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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 The Background and Significance of the Problem

One important factor contributing to Dhammakāya Temple's rise and explosive growth is the unique Dhammakāya meditation technique from where the temple takes its name as it is one of the aspects of Dhammakāya Temple that has attracted followers. According to sociologists, the continued attraction of religion in the Third World comes from the ability to respond to very specific and acute forms of deprivation; or revolutionist—to the strain felt by the putative imminent destruction of the world.

In term of the ability to address to very specific and acute forms of deprivation, at present the deprivation theory formulated to explain and classify religious movements, focuses on different kinds of strains felt by each demographic group of people such as The Five Types of Deprivation which allows researchers to explore five stresses and strains as follows:

1. Economic Deprivation - giving rise to sect
2. Social Deprivation - giving rise to church
3. Organismic Deprivation - giving rise to healing movement
4. Ethical Deprivation - giving rise to reform movement
5. Psychic Deprivation. - giving rise to cult

All of the Five Types, only Psychic deprivation is classified by the feature of Dhammakāya Meditation System. Psychic deprivation may arise when people experience a lack of a meaningful value system around which they can organize their lives. Such a condition may well be caused by a perceived social exclusion and may result in disillusionment or despair. The quest for a faith, ethic or experience is an attempt to address this deprivation.¹

In Thailand, psychic deprivation arises in the life of many well-educated, morality-conscious Thais in the urban society built during the course of transition in the country's from an agriculture-based economy to an industrial-based society. This group of urban people experiences the lack of a meaningful spiritual system to guide their lives. They perceive that traditional sermons in typical temples as irrelevant to their lifestyle. Apart from that, traditional Buddhist temple attendance does not resonate with their expectation.

¹ Glock, Charles Y. and Stark, **Religion and Society in Tension**. Chicago: Chicago Rand McNally and Co., 1965, p.248

Dhammakāya Temple has seen through this psychic situation and adopted a far-sighted friendly-user policy in running their religious services and providing their morality programs in accordance with the needs and aspirations of this urban middle class. The Temple offers an approach to life that there is no contradiction between being prosperous and spiritual development. This makes Dhammakāya followers feel that the relevant teachings and the purpose of life can be found in this temple. At Dhammakāya Temple, the concept of purification through the practice of Dhammakāya Meditation Technique is emphasized, in accompanied with five precept observation and financial contribution. The success of the Temple's Meditation propagation scheme enables the Temple becoming a homogenous hub characterized by the prosperity and the seriousness in the religious involvement of its members.

Jeffrey S. Bowers in his thesis²: agrees that Dhammakāya Meditation technique is the Temple's magnetic attraction as saying '..... the fact that Dhammakāya Meditation is popular at nearly all level of Thai society is of particular importance. unlike other Thai Buddhist movements which normally appeal to a specific segment of society and to lesser degrees other segments, the movement surrounding Dhammakāya Meditation cut across Thailand's numerous social strata.'

In the course of its rise and success, Dhammakāya Temple and its meditation practice have attracted many critics as well as followers. The arguments against the Temple are as varied and abundant as the uncommon teachings and practices employed by the Dhammakāya tradition.

Some of the Temple's critics attribute the success of Dhammakāya Temple to the exceptional ability to reach the Thai middle-class such as Santisuda Ekachai in her article³, opined that 'Whether you agree with its teachings or not, the Dhammakāya movement's birth and popularity has grown out of the religious needs of Thais in modern urban communities'

However it is interesting to note that Dhammakāya Temple itself has never satisfied with the received recognition as being the nation's foremost modern temple in its synthesis of physical and administrative innovated outlooks but kept a constant reform and been looking ahead. The Temple has a number of its members engaged in postgraduate studies both inside the country and abroad, when these graduates return to work for the Temple, they will be moved into the significant positions which will result in a change for the more effective administrative structure well fit for the Temple's future missions.

According to Rory Mackenzie's observation⁴ It would not be surprising if many at the temple see their movement as a prime mover in bringing Thai Buddhism into the twenty-first century.

² Jeffrey S. Bowers, **Thammakaya Meditation in Thai Society**, (Thailand: Thai Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1995), pp.77-78.

³ Santisuda Ekachai, Article: **Phra Dhammakāya Controversy: Keeping the Faith** on Bangkok Post English language newspaper 21.12.98 Bangkok Post Homepage www.bangkokpost.com (accessed February 2002)

⁴ Rory Mackenzie: **New Buddhist Movements in Thailand: Towards an Understanding of Wat Phra Dhammakāya and Santi Asoke**, (USA: Routledge, 270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016, 2007), p.67.

Therefore, with the mentioned reasons, a comprehensive study about the factors of success of Dhammakāya Temple would be a worthwhile research project in order to bring together all arguments about the Temple to show how they have developed, evolved and then transformed over the years, and how their analysis and understanding have changed and differed from one general temple to another over the time, with the aim of creating the appropriate context for Dhammakāya-based dialogue.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To study the rise and success of Dhammakāya temple.
2. To study the factors of success of Dhammakāya temple.
3. To evaluate the factors of success of the Dhammakāya temple.

1.3 Questions of the Study

The topic: The Factors of Success of Dhammakāya Temple sets out to answer the three following questions:

1. How did Dhammakāya Temple originate and develop their distinctive features and why do they appeal to their respective memberships?
2. How accurate and contrast between the etic's (outsiders') and emic's (insiders') descriptions and analysis toward Dhammakāya Temple?
3. What are the factors contributing to the success of Dhammakāya Temple?

1.4 Scope of the Study

This thesis focuses on three pivotal points: one: the rise and success of Dhammakāya Temple centered by the utilization of Dhammakāya Meditation practice, two: the factors of success of Dhammakāya Temple in associated with the appealing aspect of its meditation technique that has attracted followers perhaps critics as well, three: the evaluation of Dhammakāya Meditation efficient and unique attributes: the successful factors of Dhammakāya Temple.

This thesis also gathers and engage with the reflections of pro- (emic's views) and con- (etic's views) standpoints toward Dhammakāya Temple and the teaching of Dhammakāya Meditation in order to lend comprehension to the specific characteristics of each explored point. The outsiders involved in this thesis are academics researching in this area and lay people who have contact with the Temple.

With the objective to provide an accurate scrutiny and best justified conclusion, the analytical work of this thesis is carried out through the thrust of Sociological Typology approach as the use of these selected typologies are formulated specifically for the classification of religious movements in the world and have been examined to see if they are useful in the quest to understand Dhammakāya Temple. The Typological theories are also able to widen the discussion as links can be made to other religious movements which were existing yet not immediately obvious. The thesis attempts to evaluate how Dhammakāya Meditation renders success to Dhammakāya Temple through the four adopted Typology theories:

1. The Five Types of Deprivation Theory formulated by Charles Y. Glock and R. Stark. (as explained previously depicting how Psychic deprivation gave Dhammakāya Temple the added advantage in reaching and recruiting new Dhammakāya meditators from the urban society.)

2. Wilson's Typological Model of classifying new religious movements, describing seven positions of the new movement based on the movement's aims. (the objective of employing this theory is to reason why Dhammakāya meditators unlike other tradition meditators, consistently embrace and attach to the Temple's meditation tradition after having tried the practice; resulting in the constant increase of accumulated numbers of Dhammakāya meditators.)
3. Roy Wallis' Typology classifying the new movement into three different categories based on the movement's views. (the objective of employing this theory is to provide a vivid illustration showing how Dhammakāya Temple views the world at large and where they position themselves within the world to make Dhammakāya Meditation a fulfillment.)
4. Lance Cousin's Typological Categories of the new movement based on the movement's roles. (Cousin's theory is the only one out of these four, which is designed specifically to classify new Theravāda Buddhism movements; it will offer a broad sense of the Dhammakāya Temple's success in two germanes as: 'Buddhist modernism', and 'Revival of meditation'.)

The above four-type Typological-theories analysis will be further discussed in details in Chapter 4.

1.5 Definitions of the Terms Used in the Thesis

Dhamma means the Dhamma sphere which is a clear and pure sphere about the size of an egg yolk located at the center of the body. Anyone who can stop and concentrate their mind at the right position at the center of the body, without thinking about anything, can attain Dhamma.

Dhammakāya means the body of enlightenment or Buddha nature.

Dhammakāya Meditation Practice means two tiers; one dealing with ordinary Dhammakāya Meditation and the other dealing with what is called 'Vijjā Dhammakāya' Meditation or the so-called 'high level'.

Sixfold Superknowledge means the mental powers of one pure of defilements comprising: 1) supernormal powers; 2) divine ears; 3) reading the minds of others; 4) recollection of past lives; 5) divine eyes; 6) the knowledge of an end of defilements.

The factors of success means an administrative term for an element that is necessary for an organization or a project to achieve its mission. It is a factor or activity required for ensuring the success of an organization. The term was initially used in the world of data analysis which includes issues vital to an organization's current operating activities and to its future success. To apply it to the Factors of Success of Dhammakāya Temple is ascribable to the ability of attraction, the capacity of sustainability and the potential energy of continuing development. The answer to the question 'why do people choose to come to Dhammakāya Temple?' is typically a critical success factor.

Threefold Knowledge means the mental powers of one pure of defilements comprising: 1) recollection of past lives; 2) knowledge of the decease and rebirth of beings; 3) the knowledge of an end of defilements

Vijjā Dhammakāya means the Dhammakāya Tradition, or the wisdom gained by those practicing Vipassanā meditation beyond attainment of Dhammakāya.

1.6 Literature Review

1.6.1 English Thesis

- 1.6.1.1 Jeffrey S. Bowers, Master's Thesis 'Thammakaya Meditation in Thai Society', Bangkok: Thai Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1995 (B.E. 2538).

The objective of this thesis is to explain the Dhammakāya meditation technique and the modern movements utilizing it to better understanding its importance to these movements. By better understanding these modern Buddhist movements in Thailand, a better understanding of Thai society can be gained.

Although the Dhammakāya movement at Wat Phra Dhammakāya has received some scholarly attention recently, much of the information concerning the meditation technique was omitted or described inaccurately. As the meditation practice plays a significant role in the different movements, it must be correctly understood if one expects to fully understand the movements. For this reason it is necessary to begin by gaining a better understanding of the founder, or 're-discoverer' of the meditation technique, commonly known as Luang Phaw Sodh. A brief background of Luang Phaw Sodh reveals both his interest in meditation and dissatisfaction with his progress in traditional meditation practice common in Thailand at that time. He devoted considerable time to study the Mahā Satipattāna Sutta and interprets it to learn a meditation system which he called the Dhammakāya system and declared it to be the same system used by the Buddha to reach enlightenment. Luang Phaw Sodh's fame grew and he was appointed Abbot of Wat Paknam where he centered his movement dedicated to meditation.

This system is a complex visualization method where meditators, practicing in group, concentrate on a variety of images in order to progress in meditation. Progress brings with it powers, which may be applied differently, depending on the movement one follows. The system shares many similarities with Tantric meditation system and is quite different from traditional meditation systems.

Luang Phaw Sodh's death in 1959 brought about confusion and disagreement over who should control Dhammakāya meditation and the movement split with an elderly nun and her young followers establishing their own meditation institute, which eventually become Wat Phra Dhammakāya. The activities of Wat Phra Dhammakāya and their vocal claims to controlling the true teaching of Dhammakāya meditation concerned other followers of Dhammakāya meditation not associated with Wat Phra Dhammakāya. As a result, a new meditation institute formed in order to counter the negative publicity of Wat Phra Dhammakāya, and safeguard the meditation technique from any unwarranted criticism. This meditation institute eventually became Wat Luang Phaw Sodh Dhammakāyaram and although it shares followers with Wat Paknam, it has its own goal and objectives.

By examining the technique and the movements and what they offer their followers, a more complete understanding of Thai society in general can be gained.

- 1.6.1.2 Phibul Choompolpaisal, Master's Dissertation 'Materialism or Religious Practice? An Application of the Debate between Gadamer's and Habermas' Hermeneutics to a Study of Phra Dhammakāya Buddhist Temple: the Stupa and its Interpretations' the Study of Religions of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Graduate School, University of London, September 2003.

This study is the first English-language academic writing combining both emic and etic stances in attempting to study the insider-outsider debate on the issue of 'Phra Dhammakāya Buddhist Temple' in Thailand. The fundamental premise of the debate is that while 400,000 'insiders' perceive that Stupa to be the core of 'religious' practice, 'outsiders, including most Thais and academic, consider it to be 'materialistic'.

In contrast to many scholarly works on this issue which has so far been carried out by either non-Buddhist academics or through an overly textual emphasis, this study proves to be the first as it redresses a balance between a Buddhist worldview from within the Dhammakāya tradition and an academic understanding of Buddhism and Western theory.

The study applies the Gadamer-Habermas debate to portray the paradigm of the insider-outsider debate and employs Gadamer's hermeneutics to empower the subjectivity of experience. In reversing the trend, the study argues against 'outsiders' and Habermas' objectivity of 'social truth'. Pursuing Gadamer's idea pointing out problems of and factors behind interpretations, this study aims at showing how the insiders interpretation of the Stupa can question and transcend that of 'outsiders' in textual, academic and experiential dimensions.

The study critically concludes by questioning whether the outsiders' interpretation of 'insiders' becomes too narrow when an 'authentic' dialogue with 'insiders' has yet to be established. Textual analysis reveals that the outsiders' interpretation of 'puja' (as 'materialistic' worship) becomes part of the insiders', which includes both 'materialistic' and 'religious' dimensions of 'puja'. Experientially, 'insiders' transcend 'outsiders' to explain practitioners. The study also questions 'latent factors' –'an already framed view', 'a transfer of information' and 'latent prejudices' –all of which possibly cause the conflict of interpretations.

- 1.6.1.3 Danna Marie Cook, Master's Thesis 'Wat Phra Dhammakāya: Competition and Authoritative Conflict with the Thai Monastic Elite', Master of Arts, Graduate School, Arizona State University, August 2009.

This thesis analyzes the competition and authoritative conflict between the Dhammakāya movement and the monastic elite in Thailand that climaxed in the late 1990's. The Dhammakāya controversy played out in the public arena as the Thai Sangha elite actively worked against the movement to protect its authority over Thai Buddhism and maintain its access to resources provided by followers. This thesis traces the course of the conflict, analyzes the reasons for the conflict and finds that the Dhammakāya movement successfully navigated the

controversy specifically because of the mass support it accumulated through particular uncommon teachings and practices. These teachings and practices became the focal points for the controversy while alternately contributing to the movement's popularity. This thesis aims to increase understanding of emerging religious movements and the conflicts they face, using the Dhammakāya movement in Thailand as an example.

- 1.6.1.4 Rory Mackenzie, *New Buddhist Movements in Thailand: Towards an Understanding of Wat Phra Dhammakāya and Santi Asoke*, Doctoral Thesis University of Sunderland Edinburgh 2007.

This thesis seeks an understanding of two new Buddhist movements which emerged in Thailand in the 1970s. Vastly different in belief and practice, they developed in a time of political uncertainty, social change and increasing dissatisfaction with the Thai Sangha and its leadership. The researcher has sought both insiders' (emic) and outsiders' (etic) understandings of the movements. Members of both movements view their respective leaders as having qualities of *amnat* (power), *ittipon* (influence) and *parami* (moral stature or charisma). In addition, they are confident in the veracity of their models of spiritual purification. Wat Phra Dhammakāya views itself as a large, modern movement structured for growth, convenience and efficiency. It communicates effectively with its members throughout the world via its satellite TV channel. The movement plans shortly to host 1 million attendees at its temple for special meetings geared towards world peace. The writer sees some justification in describing this highly progressive movement as fundamentalist and millenarian due to its strong focus on meditation, and the belief that some of its members have in their leader a savior figure.

- 1.6.1.5 Sally Ann McAra, *A 'STUPENDOUS ATTRACTION' Materializing a Tibetan Buddhist contact zone in rural Australia*. A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology, The University of Auckland, 2009.

When people, ideas or things migrate across cultural milieux, many opportunities for cultural transformation arise. The focal point of this thesis is a large stupa/temple (Great Stupa) being built at Atisha Centre, a Buddhist retreat near Bendigo in Australia, by members of an international organization called the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahāyāna Tradition (FPMT).

The researcher approaches the planning, promotion and construction of the stupa as an instance of the transplantation of religious material culture, arguing that Atisha Centre and particularly the stupa play a constitutive role by acting as a contact zone (Pratt 1992). Since the Centre is a site of alternate social ordering in which the Buddhists attempt to actualize their Universalist ideals in a specific place, she also conceptualizes it as a heterotopia (Foucault 1986, Hetherington 1997).

The contact zone entails engagement between different socio-cultural domains. One of the key domains is the globalization of contemporary Buddhism and its permutations in new locales. Stemming from this is the question of how the Buddhists and their imported material culture engage with wider concerns such as various non-FPMT Buddhist, Anglo Australian and Aboriginal locals'

responses towards the transplantation of a Tibetan temple into a rural Australian locale. The complex and shifting relationships between different kinds of Buddhism feature in relation to different ideas about the value of holy objects. The FPMT conforms to the enlightenment-oriented ideals of 'Buddhist modernism' (McMahan 2008) but appears to depart from it in its pronounced emphasis on merit-making and holy objects. However, the project's proponents consider the stupa as a method for enacting their enlightenment aspirations. The researcher attributes the stupa project's relatively smooth passage through local planning application procedures to proponents' prior social and cultural capital, which she links to positive public perceptions of Buddhism, aspirations for Bendigo to become more culturally diverse and the economic development the stupa is expected to bring. The literally concrete structure of the stupa not only provides Buddhists with a tangible focal point for their ideals, but also serves as a vehicle for the establishment of Tibetan Buddhism in a new land.

- 1.6.1.6 Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon, Master Thesis 'An Analysis of Phramongkol-Thepmuni's (Sodh Candasaro) Buddhadhamma Propagation' Graduate School, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, B.E. 2547 (2004).

The purpose of this thesis is to critically analyze Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni's Buddha Dhamma propagation in relation to Lord Buddha's. It first reviews Lord Buddha's Dhamma propagation of Dhamma by way of meditation teaching as represented in the Pāli Canon, and then analyzes Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni's against this ideal, examining similarities and differences. The study found that Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni taught directly in accordance with the Buddha's Dhamma Vinaya. His teaching was Right View (*Sammā-ditthi*), not Wrong View (*Miccā-ditthi*) or perversion. Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni only adapted the Buddha's Dhamma propagation to the practical needs and realities of the twentieth century, amidst World Wars I and II.

His teachings reunited the academic (*pariyatti*) and meditation (*paṭipatti*) components of Buddhism, which had been developing on separate tracks (university vs. forest), and renewed the faith and efforts necessary to achieve *Nibbāna* (*paṭivedha*). He taught an integrated meditation technique, starting with *Samātha* (concentration), followed by *Vipassanā* (insight). He said 'To stop is to succeed,' both in meditation and in daily life (to avoid creating negative karma / kamma). Stopping the mind still (at the center of the body) permits climbing a ladder of increasingly pure spiritual bodies and mental states from the mundane through celestial and Noble State (*Dhammakāya*) to *Nibbāna*. This was his rediscovery of the *Dhammakāya* meditation technique which had been long lost to Theravāda Buddhism. The method is not detailed in the Tipitaka, but is simply a meditation technique for practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipatthāna*), which makes sense of the phrase contemplating 'body in body, feelings in feelings, mind in mind, and mental objects in mental objects.' The teaching has been verified scientifically by many practitioners in accordance with Lord Buddha's directive '*See for yourself (paccattāṃ veditabbo viññuhi)*.'

Most interviewees noted that Wat Paknam flourished because of people's faith in Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni. He could answer deep Dhamma questions, taught meditation which produced tangible results, and compassionately helped

people with all kinds of daily life problems (reportedly including sickness and lack of rain). He provided housing, food, and education for a large number of monks, novices, nuns and lay followers. Wat Paknam's Dhamma and Pāli studies, meditation training, and support for annual examinations played an important part in upgrading Thai Buddhism. He also initiated propagation of Buddhism abroad, ordaining the first foreign monk and initiating meditation programs in England, the United States, and Japan.

The current impact of Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni's Buddha-Dhamma propagation is readily visible. People still flock to Wat Paknam. Luang Phaw's picture hangs in many restaurants and businesses. Branch temples throughout Thailand and abroad continue to spread Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni's Buddha-Dhamma propagation worldwide. His key success was renewing meditation practice in an era emphasizing academics. Samma Araham is now an accepted school of meditation in Thailand. Despite some continuing hostility, his Buddha-Dhamma propagation has been successful, because it is based on the Truth, which can be verified in personal meditation practice. Advanced practice enables seeing Heaven and Hell and the Law of Karma, as well as Nibbāna. This has a dramatic impact on practitioners, arousing them from the over indulgent consumerism rampant in today's world, and making them careful and mindful -of doing good and avoiding evil. They also spread this personal knowledge to others, who, in turn, learn to know, see and be Dhammakāya. This is propagation of the Buddha-Dhamma as taught by Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni.

1.6.1.7 Matthew Walton, Doctor of Philosophy's Dissertation 'Politics in the Moral Universe: Burmese Buddhist Political Thought', Political Science, University of Washington, 2012.

This dissertation is a work of comparative political theory that draws attention to how religious beliefs can generate fundamentally different conceptions of what is political. The researcher argues that Theravāda Buddhism is the source of the conceptual framework within which most Buddhists in Myanmar think about politics. Specifically, being embedded in the Theravāda moral conception of the universe, Burmese Buddhists understand the politics as a sphere of moral action, governed by particular rules of cause and effect. Within this framework Burmese Buddhists vary as to their interpretation of particular concepts and the degree to which they see Buddhist teachings as relevant to politics; however, the researcher demonstrates that this framework and Buddhist conceptions of politics continue to be salient for contemporary political practice in Myanmar. There are also variations between Theravāda Buddhism as it is practiced in Myanmar and in other countries, as well as important differences in interpretation and emphasis among Burmese Buddhists themselves. He examines these variations while also comparing Burmese Buddhist political thought with other religious and cultural traditions.

Buddhism in Myanmar has provided a repertoire of "raw materials" which people have used to make sense of their political environment. These include a particular conception of human nature, an understanding of the universe as governed by a law of cause and effect that works according to moral principles, a conception of human existence as fundamentally dissatisfactory, and the acceptance of a range of methods to overcome and escape its dissatisfactory

character. He explores how Burmese Buddhists have used these ideas in deploying arguments regarding the nature of politics, the proper ends of politics, alternative conceptions and methods of political participation, and a range of understandings of “democracy.” His findings not only illuminate a relatively unexamined tradition of political thought, they also help us to understand some of the challenges facing a democratic transition in contemporary Myanmar.

Conclusion Remarks of the Significant Points of Each English Thesis Review:

1. Jeffy S. Bowers analyzes the system of Dhammakāya Meditation found by Venerable Sodh Candasaro as sharing some similarity with Tibetan tantric meditation even though the evidence shows that the founder employed the Satipatthāna Sutta as his fundamental practice. Bowers explains that the Dhammakāya Meditation model focusing on images visualization is quite different from traditional Buddhist meditation system which clearly he means of what he personally encounters in the present Buddhist environment.
2. Phibul Choompolpaisal provides the theoretical debate between the views of the Temple’s insiders and outsiders and critically concludes that ‘latent factors’: an already framed view, a transfer of information and latent prejudice are the cause of interpretation conflict toward the Temple’s Cetiya that the insiders’ translation of ‘puja’ in both materialistic and religious domains transcend outsiders’ explanation of it as solely materialistic worship. His conclusion comes from the synthesis of textual analysis, theoretical evaluation and experiential knowledge.
3. Danna Marie Cook analyzes each pivotal point of controversy levelled against the Dhammakāya Temple particularly about the teaching as the competition and authoritative conflict and the Temple successfully navigates the crisis because of the mass support from its followers which outlasts the public attention. Her view is that the teaching produces nothing harmful but a catalysis for increasing growth both financial asset and human resources, and the crisis passed because the controversy dwindled on its own. The scrutiny seems phenomenological transcendent the public framed view on the issues at that moment.
4. Rory Mackenzie found that both religious movements: Dhammakāya and Santi Asoke share the same view toward their leader as being respective figure having some admiring qualities and are confident in their veracity of the model of spiritual purification. He also justifies Dhammakāya movement as fundamentalist and millenarian due to its strong focus on meditation and the belief having in their leader a savior individual. His justification is a western-Christian-oriented view in contrast to the movement presenting itself as a modern revitalized Theravada Buddhism.
5. Sally Ann McAra concludes that the stupa project demonstrates the transplantation of religious material culture and plays a constitutive role as being a contact zone between different socio-cultural domains. The builder conforms the value of this stupa to the enlightenment-oriented ideal of Buddhist modernism but appears to depart from it in pronounced emphasis on merit-making and holy object. The researcher’s view portrays the usage of revolutionary idea promoting the ancient place of pilgrimage in the new light.

6. Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon concludes that Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni's teaching is in line with the Buddha's Dhamma-Vinaya not a perversion; only that his propagating method was adapted to the need and realities of the present century. His Dhammakāya Meditation even though is not detailed in Tipitaka, is a practicing technique based on Theravāda Satipatthāna Sutta. The theme of this thesis seems to favor the meditation system verified by practitioners and the success that the meditation system achieved in renewing meditation practice in an era emphasizing academics.
7. Matthew Walton concludes that Buddhist teachings: the concept of human existence as being fundamentally dissatisfactory and the understanding of universe as being governed by the Law of Kamma including to the acceptance of moral principles and methods to overcome and escape its dissatisfactory character, are employed by Burmese Buddhists to create the sense of political environment as well as dealing with arguments and the proper ends of politics. His thesis has proven a certain extent, in actuality, the age-old Buddhist conception can be implemented in the present complexity of political practice, inferring it is capable for other social complicated challenges, as well implying the necessity of Buddhist teaching.

1.6.2 Thai Thesis

- 1.6.2.1 Phramahā Samruay Caruvanno (Bunsong), Master's Thesis 'A Study on the Effectiveness of Opening and Receiving Information about the Buddha Dhamma, in order to develop the Quality of Life and Society,' Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, B.E. 2542 (1999).

The aims of this study were to find out how effective the opening and receiving of Dhamma information for development of society and quality of life was; including the various factors in relation to it for mental development, having a part in developing the community and bringing this Dhamma information to be utilized beneficially for the social development in the future. It was found that the Buddhists proposed to have more locations for meditation practice. Monks should apply Dhamma to modern day living and to be more interesting to people of all levels. Dhamma programs should be promoted on radio and television. The news on monks should be presented more appropriately in order to convey their good image. After each section of Dhamma preaching, there should be a segment of time for questions and answers provided for the Buddhists.

- 1.6.2.2 Phramahā Sawai Chotiko (Tamna), Master's Thesis 'A Critical Study of the Concept of Dhammakāya in Buddhism', Buddhist Studies, Graduate School, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, B.E. 2542 (1999).

The purpose of this thesis was to survey, compile and study the similarity and differences of the concept of Dhammakāya based on the Pāli Tipitaka, the commentaries (Atthakathā), Mahāyāna Sutras and the teachings of the Most Venerable Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni (Sodh Candasaro). The research discovered that Dhammakāya was a name of the Buddha who was the center of Dhamma according to the Tipitaka and Commentary of Theravāda Buddhism. In the sense of Theravāda, Dhammakāya consisted of the nine supramundane states, namely the Four Paths, the Four Fruits and Nibbāna. Nibbāna had three characteristics i.e. niccam (permanence), sukham (bliss), anattā (Non-self), and could be attained

by following the Threefold Training. Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni (Sodh Candasaro) defined Dhammakāya as a name of the Buddha and at the same time was one of the many bodies of man. Dhammakāya was considered to be beyond the scope of the three characteristics; it was unconditioned: *niccama* (permanent), *sukhama* (blissful), and *attā* (self). This study concluded that Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni's interpretation seemed to be his own personal view which was not found in the texts of Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism.

- 1.6.2.3 Phramahā Thammajariya Khruangthip, Master Thesis 'The Role of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam Foundation and the Assistance of Social Development', Rural Development Studies, Graduate School, Mahidol University, B.E. 2542 (1999).

The purpose of this study was to study the role of Luang Phaw Wat Paknam Foundation in promoting social development, Buddhism and Wat Paknam. The interest earned from the capital of this Foundation was used to support and develop the temple and the communities according to the objective of the Foundation. The study designated that this foundation had its ideology, format and ideology to promote social development, Buddhism and its own welfare by utilizing the principles appropriately. The fulfillment of Social assistance included: (1) Personnel Administration, (2) Common Resources, (3) Development Assistance, and (4) Evaluation. The Managing Administration was in a family-style. Everyone worked for this foundation based on faith in Luang Phaw Wat Paknam and the will to work for Buddhism without expecting anything in return.

- 1.6.2.4 Wiroj Nakchatri, Master Thesis 'The Belief of Buddhists and Christians in Miracles. A Case Study at Wat Paknam and Jai Samarn Full Gospel Church', Comparative Religion, Graduate School, Mahidol University, B.E. 2536 (1993).

The purpose of this research was to compare the belief of Buddhists and Christians in miracles. This research summarized that only 14 percent of Buddhists went to Wat Paknam on 'Wan Phra'. Only 14.1 percent of Buddhists went to listen to Buddhist teaching, but 50.5 percent went for merit-making. The Buddhists of 50.8 percent believed in Buddha's miracles and 59 percent believed in Luang Phaw Wat Paknam's miracles, 89.9 percent obtained what they wish by praying to Luang Phaw Wat Paknam.

- 1.6.2.5 Miss Sujitra Poonpiphat, Master Thesis 'The Role of Wat Phra Dhammakāya in Contemporary Thai Society' Graduate School, Krirk University, 1996.

The study of 'The Role of Wat Phra Dhammakāya in the Contemporary Thai Society' aims to explore the development of Wat Phra Dhammakāya which is a fast-growing religious institution in the present Thai society. The role of Wat Phra Dhammakāya in the current mainstream of Thai society, its administration system and its different forms of activities for public. The method of study is based primarily on documentary research by analyzing related materials. Moreover, an opinion survey of some visitors by using questionnaire included as supplementary data.

The results of the study are as follows:

1. Wat Phra Dhammakāya is founded by the disciples and the faithfuls of Venerable Mongkaladevamuni (Luang Phaw Wat Pak Nam, Bhasi Charoen). Firstly, it was located on 80-acre (196 rai) plot of land and later extended to 900 – acre (2,000 rai) Dhutangasathana.
2. Wat Phra Dhammakāya emphasizes its organizational establishment according to the governmental as well as the Sangha rules. It also disseminates Buddhism in an advancing way with various projects, for example: the Summer Dhammadāyāda Ordination Training Course and the Dhutanga Meditation Course which draw a large number of people on a vast piece of land.
3. Wat Phra Dhammakāya is developing Buddhism to a new direction by applying new technology and modern management to help disseminate Buddhism.
4. Wat Phra Dhammakāya attracts a lot of Buddhist of both sexes and all ages by introducing steps in meditation practices in accordance with nowadays needs of the Thai society. The practices are easily made applicable to everyday-life problems.
5. Wat Phra Dhammakāya offers many program activities which are helpful toward the improvement in the present Thai society. Most activities draw a large number of participants. Therefore, it gains great popularity through mass media which follows the Wat's activities and presents them to a wider public.

- 1.6.2.6 Charoon Somnoi, Master Thesis 'A Teaching of Pervasion (Vipalasa) in Buddhism: A case study of a teaching of Dhammakāya Monastery', Comparative Religion, Mahidol University, B.E. 2543 (2000).

This research analyzed the teaching of Dhammakāya and the teaching of perversion (vipalasa) in Buddhism. Dhammakāya illustrated that Nibbāna was the state of Attā (self), permanence, stability, immortality and eternity. Attā (Self) lived in heaven (Ayatananibbāna). It was concluded that Dhammakāya's concept of Nibbāna was a perversion in Buddhism because it conflicted with the principle of Buddha's teaching that all conditioned things were non-permanent, changing all the time, suffering and non-self. All dhamma is without Attā. Therefore, the teaching of the Dhammakāya School, that Dhammakāya is a state of permanent happiness and Attā, was classified as perversion in Buddhism.

- 1.6.2.7 Phra Mahā, Santhiti Visudhved, Master's Thesis 'The Comparative Study of Theravāda and Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Methods: A Case Study at Wat Paknam and Dhammasala (India), Comparative Religion, Graduate School, Mahidol University, B.E. 2543 (2000).

This study discovered that the methodology of Wat Pak Nam included both concentration and insight meditation and taught according to the Theravāda Pāli Canon and its' commentaries. The teaching was the use of the Aloka Kasina together with recollection of the Buddha and mindfulness of breathing in order to refine the mind until attaining jhāna (absorption), and then contemplated upon the body in the body onwards from the human body to the refined Dhammakāya body. The insight meditation attained at the Dhammakāya level was to contemplate phenomena according to dhamma.

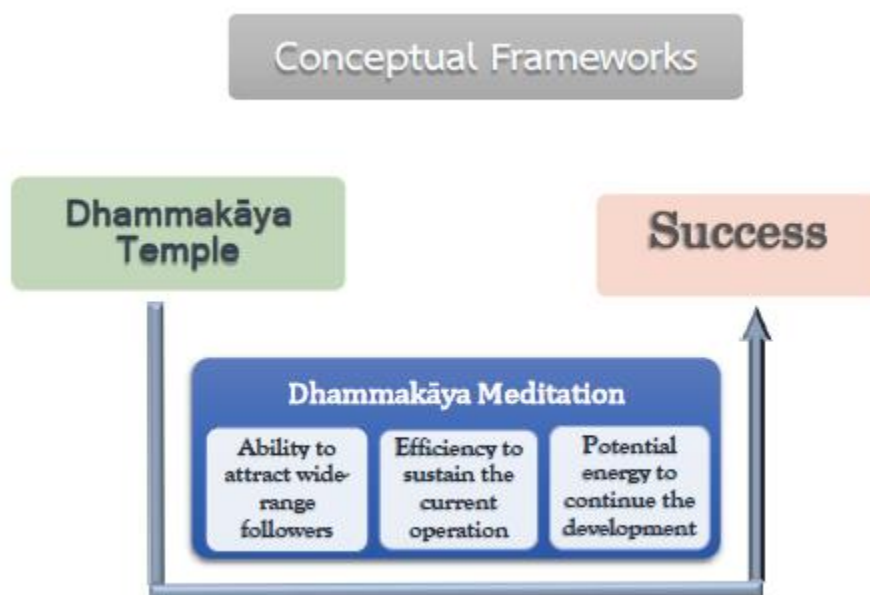
Conclusion Remarks of the Significant Points of Each Thai Thesis Review:

1. Phramahā Samruay Caruvanno found that Buddhists still open to the reception of Dhamma information and seeking the Dhamma teachings which can apply to modern day living of all ages and levels. To ensure the adequate understanding, each sermon session should include a segment of Q&A at the end. His fact finding implies that Dhamma teaching is something the present society sought after in order to offer solace to the newly acquired hectic working-life angst.
2. Phramahā Sawai Chotiko found that Dhammakāya bodies in the concept of Dhammakāya Tradition, based on the interpretation from meditation practice, is considered beyond the government of the Three Characteristics; the idea is not found in the texts of Theravada and Mahāyāna Buddhism. Apparently, this study is the utilization of the limited textual survey to analyze the Dhammakāya inner bodies, which is evident that some occurrences missed out and some significant aspects not yet touched upon. Previous scholars have done excellent works on this aspect which mostly in relation to the notion in Mahāyāna Buddhism, and only few links to Pāli cannon: Agganna passage but its usages have not been studied in details. Thus a further close textual examination is beneficial.
3. Phramahā Thammajariya designates Luang Phaw Wat Paknam Foundation has its ideology and format to promote social development, Buddhism and its own welfare by utilizing: personal administration, common resources, development assistance and evaluation. It demonstrates after the Times of Venerable Sodh Candasaro, the present abbot can mobilize monks and layman to put concerted effort in working for the spiritual and material welfares of people living in a cluster of villages around the Temple and the Temple itself.
4. Wiroj Nakchatri studies the belief of miracle; in the case of Paknam Temple, survey record said Buddhists believe in Buddha miracles 50.8% as well as miracles surrounding the prominent monk: Luang Phaw Wat Paknam 59% including 89.9% obtained what they wish by praying to Luang Phaw Wat Paknam. Miracle is something never fail to attract people attention even though Venerable Candasaro himself often states that anybody who has had the chance to study the nature of miracles will realize that they are just an ordinary byproduct of meditation practice and visualization; and insisted that he never wanted anyone to focus on the miracles but instead always encouraged the aim of reaching Nibbāna.
5. Miss Sujitra Poonpiphat's conclusion reflects a certain extent of limitation in the presentation of the role of Dhammakāya Temple which excludes some negative feedbacks made against the Temple's contribution generated from social jealousy, hostile feelings, misinterpretation as well as the inefficiency in conveying the correct message of the Temple itself. With the respect to the research approach, the fact finding in spite of disfavor, resulting from the neutral transcendent-prejudice-framed-view analysis armed by the feasible suggestions would render excitement to the Temple to push forward its limit to the new level, if not, the least to safeguard its present foremost standing.
6. Charoon Somnoi concludes that all Dhamma is without attā; therefore Dhammakāya is a state of permanent happiness hence attā was classified as perversion in Buddhism. This problematic issue visibly seems to continue gaining the heated and wide-ranging debate whenever it is raised and will probably ever find the mutual satisfactory

conclusion as long as debaters adopt the dogmatic stance toward the scrutiny: one in textual perspective, the other experimental basis. But we can be optimistic that the issue will cause a resurgence of Buddhist practice reenergizing the Buddhist sentiments among many Thais.

7. Phramahā Santhiti Visudhved discovers that the methodology of Wat Paknam included both concentration and insight meditation and taught according to the Theravada Pāli Canon and its commentaries. Textual analysis of the issue when is filtered through different layers of gathered data and etymological study can often produce ensuing problematic argument as one research found the method a deviant form of Buddhism contaminating the Buddha's teachings, the other intend to challenge the legitimacy of the claim.

1.7 Conceptual Framework



1.8 Methodology of Research

The methodology of this thesis is based on the qualitative type. The instrument employed to collect the essential and related data is primarily documentary research, with first-hand participant and non-participant observation. And this thesis conducts the data based on analytical method.

1.8.1 Data collection

- Literature review of the origin, the background, the mission, the vision, the meditation teaching and the development of Dhammakāya Temple from the Temple's publications, materials and media.
- Literature review of books, journals and articles related to Dhammakāya Temple and its teaching of meditation technique written by various authors.
- Collection of the first-hand in-depth information/data of the Dhamma courses and meditation retreats organized by Dhammakāya Temple.

- Collection of related information/data through close observation of the Temple's Dhamma and meditation propagating savvy throughout the duration of time working full-time in the Temple.

1.8.2 Data analysis

- The analysis of the rise and success of Dhammakāya Temple through the utilization of Dhammakāya meditation practice to appeal to the respective target groups, through explicitly discussing various points of public controversy from different standpoints of emic and etic.
- The evaluation of Dhammakāya Meditation system of practice to render a complete understanding on how it has efficiently sustained its popularity among its members and given the Temple a potential energy to create the futuristic development view and plan through the theme of theoretical approaches in regard of deprivation, the Temple's aims, views and roles.

1.9 Expected Findings and Advantage of the Study

- 1.9.1 To gain the broader dimension into describing and comprehending the background and the vision of Dhammakāya Temple and its model of meditation practice which are unique enough to make the Temple stand apart from mainstream Thai Buddhism while still remaining a part of it.
- 1.9.2 To understand the successful factors of Dhammakāya Temple in providing the meditation practice and in recruiting prominent members which builds the wide-scale Dhammakāya meditator network and generates mass volunteering and the financial support that the Temple currently enjoys and makes the most advantage out of them to continue the success of the Temple into the future.
- 1.9.3 To benefit scholars and other new religious movements both within Buddhism and outside Buddhism to understand on how to navigate their tradition without compromising their core values.