

University of Wisconsin-Madison/ Department of History
HISTORY 438: BUDDHISM AND SOCIETY IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN HISTORY
(Also cross-listed as **LANGASIA 438** and **RELIG ST 438**)
Spring 2008, 3 credits
Tuesday and Thursday 11:00-12:15, Rm. 1651 Humanities
Thongchai Winichakul

For more than a thousand years, the mainland Southeast Asia (Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand today) have been the homeland of Theravada Buddhism, an “order” of Buddhism distinctive from the Mahayana and the Tibetan ones. Despite Westernization and secularization since the nineteenth century, this religious tradition remains strong among nearly 150 million people today. We cannot understand the peoples and cultures of the region without understanding their strong religious tradition.

The course is NOT for a study of Theravada Buddhism. Rather, it is a cultural history of the Theravada Buddhist countries in Southeast Asia. The main subjects of the course are: 1) a history of Theravada Buddhism and its coming to Southeast Asia; 2) basic tenets of Buddhism, and Theravada Buddhism as a civic religion in popular culture; 3) Buddhist political culture in history; 4) the transition during the colonial and “modernizing” period in the 19th century; 5) Buddhism in the age of modern nations and economies. The focus is on Thailand and Burma, the major Buddhist countries in the region. .

Class: Two 75-min lectures weekly

Office Hours: Wed 1:30-3:30, or by appointment. 5211 Humanities, 263-8931
<twinicha@wisc.edu>

Exams: Three take-home exams (30-30-40).

First take home: question will be given Feb 19. Due Feb 25, 12:30 PM.

Second take home: question will be given Mar 27. Due Apr 3, 12:30 PM.

Final take-home: questions and instructions will be given in class May 6 or May 8.

Required Textbooks: (available at the University Book Store)

- Keyes, Charles. The Golden Peninsula: Culture and Adaptation in Mainland Southeast Asia. University of Hawaii Press, 1997.

- Swearer, Donald. Buddhist World of Southeast Asia. State University of New York Press, 1995.

- Keown, Damien. Buddhism :A Very Short Introduction. Oxford University Press, 1996.

- Armstrong, Karen. Buddha, Penguin 2004.

- Jordt, Ingrid. Mass Lay Meditation Movement: Buddhism and the Cultural Construction of Power, Ohio RIS Southeast Asia Series; Ohio University Press, 2007

All weekly readings are either 1) in the required textbooks, or 2) in the E-Reserves for this class (accessible via “My UW”), or 3) are journal articles (marked @ in this syllabus) that can be accessible on-line via the library journal databases.

All textbooks are also available in the Reserves. (Some readings can also be found in the Readers of History 438 of previous years – check in the Reserves as well.)

INTRODUCTIONS

- WEEK 1** (Jan 22) The course: objectives, exams, assignments, etc.
(Jan 24) Intro to Buddhism (video: “Buddhism: Footprint of the Buddha”)
- Armstrong, Karen. Buddha.

THE BUDDHA AND EARLY HISTORY OF BUDDHISM

- WEEK 2** (Jan 29) The Buddha: his biography or the mythical story of his life
- Armstrong, Karen. Buddha. (The whole book should be finished by this week)
(Jan 31) Two major “orders” (*nikaya*): Mahayana & Hinayana (Theravada)
- Reynolds, Frank E. and Regina T. Clifford, “Theravada Buddhism”, in Encyclopedia of Religion, vol. 14. 469-475.
- Keown, Damien. Buddhism. 59-72.

BUDDHISM: BASIC TENETS AND IDEAS

- WEEK 3** (Feb 5) The Four Noble Truth, Nirvana
- Keown, Damien. Buddhism. 46-58, 88-101.
- Armstrong, Karen. Buddha. 98-121, and in various places about Nibbana
(Feb 7) Karma and merit
- Keown, Damien. Buddhism. 31-34, 39-45, 102-115
- Falk, Nancy. “Exemplary Donors of the Pali Tradition” in Ethics, Wealth, and Salvation: a study in Buddhist Ethics, ed. Russell Sizemore and Donald Swearer, 124-143.
- Keyes, Charles, “Merit Transference in the Kammic Theory of Popular Theravada Buddhism,” in Karma: an Anthropological Inquiry. 261-286.

THE SANGHA (MONASTIC ORDER)

- WEEK 4** (Feb 12) Monks and monastic life, the *sangha* organization
- Harvey, Peter. An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics, 88-97, 203-206.
- Tambiah, S.J. The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets. 53-77.
(Feb 14) Female monks and Buddhist “nuns”
- Kowanami, Hiroko. “Theravadin Religious Women” in The Life of Buddhism, 85-95
- Jordt, Ingrid. “Bhikkhuni, Thilashin, Mae-chii: Women Who Renounce the World in Burma”, Crossroads, vol. 4, no.1, (Fall 1988): 31-39.

BUDDHISM AS A CIVIC RELIGION IN POPULAR CULTURE

- WEEK 5** (Feb 19) Cosmology and social hierarchy
(Feb 21) “Syncretic Buddhism”, monks and magic
(video: Cambodians in America)
- Kirsch, A, Thomas. “Complexity in the Thai Religious System,” Journal of Asian Studies 36 (1977): 241-266 @
- Tambiah, S.J., Buddhism and Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand, chap 15, pp.263-284.
- Keyes, Charles. Golden Peninsula. 113-123
- Swearer, Donald. Buddhist World of Southeast Asia. (Chapter 1). 5-61.
- Tannenbaum, Nicola. “Tattoos: Invulnerability and Power in Shan Ideology”, American Ethnologist, 14:4 (Nov. 1987): 693-711 @

BUDDHISM COMING TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

WEEK 6 (Feb 26) Intro to Southeast Asia, and its history in brief

- Keyes, Charles. Golden Peninsula. 65-112, 126-157, 259-269.

(Feb 28) Mahayana and Theravada to Southeast Asia

- Keown, Damien. Buddhism. 73-87.

- Swearer, Donald, "Buddhism in Southeast Asia", in Mark Cummings ed. Buddhism and Asian History, 1989. 107-120.

WEEK 7 (Mar 4) Theravada Buddhism to Southeast Asia (cont.)

- Than Tun, "Religion in Burma 1000-1300" in Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma, ed. Paul Strachan. 23-45

- Swearer, Donald. "A Myth, Legend and History in the Northern Thai Chronicles", The Journal of the Siam Society, vol. 62, pt 1 (Jan 1974): 67-88

- Swearer, Donald and Sommai Premchit, "The Relation Between the Religious and Political Orders in Northern Thailand (14th-16th centuries)" in Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Laos and Burma. 20-33.

SACRED SOCIETY, MORAL POLITY

(Mar 6) Human World in Cosmographic Context

- Reynolds, Frank E. Three Worlds According to King Ruang: A Buddhist Cosmology. 19-37.

- Aung-Thwin, Michael. "Heaven, Earth, and the Supernatural World: Dimensions of the Exemplary Center in Burmese History",

- Donald Swearer, "The Northern Thai City as a Sacred Center" in City as Sacred Center, ed. Diana L. Eck, 88-113.

WEEK 8 (Mar 11) Buddhist Polity (1): the ideology -- merit and power

- Swearer, Donald. Buddhist World of Southeast Asia. pp. 64-95.

(Mar 13) Buddhist Polity (2): kingship and state (13th-18th c.)

- Harvey, Peter. An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics, 113-118.

- Aung-Thwin, Michael. "Divinity, Spirit and Human: conceptions of classical Burmese kingship" in Centers, Symbols and Hierarchy: Essays on Classical States in Southeast Asia 45-86

- Swearer, Donald and Sommai Premchit, "The Relation Between the Religious and Political Orders in Northern Thailand (14th-16th centuries)" in Religion and Legitimation of Power 20-33.

WEEK 9 Spring Recess

WEEK 10 (Mar 25) Buddhism and legitimation of power

- Reynolds, Frank E. "The Holy Emerald Jewel: Buddhist Symbolism and Political Legitimation in Thailand and Laos" in Religion and Legitimation of Power. 175-193.

- Schober, Juliane "A Tooth Relic and the Legitimation of Power" in The Life of Buddhism 45-59

- Mendelsohn, E. Michael. Sangha and State in Burma: a study of monastic sectarianism and leadership. 31-65.

(Mar 27) Buddhist millennialism and peasant rebellion

- Keyes, Charles F. "Millennialism, Theravada Buddhism and Thai Society," Journal of Asian Studies 36 (1977): 283-302 @

BUDDHISM UNDER COLONIALISM (19th to early 20th c.)

WEEK 11 (Apr 1) Colonialism and politicized Buddhism in the 19th c. Burma
(Apr 3) Buddhist anti-colonial movement in Burma (late 19th -early 20th c.)

- Keyes, Charles. Golden Peninsula. 259-299

- Sarkisyanz, E. Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution. 110-179

WEEK 12 (Apr 8) Modern Buddhism in the 19th c. Siam

- Excerpts from Alabaster, Henry. The Modern Buddhist, Being the Views of a Siamese Minister of State on His Own and Other Religions (c. 1870).

- Reynolds, Craig J. "Buddhist Cosmography in Thai History, With Special Reference to Nineteenth Century Culture Change," Journal of Asian Studies 35 (1976): 203-220 @

(Apr 11) The *sangha* and nation-building in Siam (late 19th to early 20th c.)

- Kirsch, A. Thomas. "Modernizing Implications of Nineteenth Century Reforms in Thai Sangha," in Religion and Legitimation of Power. 52-65

- Keyes, Charles F. "Buddhism and National Integration in Thailand," Journal of Asian Studies. 30 (1971): 551-568 @

BUDDHISM AND MODERN NATIONS

WEEK 13 (Apr 15) Modernization and the changing roles of monks

Video: "Thailand: Minidragon" (1994)

(Apr 17) Modernization and the changing roles of monks

- Keyes, Charles. Golden Peninsula. pp. 299-323.

- Swearer, Donald. Buddhist World of Southeast Asia, 107-146.

- Charles Keyes, "Moral Authority of the Sangha and Modernity in Thailand: Sexual Scandals, Sectarian Dissent, and Political Resistance", in Socially Engaged Buddhism for the New Millennium, 1999, pp.121-47.

WEEK 14 (Apr 22) Bourgeoisie and new sects in Thailand

- Suwanna Satha-Anand, "Religious Movements in Contemporary Thailand," Asian Survey 30 (Apr 1990): 395-408 @

- 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 (1990): 402-426. @

- Taylor, J.L. "Buddhist Revitalization, Modernization, and Social change in Contemporary Thailand" SOJOURN 8:1 (1993): 62-91.

(Apr 24) The radical Buddhists

- Harvey, Peter. An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics, 109-113, 118-122, 215-225.

- Donald Swearer. "Sulak Sivaraksa's Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society", Crossroad, 6, 2 (1991): 17-57.

WEEK 15 (Apr 29, May 1) Buddhism under the military regimes in Burma

- Jordt, Ingrid. Mass Lay Meditation Movement: Buddhism and the Cultural Construction of Power, 2007

- Schober, Juliane "A Tooth Relic and the Legitimation of Power" in The Life of Buddhism 45-59

- Matthews, Bruce. "Buddhism Under a Military Regime", Asian Survey, 33 (Apr 1993): 408-423. @

WEEK 16 (May 6) Buddhism and tragic revolution in Cambodia
Buddhism in Laos after revolution

- Keyes, Charles F. "Communist Revolution and the Buddhist Past in Cambodia" in Asian Visions of Authority: Religion and Modern States of East and Southeast Asia. 43-73.

- Stuart-Fox, Martin and Rod Bucknell. "Politicization of Buddhist Sangha in Laos" Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, 13:1 (1982): 60-80.

(May 8) Final remarks