

A Historical Look at Pali Studies in Thailand

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Introduction:

After the Third Buddhist Council, Bhikkhus Sona and Uttara the Elder along with their party came to introduce Buddhism into Suvannabhumi Region. Buddhism has become the religion of the people in this region since then. Buddhism may have been introduced into Thailand through at least† three channels:

* Although most portions of this article were previously published for the Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities Conference in 2007, I felt that this article should be updated to include new annual stats, and acknowledge the effort by Mr. Dion Peoples, a PhD Candidate in Buddhist Studies, at MCU with a previous Master of Arts in Thai Studies. He greatly assisted with the revision of this article in terms of historical content, and English grammar - providing editor footnotes and other data, including a re-designed conclusion to fit the scope of the current symposium.

† Editor's note – This should not exclude the importance of Sri Lanka or Southern Indians and their efforts to disseminate Buddhism as well. Not everything originated from out of the Ganges – to spread Buddhism. Furthermore, according to the text I compiled and wrote for four levels of Thai high school students: According to tradition, Sukhothai Kingdom is the first kingdom of Thai people, but familiarization with Buddhism came several hundred years earlier. About 600 years after the Buddha past way, the Ai Lao people in Yunnan, China had already converted to Buddhism. As the Mongol influence drove the Thai's southward, Thai's began to form into city muang's; Thai's would become more and more familiar with Theravada Buddhism. However, we should look at Thailand not as a whole, but in four distinguishable regions, almost like historical stages: the East, the North, the South, and finally, the Central region.

- In the East: Indian cultural influences spread in several directions [either by land or by sea, indeed as Dr. Somjin suggests here] - 'one' region where Hindu-Brahmanism/Buddhism developed was in present-day Cambodia. The ancient Khmer people built a vast empire, extending to parts of Vietnam, Laos, and most of Thailand. Mahayana Buddhism was also fashionable for some time. Present-day remains of this vast Hindu-Brahmanism/Mahayana Khmer Empire extend into Lopburi, Phanom Rung, Phi Mai, and other areas, including Sukhothai – once under a khmer governor.
- In the North: as the kingdom/princedom of Yunnan/Nanchao disintegrated, the Thai people moved further south, eventually forming the first true Thai kingdom, in Sukhothai – removing the Khmer from power. We should not forget about the development of the Lanna Kingdom that developed north of Sukhothai, and other surrounding kingdoms.
- In the South: Mahayana was established but later disappeared, Theravada arose, and Mahayana came back as a minor religion... Islam also was established about 700 years ago, in the South.
- In the Central Region, the shaping of modern day Thailand took place. Sukhothai was absorbed by the Ayutthaya kingdom, which also conquered the former Khmer region and incorporated most of the Malaysian Peninsula, according to some published maps.

Further purges and the cleaning up of Buddhism led to the establishment of Buddhism as we know it today. Interactions or the exchanging of Sangha members from the past, assisted in continuing an unbroken lineage of monks dating from the time of the Buddha. Most kings, in the Theravada tradition, have ensured the security

(1) Over land: walking through ancient Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Thailand

(2) By Sea:

a.) Sailing along the coastlines and penetrating into Bengal, Mataban, Davi, Tanaosri... and on into what is now Thailand.

b.) Sailing through the Straits of Malacca and up the Malay Peninsula – to Nakorn Sri Thammarat and Champa, and back into what is now central-Thailand or the Chao Phraya river-region.


In the beginning, Buddhist literary works were introduced into Thailand through these channels; but there is no clear-cut evidence preserved, allowing us to know what form of literary works existed at that time – perhaps oral, and then in the form of inscriptions, or another form. As we know, many Buddhist literary works were written and preserved at the Nalanda Mahavihara - in India, when this university and others prospered. Some of those works were introduced into Thailand, such as the The Questions of King Menander – the *Milindapanho*. When Buddhist literary works were written in Lanka, many works were introduced simultaneously into Thailand, as well. Therefore, nowadays: fifty-two commentaries, such as the commentary of Vinaya Pitaka entitled *Samantapasadika*, the commentary to the of Suttanta Pitaka's *Dikha Nikaya* entitled *Sumangalavilasini*, the commentary of Abhidhamma Pitaka's *Dhammasangani* entitled *Atthasalini* have been well known to Thai monks and laypeople interested in Pali Studies. Apart from these, there are many other Buddhist scriptures eg. *Nettipakarana*, *Petakopadesa*, *Visuddhimagga*, *Vimuttimagga*, *Abhidhammavatara*, *Dipavamsa*, and the *Mahavamsa* which are all well known to Thai monks and laypeople.

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of Buddhism – some even became monks, at some point in their life. By understanding a deeper sense of the establishment of Buddhism in the different regions of Thailand, one can witness the vitality that existed in former times. However, with the centralization processes that occurred with the expansion of the Dhammayutika-nikaya, many regional characteristics were lost from 'Thai' Buddhism.

During the Sukhothai Period, there was an influx of Buddhist literary works from foreign countries to Thailand because of many factors[‡], listed in the footnote and text above. King Ramkhamhaeng the Great, of Sukhothai - played two key roles at the same time: ruling the country and teaching the Buddha's Dhamma. King Lithai of Sukhothai also invited the monks to come and study the Tipitaka along with various arts inside Royal Palace.§

[‡] Editor's footnote: according to a recent paper delivered by Dr. G. Deivanayagam, of Tamil University, Thanjavur, South-India – entitled: *The Interactions of the Chola Empire in the Chao Phraya Delta* – there was a considerable Tamil presence in Sukhothai for some considerable amount of time – including around the Chao Phraya River Basin. See his full article from the Proceedings of the International Conference: The Chao Phraya Delta: Historical Development, Dynamics and Challenges of Thailand's Rice Bowl. Vol 2. 12-15 Dec. 2000, Kasetsart University, Bangkok:
http://std.cpc.ku.ac.th/delta/conf/Acrobat/Papers_Eng/Volume%202/deivanayagam.pdf

[§] Editor's footnote: King Lithai also authored the culturally influential *Traibhumikatha* [or the Verses of the Three Worlds] –  – This is arguably the single most influential text written by a Thai person. The book was originally written about Buddhism. During the Sukhothai Period of Thai history, King Lithai – the fifth of the Kings of the Phra Ruang Dynasty wrote the *Traibhumikatha* – *The Story of the Three Planes of Existence* [sometimes translated as *The Three Worlds according to King Lithai*], in 1345 CE. What is important about this ancient text is that it contains a bibliography, references, an introduction and a conclusion – as well as a list of names of Buddhist scholars that assisted King Lithai in Buddhist wisdom. Many works of art are modeled on the Traibhumikatha – architecture, temple paintings, inscriptions, and more. In fact, Thai Buddhism is still influenced from this work today; the following paragraphs explain how:

Here are the minor-book headings within the Table of Contents: The Three Planes of Existence; Hell; The Animal Kingdom; The Spirit World; The Domain of Asura; Humanity; The Four Quarters of the World; The Universal King; Historical Personages [People]; Some Important Matters; Lesser Gods and Angels; The Higher Non-Sensual Gods; Incorporeality; The Book of Nature; The Book of Ages; Nibbana...

King Lithai tells his readers that he uses the Thai language from the City of Sri Satchanalai – where he served as the second king – the *uparat*; tells the source texts that assisted him, the names of the monks he studied Dhamma with, and that he even traveled to the Mon nation of Haribhunjaya [between Myanmar and Thailand] – for lessons from another learned elder monk. King Lithai was fortunate enough to have no foreign invasions during his reign. He was the first Thai king to ordain as a monk. He sent for monks and a relic of the Buddha from Sri Lanka – kept in a stupa/chedi at Nakorn Chum, near Kamphaengphet. His text mentions numerous mythical creatures and even a section on 'A New World Order' – detailing: when important events happen, important people come together to discuss the event. Further in that section, he explains the decay of the world, mentioning in the past that people could fly; mentions the qualifications for a Bodhisatta King and distinctions for the various Hindu-Brahmin social castes: warriors, Brahmins, traders/agriculturalists, and hunters/fishermen and other takers of opportunity. He tries to explain aspects of the Abhidhamma in his text, as well. This text was recopied by King Taksin and interestingly by King Rama I; however, King Rama IV and other modern/educated social elite discredited the work on the grounds that it was too mythological and lacked rationality. However this book remains in favorable light because of text portions dealing with performing good actions and avoiding evil, along with the results that can be achieved through cleansing the mind of evil. The law of kamma is seen as the law of reason, because results occur from causes. A modern Buddhist scholar-monk, P.A. Payutto, has written a large text for modern readers – considered a great work of Buddhist scholarship: *Buddhadhamma*. *Buddhadhamma* has become the standard or a modern, classic Buddhist text, replacing the *Traibhumikatha* and the *Visuddhimagga*.

But as I illustrated, in the "TEACHER'S NOTE" - Please compare the chapter on the New World Order to the story in the *Agganna Sutta* [#27] from the *Digha-Nikaya*. This chapter follows the sutta, making errors or leaving out details – in an attempt to summarize. Additionally, The Thai National Team for Anthology of ASEAN Literature, most likely, neglects to investigate the *Agganna Sutta* for parallel meanings. One may personally witness divergent 'Buddhist' beliefs emerging from the *Traibhumikatha*. The Buddha gives the *Agganna Sutta* to Vasetha and Bharadvaja – two Brahmins hoping to become monks, and merely ends with the Brahmins rejoicing. See: King Lithai: "*Traibhumikatha*" as translated by the Thai National Team for Anthology of ASEAN Literature, Volume Ia, (ASEAN: 1985)

Some passages in book entitled “Tao Srichulalak”^{**} tell us that some monks were well-versed in one, or two, or four, or five volumes of Vinaya Pitaka, some monks were well-versed in forty, one-hundred, or many more Suttas in Suttanta Pitaka, some monks were well-versed in ten, or many more of *Bhanavara* in Abhidhamma Pitaka.


In the Lanna Kingdom, the arrival of Buddhist literary works from foreign countries resulted in Buddhist scholar-monks around Chiang Mai and surrounding Thai areas. One of these scholars, Phra Sirimangalajarn, wrote many Buddhist literary works: the *Mangalathadipani* [a commentary on the Mangala Sutta], *Vessantaradipani* [a commentary on the Vessantara Jataka], and other works.

However, Pali studies in Sukhothai and Lanna had not been systematized into: curriculum of study, grade of study and examinations. Later on though, in the Ayutthaya period 1893-2310 BE/1350-1767 CE, during the reign of King Narayana^{**}: curriculum, teaching activity and examinations were set up. The tradition in examination in those days was oral (*mukhapatha*). The grades of qualification, are inversely named, and divided into three categories:

- Grade I, or *Bariantri* - for students who finished translating the Suttanta Pitaka.
- Grade II, or *Bariantho* - for students who finished translating the Vinaya Pitaka.
- Grade III, or *Barian-ek* - for students who finished translating the Suttanta, Vinaya and Abhdhamma Pitaka.

In the current Rattanakosin Period, since 2325 BE/1782 CE to the present - the method of studying Pali is similar to the model utilized during the Ayutthaya period, only altered somewhat to fit new circumstances. In the reign of King Rama II, 2352-2367 BE/1809-1824 CE - His Holiness the Supreme Patriarch Mi of Wat Ratchabuarana

^{**} According to an informal source: The legend of Tao Srichulalak suggests she is a princess during the Sukhothai Period, and originator of the Thai ‘Loy Kratong’ festival or holiday that pays respects to the river-spirits.

^{**} According to Wikipedia, King Narayana’s reign from Ayutthaya was from 1656-1688. He is better known as King Narai, or in Thai:  - living from 1629 until 11 July 1688.

gave an advice to the King to change the system of Pali study and examination. The grade of study was divided into nine grades: Pali I-IX. The teachers were called “Royal scholars” (Rajabandit). The teaching and examination activities were based from Wat Phrasirattanasatsadaram (Temple of the Emerald Buddha).

In the reign of King Rama VI, 2453-2468 BE/1910-1925 CE, the grade structure was reorganized again:

- (1) Grade I-III: Pariandhamtri (Pariandham I)
- (2) Grade IV-VI: Pariandhamtho (Pariandham II)
- (3) Grade VII-IX: Pariandham-ek (Pariandham III)

Apart from this, a new section of ecclesiastical education has been established for Dhamma Study (Nakdham) and the grade of study has been divided into three as follows:

- (1) Grade I (Nakdhamtri)
- (2) Grade II (Nakdhamtho)
- (3) Grade III (Nakdham-ek)

Along with this, each grade (of Nakdham) has been fixed as the prerequisite of Pali Studies as follows:

- (1) Grade I (Nakdhamtri) as the prerequisite of Pali Studies grade I-III
- (2) Grade II (Nakdhamtho) as the prerequisite of Pali Studies grade IV-VI
- (3) Grade III (Nakdham-ek) as the prerequisite of Pali Studies grade VII-IX

Later on, in a reign of King Rama VII, the method of examination changed from Oral examinations to written examinations and the Pali Studies curriculum became fixed for Grades I-IX (in 2470 BE/1927 CE), as follows:

Pali No.	Subjects	Text-books
Pali I-III	Translation Pali into Thai	Dhammapada Commentary
Pali IV	Translation Pali into Thai	Mangalatthadipani, Part 1
Pali V	Translation Pali into Thai	Saratthasangaha

Pali VI	Translation Pali into Thai	Mangalatthadipani, Part 2
Pali VII	Translation Pali into Thai	Vinaya Commentary – Samantapasadika Part. 1
Pali VIII	Translation Pali into Thai	Visuddhimagga
Pali IX	Translation Pali into Thai	Saratthadipani (Vinaya sub-commentary)

In the present reign, under King Rama IX (King Bhumipol Adulyadej), Somdet Phra Buddhakhosajarn (Phuen Jutindharo) of Wat Samphraya, Bangkok, was the Chief of Royal Pali Section. In 2507 BE/ 964 CE, His Holiness changed the Pali Studies curriculum a little bit to reflect the structural changes that occurred since the time of King Rama VI. New subjects were added to Grades IV-IX – details of this curriculum are illustrated in the next section.

Up until this period, the principle structure of ecclesiastical administration involving Pali Studies had not changed. The quality of graduates has always been emphasized over quantity of graduates. Pertaining to only Pali Grade IX – the topmost level of ecclesiastical Pali Studies - in some academic years, there are no monks or novices passing examinations. In other years, only a few monks or novices were successful; but this case does not matter at all. All the graduates of Pali IX must be highly qualified – capable to translate all Pali passages into Thai or any other language. In the meantime they must be able to write and speak Thai very well.

Pali Studies in the Present Day Thailand:

Pertaining to Pali Studies in present-day Thailand, the ecclesiastical education of the Thai Sangha in Pali Studies is divided into nine grades and the text-books for each grade are as follows:

Pali No.	Subjects	Text-books
Pali I-II	Translation Pali into Thai Pali Grammar	Pali Grammar books 1-4 Commentary of Dhammapada Parts 1-4
Pali III	Translation Pali into Thai Thai Composition	Commentary of Dhammapada Parts 5-8 Commentary of Dhammapada Parts 5-8

	Pali Grammar Method of Letter Writing	Pali Grammar books 1-4 General regulation of secretariat*
Pali IV	Translation Thai into Pali Translation Pali into Thai	Commentary of Dhammapada Part 1 Mangalattadhipani Part 1
Pali V	Translation Thai into Pali Translation Pali into Thai	Commentary of Dhammapada Part 2-4 Mangalattadhipani Part 2
Pali VI	Translation Thai into Pali Translation Pali into Thai	Commentary of Dhammapada Part 5-8 Commentary of Vinaya, - Samantapasadika Parts 3-5
Pali VII	Translation Thai into Pali Translation Pali into Thai	Mangalattadhipani Part 1 Commentary of Vinaya, Samantapasadika Parts 1-2
Pali VIII	Prosody (Poetry) Translation Thai into Pali Translation Pali into Thai	Writing Pali verses from passages fixed by Royal Pali Section. (Examinees do three kinds of six prosodies) Samantapasadika Parts 1 Visuddhimagga Parts 1-3
Pali IX	Translation Thai into Pali Translation Thai into Pali Translation Pali into Thai	Writing Pali prose from passages fixed by Royal Pali Section. Visuddhimagga Parts 1-3 Abhidhammatthavibhavini Tika

Learning and Teaching, Assessment and Evaluation:

In Bangkok, there are 80 authorized ecclesiastical schools of Pali, while in rural area there are 108 authorized ecclesiastical schools of Pali in various provinces. But in reality, there many more unauthorized schools throughout the country. In practice, each school can manage all the activities by themselves. Lay devotees, for the most part, financially support ecclesiastical schools of Pali, only some receive financial support from government as well.

The process of assessment and evaluation is called Royal Pali Examination, because since ancient times, the Thai Kings carried on this activity involving Pali Studies by themselves; though recently, in the current Chakri Dynasty, kings reassigned this activity to the government officials – although examinations are still supported by the King.

When examination time nears, Bangkok administrators will secure the examination date and location based from advice from the

Chief of Royal Pali Section. Then examination-questions are prepared based from a theme. After this, senior monks are selected by Bangkok administrators to organize the examinations on the fixed date.

The process of assessment and evaluation is very strict. There are many unknown details to learn about. For instance, there are no gained marks found, there are only losed marks found. For instance, it can roughly be estimated that the examinees have to gain at least 88% of the marks to pass the subject of Translation Pali into Thai and vice versa, and at least 75% marks to pass the subject of Pali Grammar. For evaluation purposes, the score: “H” (“Hai” in Thai) – is given. In each subject, the full score is three Hs - examinees have to gain at least two of three Hs, in every subject to pass each grade. This is a tough system of examination. The Pali Studies examination from the Thai Sangha is highly regarded as being very difficult. Most monks and novices fail these examinations, annually. We should not consider that it is useless and a waste of time; but rather, this is the traditional screening-method utilized by the Thai Sangha.

Interesting Six-Year Statistics:

Year	Number of Examinees (All Grades)	Total Exams Passed
BE 2545 (CE 2002)	43,408	4,948
BE 2546 (CE 2003)	41,278	5,177
BE 2547 (CE 2004)	38,805	5,108
BE 2548 (CE 2005)	40,547	5,671
BE 2549 (CE 2006)	37,467	5,513
BE 2550 (CE 2007)	29,342	4,547
BE 2551 (CE 2008)	31,067	2,790 #

It is noteworthy that to successfully earn the Pali IX (Grade IX) – this accomplishment is a very difficult task; thus: from 2325-2551 BE/1782-2008 CE, in some 226 years - only 1,220 monks and novices have graduated with Pali IX (Grade IX).

This number does not yet in include statistics for the results of second examination of academic year 2008.

Pali Studies at Mahaculalongkornrajavidyalaya University

1. Pali Studies in MCU Curriculum:

Mahaculalongkornrajavidyalaya University is public ‘autonomous’ university, as the university of the Thai Sangha. MCU gives great attention to Pali Studies. This kind of education has been provided from its inception and onward into the future. The following are MCU levels of curriculum involving Pali Studies:

(A) Curriculum Majoring in Pali:

- (1) Certificate in Pali
- (2) Bachelor of Arts in Pali
- (3) Bachelor of Arts in Pali Buddhist Studies
- (4) Master of Arts in Pali

(B) Pali Subjects for various programs:

(1) For the Bachelor of Arts: there are Pali subjects or related subjects in the group of Core-Buddhist Subjects in nearly every course: Pali Translation, Tipitaka Studies, Vinaya Pitaka, Suttanta Pitaka, Abhidhamma Pitaka. All MCU students in every major have to study these subjects.

(2) Lay students in the Master Degree program, not having previous studies in Pali or related subjects are required to additionally study: Pali I and II.

(3) Pali Language is one of five foreign languages which the Ph.D. students can select for qualifying examination.

2. Scriptures and Books for Pali Studies

Currently, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU) carries out many projects, producing scripture and books promoting Pali Studies in Thailand. There are at least main six projects involving Pali Studies:

- 2.1 Pali Tipitaka, MCU Version (45 vols., completed)
- 2.2 Thai Tipitaka, MCU Version (45 vols., completed, third edition)
- 2.3 Pali Commentary, MCU Version (52 vols., completed)
- 2.4 Thai Commentary, MCU Version (52 vols., on process)
- 2.5 Thai Tipitaka in Brief, MCU Version (6 vols., completed)
- 2.6 Thai Tipitaka on CD, MCU-Trai (completed)

Conclusion:

Certainly, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University takes Pali studies very seriously – as an ‘ethical’ aspect of Buddhist Education. It is widely acknowledged that Pali is the form of the earliest Buddhist ‘scriptures’ – retained by Theravada Buddhists. Buddhism can only be accurately understood if one has the thorough ability to maneuver through the intricate texts. Knowing Pali is an advantageous educational-key to unlocking important ethical situations demonstrated in the Tipitaka. As part of the university catalogue of courses, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University ensures the continuity of Pali scholarship and ethically preserves ancient/early Buddhism through rigorous examinations.

Pali Studies in Thailand

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Introduction of Pali Studies into Thailand

After the third Buddhist Council, Bhikkhus Sona and Uttara the Elder along with their party came to introduce Buddhism into Suvannabhumi Region. Buddhism has become the religion of the people in this region since then. Buddhism may have been introduced into Thailand at least through three channels;

- (1) by land ie. walking through Bengal--Burma--Thailand
- (2) by sea ie. Ship sailing through Bengal--Mataban--Davi--Tanaosi--Thailand
- (3) by sea ie. Ship sailing through Malacca Pass--Malayu Pininsula--Jampa--Thailand.

In the beginning, the Buddhist literary works were introduced into Thailand through these channels. But there have been no clear-cut evidents to show that what forms these works were of; book, or inscription, or any other form. When there were many Buddhist literary works written in India especially in the period of University Monastery; Nalanda Mahavihara etc. Some of those works were introduced into Thailand eg. The Questions of King Menander (Milindapanho). And when Buddhist literary works were written in Lanka, many works were introduced into Thailand continuously as well. Therefore, nowadays fifty-two commentaries such as the commentary of Vinaya Pitaka entitled Samantapasadika, the commentary of Suttanta

Pitaka Dikha Nikaya entitled Sumangalavilasini, the commentary of Abhidhamma Pitaka Dahmmasangani entitled Atthasalini have been well known to Thai monks and layman who are interested in Pali Studies. Apart from these, there are many other Buddhist scriptures eg. Nettipakarana, Petakopadesa, Visuddhimagga, Vimuttimagga, Abhidhammavataara, Dipavamsa, Mahavamsa which are also well known to Thai monks and layman.

Pali Studies in Thai History

Sukhothai period was the inflowing time of Buddhist literary works from foreign countries to Thailand because of many factors as we have known. King Ramkhamhaeng the Great of Sukhothai played two key roles at the same time; ruling the country and teaching the Buddha's Dhamma. King Lithai of Sukhothai also invited the monks to come and study the Tipitaka along with various arts inside Royal Palace.

Some passages in book entitled "Tao-Sichulalak" tell us that some monks were well versed in one, or two, or four, or five of Vinaya Pitaka, some monks were well versed in forty, or one-hundred, or many more of Suttas in Suttanta Pitaka, some monks were well versed in ten, or many more of Bhanavara in Abhidhamma Pitaka.

In Lan-na, the arrival of Buddhist literary works from foreign countries in Thailand resulted in Buddhist scholars monks in Chiang Mai and surrounding area. Those scholars wrote many Buddhist literary works such as Phra Sirimangalajarn wrote Mangalatthadipani, Vessantaradipani and other works. etc.

However, Pali studies in Sukhothai and Lan-na might had not been systematized ie. Curriculum of study, grade of study and examination. Later on, in Ayutthya period (BE 1893-2310=CE 1350-1767), *during the reign of King Narayana*, the curriculum, teaching activity and examination were set up. The tradition in examination in those days was oral (Mukhapatha). The grade of qualification was divided into three as follows:

Grade I, or Bariantri for students who finished translating the Suttanta Pitaka.

Grade II, or Bariantho for students who finished translating the Vinaya Pitaka.

Grade III, or *Barian-ek* for students who finished translating the Suttanta, Vinaya and Abhdhamma Pitaka.

In Rattanakosin period (BE 2325-present=CE 1782-present), the method of study of Pali was copied from that of Ayutthya period. But it might be changed a little bit. In the reign of King Rama II (BE 2352-2367=CE 1809-1824), His Holiness the Supreme Patriarch Mi of Wat Ratchabuarana gave an advice to the King to change the system of Pali study and examination. The grade of study was divided into nine ie grade I-IX (Pali I-IX). The teachers were called "Royal scholars"(Rajabandit). The teaching and examination activity were run inside Wat Phrasirattanasatsadaram (Temple of the Emerald Buddha)

In the reign of King Rama VI (BE 2453-2468=CE 1910-1925), a grade of study was regrouped as follows:

- (1) grade I-III: Pariandhamtri (Pariandham I)
- (2) grade IV-VI: Pariandhamtho (Pariandham II)
- (3) grade VII-IX: Pariandham-ek (Pariandham III)

Apart from this, a new section of ecclesiastical education has been established ie. Dhamma Study (Nukdham) and the grade of study has been divided into three as follows: 1-grade I (Nukdhamtri), 2- grade II (Nukdhamtho), 3-grade III (Nukdham-ek). Along with this, each grade (of Nukdham) has been fixed as the prerequisite of Pali Studies as follows:

- (1) grade I (Nukdhamtri) as the prerequisite of Pali Studies grade I-III
- (2) grade II (Nukdhamtho) as the prerequisite of Pali Studies grade IV-VI
- (3) grade III (Nukdham-ek) as the prerequisite of Pali Studies grade VII-IX

Later on, in a reign of King Rama VII, the method of examination has been changed from Oral examination to paper writing examination and the curriculum of Pali Studies was fixed for grades I-IX (BE 2470=CE 1967 approximately) as follows:

Pali No.	Subjects	Text-books
Pali I-III	Translation Pali into Thai	Commentary of Dhammapada
Pali IV	Translation Pali into Thai	Mangalattadipani part 1

Pali V	Translation Pali into Thai	Saratthasangaha
Pali VI	Translation Pali into Thai	Mangalattadipani part 2
Pali VII	Translation Pali into Thai	Commentary of Vinaya, Samantapasadika parts 1
Pali VIII	Translation Pali into Thai	Visuddhimagga
Pali IX	Translation Pali into Thai	Saratthadipani (sub-commentary of Vinaya)

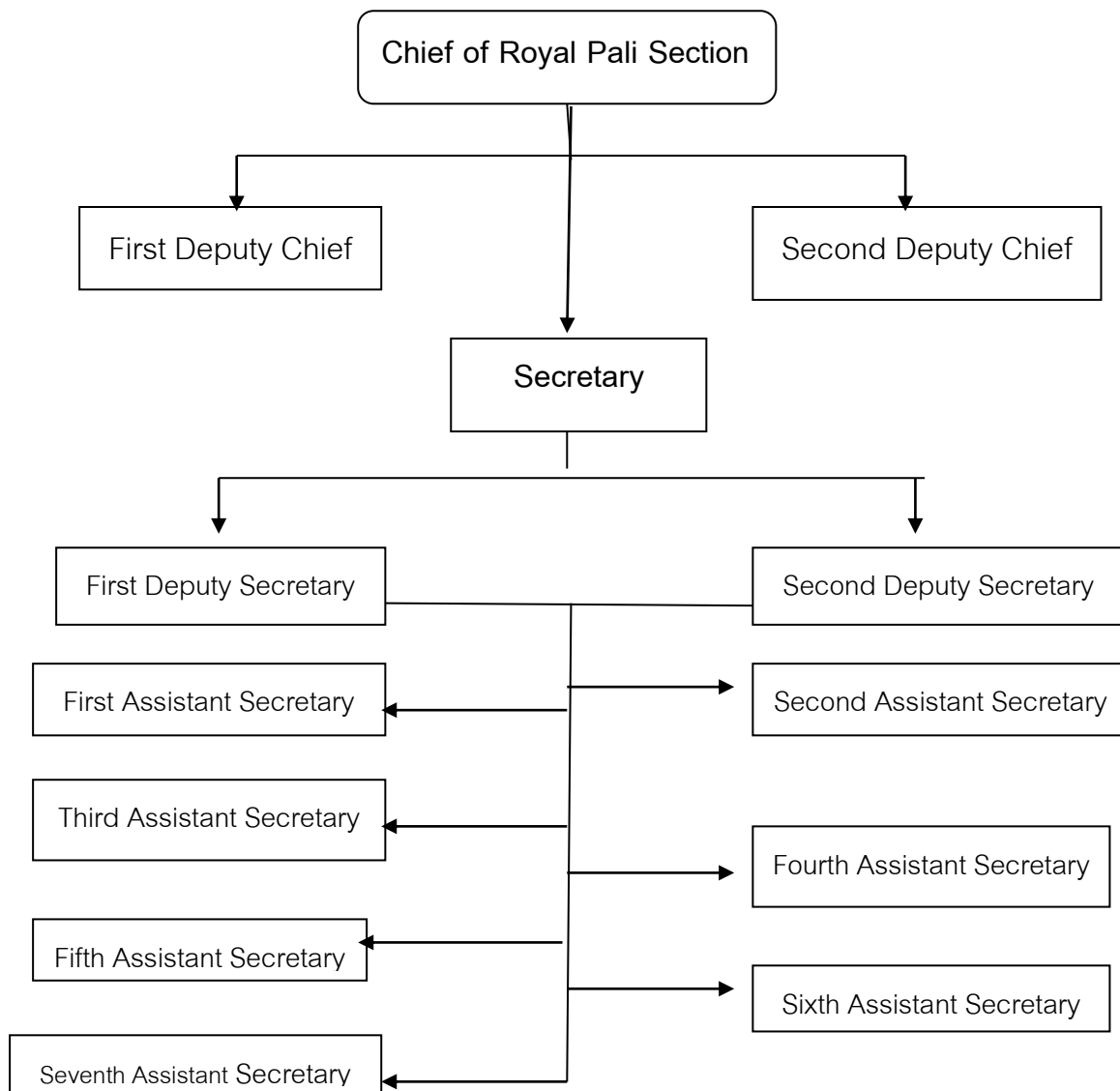
In the reign of King Rama IX (King Bhumipol, the present King), Somdet Phrabuddhakhosajarn (Phuen Jutindharo) of Wat Samphraya, Bangkok, was the Chief of Royal Pali Section. In BE 2507(CE 1964), His Holiness changed the curriculum of Pali Studies a little bit on the basis of that used in King Rama VI such as the new subjects were added to grade IV-IX. There will be the details of this curriculum in the next headline.

Upto this period, however, the principle of ecclesiastical administration involving Pali Studies has not been changed. The quality of graduates has still been emphasized more than the quantity. Talking only about Pali Grade IX which is the topmost level of ecclesiastical Pali Studies, in some academic year there was no novices and monks who passed an examination, in some academic year there was a few novices and monks who passed an examination. This case does not matter at all. All the graduates (Pali IX) must be high qualified, ie. the must have the capability to translate all the pali passages into Thai or any other language. In the meantime the must be able to write and speak Thai very well.

Pali Studies in the Present Day Thailand

1. Pali Studies of Thai Sangha

1.1 Administrative Structure*



* the administration is centralized.

1.2 Curriculum

The ecclesiastical education of That Sangha in Pali Studies is divided into nine grades and the text-books for each grade are as follows:

Pali No.	Subjects	Text-books
Pali I-II	Translation Pali into Thai Pali Grammar	Pali Grammar books 1-4 Commentary of Dhammapada parts 1-4
Pali III	Translation Pali into Thai Thai Composition Pali Grammar Method of Letter Writing	Commentary of Dhammapada parts 5-8 Commentary of Dhammapada parts 5-8 Pali Grammar books 1-4 General regulation of secretariat*
Pali IV	Translation Thai into Pali Translation Pali into Thai	Commentary of Dhammapada part 1 Mangalattadipani part 1
Pali V	Translation Thai into Pali Translation Pali into Thai	Commentary of Dhammapada part 2-4 Mangalattadipani part 2
Pali VI	Translation Thai into Pali Translation Pali into Thai	Commentary of Dhammapada part 5-8 Commentary of Vinaya, - Samantapasadika parts 3-5
Pali VII	Translation Thai into Pali Translation Pali into Thai	Mangalattadipani part 1 Commentary of Vinaya, Samantapasadika parts 1-2
Pali VIII	Prosody (Poetry) Translation Thai into Pali Translation Pali into Thai	Writing Pali in Verse from passages as fixed by Royal Pali Section.(examinees do three kinds of six prosodies) Samantapasadika parts 1 Visuddhimagga parts 1-3
Pali IX	Translation Thai into Pali Translation Thai into Pali Translation Pali into Thai	Writing Pali in prose from passages as fixed by Royal Pali Section. Visuddhimagga parts 1-3 Abhidhammatthavibhavini Tika

3. Learning and Teaching,

Assessment and Evaluation

In Bangkok, there are 80 authorized ecclesiastical schools of Pali, while in rural area there 108 authorized ecclesiastical schools of Pali in various provinces. But in reality, there many more unauthorized schools throughout the country. In practice, each school can manage all the activities by themselves. The ecclesiastical schools of Pali gain mostly financial support from Buddhist devotees, and gain the financial support from government as well.

The process of Assessment and Evaluation is called Royal Pali Examination, because in ancient time, the Thai Kings carried on this activity involving Pali Studies by themselves. Though in later time, their Majesty the kings have assigned this activity to the government officials, but it still is supported by the the Kings.

When the time of examination is coming, the administrators in Bangkok headed by the Chief of Royal Pali Section will date the examination-day and examination-place and then prepare the question-papers (it is the central question only). After that, some senior monks are assigned by the administrators in Bangkok to take those questions to organize the examination in various placed as fixed earlier.

The process of assessment and evaluation is very strict. There are many more details left to be learned about. In assessment, there are no gained marks found, there are only losed marks found. For instance, it can roughly be estimated that the examinees have to gain at least 88 marks (of 100 marks) to pass the subject of Translation Pali into Thai and vice versa, and at least 75 marks (of 100 marks) to pass the subject of Pali Grammar. In evaluation, the evaluation-score is "H" (called Hai in Thai). In each subject, the full score is 3Hs, and the examinees have to gain at least 2 Hs (of 3Hs) for every subject to pass each grade. This is the tough examination. Even though the Pali Studies examination of Thai Sangha is generally regarded as very very difficult. Many monks and novices failed in examination every year. We should not consider that it wastes time and it is useless. Because this is the tradition of screenibg-process by Thai Sangha.

4. Interesting Statistics (5 years back)

Year	Examinees of all grades	Passed
BE 2545 (CE 2002)	43,408	4,948
BE 2546 (CE 2003)	41,278	5,177
BE 2547 (CE 2004)	38,805	5,108
BE 2548 (CE 2005)	40,547	5,671
BE 2549 (CE 2006)	37,467	5,513
BE 2550 (CE 2007)	29,342	4,547
BE 2551 (CE 2008)	31,067	2,790 ^{ss}

The noteworthy one is that to finish studying the Pali IX (Grade IX) is very difficult. Therefore, from BE 2325(CE1782) upto BE 2551 (CE 2008), it is 226 years, there are only 1,220 monks and novices who graduated Pali IX (Grade IX).

2. Pali Studies

in Mahaculalongkornrajavidyalaya University

1. Pali Studies in MCU Curriculum

Mahaculalongkornrajavidyalaya University is public autonomous university, as the university of Thai Sangha. MCU pays very much attention to Pali Studies. This kind of

^{ss} This number has not been included with the result of second examination of academic year 2008.

education has been provided from the outset upto the present. The MCU curriculum involving Pali Studies is as follows:

(A) Curriculum Majoring in Pali:

- (1) Certificate in Pali
- (2) Bachelor of Arts in Pali
- (3) Bachelor of Arts in Pali Buddhist Studies
- (4) Master of Arts in Pali

(B) Pali Subjects in various curriculums:

(1) In Bachelor of Arts, there are Pali subjects or related subjects in the group of Core-Buddhist Subjects of every curriculum ie. Pali Translation, Tipitaka Studies, Vinaya Pitaka, Suttanta Pitaka, Abhidhamma Pitaka. All the students of MCU in every major have to study these subjects.

(2) The lay students in Master Degree who have not studied Pali subjects, or related subjects before are required to study the additional Pali subject I and II.

(3) Pali Language is one of five foreign languages which the Ph.D. students can select for qualifying examination.

2. Scriptures and Books for Pali Studies

In the present day, Mahachulalongkornrajvidyalaya University (MCU) carries out many projects of producing the scripture and books to promote Pali Studies in Thailand.

There are at least main six projects involving Pali Studies:

- 2.1 Pali Tipitaka, MCU Version (45 vols., completed)
- 2.2 Thai Tipitaka, MCU Version (45 vols., completed, third edition)
- 2.3 Pali Commentary, MCU Version (52 vols., completed)
- 2.4 Thai Commentary, MCU Version (52 vols., on process)
- 2.5 Thai Tipitaka in Brief, MCU Version (6 vols., completed)
- 2.6 Thai Tipitaka on CD, MCU-Trai (completed)
