

## CHAPTER III

### INTERPRETATION OF RAMA IV'S REFORM



#### 3.1 Charting the Evolution of Chanting

Meaningless Vedic mantras were transformed by Buddhists in the form of parittas, offering protection only for those with the fortitude to continue their effort. Specific sutta recitations approved by the Buddha were replaced with selections from suttas by political authority. Thus Dhamma recitation was transformed into an act of nostalgic reverence. Phra Buddhavajiranana bridged this ideological difference by producing work that wove cryptic Dhamma passages into daily morning and evening chanting, for the purpose of increasing a hearer's knowledge. In order to witness the evolution of chanting, the chart below aids in determining where or with who holds the most authority, for illustration's sake, descending in chronological order:

SOURCE:	AUTHORITY:
Respectful exchange of greetings; then a discourse; finally keeping the Buddha on one's right side while departing	Numerous occurrences in the Tipitaka
Sangiti Sutta	Sariputta & Buddha; Buddhist Councils
Extracts from: Vinaya, Anguttara Nikaya, Majjhima Nikaya and Sutta Nipata	Emperor Asoka's Rock Edicts
<i>Reverential Chanting developed sometime between Asoka's Reign and I-Tsing's Pilgrimage</i>	
Reading of a short sutta, praise of the Triple Gem, another sutta is read, prayers for merit	I-Tsing, as witness during his pilgrimage to India, in the evening hours
Recitation of several suttas	Maha-vamsa of Sri Lanka
Tam Wat Phra	Ancient Teachers in Sri Lanka/Thailand
Tam Wat Chao/Yen	Phra Buddhavajiranana

Over time, the 'monastic situation' deteriorated in India; Buddhism has been exchanged between Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand several times. Political authority stepped in and enforced changes determined to strengthen Buddhism. One can say, the social problems that existed in the days of the Buddha are still resident today in Thailand; if Buddhism could not solve problems then, how can Buddhism solve problems now?

### 3.2 Understanding Refuge and Faith

Several times in the second chapter, I have glossed over faith, as a term. In the beginning this chapter, the question was asked: “The social problems that existed in the days of the Buddha are still resident to this day in Thailand; if Buddhism could not solve problems then, how can Buddhism solve problems today?” Perhaps the answer lies in ‘will-power’ or ‘faith’.

Faith in Buddhism might be difficult, because the Tipitaka is seldom ever read.<sup>1</sup> Again, this remains the case today, especially for poorer forest temples where the focus is on meditation rather than scripture study. Often, when one ventures into a monastery and finds the Tipitaka, it is surrounded by/in cobwebs, dust, or material clutter – and this is no joke... the majority of Buddhists never read it; and few inquire into deeper ideology. However, it is clearly evident that Phra Buddhavajirana had ‘faith’ in Theravada Buddhism. His faith was tested repeatedly by Abrahamic missionaries. He even determined that his subjects lacked true faith in Buddhism, because they were superficial followers by inheritance. Furthermore, Buddhist educational standards were poor at the time.

There is a phrase in Tam Wat Chao/Yen, stating: *having gone forth in faith...* Before one has faith, one must possess wisdom; the Kalama Sutta details that for ‘us’. Established in wisdom, one can weigh ones own mental, physical and verbal actions, the results of which people reinforced with faith. Before wisdom, one needs to be taught something, or learn for themselves – and have time to develop the insight. When one chants Tam Wat Chao or Tam Wat Yen, there is a portion of the Mirror of Dhamma that states how one can be possessed of *unwavering faith* in the Dhamma:

- ‘Well proclaimed by the Lord is the Dhamma, visible here and now, timeless, inviting inspection, leading onward, to be comprehended by the wise each one for himself.’
- [Pali]: SVAKKATO BHAGAVATA DHAMMO, SANDITTHIKO AKALIKO EHIPASSIKO, OPANAYIKO PACCATTAM VEDITABBO VIÑÑUHITI

Faith-followers [saddhanusarin] can obtain ‘liberation’ in two ways: (a) attaining to view; (b) liberated by faith. Having faith in the Dhamma taught by the Buddha and his disciples serves as a successful exorcism tool widely adopted in the 1930-40’s, following the 1929 proclamation against ghosts, spirits, phallic symbols, and more. Many monks have participated in these exorcism campaigns, an exorcism was even incorporated into M.R. Kukrit Pramoj’s literary piece: *Many Lives*. Tabmiah though,

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<sup>1</sup> Ishii, pp. 182-183

states: “It is not the monks’s ethical power that the exorcist wields, but rather the dangerous power acquired through secret instruction by a guru and the ability to induce and experience an abnormal state of mind.<sup>2</sup>” Hereditary Buddhists following blind tradition were the targets of the *Dhammayuttika-nikaya*, manipulating the citizenry to adopt the [neutrally stated] proto-nationalistic<sup>3</sup> ideological weapon.

Ishii tries to find a link between the rise of the *Dhammayuttika-Nikaya* movement and the influence of Abrahamic traditions – although this may be one seed needed to plant a part of a forest [small piece of a bigger picture] – other matters are determined to weigh more. Tambiah and Ishii try to remind readers those Abrahamic missionaries with direct contact with Phra Buddhavajiranana, outlined rules for Abrahamic monastic or social disciple – whereupon Phra Buddhavajiranana could seek an internal discipline for his Siamese Buddhist subjects. One should not be so arrogant to determine all change starts with a Western mind. Amongst the revelations: monks in the Abrahamic traditions are subjected to an abbot, who was removed from the laity. This contrasts with the Buddhist monks, who are supposed to be dependent materially on the lay population.<sup>4</sup> Tambiah is trying to decipher ‘privilege and arrogance’ or the deification of certain figures that remain inaccessible to the common lay-follower without naming his target: renunciate monks who enjoy royal privilege.

I propose the simile - to differentiate between Abrahamic and Buddhist faith: A man is standing in the neighborhood, at the street corner, waiting for his friend to come. As the man waits longer and longer, he becomes nervous, wondering if his friend will arrive. He decided to have faith, knowing his friend will come... but since the time of Abraham, the friend has never arrived. However, if the same man who is waiting for his friend, decides to do something better with his life, apart from waiting, like contemplation, wisdom arises and he becomes liberated from his friend, nothing else really seems to matter except for his own liberation from suffering, as Buddhists directly experience. Many Buddhist attain liberation, but no one can be certain if one is going to heaven. Buddhist ‘faith’ is based on directly experienced, or rapid results from practicing dhamma; Abrahamic faith is based on ‘believing’ a deity that appears like a mirage or a burning bush, through numerous prophets or messengers [peace be unto them], or through angels and spirits.

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<sup>2</sup> Spirit Cults, p. 350

<sup>3</sup> Ishii, p. 149

<sup>4</sup> Spirit Cults, p. 88

Buddhists who have faith, seek refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. However, the refuge format is not without flaws. I suggest, if the government promotes the Triple Gem ideology, then one's allegiance is to the Triple Gem – and not necessarily to the government or deities, doctrinally. Understanding Buddhism 'better' is useful as a base for revolutionary ideologies, another point to consider when the government is getting increasingly authoritarian or dictatorial.

Politics aside, as previously mentioned, there was the problem encountered concerning the going for refuge in the formulas. The problem in the evening formula is more evident than the morning formula. Here are the most troublesome of Phra Buddhavajirana's verses<sup>5</sup>:

- "...NATTHI ME SARANAM ANNAM, BUDDHO ME SARANAM VARAM, ETENA SACCAVAJJENA..."
- "...NATTHI ME SARANAM ANNAM, DHAMMO ME SARANAM VARAM, ETENA SACCAVAJJENA..."
- "...NATTHI ME SARANAM ANNAM, SANGHO ME SARANAM VARAM, ETENA SACCAVAJJENA..."

These lines mean: 'for me there is no other refuge, only the \_\_\_\_\_ is truly my refuge, and by the speaking of this truth....' How is this 'sacca' or truth [paritta?] possible? The problem: The Three Jewels are individually praised and celebrated, respectfully. However inside each grouping, the lines: 'I have no other refuge' – the problematic issue arises because one stated 'no other refuge' with the Buddha, and continues 'no other refuge' to the Dhamma, and again concluding with the Sangha. One has taken refuge in three systems already. If the advice from the Buddha was: 'He who sees me sees the Dhamma; He who sees the Dhamma sees me', as from above, then two-thirds of the problem is resolved. People can choose to see the Buddha and his Dhamma as inseparable. However, the Sangha is not the Buddha, nor is the Sangha the Dhamma. If one would instead state a formula in Pali, suggesting, "I seek refuge only in the Triple Gem," or recites why each is *praised separately* concluding with a verse for *collective refuge* to themes of recollecting the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha then the issue is resolved. If one wishes to disseminate 100 percent of one's reverence equally upon each Gem, then the format of 'saying thus' should be included, and the chant should be altered. The direct suggestion is to change the verse to read or chant the following<sup>6</sup>:

- 'NATTHI ME SARANAM ANNAM RATANATTAYAM ME SARANAM VARAM, ETENA SACCAVAJJENA'

<sup>5</sup> Translations, p. 71, 73, and 75 – respectfully for each phrase

<sup>6</sup> Venerable Phra Tepvissudhikavi (Pichitr Thitavanno), *Mind Development* (Bangkok: Mahamakut Rajavidyalaya Foundation 1999) p. 88 – where He uses this line to aid in mediation, not however as a correction to the evening chanting.

Otherwise, the whole episode remains arguably: contradictory. However, it is noted here, that many Thai's have a general aversion to philosophical speculation<sup>7</sup>, which likely became rooted in state control over education, or its inaccessibility. Thus, many perhaps, could not see out of the 'oppression' that exploited Buddhist doctrine inflicts. Buddhism became propaganda and a tool used to subject the masses instead of being the vehicle used to escape the mundane world of suffering, incidentally brought on by those controlling 'various institutions'. Phra Buddhavajiranana's verses, as analyzed and directly experienced, do not lead practitioners astray, neither do they liberate.

Recall: *by the speaking of this truth* [a paritta], Spiro, in his study of Burmese lay Buddhism [equally applicable to Thai Buddhism], stated: that the effectiveness of protection verses are guaranteed by the power of the Buddha, or:

- If the devotee has faith in the Buddha
- If not by the Buddha's power, then by the power inherent in the Buddha's virtues (for, if one has confidence in the Buddha, and concentrates on the Buddha's virtues, their power will protect him)
- If not by the power of the Buddha's virtues, then by the power contained in the Dhamma

Then, for example: "...the worship of a special Buddha image is efficacious for curing snake bites because, by reciting and contemplating various scriptural passages – the doctrine of Dependent Origination, the Five 'groups of grasping', the 'Virtues', the 'Metta Sutta', and so on – protection is achieved by the power of these words."<sup>8</sup> Monks in his study, however, stated rituals before a Buddha image are useless, and only through self-confidence can 'obstacles' be overcome.

Just to demonstrate or recall previous versions of refuge, the Great Buddhist Emperor, Asoka, wrote: "BUDDHO DAKKINEYYAN' AGGO, DHAMMO AGGO VIRAGINAM, SANGHO KA PUNNAKKHETTAGGO, TINI AGGA SADEVAKE", which I-Tsing's English language translator determines to mean, "The Buddha is the best among those who are worthy of presents, the Dhamma is the best of all things which refer to the extinction of passions, and the Sangha is the best field of merit; these are the three best objects in the world of men and devas."<sup>9</sup> Even this offers clarity to the above suggested system of taking refuge, if Asoka's Pali formula is grammatically correct. Additionally, I-

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<sup>7</sup> Ishii, p. 94

<sup>8</sup> Melford E. Spiro. *Buddhism and Society – A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes*. Berkeley: UC Berkeley Press 1982: p. 149

<sup>9</sup> I-Tsing, p. 160-161, footnote by J. TAKAKUSA, B.A., Ph.D.

Tsing himself, suggests the former method for taking refuge in the Triple Gem, was the following:

- I take refuge with the Buddha as the most honorable of the bi-ped
- I take refuge with the Dhamma as the most honorable among all things that refer to the freedom from desire
- I take refuge with the Sangha as the most honorable of all assemblies

This is certainly, a different format than the refuge taken by Thai Buddhist today, whose formula has since been modified:

- I take refuge in the Buddha
- I take refuge in the Dhamma
- I take refuge in the Sangha
- For the second time...[and the three]
- For the third time...[and the three]

Asoka's and I-Tsing's verses of refuge are vibrant and illustrate why people seek refuge under them. The current formula lacks this 'entire truth'. I-Tsing mentions the singing of long verses by monks, containing doctrinal points and praises to other Buddhas – Mahayanist concepts are not entertained here. Ishii, though claims: "a field for merit can be defined, at least in the Thai context, as a beneficiary of good deeds performed by people for the fulfillment of their desires for heavenly happiness<sup>10</sup>", though this term is usually reserved for the Sangha, who is supposed to renounce sensual pleasures. Recall, in contrast, that greater merit is practicing the Dhamma, rather than providing alms for monks. There is nothing wrong with advocating the practice of providing alms for monks; though one must remember there are other, more meritorious actions – one should not resort solely rest on alms-giving as merit-making/acquiring activity. *[Amended Position: I can now understand how the refuge can be resolved: The Buddha taught the dhamma, thus in the body of one man, words came out and through striving others having faith, attained as well. This Sangha, is respected because they attained the 'fruit' directly from the Buddha – and the trio can be grouped together. However, they are only effective as a group. What good is a monk without knowledge of dhamma? The Buddha's dhamma can stand alone in texts, but without a Sangha, people today cannot witness the effectiveness, complexity, or simplicity of the Buddha's message. Those monks who practice the Buddha's Dhamma effectively, are again, fields for making merit; however one should not discount personal practice, which generates the most merit.*

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<sup>10</sup> Ishii, p. 13

*Monks are directly devoted to practicing the Dhamma, and are respected, accordingly.]*

Tambiah suggests some teachers have: “a tendency to impose on the subjects ‘his’ own understanding of dhamma, leaving little choice for the individual, and even losing contact with them.<sup>11</sup>” An example can be drawn from a historical work, where one aspires: ‘How to get to Buddhist Heaven’. In reply: with elaboration and developed theories – this becomes propagated.<sup>12</sup> This doctrine pleases most listeners, but also remains an incomplete doctrine. Rebirth and heaven, incidentally, are covered in the Sangiti Sutta<sup>13</sup> and throughout this thesis [although inadvertently]; and rebirth and heaven are used in this document to parallel the existing chanting formula used now in Thailand. The monks that emphasize: kamma, rebirth, merit, heaven and hells in their teachings are not disseminating higher dhamma to the citizens. Citizens would be capable if higher quality education was given to them at early stages in their development. The Sangiti Sutta contains nearly 230 [many can be reduced to simpler formats] pieces of doctrine/dogma as Dhamma that can be re-organized and taken on as study towards liberation. To start: replacing the Sangiti Sutta into Buddhist education or, for chanting recitations, would assist in eliminating further revisions [decay] of doctrine and confusion over proper chanting verses, at the expense of parrots or poets – and a revised version of this thesis may produce better educated monks and lay people. If someone paid me [because I need to support my wife and newborn son], I would personally do it; but that effort is outside the scope of this thesis. The Sangiti Sutta serves as a text book of doctrine – see Appendix A. Kammic Buddhism teaches to accept one’s status at birth and adherence/subservience to authority, while consequently, nibbanic Buddhism teaches renunciation, and thus liberation from worldly concerns. Therefore, a concerned government supports kammatic Buddhism, in order to exploit and suppress the intellectual development of the people, at the expense of mass education and material or economic success that destabilizes traditional means of leadership. Today’s Thai Buddhists are largely kammatic Buddhists.

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<sup>11</sup> S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror, World Renouncer*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 1976) p. 63 Tambiah is speaking of Emperor Asoka, but I ask myself: “Can this be applicable to King Rama IV?” - and I determine that he could be very detached from the common Buddhist, more interested in the very doctrine he fought to eradicate. The fact that the other Thai ‘denomination’ remains the dominate population of monks might suggest ‘few’ actually grasped onto Phra Buddhavajiranana/Somdet Phra Vajiranana’s reforms.

<sup>12</sup> Traibhumikatha

<sup>13</sup> DN, p. 479-510: Sangiti Sutta

### 3.3 Somdet Phra Vajiranana

After the death of his father, Rama IV, Somdet Phra Vajiranana worked continuously towards improving the level of knowledge and the behavior standards of monks, during his time; and instead of arguing with his father's work, he saw that the morning and evening order to chant<sup>14</sup> was more than adequate to impart knowledge upon Buddhist practitioners<sup>15</sup>; although problems with traditional methods of chanting still existed. However, Somdet Phra Vajiranana additionally noted what his august father already saw, "Most were satisfied with what had been traditionally handed down and were practically unable to distinguish the special characteristics of Buddhism from other faiths. Thus in many cases, they preferred only superficial aspects of the Truth, with a consequent laxity in Vinaya, and an ignorant distortion of the Dhamma. Even the way bhikkhus preached was haphazard and the language used was generally too old or too high to appeal intelligently to the ordinary mind."<sup>16</sup> Nevermind that the Thai language is sprinkled with Pali terms that are pronounced differently from the variation pronounced in the monastery for the same term. Somdet Phra Vajiranana, upon completing the frustrating *Isan* tour<sup>17</sup>, wrote in a report to King Rama VI, that the monks in the Northeast have a *habit and preoccupation* with their various traditional modes of chanting.<sup>18</sup> I take notice that neither royal family member has ever stated anything about the Sangiti Sutta from the Digha Nikaya. If Somdet Phra Vajiranana could utilize Phra Buddhavajiranana's Tam Wat Chao/Tam Wat Yen to greater capacity, he could<sup>19</sup>:

- Impose conformity with centralization and eradicate traditional/local variations
- Unite the Buddhist religion with the Dhammayuttika-Nikaya
- Deepen public indoctrination into the modernizing Thai nation.

Therefore, this new Buddhist leadership faced new dimensions to address to the nation, the trivialities of pronouncement and variances in reverence. Naturally, there were opponents.

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<sup>14</sup> As alluded to in Wells, p. 13: "He prepared an order of service which was adopted by all monasteries for morning and evening worship."

<sup>15</sup> Navakovada, p. iv

<sup>16</sup> Navakovada, p. iv

<sup>17</sup> Craig J. Reynolds, [ed. & tms.], *Autobiography of the Life of Prince Patriarch Vajiranana* (Athens: Ohio University Press 1979)

<sup>18</sup> Taylor, p. 122

<sup>19</sup> Taylor, p. 133



### 3.4 Opponents to Reform

Many people, particularly Mahanikaya monks resisted or ignored the Dhammayuttika-Nikaya ‘sectarian’ reforms, but over the years, many have accepted some aspects of Phra Buddhavajiranana and Somdet Phra Vajiranana’s efforts to the extent that there are little differences between the denominations today, except robe-wear and minor chanting details. Strict adherence to the dhamma-vinaya has evolved into one’s own individual effort. Many individuals were simply not interested in stricter regulations. The slavery system was still practiced until Rama V [King Chulalongkorn] abolished the sakdina system; many people could not escape mandatory service, and this could never enjoy the ‘liberation’ that full ordination could provide. So for many, Buddhist practice, or ordination, was out of reach, and limited by government controls over who could enter the Sangha.

The various national reforms, inspired by Phra Buddhavajiranana, Somdet Phra Vajiranana and other Dhammayuttika-nikaya monks leading the Sangha hierarchy, included the chanting revision important to my study; however the complete ‘reform package’ was only partially successful, because ‘ineffective’ is wrong to claim. It can be said that the reforms were ‘top-down’, though coincidentally. Although the chanting ceremony has now been successfully integrated into the daily lives of monastic and lay followers of Buddhism; few understand the reasons behind the reform, as I have shown; few can expound the details that Phra Buddhavajiranana compacted into his work. Furthermore, the number of ordained Dhammayuttika-Nikaya versus Mahanikaya monks is illustrative of the attractiveness to stricter dhamma-vinaya adherence [relatively around 7% - 93%, in essence: *unpopular*]. If one wished to revere the aspects of the Triple Gem, a set formula is not necessary. Many poets versed in Pali have created their own songs or verses, surviving with disciples, and subsequent generations of disciples.

The meditative arahant, Phra Ajahn Mun was one opponent to state-sponsored Buddhism, and he belonged to the Dhammayuttika-Nikaya denomination, the very group pushing academic knowledge gained in scriptural studies over spiritual knowledge gained through meditation. Ajahn Mun also created verses for chanting. One such song is called: *The Ballad of Liberation from the Khandhas*. Phra Ajahn Mun would often task book-learned monks to meditate, to put their books into practice – many found the task too difficult. His ‘dissent’ was through his desire to

remain homeless, as a wandering monk who practices austere dhutanga suggestions. He only ‘settled’ when he got too old to wander. Phra Ajahn Mun reportedly would chant suttas for hours [Mahasamaya Sutta: which details celestial devas that came to visit the Buddha staying in the forest at the time with 500 monks. The verses were spoken by four of many visiting devas. Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: which details the setting of the wheel of dhamma in motion through a detailed explanation of the Four Noble Truths, along with the system of deities/devas that proclaimed witness to the event, as the world shook.]. Phra Ajahn Mun’s biography mentions many celestial beings, so one can be certain that these beings existed in the realm of Phra Ajahn Mun’s existence – or after years of reciting the same sutta’s he came to hallucinate or believe what he recited. None of the texts concerning his life mention anything about utilizing a monastic or reverential chant, only that he chanted the above and other suttas, mostly alone. The recitation of the devas praise was duplicated by Phra Ajahn Mun. The death of Phra Ajahn Mun revived state interest in meditation.

Some, like Phra Ajahn Chah, believed that chanting all day and all night, memorizing suttas, does little for perfecting *sila* [morality]. Phra Ajahn Tate [Phra Rajanirodharangsee], in his biography, mentions a meditation master he knew, chanted a round of Pali recitations that took seven days to complete; but Ajahn Tate was not an opponent to chanting, and seemed to do a lot of it himself – training many disciples in various vocal styles and even the Patimokkha on a regular basis.<sup>20</sup> Phra Siddhidhammaransi Gambhiramedhacariya [Lee Dhammadharo], conducted chanting as most monks did in his time, and mentioned in his biography that monks in India chant the same formula as Thai monks, but only faster. Another monk, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu had an interesting experience, relevant to the direction of this thesis, quoting at length<sup>21</sup>:

“When Buddhadasa Bhikkhu was a young monk, senior monks discouraged sermons on principles and teachings such as not-self, dependent-origination, [etc.]. Supposedly, these were too difficult for the ordinary people to understand. For the masses, moral teachings based on ancient – and not particularly Buddhist – beliefs about kamma, rebirth, merit, heaven and hell were considered appropriate and sufficient. Thus, the most profound teachings of the Buddha were left out of public discourse, and few monks gave them much attention, although these words regularly cropped up in their chants and studies. Only free-thinkers and curious young monks gave these terms much attention.”

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/thai/thate/thateauto.html#n77>

<sup>21</sup> Santikaro Bhikkhu, inside: Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree – The Buddha’s Teaching on Voidness* [ed. Santikaro Bhikkhu], (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books 2004) p. xvi

Nevermind the fact that portions of dependent origination are included in the chanting formula and there is absolutely no mentioning of heaven and hells in the chanting formula – so Buddhadasa’s ‘elders’ were truly behaving hypocritical if they adopted Rama IV’s order for chanting, as many monasteries have already done. Recall, from the above analysis on the chanting ceremony: the teachings on the five aggregates [subsequently as elements to dependent origination], are expounded over 100 times yet remain, determined by elders, to be too difficult – in a way to intellectually suppress the mass citizenry. It is possible the elders understood little of this doctrine themselves. Furthermore, dependent origination is nowhere to be found in the Navakovada – the ‘textbook’ for monks. Had bhikkhus continued to chant the Sangiti Sutta, dependent origination would have been an easier theme used for public discourses. To conclude this chapter, research determines that what is chanted is solely up to the temple-abbot; Tam Wat Chao or Tam Wat Yen are recommended guides for chanting, but some abbots have preferred older methods or have eliminated them altogether. In the case of some of the before mentioned monks, sutta recitation was popular.

One scholar highlights: “Regional and ethnic traditions... tolerated to some degree, became suspect for perpetuating ‘superstitions’ and for contributing to a sense of regional or ethnic distinctiveness... In addition to creating a state-controlled Buddhism, thus making possible a Buddhist nationalism, King Chulalongkorn, Prince Damrong and Somdet Phra Vajiranana also laid the foundation for a state controlled system of education in which all children throughout the country would study the same ‘national’ language (standard Thai), study the same ‘national’ history [one that accentuated the role of the Siamese monarch and de-emphasized the roles of local lord, rulers and local history], and learn the same ‘national songs’ [especially those dealing with the Chakri Dynasty and with the Thai people]. ...Thai nationalism was launched under the banner... literally, ‘Nation, Religion, King’. *It demanded of the people both unquestioning loyalty to the monarchy and self-identification as Thai regardless of their previous regional political leaders and ethnic origins.* Political rule and ethnic identity were indivisible.”<sup>22</sup> Many people in the past have even failed to understand this propagandized discourse. In the past [fueled by Field Marshall Phibun Songkran and Luang Wichit Wathakan propaganda], people rallied under the

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<sup>22</sup> Chaiyan Rajchagool, *The Rise and Fall of the Thai Absolute Monarchy* (Bangkok: White Lotus 1994) p. 149-150; citing Keyes

tired tri-pillar concept of 'Nation, Religion and State'. This concept has been replaced by 'Thainess', which could more effectively win the hearts and minds of the people:

"Indeed, in 1976, the National Security Council began a discussion that would eventually lead to the formation of the National Identity Office and the National Culture Commission, both key agencies in the promotion of 'Thainess,' or regime of identification through which individuals were bound to the national good. ... The NSC proposed as national ideology: preserve the nation, defend independence and democracy, protect religion, treasure and preserve the monarchy, eliminate socio-economic disparities, eliminate suffering and nourish well-being, assimilate interests, maintain rights and freedoms, create unity and integrity, uphold the identity of and promote the decent culture of the Thai people."<sup>23</sup>

Thainess, as 'honorably intended' is deeply ethno-centric and fails to take into account the nation's diverse elements. Thailand has numerous ethnic groups inside, people of different religions, different ideologies – imposing a singular ideology continually instigates uprisings from frustrated populations. Recognizing cultural diversities is paramount in peace-building exercises. Former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun has repeatedly called on the entire nation to recognize cultural diversity in Thailand, decentralizing existing concepts of philosophical history, because monocultures ignore 'diversity', which can be valuable to nation-building. Vital to regional socio-cultural development are education and economic development. The same can be said with variations of Buddhist themes.

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<sup>23</sup> Micheal Kelly Connors, *Goodbye to the Security State: Thailand and Ideological Change* (Journal of Contemporary Asia, Vol. 33, No. 4; 2003) p. 438