

Research Title: Neo-Buddhist Movements in Thailand

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Abstract

This research aims at studying the development of Neo-Buddhists Movement in Thailand, the factor which is a main cause of emerging of new Buddhists, interpretation of neo-teachings including the way of propagation and the influence toward Thai society. This is the qualificative research. The researcher has studied and collected the data from three sources: Tha Sawang Temple, Muang District, Surin Province, Vihardhamma of Nongdon Village, Nongdon Subdistrict, Lamplaimat District, Buriram Province and Phurithatta Meditation School, Nongslai Village, Dook-ueng Subdistrict, Nonghee District, Roi-Ed Province. The research methodology is non-participative observation and informal interview. The researcher has observed and interviewed nine of those who gave informations, selected from the abbot and members of movement group.

From the research, it was found that the several disciples of neo-Buddhist movement have belief and faithfulness. They wish themselves better qualities of living e.g. recovering from illness, freedom from poverty and having happy families. Beside that, they have the principle of propagating the idea in the form of network to both a city and country communities. However, as the result of research, it was discovered that each movement has the specific principle, idea, rite and practice, obviously different from other schools especially Vihardhamma of Nongdon Village which consists of Buddhist moral, Brahmin moral, belief in the

soul and the way of life, that is; the movement of this school believes in Sri Ariyamettrai Bodhitava who is believed that he was reborn as Mater Thongpoon Saovarophon called by his followers “Pho Ton or Ong Ton”

The strong mixture of local belief, religious faith and original culture cause the factors which support the phenomenon leading to more superstitious belief. The several believes are mixed and sustained by the process of social cultivating both directly and indirectly, and by the factor of profits which belong to each movement; for example, income and praise from society.

It can be said that the communities received the new abstract concept especially that of belief and mixed with the traditional faith until they get real new belief according to this research.