and doctrinal errors, was key in leading Thailand into a respected position in the new world of trading or colonial powers; although his creation of a national deity would seem hypocritical. From my analysis, in the mind of Phra Buddhavajiranana<sup>50</sup>:

- The kingdom largely follows Buddhism superficially, without thought,
- Most are Buddhist by birth, not Buddhists from realization or ideology
- People should investigate & see the true nature of things as they really are
- They only practice what parents their have done or by hearsay.
- People had little knowledge of the Triple Gem
- People only ‘gave’ to gain merit
- Monks recited prayers without understanding the real meaning.<sup>51</sup>
- Monks to be ‘heirs of dhamma’ rather than ‘heirs of offerings and gifts’!

Buddhists should practice accordingly:

- Abandon any practices or traditions that are not the Buddha’s dhamma-vinaya.<sup>52</sup>
- Do not blindly follow teachers possessing inadequate amounts of knowledge.<sup>53</sup>
- Personally investigate and become ‘literate in and subservient to’ Tipitaka Buddhism
- Personal suffering should be eliminated
- Understand Nibbana as ‘place’ where birth, decay and death is not found.

By changing the chanting ceremony to highlight devotion solely to the Triple Gem, Phra Buddhavajiranana succeeded scholastically in aligning devotion practice to contents contained in the Tipitaka. The Kingdom today retains much of this concept, and is recited at nearly every Buddhist ceremony. Lax vinaya practice was also a

<sup>50</sup> H.H. Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara – The Supreme Patriarch [trans.: Bhikkhu Kantasilo], *Buddha Sasana Vamsa: A Buddhist Monastic Lineage* (Bangkok: Mahamakut Press 1992) p. 23

<sup>51</sup> *The Nation*, Buddhist Realism – How Mongkut Shook up the Monkhood and Set Out Stricter Rules. 26 September 2005

<sup>52</sup> H.H. Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara – The Supreme Patriarch [trans.: Bhikkhu Kantasilo], *Buddha Sasana Vamsa: A Buddhist Monastic Lineage* (Bangkok: Mahamakut Press 1992) p. 4

<sup>53</sup> H.H. Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara – The Supreme Patriarch [trans.: Bhikkhu Kantasilo], *Buddha Sasana Vamsa: A Buddhist Monastic Lineage* (Bangkok: Mahamakut Press 1992) p. 7

concern, and perhaps served as a catalyst to enforce twice-daily recitations from a single daily devotion. Additionally, bear in mind, the Tipitaka was being imported from Sri Lanka in parts from 1840-1845; and upon further review, many of the existent Pali works were determined to be either post-canonical or heterodox<sup>54</sup>. In a sense, his reforms were an attempt at purifying the Thai 'religion' from dark, Devadatta-like influences prevalent in the post-Ayutthayan kingdom, though to many he is revered because he will be a future Buddha. However his attempts failed to penetrate deeply into the nation immediately, because most of his subjects resided in the information periphery. His son, Somdet Phra Vajiranana, noticed similarities in the general population's ignorance.

I see all of his actions his attempt at gaining political legitimacy for his eventual kingship, through the new tool of rationality. Respecting or revering something other than the Triple Gem is disrespectful to the foundation/tenets of Buddhism. Again, Dhammayuttika-nikaya reforms were only partially successful, because the 'wrong' elements are still prevalent in the Kingdom, but awareness has also risen. The new chanting formula is in almost every temple now, but few know the meaning. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu was apparently in agreement with Phra Buddhavajiranana: "The influence of the collective mental flow of many ignorant people can have enough power to possess the minds of foolish individuals ...and accordingly develop in them the feeling that such things are true and so cause them to believe in ghostly and magical things... the thing called avijja [ignorance] builds up such erroneous beliefs."<sup>55</sup> What follows, in the next chapter is my study of his 'reform' of monastic morning and evening chanting.

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<sup>54</sup> Ishii, p. 156

<sup>55</sup> Peter A. Jackson, *Buddhadasa – Theravada Buddhism and Modernist Reform in Thailand* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books 2003) p. 107