

University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Department of History  
HISTORY 438  
BUDDHISM AND SOCIETY IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN HISTORY  
Fall 1994  
Rm. 1217 Humanities      MWF 9:55-10:45  
*Thongchai Winichakul*

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Except Vietnam, the countries in the mainland Southeast Asia (Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand) are distinctive not only to the region but also to the world since, including Sri Lanka, they are the homeland of Theravada Buddhism. Over 120 million people today practice and live under the influence of Theravada Buddhism. Despite Westernization and the secularization in the past 150 years, the influence of religious tradition in those countries is very strong.

It is not the aim of this course, however, to study Theravada's tenets and philosophy in depth. As a history course, the theme will be the role of religion in the politics and cultures of those countries in history: the ideas and influence of Theravada Buddhism in shaping political and social institutions; the role of the monastic order in relation to the state and peasant, and the effects on the religion as the countries have gone through colonialism and modernization since the mid-nineteenth century. The focus on Thailand and Burma is not arbitrary, since they are major force of the region's history and religious development, and they provide us with adequate examples to understand the entire region.

As an introduction to the culture with which students may not be familiar, the course will explore major topics instead of a chronology. No previous knowledge is required; nor is the ability to memorize all the dates and unfamiliar terms and names. What is required is attention and patience, plus imagination, to learn about the unfamiliar culture.

Class: Three 50-min. lectures weekly.

Office Hours: 5211 Humanities ph. 263-8931

Monday 11:00-12:30 and 2:00-3:00 and by appointment

Grading:

1. One mid-term take-home exam. The question will be given at the end of Week 4 or 5 and due a week later. (20%)
2. For four credit: One research paper about 10-12 pages, not including notes and references at the end. Due Mon, Nov 21. (40%)  
For three credit: a short essay (4-5 pages). The instruction will be given in Week 8. Due Mon, Nov 21. (40%)  
[All written works must be typed, double spacing.]
3. Final exam (see the Time-table) 40%

What is expected is NOT the ability to excerpt, or paraphrase the lecture or reading materials, but one's understanding of the subjects in her/his own words (particularly in writing), and the basic research skills such as library search for relevant materials. Originality, creativity and imagination will be bonus.

**Required Textbooks:**

Spiro, Melford. *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982.

*The Coursepacket for History 438-Fall 1994* (available at the Humanities Copy Center, Rm. 1650 Humanities)

**Recommended books:**

- Ishii, Yoneo. *Sangha, State and Society: Thai Buddhism in History*  
Tambiah, Stanley J. *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*  
Smith, Bardwell. *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand Laos and Burma*. (Out of prints. Find in the Reserves.)  
Aung-Thwin, Michael. *Pagan: The Origins of Modern Burma*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985.

All the texts and recommended books, including the coursepacket, are also available in the Reserves Collection (in the College Library). The previous coursepackets of this course remain in the Reserves, although the materials are not entirely the same. (See History 459 for Spring 1993 and History 438 for Spring 1994.)

**Note on the Readings:**

The required readings are in either Spiro, 1982 or in the coursepacket. The number at the end of each item is page numbers. The supplemental readings are recommended for anyone interested in particular topics.

SCHEDULE

- ORIENTATION Sept 2      Introduce the course: aims and objectives of the course, business, assignments, expectation.
- WEEK 1 (Sept 5,7,9)      Introduce Southeast Asia and its history in brief  
The Buddha  
Assignment: To be announced in class  
Reading: \* Conze, Edward. Buddhism. 34-39.
- WEEK 2 (Sept 12,14,16) Two major "orders" of Buddhism  
Theravada Buddhism to Southeast Asia Asia  
Reading: \* Conze, Edward. A Short History of Buddhism. 9-47.  
\* Lester, Robert. Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia. 66-80.

IDEAS

- WEEK 3 (Sept 19,21,23) The Four Noble Truth, Nirvana, Karma, merit  
Reading: \* Spiro. Buddhism and Society. chap. 2,4,5 (31-65, 92-139)  
\* Keyes, Charles, "Merit Transference in the Kammic Theory of Popular Theravada Buddhism," in Karma: an Anthropological Inquiry, ed. Charles F. Keyes. 261-86
- WEEK 4 (Sept 26,28,30) Buddhism and popular belief  
Reading: \* Kirsch, A, Thomas. "Complexity in the Thai Religious System," Journal of Asian Studies 36 (1977): 241-266  
\* Spiro. Buddhism and Society. chap. 6,7 (140-87)  
\* Terwiel, B.J. Monks and Magic. 72-96
- WEEK 5 (Oct 3,5,7)      (To be announced)  
Reading: "Spirits of the Yellow Leaves" (in the coursepacket)

WEEK 6 (Sept 10,12,14) Cosmology and social order

- Reading: \* Reynolds, Frank E. Three Worlds According to King Ruang: A Thai Buddhist Cosmology. introduction pp. 5-37. The entire book is a translation of a thirteenth century Thai cosmographical text.
- \* Heine-Geldern, Robert. Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia
  - \* Reynolds, Craig J. "Buddhist Cosmography in Thai History, With Special Reference to Nineteenth Century Culture Change," Journal of Asian Studies 35 (1976): 203-220

THE *SANGHA* (MONASTIC ORDER)

WEEK 7 (Oct 17,19,21) The *sangha*

- Reading: \* Spiro. Buddhism and Society. pp. 279-320, 365-77, 396-421
- \* Tambiah, S.J. The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets. chap. 5 (53-77).

BUDDHIST POLITY

WEEK 8 (Oct 24,26,28) Merit and power, kingship, and state

- Reading: \* Aung-Thwin, Michael. "Divinity, Spirit and Human: Conceptions of Classical Burmese Kingship," in Centers, Symbols and Hierarchy : Essays on Classical States in Southeast Asia. ed. Lorraine Gesick. 45-86
- \* Tambiah, S.J. World Conqueror and World Renouncer. 111-131
  - \* Wyatt, David K. "The Subtle Revolution of King Rama I of Siam," in Moral Order and the Question of Change. 9-52 .

WEEK 9 (Oct 31, Nov 2,4) Religious legitimation of power and rebellions

- Reading: \* Mendelson, E. Michael. Sangha and State in Burma: A Study of Monastic Sectarianism and Leadership. 42-65.
- \* Aung-Thwin, Michael. "The Role of *sasana* Reform in Burmese History: Economic Dimension of a Religious Purification," Journal of Asian Studies. 38 (1979): 671-88
  - \* Keyes, Charles F. "Millennialism, Theravada Buddhism and Thai Society," Journal of Asian Studies 36 (1977): 283-302
  - \* Spiro. Buddhism and Society. 171-180
  - \* Adas, Michael. "Bandits, Monks, and Pretender Kings: Pattern of Peasant Resistance and Protest in Colonial Burma, 1826-1941," in Power and Protest in the Countryside, ed. Robert P. Wellner. 75-105.

TRANSITION

WEEK 10 (Nov 7,9,11) Buddhism and colonialism in Burma

Buddhism, socialism and nation-building in Burma

- Reading: \* Sarkisyanz, E. Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution. 110-179
- \* Adas, Michael. "Bandits, Monks, and Pretender Kings: Pattern of Peasant Resistance and Protest in Colonial Burma, 1826-1941," in Power and Protest in the Countryside, ed. Robert P. Wellner. 75-105.

WEEK 11 (Nov 14,16,18) Modern Buddhism in Siam

The *sangha* and nation-building in Siam

- Reading: \* Kirsch, A. Thomas. "Modernizing Implications of Nineteenth Century Reforms in Thai Sangha," in Religion and Legitimation of Power. 52-65
- \* Reynolds, Frank E., "Sacral Kingship and National Development: The Case of Thailand," in Religion and Legitimation of Power. pp.100-110
  - \* Keyes, Charles F. "Buddhism and National Integration in Thailand," Journal of Asian Studies. 30 (1971): 551-568
  - \* Excerpts from Alabaster, Henry. The Modern Buddhist, Being the Views of a Siamese Minister of State on His Own and Other Religions. (See in the coursepacket.)

BUDDHISM AND MODERN NATIONS

WEEK 12 (Nov 21,23) Buddhism, women, and the prostitution issue

- Reading: \* Kirsch, A. Thomas, "Buddhism, Sex-role and Thai Economy," in Women of Southeast Asia. ed. Penny Van Esterik. Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University. 16-41
- \* Khin Thitsa. Providence and Prostitution: Image and Reality for Women in Buddhist Thailand.
  - \* Keyes, Charles F. "Mother or Mistress but Never a Monk: Buddhist Notions of Female Gender in Rural Thailand," American Ethnologist 11 (1984): 223-41
  - \* Kirsch, A. Thomas, "Text and Context: Buddhist Sex Roles/ Culture of Gender Revisited," American Ethnologist 12 (1985): 302-320.

WEEK 13 (Nov 28,30, Dec 2) Buddhism, the bourgeoisie, and forest

- Reading: \* Keyes, Charles F. "Political Crisis and Militant Buddhism," in Religion and Legitimation of Power. 147-164.
- \* Suwanna Satha-Anand, "Religious Movements in Contemporary Thailand," Asian Survey 30 (Apr 1990): 395-408.
  - \* Taylor, J.L. "New Buddhist Movements in Thailand: An 'Individualistic Revolution', Reform and Political Dissonance," Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 21 (1990): 135-154.
  - \* Zehner, Edwin. "Reform Symbolism of a Thai Middle-class Sect: the Growth and Appeal of the Thammakai Movement," Journal of Southeast Asian Studies. 21:2, 402-426
  - \* Taylor, J.L. "Living on the Rim: Ecology and Forest Monks in Northeast Thailand," SOJOURN. 6:1, 106-125

WEEK 14 (Dec 5,7,9) Buddhism and Politics in Burma Today

- Reading: \* Tin Muang and Muang Than. "The *sangha* and *sasana* in Socialist Burma," SOJOURN: Social Issues in Southeast Asia. 3:1 (Feb. 1988), 26-61

WEEK 15 (Dec 12,14) Final remarks

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

(for weekly reading, research and FYI)

### Week 1 & 2 Introduction to Southeast Asia and early history of Buddhism to Southeast Asia

- Coedes, George. The Making of Southeast Asia. 10-87
- Than Tun. Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma. 3-58

### Week 3 Nirvana, Karma and merit

- Aung-Thwin, Michael. Pagan. chap. 2 (30-47)
- Lester, Robert. Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia. 23-46
- Keyes, Charles ed. Karma: an Anthropological Inquiry.
- Conze, Edward. Buddhism. 11-48

### Week 4 Popular Belief

- Spiro. Burmese Supernaturalism.
- Anuman Rajadhon. Popular Buddhism in Siam and Other Essays on Thai Studies. 25-68, 99-168
- Tambiah, S.J. Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in Northeast Thailand. chap 13-20 (223-366)
- Texter, Robert. Patterns of Worship, and Roster of Gods.

### Week 6 Cosmology

- Sarkisyanz, E. Buddhist Background of the Burmese Revolution. chap.11,13 (68-74, 82-86)
- Reynolds, Frank E. "Ritual and Social Hierarchy: An Aspect of Traditional Religion in Buddhist Laos," in Religion and Legitimation of Power. 166-74.

### Week 7 Sangha

- Ishii. Sangha, State and Society. chap 1 (3-33)
- Reynolds, Craig J. The Buddhist Monkhood in the Nineteenth Century Thailand. chap 2
- Lester, Robert. Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia chap 5-7 (83-150)
- Wijayaratna, Mohan. Buddhist Monastic Life.

### Week 8 Merit, power, kingship and state

- Spiro. Buddhism and Society. chap.16 (378-395)
- Reynolds, Frank E. "The Holy Emerald Jewel: Buddhist Symbolism and Political Legitimation in Thailand and Laos," in ed. Bardwell Smith. Religion and Legitimation of Power. 175-193
- Ishii. Sangha, State and Society. chap.2-3 (34-66)
- Aung-Thwin, Michael. Pagan. chap 3 (47-68)
- Aung-Thwin. "Kingship, the sangha and Society in Pagan," in Explorations in Early Southeast Asian Statecraft. eds. Kenneth Hall and John Whitmore. 205-256
- Gesick, Lorraine. "The Rise and Fall of King Taksin: A Drama of a Buddhist Kingship," in Centers, Symbols and Hierarchies. ed. Lorraine Gesick. 87-105
- Sarkisyanz, E. Buddhist Background of the Burmese Revolution. chap. 4-5,7-10,14-15 (26-36, 43-67, 87-97)
- Hanks, Lucien M. "Merit and Power in Thai Social Order," American Anthropologist. 64 (1962), 1247-61.
- Reynolds, Craig J. The Buddhist Monkhood in the Nineteenth Century Thailand. chap 1

### Week 9 Religious legitimation of power and rebellions

- Aung-Thwin. Pagan. chap.8-9
- Victor Lieberman's argument against Aung-Thwin in the same journal 39 (1980) 753-69; and then Aung-Thwin's "A Reply to Lieberman" in the same journal 40 (1980/1): 87-9.

- Butt, John W. "Thai Kingship and Religious Reform," Religion and Legitimation of Power. 34-51
- Ishii. Sangha, State and Society. chap.9 (171-187)
- Ishii, Yoneo. "A Note on Millenarian Revolts in Northeastern Siam," Journal of Southeast Studies. 6:2, 121-126
- Tambiah. Buddhist Saints of the Forest. chap.20 (293-320)
- Sarkisyanz, E. Buddhist Background of the Burmese Revolution. chap. 21-22 (149-65)
- Tanabe, Shigeharu. "Ideological Practice in Peasant Rebellions: Siam at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," in History and Peasant Consciousness in South East Asia, ed. Andrew Turton, 1984, pp.75-110.
- Week 10** Buddhism and Colonialism in Burma
  - Ferguson, John P. "The Quest for Legitimation by Burmese Monks and Kings," In ed. Bardwell Smith. Religion and Legitimation. 66-86
  - Mendelsohn, E. Michael. Sangha and State. chap 4 (173-235)
  - Smith, Donald E. Religion and Politics in Burma. chap 3
- Week 11** Modern Buddhism in Siam
  - Tambiah, S.J. World Conqueror and World Renouncer. chap. 10-12 (179-261)
  - Alabaster, Henry. The Modern Buddhist, Being the Views of a Siamese Minister of State on His Own and Other Religions.
  - Ishii. Sangha, State and Society. chap. 6-8 (100-170)
  - Reynolds, Craig J. "Buddhist Cosmography in Thai History, With Special Reference to Nineteenth Century Culture Change," Journal of Asian Studies 35 (1976): 203-220
  - Reynolds, Craig J. The Buddhist Monkhood in Nineteenth Century Thailand. chap. 3-4
- Week 12** Buddhism, women
  - Penny Van Esterik, ed. Women of Southeast Asia. Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University. chap. 1, 4
  - Keyes, Charles F. "Ambiguous Gender: Male Initiation in Buddhist Society," in New Perspective on Religion and Gender, ed. Caroline Bynum, Steven Harell, 1986
  - See the works by Chatsuman Kabinlasingh
- Week 13** Buddhism, bourgeoisie
  - Reynolds, Frank E. "'Legitimation and Rebellion,'" in Religion and Legitimation of Power. pp.134-146.
  - Jackson, Peter A. Buddhism Legitimation and Conflict. section 2
  - Sulak Sivaraksa. Seeds of Peace, and Siam in Crisis.
  - Jackson, Peter A. "The Hupphasawan Movement: Millenarian Buddhism among Thai Political Elite," SOJOURN: Social Issues in Southeast Asia. 3:2, 134-170
  - Taylor, J.L. "Buddhist Revitalization, Modernization and Social Change in Contemporary Thailand," SOJOURN 8:1 (1993): 62-91
  - Jackson, Peter. Buddhadasa: A Buddhist Thinker for the Modern World.
  - Swearer, Donald, "Sulak Sivaraksa's Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society," Crossroad 6, 2 (1991): 17-57
  - Somboon Suksamran. Political Buddhism in Southeast Asia: the sangha in the Modernization of Thailand. chap.3,4
- Week 15** Buddhism and nation-building in Burma
  - Sarkisyanz, E. Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution. chap 25-28 (192-236)
  - Mendelsohn, E. Michael. Sangha and State. chap.5 (236-298)
  - Smith, Donald E. Religion and Politics. chap.5,7