

## Wisdom Leadership Development of Sangha in Thailand

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**Abstract:** Wisdom leadership development in temples, Findings were as: the management of religious activities is faced with many problems because of personnel, legality and other contexts related to society. A lack of a good leadership has caused Buddhist values in the community to decline. However, the management and care of temple property must be done to benefit Buddhism. Temple budget is a further problem. Consequently, temples lack equipment and there is inadequate regulation. The important roles of abbots are temple maintenance and organization of religious activities. High levels of knowledge concerning temple management are a prerequisite for all abbots. The abbot has to use management strategy effectively, efficiently and for the prosperity of the temple.

**Key words:** wisdom leadership, personnel, legality

### 1. Introduction

Buddhist temples are important, sacred places that are very important for people in local Thai communities. The King of Magadha offered Weluwan Temple as a pavilion of the Buddha and a place for Buddhist disciples to study. This place helped Buddhism grow, so the temple is considered an important place in the history of religious development in the area. Nowadays, the temple helps to develop many sectors, but maintains its unique of Buddhist heart. Thailand has been a Buddhist country since the Sukhothai era and Buddhism has grown to be very important to Thai society. The religion is especially important for cultivation of mental well-being and training of Thai people's behaviour. It also responds to the needs of the people, solving the problems of society and the country.

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The 43,810 temples across Thailand can be divided into three categories. There are 310 royal temples, 37,403 private temples and 6,097 abandoned temples (The National Office of Buddhism, 2013). There are 17,269 temples

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in the northeast of Thailand (The National Office of Buddhism, 2013).

According to the Eleventh National Social and Economic Development Plan, 2012-16, Thai people are proud of their nationality due to the unique way of life, friendliness in society, cultural democracy, good governance and public service (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), 2012) Society is safe and sustainable. Buddhist ecclesiastical officials are the powerful and lawful leaders of monks and their jurisdiction covers all areas of temple management. The lives of monks are related to the community, both in terms of lifestyle and assistance. Monks should do their best, therefore, to benefit the community (Panthajan C. et al., 2010).

The important mission and role of the National Office of Buddhism and the Department of Religious Affairs is to enhance and protect Buddhism in Thailand. Moreover, these institutions should oversee the provision of Buddhism-related activities in order to develop Buddhism and make temples centres of Buddhism in the community (The National Office of Buddhism, 2013). Temple management is important because good management models require many factors and components to be combined (The Office of National Education, 2002). Temples are at the center of community spirit, education and social security. They can reduce criminal problems and promote strong personal characteristics consistent with the Thai identity (Jantraluk Phramaha A., 2001). Temple management in the past used the Buddha's religious principles. For this reason, the leadership of the temples influences the effectiveness of religious activities. The abbots must be knowledgeable, capable, powerful, moral and friendly people. Moreover, they must have model leadership qualities, which are reflected in the behaviour of the monks and novices.

Nowadays, the management of religious activities is faced with many problems because of personnel, legality and other contexts related to society. A lack of a good leadership has caused Buddhist values in the community to decline. However, the management and care of temple property must be done to benefit Buddhism. Temple budget is a further problem. Consequently, temples lack equipment and there is inadequate regulation. The important roles of abbots are temple maintenance and organisation of religious activities. High levels of knowledge concerning temple management are a prerequisite for all abbots. The abbot has to use management strategy effectively, efficiently and for the prosperity of the temple.

## **2. Method for Development**

According to interviews, observations and group discussions the management conditions of the temples were divided into five aspects: temple maintenance, temple activities, administration, study and making merit services. On the other hand, the factors are determined by the planning of the abbot, the organizational structure of the temple, the direction of temple leadership and follow-up. The wisdom leadership development in temples of Buddhist ecclesiastical officials in the lower northeast consists of four aspects: 1) the search for knowledge, 2) belief, 3) mastery and 4) care.

### **2.1 Money**

Money is collected by the temples from merit-making donations, sale of Buddhist artefacts, collection of parking fees and collection of tuition fees. The major problem with money at the temples is the lack of income to cover the monthly outgoings. Additionally, money collected for parking fees is dependent on a regular parking attendant. There is not continuous supervision at many of the temples and, as a result, potential income is lost. Expenditure is high because temple buildings require regular maintenance. Temple funds are managed in accounts

but some temples do not have accounts because their monthly income is insufficient. For the most part, monks assigned duties to manage the temple finances have high levels of experience and have been in the role for many years. While they know the workings of their own temple very well, their longevity does cause some problems. The majority of these monks have high educational qualifications in religion and religious studies but little experience of worldly matters. They are thus unfamiliar with modern banking systems and regulations. Additionally, there are few younger monks with the required expertise to take over the management of temple finances. Temple finances are rarely monitored by a committee. These issues can be remedied by external intervention (on-site training) and observation of practices elsewhere. There must also be greater discipline in allocating budget according to income and adhering to that budget (Scott R. M., 2009).

## **2.2 Man**

The major problem in the temples of Northeastern Thailand regarding personnel is cooperation. There is not enough communication between individuals, which results in monks performing individual duties with little concern or knowledge of others' actions across the temple. With greater communication, temple duties will be more synchronised. Increased cooperation must be implemented at the planning stage. Care for the congregation is also sporadic and unsystematic. Informants indicate that there needs to be tighter management and regulation of interactions with the community. One suggestion provided by informants was a regular, weekly temple class for community members. This would increase understanding of Dhamma among local community members and, hopefully, raise the likelihood of community willingness to participate in temple activities and the day-to-day management of the temple. Tighter administration of roles concerning temple resources and clearer definition of human relationship with those resources will serve to improve the overall progress of the temple. This will benefit the abbot, monks and the local community because there will be no ambiguity over duties and jobs will get done (Prayukvong W., 2005).

## **2.3 Materials**

Temple resources are clearly affected by each of the other aspects of temple administration, particularly in the allocation of budget (money) and assigned responsibilities of temple members (man). At present, a number of resources are either aging, poorly maintained or both. In all temples there is no current duty for the maintenance of temple property, which is therefore left to the abbot. This is too much work for one individual and consequently many items are not cared for properly. Through lack of care and resultant breakage, some items are in short supply, notably chairs and tents, which are needed for large temple activities and events. It is vital that resource management is made a part of temple planning. This aspect of administration has a knock-on effect to all other areas because, if resources are low or in need of replacement, large chunks of the (already limited) temple budget will be eaten away. There must also be regular stock-takes and meetings to discuss the situation of temple resources so that they are not forgotten. One further aspect of resource management is the use of utilities, such as electricity and water. Temples cannot afford to be wasteful in this regard and there must be a strict policy concerning the use of electricity and water on the temple grounds.

## **2.4 Management**

There is currently no short or long-term planning in the management of building maintenance, new building construction, temple services, temple environment or temple regulations. It is crucial for temple development that planning in these areas commences immediately. The abbot is the most important individual for the organization

of this planning, as he must be responsible for instigating and continuing dialogue between all relevant parties. At present, abbots use traditional methods for the management of their temples and are not well-schooled in modern management. In terms of management, temples must be treated as businesses in order to survive in the wider world. For this reason, abbots must receive external support and training in modern business management. One further resource that must not be overlooked in terms of management is the local community. There should be clear communication with the local community, who should be encouraged to participate in temple activities, especially at the planning stage.

### 3. Summary

The efficiency of Buddhist ecclesiastical officials' observed during this investigation is consistent with prior research into the subject. The provision of activities is the duty of the leaders of temples. The abbots should manage temples based on religious regulations and the existing temple property. Temple rule means taking care of and training monks and householders in temples following discipline and the regulations of the Sangha Supreme Council. The monks are expected to study and train in Dharma and Buddhist ecclesiastical officials must work efficiently to help continuously train the morals of their students. Officials must also support the temple committee, monks and Ubasok Ubasika to further their education and develop themselves progressively.

Merit-making practices reflect the relationship between people and the community and make others trust temples. The management of Buddhist ecclesiastical officials should make people realize that officials are part of Buddhism heritage and develop temples to be the centre of people's hearts. Thus the management of Buddhist ecclesiastical officials should be done abstractly. Financial management must be in cooperation with the temple committee and villagers, which keeps financial matters transparent. The principles of Dharma must be central when using wisdom for temple management. These will be reflected in the progress of the temple.

Knowledge management of temples is not currently developed because payment, personnel, equipment, buildings and administration were not prosperous. The payments are high, human resources are limited and administration is hard. The abbots should have more knowledge, belief and direction. They should take care of all aspects of wisdom management if they are to sustainably develop leadership.

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