

VII CONCLUSION

One of the first questions I raised in this study was the matter of why the Asoke group was banned: What made this group so much more subversive or deviant than all other groups? Why did this particular group have to be legally banned and the monastics forcibly disrobed? Was the Asoke group banned because it represents heretic Buddhism, or at least unorthodox Buddhism, and, if so, what is orthodox Buddhism according to Thai standards? Who is the highest authority deciding on the Buddhist orthodoxy and unorthodoxy? Were there other reasons for banning the Asoke group, and, what were those reasons? Why has the Asoke group been regarded as an oppositional movement in Thai society, not only in the Buddhist sphere but even on the socio-political level? Does Asoke present an alternative political programme and, what kind of society is it striving for?

In the history of the Thai Buddhist sangha's development, it is quite clear that there was a major split into two sects, Mahanikai and Thammayutnikai, during the 19th century. Of these two, the Thammayutnikai is generally perceived as being more orthodox. The importance of the schism is, however, consistently played down by the sangha authorities. I also observed that there have been several dissidents in the Thai sangha - even during this century. I noted that some of these dissident thinkers - like Kittivuddho - have not been very orthodox even according to Thai Buddhist standards, whereas some others - like Yantra - have behaved in quite an unorthodox way. I concluded that there were political reasons as to why some dissident monks have not been forcibly disrobed, despite their repeatedly breaking monastic moral codes and rules. On this basis, I would like to propose that orthodox Buddhism and unorthodox Buddhism in Thailand are definitions which are outlined by the state authority rather than by any independent or Buddhist scholarly authority.

The monks and groups which are supported by the leading military-politicians seem to have a surprising degree of freedom to act - even against the monastic rules - without incurring any sanctions by the state sangha. This was shown in the case of Kittivuddho.

The reasons that the Dhammakaya movement has not been banned, despite its controversial meditation teachings and its disputed economic transactions, were also political. Again, this group is openly supported by some leading military-politicians.

It is quite clear that the close link between the state and the sangha forms a Buddhist authority *par excellence* in Thailand with power to monopolise religion and to decide which group and which monk will be tolerated and who should be banned and forcibly disrobed. This strong link between the sangha authority and the state authority gives the impression that they define the limits of state Buddhism rather than Thai Buddhism. The state dictates the decisions of the sangha authority, thus a deviant monk or group do not have to be deviant according to the general Buddhist or to the Thai Buddhist standards, but only from the viewpoint of the state Buddhist standards.

If this is the case with Asoke, what then were the political reasons for banning the group? Why was it interpreted as being against the state? In this study, I showed how Bodhiraksa openly cultivates very close contacts with Major-General Chamlong Srimuang and his Palang Dharma party. This connection has further complicated the existence of the Asoke group since Chamlong is widely perceived as being an opposition leader representing different political, social and economic values than the other politicians in Thailand. Whether Chamlong really has a different policy on the practical level can be discussed elsewhere, but the fact remains that Bodhiraksa's association with Chamlong seems to be the main cause for the legal problems the Asoke group has faced since Bodhiraksa rejected the state authority.

I also made a point that the Asoke group has legally existed as an independent group outside the state Buddhist administration since 1975, yet did not incur any significant reactions by the state sangha until 1988. While the renegade status of the Asoke group was not a major problem for 13 years, it started to irritate the state authorities in the wake of Major-General Chamlong Srimuang's candidacy for Palang Dharma party in the general elections of 1988.

I also examined whether the Buddhism taught and practised by the Asoke group is so deviant that it cannot be tolerated by the

orthodox state Buddhist authority. Bodhiraksa and the Asoke group emphasise modesty, frugality and hard work. The values cherished by Asoke are entirely based on the general Buddhist moral precepts, which the state Buddhist authority also observes in theory but rarely in practice. This is evidenced by the frequent sex, money and other scandals within the mainstream as well as in the daily life of the great majority of Thai monks. The moral ethos of Asoke separates it from the easy-going and fun-loving Thai society, where rampant corruption, prostitution and environmental degradation are tolerated. For example, even though the official state policy has been oriented towards more reforestation than deforestation since the disastrous floods in 1989, the illegal logging continues under the eyes of the state authorities and leading military-politicians.

The Asoke ideology, for its part, emphasises conservation and environmental values by encouraging ecologically sound agriculture, rejecting chemicals and recycling garbage. The Asoke group's national development programme stresses the development of rural areas, whereas the official state development programme concentrates on rapid industrialisation of urban centres along the lines with other East Asian and Southeast Asian newly industrialised countries.

The emergence of Asoke in the wake of the democracy movement in the early 1970s seems to link the movement with the democratic and egalitarian values cherished by students, intellectuals and Buddhist monks during those years. One should not, however, draw too one-sided conclusions based on this. After the democracy movement was crushed in 1976, Asoke and other religious groups were the only organisations which could have channelled the discontent of the former pro-democracy activists. Yet, I did not come across with any of these 1970s activists in Asoke. Most people joined Asoke out of sense of frustration that they felt towards the mainstream sangha's corrupt and lax practices. The political activity of Kittivuddho and the likes of him, leading to the crushing of the democracy movement, was one of the main causes that shattered the image of a united sangha. The politicisation and secularisation of the sangha encouraged people to look for new Buddhist groups in Thailand.

The state campaign against Asoke, which started in 1988 in

the wake of the general elections, seemed to increase rather than decrease the support for Asoke among the second-generation political activists. Banning a religious group aroused the interest of many intellectuals who had been looking for alternative socio-political movements. The activities of the Asoke group have clearly expanded since the official state ban: schools were opened, new centres emerged and the promotion of natural agriculture gained a prominent position in the group's activities. Their alternative national development programme, based on rural development, is propagated by the well-educated lay intellectuals who started to join the group around the year 1989.

Earlier research on Asoke tended to connect the group with the Weberian concepts of economic growth and the spirit of capitalism. The economic policy of Asoke is, however, clearly anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist. This was demonstrated in the analysis of their economic ideals of merit-ism (*bun niyom*). They have even managed to make their ideals concrete by opening Bun Niyom-shops, where they can experiment with their economic programme.

The frugality taught and practised by the Asoke can be interpreted as a direct criticism of consumerism. This puts the group in opposition to the state economic programme which encourages consumption. In the present consumerist Thai society, where individualism is gaining increasing importance, Asoke emphasises communal values and self-sufficiency. Asoke people are encouraged to work for the group and society.

The Asoke group cherishes similar values to those described by Weber in his discussion about the Protestant ethics: frugality and hard work. Yet, the difference is that individual wealth is not regarded as a reward for asceticism in Asoke. The values connected with frugality and diligence are sacrifice and devotion to society. I concluded that the individuals in Asoke work for the group, and the wealth accumulated by the volunteers is expected to benefit the whole group.

The moral conduct of the Asoke monastics is of utmost importance in this context; whether they are practising "world-rejecting asceticism" by concentrating on spiritual counselling, or "inner-worldly asceticism" by participating in the actual labour of the Asoke.

The borderline between these two forms of asceticism seemed somewhat fluid among the monastics. As long as the monastics do not use the money for their own enrichment, neither do the laypeople wish to enrich themselves individually. The lay followers are satisfied with accumulating capital for the Asoke group collectively.

One characteristic of a sect, according to Bryan Wilson, is that it claims to have better access to salvation than the mainstream religious body. This idea links Asoke to the millenarian *phu mi bun* movements with whom Asoke seems to have some similarities. Both are predominantly based in rural areas, particularly in the impoverished northeastern part of Thailand, and both promise an immediate this-worldly salvation as Chatthip indicated when describing the traditional *phu mi bun* movements.

The Buddhist salvation or enlightenment indeed is interpreted by Asoke in a different way from the mainstream. The Asoke group has further demythologised nirvana, a process which was initiated by Buddhadasa. According to Asoke, everyone who manages to stop smoking, drinking, lying, stealing, killing and practicing illicit sex already is enlightened. After this the person can start to struggle for the higher levels of enlightenment by following quite explicit steps which will lead to this goal.

The notion of a concrete attainable nirvana brings Buddhism closer to the ordinary Thai laity and encourages them to follow the ideals and moral guidelines of Buddhism. I came to the conclusion that it moves the sangha-centred practices towards a more worldly level which is open to all lay people. Losing the sangha-centredness of Buddhism destroys the traditional interdependence between the sangha and the state. Therefore the idea of an attainable nirvana is revolutionary in the Theravada Buddhist context. It can change the submissiveness of the underprivileged when they are encouraged to struggle for nirvana through their own behaviour, regardless of their social status and without the financial sacrifices to the monks in merit-making ceremonies.

One difference between the *phu mi bun* movements and Asoke can be found in the class composition of the two groups. In my examination of the social background of the Asoke adherents, I showed

that the group is not entirely composed of the rural poor - as is often the case in religious peasant movements. Neither does the Asoke group consist of the urban upward-mobile middle class, as was suggested in the research from the 1980s and early 1990s. The main shortcoming in the earlier research was linking the two entirely different, albeit contemporary, religious groups together - the Dhammakaya and Asoke - and drawing conclusions without the use of convincing empirical data. Another problem was the emphasis placed in these studies on the urban Santi Asoke centre while neglecting the importance of the rural centres. Furthermore, these studies focused on the person of Bodhiraksa, thus neglecting interviews with his supporters and followers.

My data on the social background of the Asoke people suggest that among the ordinary lay people the rural low-educated poor are in a great majority, whereas the monks are more divergent in class composition. They originate from the rural low-educated poor, from the somewhat more educated lower middle-classes and from the urban high-educated upper middle-class, in fairly equal proportions.

To call the Asoke group a fundamentalist movement, as Swearer does, is problematic. Swearer links the two new Buddhist groups - Asoke and Dhammakaya - together as examples of fundamentalist tendencies in Theravada Buddhism. As I hope to have shown in this study, the two movements differ quite radically both in theory and in practice, and particularly in their relationship to the state. Therefore, it is an over-generalisation to conclude, as Swearer does, that "both represent resurgent forms of fundamentalistic religion", because they both have a "distinctive ideology and religious practice", and they both are led by "strong, charismatic figures".³⁵² These characteristics apply to nearly all religious groups in the world; few groups, sects or new religious movements are led by weak, uncharismatic figures.

I suggested that Asoke challenges the mainstream from the gender point of view, as well. The traditional position of women in Thai Buddhism has been subordinate to that of men. According to a popular interpretation, a woman must be born as a man before she can even dream of enlightenment. The Asoke has ordained 23 women

as nuns, albeit with the title of Sikkhamat, in order to give them the possibility of devoting their lives to religious practices. The 23 Sikkhamats of the group are highly respected by Asoke people, and even if some lapses in showing respect to the Sikkhamats do occur, they still are in a very different social and hierarchical position in the group from any of the *mae chis* in the mainstream Thai Buddhist sangha. The fact that also a great majority of the monks and lay people saw "becoming a Sikkhamat" as the second highest alternative in earning spiritual merit (*bun*) is quite encouraging from the Thai women's point of view. It shows that if an opportunity is given to Thai women to be properly ordained in the sangha, they can be as respected as the monks. The fact that the Sikkhamats themselves regarded "becoming a Sikkhamat" as the highest alternative, also indicates that the 23 women have developed a strong identity as Sikkhamats despite the fact that their position is completely new and unique in Thai Buddhism.

While the traditional definitions of the sect by religious sociologists, particularly Wilson, Stark & Bainbridge³⁵³, seem to correspond quite well with the Asoke group, some reservations should still be made. To define Asoke as a sect in the Thai context is somewhat problematic. The Thai word for sect is *nikai* and, as I showed there already are two sects in Thailand: Mahanikai and Thammayutnikai. The state Buddhist authority prefers to emphasise the unity of the sangha despite the schism, and it certainly will not accept easily the idea of a third Buddhist sect in Thailand. The Asoke members are also careful not to propagate the idea of a third sect in Thailand because they like to emphasise that Buddha himself was against the division of the sangha. The fact remains, however, that there already are two sects in Thailand, and several other Buddhist sects exist in the neighbouring Theravada Buddhist countries, e.g. Burma. All this indicates that sectarianism cannot be avoided in Buddhism.

If the Asoke group were permitted to exist and continue its activities, it can hardly be avoided that Asoke will, *de facto*, form a third Buddhist sect in Thailand whether recognised by the state or not. Whether their Buddhism is Theravada Buddhism or even closer to Mahayana Buddhism is an open question. It seems to combine

ideas from both schools: strict vegetarianism from Mahayana Buddhism and the Thai Theravada Buddhist idealistic values of strict discipline and celibacy on the part of the monastics as well as the daily almsrounds to offer the laity the opportunity of making merit. If the group has a future, it might be justified to call its brand of Buddhism "Asoke Buddhism". One prerequisite for this is, however, that the Thai state will truly follow the constitution, where freedom of religion is granted. This way Thailand could become a more pluralistic society.

As Stark & Bainbridge³⁵⁴ suggested, a sect can develop into a "church" when the class composition of the sect changes. The tendency for the sects to develop closer to "church" status remains to be seen in the case of Asoke. As could be deduced from the biographies, some of Asoke members feel that the group already has changed quite dramatically over the last 20 years. This can also be seen in the descriptions of Asoke in earlier research, where the living conditions of the Asoke members were described to still be extremely austere as the members were following their own strict rules of conduct. The results of this study indicate that in several cases minor bending of rules is tolerated nowadays; the Asoke still emphasise very strict ascetic Buddhist practices, but do not force anyone to follow these practices to the extremes. There are different disciplinary and spiritual levels upon which practitioners can dwell, and these levels also correspond with the practitioner's hierarchical position within the Asoke group and often are connected with the different levels of enlightenment. A major deviation from the mainstream Buddhist sangha, however, seems to exist: the Asoke monastics do practise what they preach.

My first visit to Santi Asoke took place in October 1991 when I visited the old wooden main temple and conducted my first interviews. The building was later destroyed by insects and, when I arrived in Santi Asoke in October 1994, I was surprised to see a huge construction site. The building of a giant-sized temple in concrete at the Santi Asoke centre in Bangkok seems to symbolise the change from an extremely austere and radical Buddhist group into a more socially-oriented one with manifold activities carried out by the fairly diverse membership.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ *The Nation*, 9 August 1989. All quotes in this thesis have been left exactly as they appeared in the original.
- ² *The Nation*, 7 November 1994.
- ³ *The Nation*, 26 November 1994.
- ⁴ Also written Thammakaai, but here standardised throughout Dhammadaya - the form preferred by the sect members.
- ⁵ Suwanna 1990, Taylor 1990.
- ⁶ See Chapter III.
- ⁷ Celebrating Buddha's birthday and enlightenment, *Maghabucha* often falls in February.
- ⁸ Field notes; interview with Nicholas Woods, 1 September 1991.
- ⁹ Field notes, interview with Phra Thammanithet, also known as Phra Sophon Khanaphon, deputy abbot of Wat Bovornnivet, 7 October 1991.
- ¹⁰ Heikkilä-Horn 1992, *The Supernatural Power of Buddhist Rulers. The Ideological Background of Kingship in Theravada Buddhism*, unpublished Licentiate thesis for Åbo Akademi University.
- ¹¹ Heikkilä-Horn 1994, 165-168.
- ¹² Ishii 1986, 40-47, 164-166; Somboon 1982, 24, 158-159.
- ¹³ In Thai: *phra mahakasat, chart, sasana*.
- ¹⁴ Girling 1984, 393.
- ¹⁵ Girling 1984, 387-395.
- ¹⁶ Girling 1984, 395-401.
- ¹⁷ Turton 1984, 37-39.
- ¹⁸ Turton 1984, 25-26, 36.
- ¹⁹ Turton 1984, 41, 65.
- ²⁰ Turton 1984, 65-67.
- ²¹ Tanabe 1984, 86.
- ²² Tanabe 1984, 86.
- ²³ During this century the most important *phu mi bun* revolts occurred in the Northeast Thailand in 1901-2, 1924, 1936 and 1959. Chatthip 1984.
- ²⁴ The Pali term "dhamma" usually refers to Buddhist doctrine, whereas the Sanskrit word "dharma" here refers more to moral law and righteous rule. In Thai both are pronounced as "thamma" or "tham".
- ²⁵ Chatthip 1984, 117-124.
- ²⁶ Ames 1964; Spiro 1970; Kirsch 1977.

27 Ames 1964, 21-25; 35-36; 40.

28 Spiro 1970, 9-12; 19; 140. Sanskrit: *nirvana* is often used in its Pali form *nibbana* in the literature dealing with Theravada Buddhism. *Kamma* is the Pali form of the Sanskrit word *karma*.

29 Kirsch 1977, 252-253.

30 Wilson 1990, 4.

31 Wilson 1990, 6.

32 Wilson 1990, 17-18.

33 Wilson 1990, 9.

34 Grant A. Olson (1983) *Sangha Reform in Thailand. Limitation, Liberation and the Middle Path*. M.A. Thesis. May 1983, University of Hawaii.

35 Olson 1983, 66.

36 Olson 1983, 68.

37 Olson 1983, 68.

38 Olson 1983, 72. Chamlong Srimuang worked as the Secretary General in the Prime Minister's Office in 1980-81, during the premiership of General Prem.

39 Olson 1983, 72.

40 Olson 1983, 73.

41 Peter A. Jackson *Buddhism, Legitimation and Conflict. The Political Functions of Urban Thai Buddhism*. Singapore 1989.

42 Jackson 1989, 9 - 10.

43 Jackson 1989, 164-166.

44 Jackson 1989, 6-7.

45 Jackson 1989, 11.

46 Jackson 1989, 24.

47 Jackson 1989, 37.

48 Jackson 1989, 50.

49 Jackson 1989, 55.

50 Jackson uses the spelling "Phothirak", in this study standardised throughout Bodhiraksa.

51 Jackson 1989, 166.

52 Jackson 1989, 51.

53 Jackson 1989, 50-51.

54 Jackson 1989, 189.

55 Anan Senakhan: *Bodhiraksa - the highly dangerous prophet.*(In Thai) Bangkok 1982.

56 Jackson 1989, 184-185.

57 Jim L. Taylor "New Buddhist Movements in Thailand: An "Individualistic Revolution", Reform and Political Dissonance", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, March 1990.

58 Taylor 1990, 135, 153.

59 Taylor 1990, 139.

60 Taylor 1990, 135-139.

61 Taylor 1990, 135-139.

62 Taylor 1990, 152-153.

63 Taylor 1990, 145-146; Anan Senakhan together with Phra Sophon Khanaphon and Sangwian Phurahong: *Maha Chamlong disciple of Bodhiraksa, a very dangerous teacher*, published in Thai in 1988 - shortly before the elections.

64 Taylor 1990, 145.

65 Sombat Chantornwong: *The Pathom Asoke Community. A Study of Buddhist Utopia.* (in Thai) Thamma Santi Foundation 1988; and Prawet Wasi: *Suan Mok, Thammakai, Santi Asok.* (in Thai) Bangkok 1988.

66 Suwanna 1990, 404.

67 Suwanna 1990, 407.

68 Suwanna 1990, 396-407.

69 Donald K. Swearer "Fundamentalism in Theravada Buddhism". in Martin E. Marty & R. Scott Appleby (eds) *Fundamentalisms Observed*. Chicago 1991.

70 Swearer 1991, 628.

71 Swearer 1991, 668. *Acharn* Man was a revered forest monk, a meditation teacher in the Northeast.

72 Swearer 1991, 672-677.

73 Swearer 1991, 677.

74 Swearer 1991, 678. Swearer's way of regarding both Dhammakaya and Santi Asoke as "fundamentalistic" movements weakens his argument and gives the impression that his conclusions are guided and simplified by the general title of the book (*Fundamentalisms Observed*) compiled by Marty and Appleby rather than being based on a deep analysis of the two Thai Buddhist groups.

75 Swearer 1991, 667.

76 Swearer 1991, 667.

77 Swearer 1991, 672.

78 Swearer 1991, 673.

79 Swearer 1991, 656.

80 Biography (in Thai) *Sacca haeng chivit* (Truth of Life) 1982 pp.186-237, *Phutaplauk* (The Externals of Buddha) 1985.

81 Apinya Fuengfusakul "Empire of Crystal and Utopian Commune: Two Types of Contemporary Theravada Reform in Thailand". *Sojourn* Vol. 8 Nr. 1, February 1993.

82 Apinya 1993, 153.

83 Apinya 1993, 159.

84 Apinya 1993, 170.

85 Apinya 1993, 180.

86 Bunruam Theimchan "The Santi Asoke Case" (in Thai) *Khadi Santi Asoke* from 1989; Sunai Setboonsarng's MA-thesis from 1986; Bodhiraksa's criticism on Buddhadasa in "Social problems that cannot be solved, because of the wrong way of studying Buddhism" (in Thai) *Panha Sangkhom thii kae mai daai phro kaan suksa phutta sasana phit plaat* from 1985.

87 Jim Taylor "Buddhist Revitalization, Modernization, and Social Change in Contemporary Thailand". *Sojourn* Vol. 8, Number 1, February 1993.

88 Taylor 1993, 68.

89 Taylor 1993, 69.

90 Taylor 1993, 62-64.

91 Taylor 1993, 65. Grant Olson returns to the topic in his unpublished paper, "Bodhirak, Chamlong and Phongpichai: A trinity of Santi Asoke Biographies", which is based on biographies of three Asoke members. Olson interprets the three biographies as showpieces of the Asoke groups belief in *varna*. According to Olson, the biographies of Pongpichai, a young Asoke activist who died in a car accident, in different Asoke magazines, fill the gap in the biographic "trinity" of the Asoke by lifting up the life of a *sudra*. Whereas Bodhiraksa himself must be seen as a *brahmin* and Chamlong as a *kshatriya*. One of Olson's main arguments is that the Asoke group is more than just a Buddhist movement; it is a social movement against the corruption in the sangha and decay in the Thai society.

92 A monastic ceremony at the end of Buddhist Lent.

93 Asoke ceremony during the *maghabucha* week.

94 Letter, 25 December 1993.

95 See Chapter IV for a description of the *pluksek* ceremony.

96 My Thai is unfortunately not enough for a throughout text analysis of even a minor part of the literature published by the Asoke group during the last 20 years. This work I will have to leave to a linguist.

97 The questionnaires, a copy of the unpublished manuscript "Insight into Santi Asoke 3", the English video tape "The Santi Asoke case" and the video tape taken during Yantra's visit to Helsinki in 1993 are at the Department of Comparative Religion at Åbo Akademi University in Turku, Finland.

98 I shall use the term 'Asoke' to signify the whole group and reserve the use of the term 'Santi Asoke' for the centre in Bangkok.

99 Insight into Santi Asoke 1 (hereafter ISAA 1), 1989 12.

¹⁰⁰ Thai sangha is divided into two sects Thammyutnikai and Mahanikai.

¹⁰¹ IISA 1, 1989, 12.

¹⁰² The group was known as *Chou Asoke*, the Asoke group, as it originated from the Wat Asokaram.

¹⁰³ Sanitsuda, IISA 1, 1989, 13.

¹⁰⁴ In the article “The Man behind Santi Asoke” in *Bangkok Post*, 22 July 1989, Sanitsuda Ekachai describes Bodhiraksa as a man “you either love or hate”. It is interesting to note that even though the article includes adverse criticism, a complete version of it was printed in the movement’s own publication: in IISA 1, 1989, 9-17.

¹⁰⁵ IISA 1, 1989, 13.

¹⁰⁶ IISA 1, 1989, 15.

¹⁰⁷ IISA 1, 1989, 15.

¹⁰⁸ In fact there are no nuns or *bhikkhuni* in the Theravada Buddhist tradition. The nuns of the Asoke group could be regarded as female novices, their earlier name *mae nen* referred to this. The name Sikkhamat or *sikkha mata* means studying mother.

¹⁰⁹ The social and spiritual status of the mainstream *mae chis* is very low. *Mae chis* shave their head, dress in white and live in the temples. They are often regarded as beggars, and often behave that way since they cannot receive donations from any other source. My general impression is that the senior mainstream monks do not wish to improve the status of the *mae chis*, which forces the Asoke group to maintain a low profile on the question. For more about *mae chis* see Chatsumarn 1991, 36-44.

¹¹⁰ The reasons for her disrobing were not made public, and her disrobing came as a surprise to the Sikkhamats in Santi Asoke. She told me that she felt tired of the work in the group, and wanted to be free for a while, to test herself outside. She had plans to rejoin the group as a Sikkhamat in the near future. Thipdevi stays in close contact with the Asoke group visiting the centres regularly. She continues to dress in the manner of a Sikkhamat: a long dress and shaven head.

¹¹¹ The word “aspirant” has been translated by Sikkhamat Chinda into *phu triam buat* which means person preparing for ordination.

¹¹² *Aramik* for male and *aramika* for female temple residents; *Akhantuka* for both male and female temple guests.

¹¹³ In Thailand these types of books are generally called “*Dhamma* books”.

¹¹⁴ January 1995.

¹¹⁵ In May 1995 a *samma sikha* school was opened in Santi Asoke on similar lines to the schools in Sisa Asoke and Pathom Asoke.

¹¹⁶ In a meeting in January 1995 on the teachers’ day (*wan khru.*).

¹¹⁷ The *Palang Bun* shop was renovated in February 1995 air-conditioning was installed to make it look more like the other shops in the neighbourhood.

¹¹⁸ More about the Asoke ideology called “merit-ism” in Chapter IV.

¹¹⁹ One *rai* is 0.16 hectares.

¹²⁰ These bases include the following: kitchen, garden, rice field, tofu factory, shop, offices or any of the workshops.

¹²¹ Freely translated by Sikkhamat Chinda. Peril in Thai *aphaai*, no-peril, no-danger, no-disaster.

¹²² *Pluksek* ceremony will be described in Chapter IV.

¹²³ Lanna refers to the old Northern Thai kingdom, centered in Chiang Mai, which existed until the 1770s.

¹²⁴ In the national gathering to celebrate *pluksek* in Sisa Asoke, there were 51 persons from Chiang Mai, 11 from Lampang and six from Lamphoon. Altogether there were 138 persons from the North.

¹²⁵ Bodhiraksa estimated the number of his disciples to be around 900 in a speech given in the *pluksek* ceremony in Sisa Asoke, 17 February 1995.

¹²⁶ Swearer (1991, 672) talks about 10 000 core members and 100 000 peripheral members. Jackson (1989, 168) refers to an article in Thai newspaper *Matichon* from 2 February 1986, where a mainstream monk complained that "about 10% of people in Ubon Ratchathani and in Sisaket support Bodhiraksa". According to the 1993 statistics the province of Ubon Ratchathani had 1,6 Million inhabitants, and Sisaket 1,3 Million; 10% would be 290 000.

¹²⁷ In Santi Asoke and in Pathom Asoke the Sikkhamats very consciously turn towards the eldest Sikkhamat for the third bow, who then receives the greeting by sitting straight.

¹²⁸ The laypeople in Santi Asoke and in Pathom Asoke remember to turn towards the Sikkhamats for the third bow. The same does not happen in the larger national gatherings.

¹²⁹ *Bangkok Post* (hereafter BP) 24 February 1982. Anan obviously refers to the Sangha Act 1962. The Sangha Act 1962 does not, however, require that every monk should dwell in a monastery belonging to the state Buddhist administration. The earlier Sangha Act of 1941, Chapter Seven / Article 54 states that: "Whoever without having been duly ordained according to the Buddha's discipline wrongfully wears a dress imitating that of a Bhikkhu shall be punished with imprisonment not exceeding six months."

¹³⁰ BP 17 August 1988.

¹³¹ BP 19 August 1988.

¹³² BP 24 August 1988.

¹³³ BP 1 September 1988.

¹³⁴ BP 24 May 1989.

¹³⁵ BP 24 May 1989.

¹³⁶ BP 29 May 1989.

¹³⁷ BP 30 May 1989.

¹³⁸ BP 7 June 1989.

¹³⁹ Insight into Santi Asoke 2, hereafter IISA 2, 1991, 23.

¹⁴⁰ All Buddhist monks in Thailand have the title "*Phra*"; the word "*Samana*" is a general Pali term for ascetic monks but, in Thai, the word sounds very similar to the Thai word for novice "*Samamen*".

¹⁴¹ IISA 2, 1991, 23-24.

¹⁴² BP 12 June 1989.

¹⁴³ A former Prime Minister from the years 1973-1976, and former leader of the Social Action Party.

¹⁴⁴ BP 13 June 1989.

¹⁴⁵ *Far Eastern Economic Review* (hereafter FEER) 6 July 1989. The account hereafter is based on the unpublished video tape produced by the Asoke group of the material the media took after the ban.

¹⁴⁶ Appr. USD 20 000.

¹⁴⁷ *The Nation* 9 August 1989.

¹⁴⁸ *The Nation* 9 August 1989.

¹⁴⁹ IISA 2, 1991, 38-41.

¹⁵⁰ The second English language publication "Insight into Santi Asoke" from 1991 by Aporn Poompanna mainly deals with the court case against Bodhiraksa and the Asoke group. The booklet is a response to the ban declared by the government to the media to publish any report on the court case. This publication is trying to fill the gap caused by the ban, and is obviously approaching the foreign correspondents in Thailand. According to the preface, the purpose of the booklet is to present "preliminary information to encourage those who are interested to follow the results of the court judgement". IISA 2, 1991, 8.

¹⁵¹ IISA 2, 1991, 12.

¹⁵² IISA 2, 1991, 12-13.

¹⁵³ IISA 2, 1991, 23-24.

¹⁵⁴ IISA 3, 117.

¹⁵⁵ IISA 2, 1991, 51. The Sangha Act of 1962 obviously gives a possibility to interpret the Asoke case being against public order. Part four/Article 27 declares: "In the event that there is a Bhikkhu...who is not attached to any monastery, thereby living the life of a tramp, the Council of Elders is vested with the power to enforce a judgement for his disrobing". The penalty for a violation of Article 27 is "an imprisonment of not more than six months" according to Part seven/ Article 42. Yet, the Sangha Act of 1962 fails to indicate that to be "attached to any monastery" in fact means any monastery under the state Buddhist administration. This, again, is somewhat illogical as the Chinese and Vietnamese Mahayana Buddhist monasteries are not under the state Buddhist administration.

¹⁵⁶ Similar aggressive reactions were broadcasted in the media during the final decisions in the Yantra affair in February - March 1995. More about Yantra in Chapter III.

¹⁵⁷ Based on my observations in the court on the 20th and 27th March 1995.

¹⁵⁸ Buddhadasa.

¹⁵⁹ Bodhiraksa.

¹⁶⁰ Bodhiraksa.

¹⁶¹ Bodhiraksa.

¹⁶² The term “*thudong*” (Pali: *dhutanga*) refers to ascetic practices of which one includes wandering around and living in deserted areas such as mountain caves and forests to devote their time for spiritual exercises. Heinze 1977, 229.

¹⁶³ McCargo 1993, 31.

¹⁶⁴ Buddhadasa 1986, 89.

¹⁶⁵ Buddhadasa 1986, 50-53.

¹⁶⁶ Mulder 1990, 129. More about Buddhadasa in Jackson, Peter (1986) *Buddhadasa - A Buddhist Thinker for the Modern World*; Gabaude, Louis and Swearer, Donald in Sulak Sivaraksa (ed) (1994) *The Quest for a Just Society. The Legacy and Challenge of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu*.

¹⁶⁷ The name is seen to refer either to the nine points of the organisation laid down as a program for preserving Thai nationalism, or to the ninth king of the Chakri dynasty, Rama IX. Keyes 1978, 151; Somboon 1982, 132-133.

¹⁶⁸ Somboon 1982, 135.

¹⁶⁹ Somboon 1982, 130.

¹⁷⁰ Somboon 1982, 151-153.

¹⁷¹ Keyes 1978, 155-156.

¹⁷² Jackson 1989, 149-150. More about Kittivuddho in Heinze, Ruth-Inge (1977) *The Role of Sangha in Modern Thailand*; Keyes, Charles: *Political Crisis and Militant Buddhism in Contemporary Thailand* in Smith, Bardwell (ed) (1978) *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Burma and Laos*; Somboon Suksamran (1982) *Buddhism and Politics in Thailand*.

¹⁷³ Mulder 1990, 127.

¹⁷⁴ Rajavaramuni 1984 108-109.

¹⁷⁵ Rajavaramuni 1984, 117-118.

¹⁷⁶ Debvedi 1988, 35.

¹⁷⁷ Based on the Dhammakaya group's own publications: *Light of Peace, Mettanando, Progress for Inner Peace*.

¹⁷⁸ Field notes, 1 September 1991.

¹⁷⁹ Field notes, 18 February 1992.

¹⁸⁰ BP, 2 November 1992. More about the Dhammakaya movement in Bowers, Jeffrey (1996) *Dhammakaya Meditation in Thai Society*, Chulalongkorn University Press; Apinya Fuengfusakul (1993) *Empire of Crystal and Utopian Commune: Two types of contemporary Theravada reform in Thailand*; Jackson, Peter (1989) *Buddhism, Legitimation and Conflict. The political functions of urban Thai Buddhism*; Taylor, Jim (1990) *New Buddhist Movements in Thailand: An 'Individualistic Revolution', Reform and Political Dissonance*; Zehner, Edwin (1990) *Reform Symbolism of a Thai Middle-Class Sect: The Growth and Appeal of the Thammakai Movement*. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Vol XXI No. September 1990 pp. 402-426.

¹⁸¹ Based on an article written by Sanitsuda Ekachai in the *Bangkok Post* on th 13 December 1991. No biographies of Yantra or academic articles on him and his movement exist

to my knowledge.

¹⁸² 22 May 1993 video tape taken by Mr. Timo Vainikka.

¹⁸³ Merit in Thai is *bun* deriving from the Pali word *pūñña*. The Pali word *kusala*, meaning cleverness, is also known in Thailand. Demerit in Thai is known as *baap*, in Pali *akusala*, which is translated as stupidity. The terms *bun* and *tham bun*, make merit, are widely used in colloquial Thai; *tham bun*, literally means to make merit.

¹⁸⁴ Pali: *kamma*

¹⁸⁵ Ling 1972, 213-214.

¹⁸⁶ Khantipalo 1973, 56-57. The concept of *barami* is frequently combined with the ideas concerning merit in the Thai context. *Barami* is used as an attribute of royalty and high political authority. *Barami* derives from the Pali *parami* meaning completeness, perfection and exercise of the ten principal virtues: 1. giving (*dana*), 2. moral conduct (*sila*), 3. selflessness (*nekhamma*), 4. wisdom (*pañña*), 5. energy (*viriya*), 6. patience (*khanti*), 7. truthfulness (*sacca*), 8. self-determination (*adhitthana*), 9. love (*metta*), 10. equanimity (*upekha*) Pali-English Dictionary, 1972.

¹⁸⁷ *Nirvana* is usually translated into extinction or to salvation; in Pali: *nibbana*, in Thai: *nibhaan*.

¹⁸⁸ Khantipalo 1973, 59-65.

¹⁸⁹ Khantipalo 1973, 59-61.

¹⁹⁰ Somboon 1976, 8.

¹⁹¹ Khantipalo 1973, 61.

¹⁹² Kaufman 1960, vii, 183.

¹⁹³ A ceremony after the Buddhist Lent, when laypeople donate robes - among other things - to the monks for a period lasting one month.

¹⁹⁴ Kaufman 1960, 184, 210.

¹⁹⁵ Both Kaufman and Tambiah fail to mention whether the 25 "farmers" and 79 "family heads" were male or female. The religious and ceremonial behaviour of Buddhists varies according to gender.

¹⁹⁶ Tambiah 1970, 147-148.

¹⁹⁷ Mulder 1969, 9.

¹⁹⁸ Fieldnotes. Interview with Professor Sunthorn Na-Rangsi, 11 February 1992.

¹⁹⁹ Mulder 1969, 11; Tambiah 1970, 146; Terwiel 1979, 243.

²⁰⁰ My own observations from a *kathin* ceremony in Songkhla in October 1991 support Terwiel's observations from the 1970s. Terwiel 1979, 243.

²⁰¹ Ingersoll 1975, 236, 357.

²⁰² Heinze 1977, 89.

²⁰³ The last alternative on the list: Doing something else, explain what, was added by the suggestion of Sikkhamat Chinda in the Santi Asoke. She herself originally felt that none of

the given options could be ranked as the best alternative, but changed her mind when filling in the questionnaire. The last option, however, gave some very interesting alternatives and ideas, which will be discussed shortly.

²⁰⁴ Only 9 persons ticked the alternative “contributing money to the construction of a temple”, although a new huge temple in concrete is under construction in Santi Asoke in Bangkok, a project which has required several Millions of *baht* already. 15 monks ticked the alternative “contributing money for the construction of a hospital” and 13 monks ticked the alternative “contributing money for the construction of a school”. These alternatives were ranked between 1-6.

²⁰⁵ Two different levels of being an aspirant; a novice.

²⁰⁶ Pali: *Sotapanna*, stream enterer.

²⁰⁷ Pali: *Sakadagami*, once-returner.

²⁰⁸ Pali: *Anagami*, never-returner.

²⁰⁹ Pali: *Araha*, the enlightened one.

²¹⁰ Pali: *kilesa*, defilement.

²¹¹ The three defilements: anger, greediness and delusion.

²¹² Bodhiraksa.

²¹³ Buddhadasa.

²¹⁴ The Council of Elders.

²¹⁵ “The New Trend of Buddhism in Thai Society”, hereafter New Trend p. 15. (n.d.)

²¹⁶ IISA 3, 105. The third English language booklet “Insight into Santi Asoke 3”, hereafter IISA 3, still unpublished, includes several interviews with Bodhiraksa by foreign journalists. The names of the journalists are not always revealed, and the interviews are rearranged to fit the topic content.

²¹⁷ IISA 3, 98.

²¹⁸ New Trend p. 17.

²¹⁹ New Trend p. 18. This description seems to refer to the Dhammakaya movement fairly openly.

²²⁰ New Trend pp.18-19.

²²¹ In “Insight into Santi Asoke 1” the term “fundamental Buddhism” is used, whereas the older version of the same text in “New Trend” uses the term “authentic Buddhism”.

²²² New Trend p. 19.

²²³ The second publication in English was published in 1989 with the title “Insight into Santi Asoke 1” hereafter IISA 1. It was edited by Porn Poompanna alias Aporn Poompanna, a former lecturer in French of the Chulalongkorn university. ISAA 1, 4-5.

²²⁴ IISA 3, 100-101.

²²⁵ IISA 3, 49.

²²⁶ It should be noted that there are different translations of these terms. See

Khantipalo's translations in Chapter III.

227 IISA 3, 75-77.

228 IISA 1, 23.

229 IISA 1, 23-24.

230 IISA 1, 22. The same chapter was first published in the "New Trend" and later even in the "Insight into Santi Asoke 1" under the title "The Dhamma practices of Santi Asoke".

231 IISA 3, 49.

232 In one of the first brochures in English "The New Life at Dawn", hereafter NLD, a reference to Chiraka Sutta (Vol 13) is made. NLD p.3-4. The Pali word *Jivaka* is probably misspelled into Chiraka. We should remember that the Thais don't read the Pali canon in English, and are not familiar with the Western way of spelling Pali. The "Insight into Santi Asoke 1" also publishes translations of the "fundamental Buddhist precepts" taken from Cullasila (*Culasila*), Majjhisila (*Majjhimasila*) and Mahasila from Mahavagga and Cullavagga in Khandaka Vinaya Pitaka. Another translation is taken from the Brahma-Gala (probably a misspelling of *Brahmajala sutta*) Nikaya in Digha Nikaya from 1899, translated by Max Muller for the Pali Text Society in London. By publishing these texts in English the Asoke group wants to demonstrate that they are following the scholarly tradition and the fundamentals of the Buddhist teaching.

233 in Pali: *nibbana*; in Thai: *nibhaan*.

234 Thai: *Sodaban*.

235 Thai: *Sakitakhami*.

236 Thai: *Anakhami*.

237 Heinze 1977, 201-202.

238 The present king of Thailand is popularly regarded as a *bodhisattva*.

239 According to some informants the Sikkhamats should be on this level, but others are very careful about giving such statements.

240 In this Bodhiraksa follows the teachings of Buddhadasa, but at the same time criticises Buddhadasa for not showing the way to reach nirvana in practical terms. Bodhiraksa criticises Buddhadasa on these point in his *Social Problems.....*, more on the question on nirvana in *Major way* part 3, 1979, 57-65 and in *What is a human being* 1994, 545. (Translated for me by Sikkhamat Chinda.)

241 Thip 1978, 49. *Nome du plume* of Sikkhamat Thipdevi.

242 NLD p. 5.

243 NLD p. 6. Grant Olson discusses different views on the issue of "holy water" in Olson 1991.

244 IISA 3, 3-5; 29-30.

245 "Development" monks here refer to monks who are involved in community development programmes either by the initiative of the Thai state (the Dhammaduta-programme from the 1960s) or be their own independent initiative. More about development monks see Seri's book from 1988, and Keyes 1989, 140-141.

246 IISA 3, 6-8; 37.

- 247 IISA 3, 9.
- 248 IISA 3, 113.
- 249 IISA 3, 32-33.
- 250 IISA 3, 38-40.
- 251 IISA 3, 36
- 252 IISA 3, 50.
- 253 IISA 3, 69-70.
- 254 IISA 3, 57.
- 255 IISA 3, 63, 83.
- 256 IISA 3, 86-87.
- 257 IISA 3, 58.
- 258 IISA 3, 59-60.
- 259 IISA 1, 17.
- 260 ISAA 3, 12,18.
- 261 IISA 3, 64.
- 262 IISA 3, 113.
- 263 IISA 3, 72.
- 264 IISA 3, 90.
- 265 IISA 3, 91.
- 266 IISA 3, 92-93.

267 In *pluksek* in Sisa Asoke 17 February 1995.

268 Sunai, 2.

269 Sunai, 2.

270 Schumacher's article on Buddhist economics has been translated into Thai in one of the Asoke publications, according to McCargo 1993, 173 (footnote 3). I have not been able to trace it.

271 Schumacher 1973, 48.

272 Schumacher 1973, 48-49.

273 See my description of a *maghabucha* ceremony at the Dhammadaya temple in Chapter III.

274 During the first years, the Asoke group did not call the ceremony as *pluksek*.

275 Tambiah analyses sacralising amulets by preaching magic words in his book "The Buddhist saints of the forest and the cult of amulets" (1984). The Thai verb *pluk* actually means to wake up and *khon* means a person.

276 More about the hierarchy in Chapter VI.

277 Many people get up before 2 a.m. in order to reserve good seats in the temple.

278 The Asoke group does not, in fact, chant, but tries to recite the prayers by reading without any rhythm. Chanting is regarded as singing, which is forbidden according to the seventh precept. The word chanting is used here for convenience.

279 Starting to eat vegetarian food, could be compared with a "conversion experience", a characteristic of a "sect" according to Stark and Bainbridge 1985, 21.

280 The topic of all newspapers during the week from 11 - 17 February 1995 was the sex scandal involving Phra Amarobhikkhu Yantra from the mainstream sangha.

281 I used to sit outside the Sikkhamats' conference building in my "natural office" every day. Only after several months was I finally asked to leave during the Sikkhamats' meeting time. In fact, all one could here from outside the building was the chanting.

282 In January 1995 two school boys had disappeared and the other boys were so worried about them that next morning the English lesson could hardly be started. When asked what they believed had happened to their friends, they replied unanimously "*wong narok*", hell-factories, or sweat-shops, where children work as slaves. The boys, however, returned the same day, they had arrived too late to the centre, and had slept in the health care centre (*sala sukhaphaap*).

283 Based on observations in funerals in Pathom Asoke the 5th of March 1995.

284 There are considerable irregularities in the romanization. "*Thamma*" or "*tham*" is the Thai pronunciation of the Pali word "*dhamma*" and Sanskrit word "*dharma*".

285 The word "fah" meaning heaven, could also be spelled "pha" like in many Asoke names, but this is the standardised form in English that the company uses.

286 The director of the Palang Bun-shop in Bangkok is a layman called Hin Pha. Nearly every Asoke layman has a s.c. Asoke name, given to him or her by Bodhiraksa. These names are Thai words, often describing nature.

287 The manager of the Fah Apai publishing house is a layman called Sam Din.

288 Rules stated on the back page of the book. The shape of the saving book is exactly the same as from any Thai bank.

289 The number seven has been randomly selected, probably with the idea that a person should visit the temple at least every day for a period of week before he or she can start to donate money.

290 BP 12 January 1995.

291 The verb *pavarana* in Pali originally means to invite. The term is used in the yearly post-Lenten ceremony *maha pavarana*, where the monastics are "invited" to mutual criticism concerning their practice.

292 Wilson 1990, 47

293 Buddhadasa

294 Bodhiraksa

295 Shootings in the 14th of October 1973.

²⁹⁶ Prince Vessantara, a Jataka story.

²⁹⁷ Jackson 1989; Taylor 1990.

²⁹⁸ Weber 1963, 166.

²⁹⁹ Weber 1963, 169-171.

³⁰⁰ Weber 1963, 166.

³⁰¹ Weber 1963, 166-167.

³⁰² Weber 1963, 167.

³⁰³ Weber 1963, 168.

³⁰⁴ Weber 1963, 175.

³⁰⁵ Weber 1963, 183.

³⁰⁶ All the information is based on the replies to the questionnaire. See Introduction and Appendix One.

³⁰⁷ Kirsch 1977, Ames 1964.

³⁰⁸ Major general Chamlong Srimuang always builds a separate hut for his wife in the centres where he has a house (e.g. Pathom Asoke, and outside Ratchathani Asoke). Thus they do not have to share the bedroom, which might lead them into temptation, or the outside world to doubt their sincerity.

³⁰⁹ Chatsumarn 1991, 79.

³¹⁰ Jackson 1989, 1994 discusses the problems homosexuals are facing in Thailand.

³¹¹ For Stark and Bainbridge a "conversion experience" is one characteristic of a "sect" member. Stark and Bainbridge 1985, 21.

³¹² There can be exceptions even to this rule, as I observed during *mahaparawana* in 1994, when some schoolgirls who were over the age 14 danced folk dances.

³¹³ Usually known as *metta karuna*, but in the respondents' replies often only *metta*.

³¹⁴ A considerable exception to this principle is the construction of the new huge temple in Santi Asoke, where concrete is used as basic material.

³¹⁵ The word simple (*rieb*) signifies asceticism in Asoke terminology, whereas the word ascetic often refers to the forest monks.

³¹⁶ The concept *siasala* can also been translated as sacrifice, the practitioners should sacrifice themselves for the Asoke group.

³¹⁷ See "Hierarchy of money use in Asoke" in Chapter IV.

³¹⁸ Bodhiraksa declared in the teachers' meeting in Santi Asoke on the 4th of January 1995: "If you avoid work, you avoid practice. Everytime you work, you practise".

³¹⁹ Generally the word "pundit" connotes university graduates.

³²⁰ All Asoke temples are decorated with the five slogans.

³²¹ See Chapter IV for a discussion on the concept of *bodhisattva* in the Asoke group.

³²² Only one novice failed to answer properly and gave 'OK' or 'yes' to the questions C. 1-5.

³²³ Suwanna 1990, 407.

³²⁴ Chinese buns.

³²⁵ stupa

³²⁶ Laywoman with white clothes, not shaven head.

³²⁷ To ask permission to stay.

³²⁸ Temporary guest.

³²⁹ Vegetarian restaurant in Chatuchak in Bangkok.

³³⁰ Key Statistics 1994; BP 6 March 1995.

³³¹ Key Statistics 1994, 99.

³³² Rajavaramuni 1984, 108; Suwanna 1990, 406.

³³³ Tambiah 1984; Taylor 1994.

³³⁴ The words used to indicate their father's profession in Thai *chao na, tham na, tham rai* and *kam kaset* do not, in fact, reveal whether we are dealing with big landowners or small peasants. The other research on Thai peasantry, however, indicates that the great majority of the people classified as peasants cultivate very small plots of land. For big landowners, it is more common to practice absentee landlordism where the tenants take care of the land.

³³⁵ The Thai word used for a merchant *kham khaay* does not reveal whether we are dealing with a street vendor, a petty trader or a large scale businessman. The expression *kham khaay* simply refers to a person who is "selling things". A peasant wife selling agricultural products at the village market could be also classified as *kham khaay*, but as I asked for the profession of the father in this questionnaire, we can assume that the person indicated as a *kham khaay*, is more than a vendor at the market place - an activity normally reserved for women. A *kham khaay* in this context will be regarded as a petty trader living in a rural or urban centre belonging to the lower middle class possibly of Sino-Thai origins.

³³⁶ The original Thai word for civil servant is *kharatchakan* and means "servant of the crown". See more about the term in Keyes 1989, 141.

³³⁷ Fairclough in FEER 4 February 1993. Only 29% of the school children continue with their schooling after the obligatory 6 years.

³³⁸ Not all monks graduated with a degree from their universities, thus I can only state that they studied at the university which is still significant.

³³⁹ We should remember that the academics were the ones who were most interested in filling in the questionnaire in the *mahapawarana* in Pathom Asoke, whereas the less educated ones shied away thinking it would be too difficult.

³⁴⁰ The terms for schooling were somewhat different in my questionnaire and in the paper distributed in the *pluksek*. Primary school - *prathom* - is the same in both, secondary school and high school both refer to *mattayom*. My "college" has been translated to *witthayalay*, whereas the other paper talks about vocational education using only the Thai word *aachitwa* referring to vocation. Many of the colleges, however, can be interpreted as institutes giving a profession, such as nursing schools, teacher training colleges, technical colleges etc.

³⁴¹ Here the word *kaset* was used for farmer.

³⁴² The sex ratio in the *pluksek* was also similar to the earlier results collected from the *mahapawarana* - the number of the laywomen exceeded the number of the laymen by 20%; 60% (1311) were women and 40% (870) were men. At the *mahapawarana* ceremony, there were 45 women and 30 men who filled in the questionnaire. The age division was similar to the division in the smaller sample. The largest group of participants belonged to the age group 31 to 40 i.e. 20%. The second largest group (15% of the total) were between the ages of 41 to 50 with 15% and the third largest group were senior citizens, i.e. people aged 60 or more, who totalled 14% of all the participants.

³⁴³ Wilson 1990, 62.

³⁴⁴ Wilson 1990, 63.

³⁴⁵ The Pali word *samana* (Sanskrit: *sramana*) is closely synonymous with *bhikkhu*, but the term has not been used earlier in Thailand.

³⁴⁶ This information was received only by 2140 persons.

³⁴⁷ This was mentioned to me by some laywomen. Only 36 of the 38 replied to this question.

³⁴⁸ Prakarn Asoke was a small temple in the house owned by Sikkhamat Rinpha's mother. Two Sikkhamats stayed there permanently for almost a year, after which the temple was closed down.

³⁴⁹ The fact that the people start to read a book dealing with Buddhist topics clearly shows that they have been seriously looking for spiritual explanations and a new life-style. Here the main interest is, however, why they chose the Asoke group and not another Buddhist group.

³⁵⁰ There is a great secrecy concerning these questions, and I was not able to hear any examples.

³⁵¹ To refrain from killing, stealing, illicit sex, lying, using drugs, eating uncountable meals, listening to music and decorating oneself, and finally sleeping on elevated beds.

³⁵² Swearer 1991, 668.

³⁵³ Wilson 1990; Stark & Bainbridge 1985, 1987.

³⁵⁴ Stark & Bainbridge 1985, 150.

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APPENDIX ONE

QUESTIONNAIRE (*Marja-Leena Heikkilä-Horn 1994*)

sex:

- male
- female

age:

- 10-20
- 20-30
- 30-40
- 40-50
- 50-60
- 60-70
- 70-

Marital status:

- single
 - married
 - children.....person(s)
- present status in the Asoke group
- monk
 - novice
 - nun (sikkhamat)
 - aspirant
 - layman/laywoman

How long have you been in that position in the Asoke group?

.....year(s)

A. SOCIAL BACKGROUND

1. Where were you born?

Village.....

Subdistrict.....

district.....

province.....

region.....

2. How many brothers and sisters do you have?

3. What is your father's occupation?

4. How many years did you go to school?

Primary school

High school

College

University

name of the institute(s)..... grades.....

5. What did you do before joining the Asoke group?

6. Where do you work now?

7. Do you have family members in the Asoke group? Who?

B. BUDDHIST EXPERIENCES

1. Have you ever stayed at a temple before?

yes no

If yes,

a) How long did you stay at the temple

one week

two weeks

one month

several months

several years

several times for short periods

b) Did you meditate in that temple?

or anywhere else.....

c) On which occasion(s) / why did you go to the temple?

d) What was your position at the temple?

2. How did you learn about the Asoke group?

3. Where did you first meet the Asoke people?

4. When did you first meet the Asoke people?

5. What did you like about the Asoke people at first?

6. Where did you first meet Bodhiraksa?

7. When did you first meet Bodhiraksa?

8. What did you like about Bodhiraksa at first?

9. What is it that you don't like in the mainstream (big group)?

10. What have you received spiritually during your stay in the Asoke group?

C. THE ASOKE GROUP LIFESTYLE

Could you give me some reasons why you think.....

1. It is good to eat vegetarian food?

2. It is good to live simple life?

3. It is good to eat only one meal in a day?

4. It is important not to drink alcohol?

5. It is good to wake up early in the morning?
6. It is not good to wear beautiful fashion clothes?
7. What is the most important thing about the Asoke group for you?
8. How do you meditate while you are working?
9. It is good not to get married?

D. BUDDHISM IN GENERAL

1. Have you ever studied the Pali language?
2. What is the difference between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism?
3. Which countries have Mahayana Buddhism, which Theravada?
4. What is the difference between Mahanikai and Thammayutnikai?
5. What is the difference between the Thammakaai group and the Asoke group?
6. Have you ever practiced meditation? If so, what type of meditation?
7. What is the best way to make merit (tham bun)? Mention in rank order the six most meritorious acts from one to six:
 - (1.) Attending the ceremonies at the temple every holy day
 - (2.) Becoming a monk
 - (3.) Becoming a sikkhamat
 - (4.) Contributing money for the construction of a temple
 - (5.) Contributing money for the construction of a hospital
 - (6.) Contributing money for the construction of a school
 - (7.) Contributing money for the repair of a temple
 - (8.) Eating vegetarian food
 - (9.) Having a son ordained as a monk
 - (10.) Giving food to the monks every day
 - (11.) Giving money to beggars
 - (12.) Giving 100 baht in a kathin ceremony
 - (13.) Giving 1 000 baht in a kathin ceremony
 - (14.) Strictly observing the 5 precepts (sila)
 - (15.) Strictly observing the 8 precepts (sila)
 - (16.) Doing something else, explain what.....