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SECTION VI

THE PASSING OF  
BUDDHADASA BHIKKHU



# BUDDHADASA BHIKKHU— HIS LAST DAYS AND HIS LEGACY<sup>1</sup>

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## THE PASSING OF BUDDHADASA BHIKKHU<sup>2</sup>

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu passed away just after 11.00 A.M. on 8 July 1993 at his forest monastery of Suan Mokkh or Wat Than Nam Lai in Surat Thani Province, southern Thailand. However, many of his lay and clerical followers believed that the reverend monk had in fact passed away several weeks before his physical death, soon after he suffered a severe stroke on the morning of 25 May 1993, and that only intensive medical intervention had delayed his inevitable passing. In the weeks between late May and early July 1993 the medical treatment provided to the comatose Buddhadasa and debate on the issue of the right to die became focuses of public debate in Thailand. The intensity of feelings generated can be gauged from comments made by one of Buddhadasa's Western clerical followers, Santikaro Bhikkhu (1993, 125), who described the efforts to keep Buddhadasa alive after his stroke as "a tragedy of a confused, commercialised, unnatural, and overly politicised medical system."<sup>3</sup>

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu proved to be almost as great an object of controversy in his passing as he had been while in command of his faculties. In here tracing events from the onset of Buddhadasa's final illness to his cremation on 28 September 1993, I record the efforts of the revered monk and his devout followers to ensure that the manner of his death and the disposal of his physical remains accorded with the principles that he had espoused and lived by during the more than sixty years he had been an ordained monk.

### Buddhadasa's Final Illness—Suan Mokkh and Surat Thani

The Thai press reported that in the weeks before his fatal stroke Buddhadasa had become tired of living with failing health and often remarked that his period of useful time in this life had passed. *Matichon Weekly* (16 July 1993, p. 75) reported that since the end of the *phansa* rains retreat the previous year, Buddhadasa's discourses had increasingly dealt with the topic of *nibbana*. A

female lay follower, *Pa* Lamon Khemnak, reported to the magazine *Chiwit Torng Su* (17–23 July 1993, p. 4) that on the day before his stroke Buddhadasa had said to her:

The Lord Buddha attained *nibbana* when he was 80. I'm already 87. I don't know why I'm still alive. It's not good to live longer than the Buddha<sup>4</sup> ... My eyes are really blurred. The doctor says that blood vessels in my brain are constricted.

On 25 May 1993 Buddhadasa woke at his usual rising time of 4.00 A.M. and for a few minutes he wrote notes for a discourse to be given on his eighty-seventh birthday in a couple of days' time. But he told his attendant that he felt ill and returned to bed.<sup>5</sup> A couple of hours later Buddhadasa told the abbot of Suan Mokkh, Phra Khru Palad Silawatn (commonly known as Acharn Poh Jantasaro), that he was afraid his "old ailment was coming back." Not long afterwards he said, "I can't say anything. My tongue is getting hard." Buddhadasa's speech became increasingly indistinct in the following period, but he continued making an effort to talk. *Matichon Weekly* (16 July 1993, p. 75) reported his final words before he became unconscious as follows:

His final words that could be understood were a recounting of the *Nibbana Sutta*, '*na pathavi na apo na tejo na vayo ... [no earth, no water, no fire, no wind ... ]*'.<sup>6</sup> He repeated this again and again. In addition he also said, 'I don't feel that it's me (*mai ru-su'k pen tua ku*)', '[There is] no gain and no loss (*mai buak mai lop*)', 'Peace (*santiphap*)', 'Well being (*santisuk*)'.<sup>7</sup>

Buddhadasa then fell into a coma from which he never regained full consciousness. The supervising doctor at Suan Mokkh diagnosed that Buddhadasa had probably suffered a stroke and recommended that he be taken to Surat Thani Hospital for a CAT scan. At the hospital it was determined that he had suffered bleeding in the left hemisphere of the brain and he was

admitted to the intensive care unit and placed on a saline drip. Buddhadasa's condition gradually worsened on that day, with bronchial congestion and increasing weakness on the right side of his body.

On 27 May Buddhadasa was placed on an artificial respirator after the intervention of a doctor from Bangkok. Buddhadasa's followers became concerned about the quality of treatment he was receiving after this intervention, as before his final illness Buddhadasa had indicated that when he became severely ill and the time of his passing approached he did not want to be attached to any life-prolonging medical equipment. In the event, he remained attached to a respirator from 27 May to his death on 8 July. Later on the afternoon of 27 May, a group of seventeen of his close associates and relatives led by the abbot of Wat Chulprathan Rangsit, Phra Panyananda Bhikkhu, decided that it would be appropriate to bring the comatose Buddhadasa back to Suan Mokkh, to accord with his often-stated wish to die there. He was brought back to Suan Mokkh at 5.00 P.M. on that day and put to bed in his own room. From Buddhadasa's unconscious condition when he returned, his closest followers believed that "he had already passed away."

### King Bhumibol's Concern and the Move to Siriraj Hospital

Over the years Buddhadasa's health had been an object of concern to King Bhumibol. Santikaro (1993, 125) reports that after Buddhadasa suffered a heart attack in October 1991 the King requested of the revered monk, "Don't let the body cease just yet; please remain to teach the Thai people a while longer." At that time the King also ordered first class medical care to be made available to Buddhadasa. King Bhumibol had been particularly concerned by the reports of Buddhadasa's stroke, and at his request a Royal Thai Air Force plane was prepared at the Surat Thani air base to take Buddhadasa to Bangkok for treatment at Siriraj Hospital.

On 28 May a group of more than twenty of Buddhadasa's clerical and lay followers headed by Phra Panyananda reviewed the medical prognosis on Buddhadasa's condition and considered King Bhumibol's offer of assistance. In particular, the meeting discussed a Bangkok neurologist's proposal that Buddhadasa be transferred to Siriraj Hospital. A majority, but not all, of this group agreed to let the neurologist and his superiors take Buddhadasa to Bangkok for treatment. This decision was taken after the neurologist assured the group that Buddhadasa's condition could improve if he were given the proper treatment. The doctor argued that Buddhadasa's condition was treatable, taking the fact that he had responded to touch and squeezed the hand of Phra Panyananda as indications that he might be able to regain consciousness. The Siriraj doctor also promised the group that Buddhadasa's treatment would not involve surgery and that if his condition deteriorated severely he would be brought back in time to die at Suan Mokkh as he had wished. Buddhadasa was transferred to Siriraj Hospital on 29 May.

Buddhadasa had maintained that Buddhism teaches not to unnecessarily prolong life, and that when it becomes clear that death is inevitable "nature should be the doctor." (*Siam Rath Weekly*, 20–26 June 1993, p. 16) However, Buddhadasa's illness polarized thought on how his condition should be treated. Many of his clerical and lay supporters believed that Buddhadasa was on the point of death and intensive medical intervention was pointless and would only delay the inevitable. But some doctors at Siriraj Hospital believed that Buddhadasa could respond to treatment and regain consciousness if administered with the latest medical technology. The heated public dispute over Buddhadasa's treatment led to calls in the Thai press for legal and ethical consideration of the issues surrounding the right to die, "so that the conflicts such as those that occurred in the case of Buddhadasa are brought to an end." (*ibid.* p. 17)

Dr. Prawase Wasi, a prominent lay follower of Buddhadasa and an eminent physician, added a philosophical element to the debate. Three weeks before Buddhadasa's physical death Dr. Prawase wrote in *Matichon Weekly* (18 June 1993, p. 10) that "Buddhadasa 'died' long ago," meaning that he had died to all attachments to this life and to "I" and "mine" (Thai: *ku, khornng ku*). In arguing that Buddhadasa should be taken off life-supporting equipment and allowed to die naturally, Dr. Prawase cited a poem by Buddhadasa titled "Buddhadasa Will Not Die" (*Phutthathat Jak Mai Tay*)<sup>8</sup> that indicated the revered monk had no fear of acknowledging his mortality. Dr. Prawase also noted that it is his personal policy as a medical doctor not to unnecessarily "prolong death," saying,

In a society that is irrationally afraid of death they will use various technological methods to prolong death. On precisely this point one group uses a completely opposite term, they call it 'prolonging life' ... (*ibid.*)

Despite earlier promises that Buddhadasa would not be operated on, a tracheostomy was performed on 27 June and he received the first of several blood transfusions the following day. Buddhadasa's condition then deteriorated rapidly. In succession his kidneys failed, a blood vessel burst in his stomach and his heart began palpitating. A Swan-Ganz catheter was inserted through a vein in his right wrist, up the arm and to the heart in order to monitor blood flow and pressure. On 1 July Buddhadasa was given a kidney dialysis and another blood transfusion. On the night of 7 July he was diagnosed as having septicemia.

Early on the morning of 8 July 1993 the supervising doctors at Siriraj Hospital agreed that death was imminent and informed his relatives and closest followers. Buddhadasa was then returned to Surat Thani Airport by a Royal Thai Air Force C-130 plane, arriving at 10.08 A.M. He arrived at Suan Mokkh 35 minutes later. At 11.10 A.M. Phra Khru Palad Silawatt announced over a loudspeaker that Buddhadasa had passed away peacefully. After his death Buddhadasa's dhamma tapes were played over the loudspeaker at Suan Mokkh and the market

place at Chaiya, his birthplace, "as if he were still alive." (*Siam Rath Weekly*, 18–24 July 1993, p. 11) At 12.00 midday on 8 July Buddhadasa's will was opened and read at Suan Mokkh.

### Buddhadasa's Will

On 28 March 1993, just under two months before his fatal stroke, Buddhadasa had made a will (*phinaykam*) at Suan Mokkh in the presence of three male witnesses, including his nephew, Dr. Wijan Phanit, and Professor Chitti Tingsabadh, a Privy Councillor. In this document he specified arrangements for the disposal of his remains upon his death.<sup>9</sup> Buddhadasa indicated that he wanted his funeral to be conducted in accord with the principles by which he had lived. He was concerned to ensure that no elaborate cremation ceremony be performed and that none of the superstitious rituals that he had criticized all his adult life be conducted over his remains.

In his will Buddhadasa specified that before cremation his body should be kept in a tightly closed coffin which should not be opened for viewing and that there should be no sprinkling of holy water nor any ceremonial recitation of prayers (*suat mon*) over his body. He also requested that after cremation his ashes should be divided into three portions and scattered at three locations: in the sea at Chong Ang Thorng, off the northern islands of the Ang Thorng Peninsula in Surat Thani Province; on the waters at the source of the Tapi River on Khaw Sok Mountain in Surat Thani's Phanom District; and at Khaw Prasong Mountain in Tha Chana District of Surat Thani.

Wanaprat (1994, 37) says that Buddhadasa wanted his ashes to be dispersed because "he did not want anyone to keep anything [of his remains] except the *dhamma* that he had taught throughout his life." In an interview with *Siam Rath Weekly* (18–24 July 1993, p. 11) Phra Khru Palad Silawatn surmised that Buddhadasa wanted some of his ashes spread at Khaw Prasong because his mother's and father's remains were interred there, and that mountain can be seen in the distance from Suan Mokkh. As for the other two locations, Phra Silawatn noted that they are places that many people travel to visit, and spreading Buddhadasa's ashes at the source of the Tapi River, for example, would be as if

he wanted the *dhamma* and his teachings to spread out like the flowing [Tapi] river that passes by so many places over the whole region of what was once the greatness of the Kingdom of Srivijaya, which was a centre of religion, art and culture.

On the evening of 8 July, in accord with his stated wishes, Buddhadasa's body was interred in a wooden coffin and placed in a newly constructed building behind the Sala Dhammaghosana building at Suan Mokkh. At this simple ceremony Phra Panyananda said, "From this moment forward Buddhadasa will live in all our hearts, may we all continue to perform our duty [to the *dhamma*] in his place." (*ibid.*) Phra Panyananda went on to explain that Buddhadasa did not want Pāli incantations chanted over his body because, "the people

who listen [to Pāli] can't understand it. The person who chants doesn't translate the meaning for us to hear. He [Buddhadasa] wanted to reform the way we make merit." (*ibid.*)

Soon after Buddhadasa's death it was announced publicly that his funeral would take place on 27 May 1994, which would have been his 88th birthday, and that the cremation would be broadcast live on national TV. But Buddhadasa's funeral was in fact brought forward to 28 September 1993. Phra Silawatn later said that the cremation was brought forward to comply with Buddhadasa's wishes that his funeral be simple and because in the two months after his death almost a hundred thousand people had visited Suan Mokkh to pay their respects to Buddhadasa's remains. Phra Silawatn said that if he had waited until May 1994 to conduct the cremation the expected crush of people would have caused severe logistical problems for Suan Mokkh.

September 28 was "Paying Respects to Than Acharn [Buddhadasa] Day" (*Wan Tham Wat Than Ajan*), a day when Buddhadasa's followers traditionally visited Suan Mokkh to pay their respects. After Buddhadasa's death the name of this day was changed to "Visiting Suan Mokkh Day" (*Wan Yiam Suan Mok*). While the cremation had not been pre-announced, many followers and admirers of Buddhadasa were present, including Phra Panyananda, Dr. Prawase Wasi, Major-General Chamlong Srimuang and Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai. Phra Panyananda was the first to light the pyre and Wanaprat (1994, 37) reports that during the cremation a tape that Buddhadasa had pre-recorded for the occasion was played over loudspeakers. On this tape Buddhadasa admonished those present not to remiss in their spiritual practice, adding that he had once been like all those who were at that moment sitting in front of the blazing funeral pyre, and that one day everyone will certainly be as he is now. A policeman stood guard over the remains during the night as the ashes cooled in order to prevent theft.

## BUDDHADASA BHIKKHU'S LEGACY FOR THAI BUDDHISTS

In speaking to the *Nation Weekly* (1–7 October 1993, p. 11) after Buddhadasa's death, Dr. Prawase Wasi said "Buddhadasa's teachings are something that will never die. They are eternal and lasting, and so that is the same thing as Buddhadasa still being alive." But writing several years before Buddhadasa's death, Louis Gabaude<sup>10</sup> (1990a, 215) maintained that, compared with traditional interpretations of the religion, Buddhadasa's demythologized Buddhism has two major deficiencies. First, it does not satisfy the need for consolation that many people seek from religion; and second, the excision of the supernatural aspects of Buddhism could cut Buddhadasa's interpretation of the religion off from its popular roots. Gabaude (1990a, 226) concluded:

If Buddhadasa was teaching just for an elite like he [said he] did in the [nineteen] forties, there would be no problem. He has his elite of followers. Let it be. The

problem arises when this elite pretends to change popular and general Buddhist habits in Thailand.

Between Prawase's eulogy of hope and Gabaude's qualified appraisal of the likely future influence of Buddhadasa's ideas in Thailand, how are we to assess the intellectual legacy of the man? I think this is best done if we consider separately Buddhadasa's significance for his supporters among the Thai intelligentsia, and the relationship between Buddhadasa's rationalized Buddhism and the traditional forms of religious belief and practice in Thailand. The disparity between Prawase's and Gabaude's comments reflects the inevitable difference in viewpoint that will exist between an enthusiastic supporter of reformed Buddhism in Thailand and an external observer of the manifold forms of that religion.

### Buddhadasa and Thai Buddhist Identity in the Era of Globalization

Buddhadasa's legacy is not limited to his reforms of Buddhist doctrine. In Thailand Buddhadasa's intellectual legacy extends beyond religion and his ideas have had an impact on Thai intellectual culture as a whole, contributing to a growing spirit of reform in many areas of Thai social life including politics and the economy. Since the 1970s Buddhadasa has been especially influential in what Jim Taylor (1993a, 4) calls "counter-hegemonic" political movements in Thailand; that is, pro-democratic and anti-military groups that support political decentralization and the empowerment of marginalised sections of Thai society. On this point, Santikaro (private correspondence) observes:

Ajarn Buddhadasa has always been one of the main guides and inspirations [of reform-minded Thais]. Even former students who spent time in the forest with the CPT [Communist Party of Thailand] testify to this.

In recent years Buddhadasa has been an important influence on the Thai environmental movement. The former clerical activist Phra Prajak Khuttajitto has been one of the most prominent figures in this movement in recent years. Taylor (1993a: 4) observes:

Phutthathat has been an immense influence on many clerical and secular Buddhist activists in the past three decades, including Prajak, especially in his notion of a grassroots "socialism" (*sangkhomniyom*) inherent in the teachings of the Buddha ... Essential to this philosophy is the need for living a simple and moderate life in harmony with nature. This conflicts radically with the Western notions of modernisation, social and economic achievement, and individual and national progress embedded in capitalist development theories.

In reviewing my 1989 book, *Buddhism, Legitimation and Conflict*, Suwantha Satha-Anand (1990, 107) criticized my proposition

that Buddhadasa has provided ideological support for the development of Thai capitalism. However, Suwantha mistakes the anti-capitalist content of Buddhadasa's writings for the effect that his life work has had upon social and political discourse in Thailand. While it is true that Buddhadasa's work does not in itself support the materialistic values of capitalism, some Thais have interpreted his rationalist account of Buddhism as supporting modernisation and capitalist development in Thailand. Some revisionist interpreters such as Chokechai Sutthawet (1993) read Buddhadasa as providing a Buddhist basis for the rationalization of the Thai bureaucracy, polity and economy, conditions that they regard as important requirements for the further development of Thailand's capitalist economy.

Chokechai in particular has extended Buddhadasa's religious reforms into a broad-based critique and "radical reform" of traditional Thai values in order to develop a Thai Buddhist basis for the country's integration into the global economy and culture. While Chokechai's views are not representative of the majority of Buddhadasa's followers, they do show how the reverend monk's ideas were being taken up in the 1990s and why Buddhadasa is likely to have a lasting impact on Thai intellectual life.

Chokechai begins his consideration of Buddhadasa's ideas by asserting that Thais should emulate the struggle for "rationality" in the history of Western culture, especially in uprooting irrationality from religion. He compares Buddhadasa to John Calvin, who, he says, "released people from the yoke of the Catholic distortion [of Christianity] ... and permitted people to approach God directly without needing the intercession of a priest." Chokechai presents a strong version of the Weberian thesis that posits a historical relationship between Protestantism and the rise of capitalism, saying that the Protestant reformation in Northern and Central Europe "(unintentionally!) helped the capitalist style of economy develop and grow quickly" (1993, 34).

Chokechai maintains that Buddhism is a highly rational religion, as evidenced by the Buddha's directives in the *Kalama Sutta*,<sup>11</sup> but adds that many Thais are still steeped in religious irrationality. He attributes this irrationality to Phya Lithai's medieval text, the *Traiphum Phra Ruang*,<sup>12</sup> making the unfavorable comparison that Lithai was compiling the "irrational" *Traiphum* at the same time that European thinkers were reforming their own religion in the light of reason.

Reflecting on Buddhadasa's intellectual impact in Thailand, Chokechai states that his legacy is a "method of radical reform" (*witthi kan-patirup yang thu'ng rak-ngaw*) that can be applied to any context, and which has the capacity to effect significant change in Thai society and culture. According to Chokechai (1993, 35), the effectiveness of Buddhadasa's method of radical reform depends only on the extent to which it is applied in practice:

It has been said that [Protestant] Christianity in Europe gave capitalist development there a special difference from capitalism in other regions of the world. But whether Buddhadasa's rationalist reform of Buddhism will have

an impact on economic, political, social and cultural development and on conservation of the environment in Thai society depends on the extent to which Thai people or Buddhists practise the principles of religion and religious ethics in their everyday life and work.

Chokechai adds that those people who apply this rational understanding of Buddhism in their everyday life and strive to improve Thai society "are the hope of Thai society!" (1993, 35) He characterizes the reason espoused by those he calls "the hope of Thai society" in the following ways. First, rationality denotes "self-realisation and self-understanding, broad critical insight (*wijan-yan rorp-khorp*), the capacity to anticipate events and ... to free oneself from habit." (ibid.) Second, Chokechai maintains that reason is not only a property of Western culture, but is also a fundamental characteristic of the true core (*kaen thae*) of Buddhism that Buddhadasa revealed to be "a function of Thai indigenous knowledge (*phumi-panya*)" (ibid.) He says "we should divest ourselves of attachment [to the idea] that reason is a property of Westerners but not of Easterners." (ibid.) And third, Chokechai believes that the reason which Buddhadasa revealed to lie at the core of Thai Buddhist culture is the same reason that has driven historical advances in Western societies and which is at the root of the process of globalization (*lokanuwat* or *lokaphiwat*) in which, Chokechai maintains, the divisions between East and West are being replaced by a unified global culture.

To summarize, Chokechai identifies reason as the key feature of the emerging global economic and cultural culture. And he locates this reason, which is capable of effecting economic, political, social and cultural transformation, as existing in the core of Thai Buddhist culture. Following this argument, it is therefore possible for Thailand to participate in the global culture of reason on an equal footing with the West. In other words, it is possible for Thailand to move forward from its own Buddhist cultural roots and embrace the global culture of reason while still remaining characteristically Thai. In Chokechai's hands Buddhadasa's ideas are used, on the one hand, to support Thai cultural irredentism and nationalism and, on the other hand, to support Thailand's integration into the global economic and cultural order. Significantly, in this account Thailand's "globalisation" is not only considered possible without the loss of Thai cultural identity but is also represented as a return to the rational roots of Thai Buddhist culture.

The double-edged thrust of Chokechai's account, simultaneously looking inward to Thailand's past and outward to the modern global economic order, derives from the twofold movement of Buddhadasa's thought. This twofold movement involves opening up to the powerful world of ideas outside Thailand while at the same time reaffirming the fundamental place of Buddhism and Buddhist identity in Thailand. One of Buddhadasa's most important legacies to Thai Buddhists is that he has provided an intellectual framework that simultaneously affords the security of affirming the lasting value of Thailand's cultural past while challenging his compatriots to face the outside world head on.

### Buddhadasa and Political Dissent in Thailand

Still, Chokechai's rosy views on the impact of globalisation on Thailand are not shared by all of Buddhadasa's followers, and Santikaro Bhikkhu (personal correspondence) believes that Chokechai has "wandered quite far from Ajarn Buddhadasa's message." Presenting an analysis similar to that developed by Taylor and Suwanna, Santikaro says,

Tan Ajarn [Buddhadasa] never argued for the integration of Thailand into the global economy. Rather, his criticisms of materialism, consumerism, and capitalism—as well as Marxism—should lead thoughtful readers to think of getting disentangled from the global economy ... Tan Ajarn is highly critical of the capitalist project and the unbridled individualism and selfishness it has fostered.

The conflicting pro- and anti-capitalist readings of Buddhadasa show that it is not possible to characterize his intellectual impact in Thailand in terms of a single, neatly definable political position.

Taylor (1993a, 4, 35) states that the "activist theological orientation" of Buddhadasa's supporters in Thailand is "decisively counterhegemonic," but he describes only one thrust of this activist Buddhist ideology, namely, grassroots environmental activism. Buddhadasa was consistently counterhegemonic, to use Taylor's term, but there have been numerous sites of political opposition in Thailand in the 1990s, not all of whose interests have coincided. One tendency amongst the counterhegemonic groups that look to Buddhadasa is indeed anti-centrist and pro-local, and supports the interests of the uneducated poor against the interests of the political and economic center. But another tendency is pro-democratic and anti-military, and supports the interests of the educated professional and commercial Thai middle class, which is now increasingly a part of the political and economic center of the country that stands in opposition to the urban and rural poor. There is thus a significant disjuncture in the political usages to which Buddhadasa's ideas are now applied in Thailand which has developed in parallel with shifts in the site and nature of political opposition in Thailand in recent decades.

In the 1970s and early 1980s key sites of opposition to state authority were among the educated middle class who struggled against entrenched bureaucratic and military power. At that time sections of the middle class turned to Buddhadasa for a Buddhist basis for democracy and the rationalization of Thai social and economic life. Chokechai represents a recent development of this middle class appreciation of Buddhadasa. However, with recent rapid economic growth and a widening income gap between rich and poor, sites of political opposition have arisen among the urban and rural poor, and Buddhadasa's ideas have also been appropriated by representatives of these marginalised groups and by the Thai environmental movement in order to support anti-capitalist grassroots activism. In this context, the increasingly wealthy middle class is now more and

more a part of the Thai economic and political establishment that stands in opposition to the poor majority of the Thai population. Indeed, some members of the middle class who support the earlier, rationalist, anti-military forms of activism based on Buddhadasa's ideas are now likely to be among the capitalists opposed by the NGOs and grass-root activists who also look to Buddhadasa for inspiration.

### Buddhadasa and Traditional Buddhism

But Buddhadasa is not only popular among those Thais who see themselves as being opposed to the political and economic establishment. He has also achieved prominence among many apolitical Thais who remain attached to the traditional forms of Buddhism that Buddhadasa criticized. There is an apparent contradiction here. For even though Buddhadasa was radically opposed to the religion that many Thais still seek security from, he nevertheless achieved the status of a Buddhist intellectual guru among those who follow the traditional forms of Buddhism. This was evidenced by the intensive press and media coverage of his final illness.

How is it that Buddhadasa became so popular in Thailand? There appear to be at least two reasons. First, the influence of Buddhadasa's rationalized Buddhism has now spread to sections of Thai society outside the educated middle class, his most important early audience. The already-noted concern of King Bhumibol for Buddhadasa's health in 1991 and 1993 indicates that his ideas now receive official approval and support in Thailand.<sup>13</sup> But it is also true that as Buddhadasa's reputation as a revered monk has spread he has been incorporated within the traditional patterns of religious belief still adhered to by many Thai Buddhists. The name and fame of Buddhadasa are now known much more widely than his ideas, and he has become increasingly popular because many traditional Thai Buddhists regard him the same way they regard other revered monks, as a source of sacral supernatural power.

### Buddhadasa and the Thai Monarchy

On page 256 of my book, *Buddhadasa—A Buddhist Thinker for the Modern World* (1988), I say that by de-emphasizing *kamma* and the related notion of merit in his teachings, Buddhadasa has undermined Theravada Buddhism's historical function of legitimating the monarchy and centralist political institutions in Thailand. However, in the 1990s the legitimating relationship between Buddhism and other important Thai institutions such as the state and the monarchy was changing, and my comment, written over a decade ago, now needs to be revised. King Bhumibol's interventions in 1991 and again in 1993 to afford medical treatment to Buddhadasa, who less than twenty years previously had been accused of being a communist who undermined Thailand's national institutions, bespeaks the extent of the ideological shift that has taken place.<sup>14</sup>

King Bhumibol's concern for Buddhadasa's health and his 1991 request for Buddhadasa to "remain to teach the Thai people a while longer" suggest a repositioning of the monarchy relative

to the traditional *kammic* account of Buddhism. In this account the monarch's right to rule was legitimized by the notion that Thai kings possessed great personal merit or *bun* and so were the most deserving persons to rule the country. Buddhadasa criticized the notion of merit on which this traditional political legitimating ideology was constructed, replacing it with the notion that those in power earned the right to rule by demonstrating ethical conviction and moral rectitude in their personal conduct.

King Bhumibol's interventions suggest that the rationalist form of Buddhism propounded by Buddhadasa has "arrived," in the sense of being incorporated within the state-supported ideological construction of Thai Buddhism. This does not mean, however, that the traditional *kammic* interpretation has been rejected. The older interpretation of Buddhism remains as part of the ideological panoply of Thai Buddhism. But it has been moved aside from its former central and dominating position, now sharing the ideological stage with rationalist Buddhism.

In analyzing discourses and practices concerning sexuality in Thailand, Rosalind Morris (1994) cites Eve Sedgwick (1990, 47) as noting that issues of sexual definition in contemporary societies are not structured by one model superseding another, but rather by the "unrationalised co-existence" of different and often conflicting models. Morris then remarks, "The present appears to be one of those times in Thailand when different and mutually irreconcilable systems cohabit in a single social field." I think Sedgwick's and Morris's insight can be extended to the domain of religion in Thailand. That is, Thai religious culture in the 1990s has been characterized by the coexistence of multiple conflicting trends. By the mid-1990s it was difficult to maintain that the forms of Buddhism adhered to by any particular socio-economic stratum of Thai society—working class, middle class, aristocracy—were integrated or united by a single discourse or set of ritual practices. Indeed, Buddhism at several levels of contemporary Thai society appears riven by contradictory trends and it may be that efforts to discover general patterns that characterize "working class," "middle class" or "royal" forms of Thai Buddhism in the 1990s have been misguided.

Peter Vandergeest (1993, 862) made a similar point in his study of Buddhism in southern Thailand in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries:

Religious practices in Songkhla were an assembly of rituals, practices, and meanings which cannot be identified primarily with any single tradition in a totalising manner. Rather, they were structured by the social context of the nineteenth century in Songkhla ... Cultural practices are best understood as the historical outcome of a multiplicity of practices with diverse origins in specific historical contexts which, for heuristic purposes, can be seen in terms of different interpretive domains (Buddhism, folk-Brahmanism, and so on).

Thus, while Buddhadasa's rationalized Buddhism may have "arrived" in terms of being increasingly accepted by many of those in authority in Thailand, the older *kammic* form of the religion has not "departed" from the scene. Furthermore, it is no



longer possible to say, as I have in my book (Jackson 1988) and elsewhere, that Buddhadasa's main Thai audience is found among a certain socioeconomic group. Buddhadasa now has followers and supporters among all strata of Thai society. In seeking to explain Buddhadasa's influence in the 1990s we need a more sophisticated analysis that is more aware of context (Thai: *boribot*) and attuned to the nuances of "time and place" (Thai: *kalathesa*) that may lead an individual of any stratum of Thai society to adhere to one or another form of Buddhism.

### **Buddhadasa, the Thai Working Class and the Normativisation of Rationalist Monks**

The extent to which Buddhadasa's influence has spread among Thai blue collar workers, for example, can be gauged from the wide coverage of his illness and death given in publications oriented to this market. The 17 July 1993 issue of the weekly magazine *Chiwit Torng Su* (in life you have to fight) devoted nine pages and its cover to documenting Buddhadasa's life. Writing in *The Nation* (18 July 1993, p. B10), Nithinand Yorsaengrat stated that *Chiwit Torng Su* entertains "the working class with information and stories that are relevant to the lives of local people in community villages and rent-houses," adding that it is a middle-brow magazine, "lighter, more colourful and more sensational than high-class magazines, but higher in quality than the bottom-end throw-aways." Nithinand quoted the magazine's editor, Santi Savetvimol, as saying "Most of our readers are common people or underprivileged people who never give up on life." *Chiwit Torng Su* entitled its article on Buddhadasa, "A Great Warrior Monk of the Army of Dhamma" (*phra yort nak-rop haeng korng-thap tham*).

The coverage of *Chiwit Torng Su* focussed on Buddhadasa the man rather than the thinker, and reflected what Grant Olson (1990, 263) has called the normativisation of rationalist monks such as Buddhadasa. Olson notes that Buddhadasa's scholarly importance exists "within a small and limited, albeit growing, circle" and that there are many Thais who, despite Buddhadasa's intellectual accomplishments, still insist on viewing him "within the bounds of more traditional types of devotion." According to Olson, such people are unlikely to have read Buddhadasa's works and may only have heard of his growing reputation and related "holiness." Buddhadasa was well aware of the tendencies for popular monks such as himself to be normativised within the traditional patterns of Thai supernatural beliefs. The injunctions he included in his "will" can be seen as an attempt to prevent the development of a supernatural cult around him or his remains after his death.

Other Thai publications have also focussed on Buddhadasa's reputed *saksit* status. One popularly oriented commemorative publication issued after Buddhadasa's death was entitled, "The Arahant, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu" (*Arahan Phutthathat Phikkhu*, anonymous, 1993) and included the following as part of its dedication:

This book has been prepared with pure intentions in order to honour and remember Phra Dhammakosacarya

(Buddhadasa Bhikkhu), [who is viewed as] an *arahant* in the hearts of Thai Buddhists (p. 5).

The title of a commemorative article in the *Nation Weekly* (1–7 October 1993, pp. 9–11), "Buddhadasa, Enlightened Throughout Eternity" (*Phutthathat Phra Phu Tu'n Trap Niran*), also implied that Buddhadasa had attained enlightenment and was an *arahant*. And writing of Buddhadasa's cremation in the periodical *Mahatsajan* (miraculous), which reports on supernatural aspects of Buddhism, the journalist Wanaprat (1994, 14) referred to the reverend monk as a *nak-bun* ("saint", "holy man"), a term more commonly associated with *saksit* figures than scholar monks. Wanaprat also used the designation *luang-pu* ("revered grandfather") to refer to Buddhadasa. *Luang-pu* is a common colloquial title for senior monks often regarded as having spiritual authority and sacral power. Buddhadasa's close followers rarely if ever use this designation, preferring to refer to him by the titles *than ajan* ("respected teacher") or *mahathera* ("great elder").

In this context, Olson (1990) relates an anecdote that shows how many Thai Buddhists regard Buddhadasa and indicates the way in which even critics of traditional religious beliefs and practices can be appropriated within the very system they oppose. Olson writes that when visiting Suan Mokkh in 1982 three soldiers had spoken to Buddhadasa before his own turn came to talk with the monk. Buddhadasa laughed as he later told Olson that the three soldiers

had driven all the way down to Suan Mokkh from the Northeast and had arrived quite drunk. They requested that he [Buddhadasa] blow in their ears for good luck and protection. He told them that he did not know how to do this (*rao tham mai pen*) and sent them up to talk with another monk up the hill (who would tell them about the problems of drinking and smoking and encourage them to quit).

Santikaro Bhikkhu (personal correspondence) observes that, despite Buddhadasa's best efforts, he has won a place within the pantheon of Thai holy or *saksit* monks, with all the connotations of supernatural power that attach to such an identification. Santikaro relates that he first realized that many Thai people viewed Buddhadasa as a supernatural figure

when I saw, while riding on a public bus in Bangkok, a street merchant hawking posters of Ajarn Mun,<sup>15</sup> Luang Por Wat Paak Naam,<sup>16</sup> Jesus Christ, some teen idols, and Tan Ajarn [Buddhadasa]. He [Buddhadasa] quietly chuckled, almost embarrassed, when I told him of this.

On pages 290–291 of my book (1988) I wrote:

Buddhadasa is an ideologue without an effective social mouthpiece. He is not popular among peasants or workers or in the halls of power but only among a small group of like-minded intellectuals who, by and large, are

disenfranchised from the actual decision-making processes of Thai politics and who stand in uneasy relation to the rest of Thai society.

These comments are now patently inaccurate. For one thing, and as Santikaro Bhikkhu quite rightly observes, Phra Panyananda has been a very effective "mouthpiece" for Buddhadasa for decades, and Phra Phayom Kallayano and a large number of other monks and lay-people have taken his ideas throughout the country. As Donald Swearer (1991) reports, the prominent social critic Sulak Sivaraksa has been especially important in promoting Buddhadasa's ideas as an ideology of political resistance in Thailand. Santikaro (personal correspondence) notes that Sulak interested many students in Buddhism during the 1970s and that some of these activists subsequently took Buddhadasa's ideas to the Thai countryside through their involvement in NGOs and rural development activities.

Much has changed in Thailand in the 1990s, notably the economic boom for most of the decade and the political rise of the middle class. And together with these changes came the growing importance of rationalist formulations of Buddhism and their coexistence and interaction with traditional forms of Buddhism. The end point of these changes cannot be easily predicted. It is safe to say, however, that Buddhadasa's influence in Thailand will last well into the twenty-first century.

### BUDDHADASA'S LEGACY FOR WESTERN STUDENTS OF THAI BUDDHISM

In considering Buddhadasa's legacy we should not forget that his popularity extends beyond the borders of his own society. More has been written about him by Western students of Thai Buddhism than about any other recent or contemporary religious figure in Thailand.<sup>17</sup> However, I am not aware of any studies that have reflected on Buddhadasa's popularity among Westerners and I now wish to consider briefly why this Thai Buddhist philosopher monk should occupy such a prominent place in Western discourse about contemporary Thai Buddhism.

We need to look to more than a desire to record and account for Buddhadasa's importance for Thai Buddhists to explain his popularity among Western students of Thailand. Intellectual values from our own culture are also at play in leading us to give prominence to Buddhadasa. I suggest that Buddhadasa is so often written about by Western students of Thai Buddhism because his ideas often come close to the views of rationally minded and scientifically educated Westerners. When we read or hear *kammic* accounts of Buddhism we may understand them intellectually but they remain culturally alien to our own intellectual world. We approach *kammic* accounts of Buddhism as anthropologists, students of that Western discipline which specializes in apprehending what is culturally "foreign" and "other." But when we, as Westerners, read Buddhadasa we often have the experience of being with a kindred mind and we can

appreciate and applaud his radical consistency in demythologizing Buddhism. Buddhadasa was a Thai thinker whose work Westerners can not only describe anthropologically but also engage intellectually.

Western intellectuals enjoy the *frisson* of debate and our culture thrives on the challenge of confronting new ideas. Reading Buddhadasa one feels the excitement of approaching a radical thinker. Furthermore, Buddhadasa exemplified the Western intellectual value of critique. He adopted a critical attitude to the sources of his tradition and, like a Western philosopher, conceived of his religion in terms of rationally explicable principles. What is more, we in the West value innovation and individuality. It is part of our tradition to lend support to the underdog who struggles against the entrenched positions of privilege and we admire those who take risks in achieving something new and different. Buddhadasa manifested all these qualities that Westerners admire and for this reason he was an attractive figure for many Western students of Thailand.

Paradoxically, while many Thais regard Buddhadasa's ideas and writings to be difficult to comprehend, many Western students of Buddhism find his explanations of Buddhist principles to be more accessible than traditional Thai accounts. This indicates the extent to which Buddhadasa operated within a non-traditional intellectual framework having many affinities with Western discourses on religion, the Western discursive features of Buddhadasa's work simultaneously making his writings dense to many of his compatriots yet lucid for non-Thais. In summarizing Buddhadasa's innovativeness Gabaude (1990, 226) points to the Western tenor of the man's work:

Buddhadasa hardly corresponds to any other figure in the Theravada tradition of Commentators. He has not just repeated sets of texts, and he has been creative in two ways: first by picking up "jewels" from the Scriptures, brief and inspiring formulas such as "nothing is worth grasping as me and mine"; secondly by proposing to make those "pearls" change the society and the world. He probably would not be such an original and dangerous figure in a western Christian country where "theologies" develop regularly. But he fits neither in the mold of monks preaching only on how to go to paradise by donating to the monks nor in that of monks preaching extinction [*nibbana*] for monks only. This makes him, for some, the saviour; for others, the destroyer of Buddhism in Thailand.

Gabaude's final point above is especially poignant. For it was precisely the radical and individualistic qualities of Buddhadasa's life devoted to doctrinal reform that Westerners admire which ensured him a controversial position in Thai intellectual and political life.

In seeking to explain Buddhadasa's popularity in the West we also need to acknowledge that many Western students of Thai Buddhism applaud Buddhadasa's demythologization of the religion. Many Westerners are excited by the idea of a

rational, non-theistic religion based on practice and insight rather than faith. Buddhadasa holds out the promise, but not the realisation, of such a religion. Gabaude (1990, 217) says that Buddhadasa is popular among "decultured" Thais. That is, those who are "no more bent towards 'consolation' and ritual security." Gabaude could equally be describing many Western students of Buddhadasa. Most of us are "decultured" in the late twentieth century. The attitude that Gabaude describes is, after all, close to the heart of what is now called the "postmodern condition" of our society (Lyotard 1984).

In Buddhadasa's work we find the affirmation of key intellectual values from our own culture and it is possible to read his life as a confirmation of the "grand narrative" of the European Enlightenment: the historical triumph of reason over unreason. In this context, Louis Gabaude's previously noted observations about the contradictions between Buddhadasa's views and traditional Thai Buddhist beliefs and practices are especially relevant. They remind us, first, not to equate Buddhadasa with Thai Buddhism and, second, not to adopt unquestioningly the rationality that Buddhadasa championed as an explanatory principle in our own studies, perhaps leading us to mistakenly characterize rationalized Buddhism as inherently "progressive" and *kammic* Buddhism as necessarily "backward." For example, I have remarked elsewhere (Jackson 1993c) that attitudes to lay

sexuality in the *kammic* tradition of Thai Buddhism are often more liberal and accepting of human diversity than among interpreters who work within the framework of rationalized formulations of Buddhism.

## A PERSONAL CONCLUSION

Upon meeting Buddhadasa one had the experience of encountering a remarkably reasonable person with valuable things to say about living happily and well amid the confusion and disarray of the twentieth century. Kasem Atchalai, writing in the *Arai Kor Dai* ("whatever") column of the *Nation Weekly* (4–10 June 1993, p. 13), concluded his recollection of an interview with Buddhadasa, saying, "I remember that after the interview that day I was in a good mood (*arom di*) the whole rest of the day." My own experience concurs with that of Kasem. My own short time with Buddhadasa, and my many meetings with his ideas through his books and *dhamma* talks on cassette tapes, have always had the effect of leaving me in a good mood. I like to think that Buddhadasa's legacy to us, both Thai and *farang*, is not only his philosophy and his erudition but that he also left us with a better frame of mind towards ourselves and others than before we encountered him and his work.

## NOTES

- I wish to thank Phra Santikaro Bhikkhu (Suan Mokkh), Craig Reynolds (The Australian National University), Louis Gabaude (École Française d'Extrême Orient, Chiang Mai), Grant Olson (Northern Illinois University) and Rosalind Morris (Columbia University) for their valuable comments on earlier versions of this paper.
- This section has been compiled from details provided by Phra Santikaro Bhikkhu (personal correspondence) and reports in the following Thai language sources:
  - Anonymous, *Arahan Phutthathat Phikkhu* (the *arahant*, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu), N.N. Printing, Bangkok, 2536 (1993).
  - "Prathip Tham Sorng Sawang Klang Jai Sayam – 87 Pi Phutthathat Phikkhu (the lamp of *dhamma* shines brightly in the heart of Siam—the 87 years of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu)," Santi Butrchai, *Nation Weekly* (*Sut-sapda*), 1 (52), 4–10 June 1993 (2536), pp. 8–9.
  - "Thammanusati Jak Kan—aphat Khorng Than Phutthathat Mahathera, (reflections on the *dhamma* from the illness of *mahathera* Buddhadasa)," Dr. Prawase Wasi, *Matichon Weekly* (*Sut-sapda*), 13 (669), 18 June 1993 (2536), pp. 8–11.
  - "Korani Aphant Khorng Than Phutthathat Kap Sitti Thi Ja Tay (Buddhadasa's illness and the right to die)," Phongnarin Ulit, *Siam Rath Weekly* (*Sapda-wijan*), 40 (3), 20–26 June 1993 (2536), pp. 16–17.
  - "Ray-ngan Phiset—87 Pi Anitjang Phutthathat Amata Thammakhot (special report—the passing after 87 years of Buddhadasa, immortal expounder of the *dhamma*)," *Matichon Weekly* (*Sut-sapda*), 13 (673), 16 July 1993 (2536), pp. 75–76.
  - "Phra Yort Nak-rop Haeng Korng-thap Tham (a great warrior monk of the army of *dhamma*)," *Chiwit Torng Su*, 1 (34), 17–23 July 1993 (2536), p. 2ff.
  - "Moradok Tham Jak Suan Mok, Phutthathat Jak Yu Pai Mai Mi Tay, Ray-ngan Phak-sanam Doy Korng Bannathikan (the *dhammic* legacy from Suan Mokkh, Buddhadasa will live on, never to die, field report by the editorial board)," *Siam Rath Weekly* (*Sapda-wijan*), 40 (7), 18–24 July 1993 (2536), pp. 10–11.
  - "Phinaykam Than Phutthathat (Buddhadasa's will)," *Nation Weekly* (*Sut-sapda*), 2 (58), 16–22 July 1993 (2536), p. 40.
  - "Phutthathat Phra Phu Tu'n Trap Niran (Buddhadasa, enlightened throughout eternity)," *Nation Weekly* (*Sut-sapda*), 2 (69), 1–7 October 1993 (2536), pp. 9–11.
- Phra Santikaro was one of three monks who stayed with Buddhadasa throughout his hospitalization at Siriraj Hospital in Bangkok. He kept a detailed diary during this time and is planning to write a book on the events surrounding the passing of Buddhadasa.
- Phra Santikaro (personal correspondence) reports that Buddhadasa had been saying

that it was *bap* (Pāli: *papa*, "sin") to outlive the Buddha since before his 80th birthday.

5. Phra Santikaro reports that as Buddhadasa returned to bed he handed his keys over to his attendant, saying "I don't want to die holding these keys (*mai yak tai kha kunjae*)." Phra Santikaro interprets these comments as meaning that "monks are supposed to be without possessions and homeless, and to die with a set of keys on you ... he did not feel was appropriate. And many of us consider that that was where he was saying, 'Well, this is it, folks.'" (Quotation from a taped interview with Phra Santikaro Bhikkhu by Grant A. Olson at Wat Buddhadharma, Hinsdale, Chicago, 2 September 1993).
6. This denotes the absence of the elements of material existence in *nibbana*.
7. The anonymous author of the publication *Arahan Phutthathat Phikkhu* (The *arahant*, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu) (1993 [2536], 9) reports that Buddhadasa's final words were "*mai ru-su 'k pen tua ku mai mi buak mai mi lop santiphap santisuk nipphan,*" and were uttered in a delirium (*phoe*) on 31 May when Buddhadasa was receiving intensive care at Siriraj Hospital. However, this contradicts other reports that Buddhadasa was in a coma from 25 May.
8. *Buddhadasa Will Not Die*  
 Buddhadasa will live on, never to die;  
 Even though his body will cease, and  
 become deaf to sound.  
 The body exists, the body passes; of this  
 I am unconcerned;  
 It is but a thing that passes through  
 time.  
 Buddhadasa will remain, never to die.  
 Through good and bad he will remain a  
 companion of the *sasana*,  
 As befits his unceasing commitment to  
 serve with his body and mind  
 The commands of the Buddha.  
 Buddhadasa still lives on, never to die,  
 Unceasingly serving his fellow man and  
 woman  
 With the *dhamma* teachings left behind.  
 Oh dear friend, can you see what it is  
 that has died?  
 Buddhadasa Bhikkhu  
 (From Anonymous, *Arahan Phutthathat Phikkhu* (The *arahant* Buddhadasa Bhikkhu), N. N. Printing, Bangkok, 1993 (2536), p. 3. trans. Peter A. Jackson with advice from Santikaro Bhikkhu). Santikaro (personal correspondence) reports

that this poem first became public in 1986 around the time of Buddhadasa's eightieth birthday. Santikaro also notes that the poem has a further three verses in addition to those published at the time of Buddhadasa's death and provides the following translation:

Even when I die and the body ceases  
 My voice still echoes in comrades' ears,  
 Clear and bright, as loud as ever.  
 Just as if I never died, the Dhamma—  
 body lives on.

Treat me as if I never died,  
 As though I am with you all as before.  
 Speak up whatever is on your minds  
 As if I sit with you helping point out the  
 facts.

Treat me as if I never died,  
 Then many streams of benefit will  
 accrue.

Don't forget the days we set aside for  
 Dhamma discussion;  
 Realise the Absolute and stop dying.

9. Wanaprat (1994, 14) reports that before making his final will in March 1993 Buddhadasa had given Phra Silawatn quite different verbal instructions about how his remains should be disposed of upon his death. According to Wanaprat, Buddhadasa directed that when he died his body should be bound up in a sitting meditation position with cords binding his body, legs and arms. Then his body should be lowered into a hollow cavity in part of a building at Suan Mokkh called the Sala Thammakhot (Pāli: *dhammaghosana*) and the top of the cavity should be closed with a cement lid that should not be opened for at least one hundred years. But Phra Silawatn replied that he did not dare (*mai kla*) do as Buddhadasa requested, because he thought that many followers in Thailand and overseas would be strongly critical of this unconventional means of burial. Wanaprat reports that Phra Silawatn was so vexed about having to carry out Buddhadasa's request that he became ill. Because of concern about having to carry out his request, some of Buddhadasa's followers suggested that he write a will about his funeral to make everything clear. In the end Buddhadasa opted for a more traditional cremation to avoid difficulties for his followers or possible complications with the authorities about the method of his funeral.

10. Dr. Gabaude is currently a Fellow of the École Française d'Extrême Orient based in Chiang Mai.

11. See my discussion of the *Kalama Sutta* in Jackson (1988, 61–63).
12. For discussion on the historical and contemporary importance of the *Traiphum Phra Ruang* in Thailand, see Jackson 1993a, 64–100 and 1993b, 191–231.
13. Santikaro Bhikkhu (personal correspondence) observes that Buddhadasa increasingly received official recognition with the passage of the years, noting, in particular, the visit of Somdet Phra Phutthaghosacarn (Jaroen Nanavarathera) of Wat Thepsirind to Suan Mokkh on 26 June 1937; the granting of a series of ecclesiastical titles to Buddhadasa from 1946; Buddhadasa's appointment as Head of *Dhamma* Propagation for the Southern Region and his being made abbot of the royally sponsored monastery Wat Boromthat Chaiya in 1949; and the awarding of numerous honorary degrees from Thai universities.
14. Santikaro Bhikkhu (personal correspondence) suggests that Professor Sanya Dharmasakdi, a close disciple of Buddhadasa for many years and Chairman of the Privy Council, had been important in informing King Bhumibol of Buddhadasa's ideas, having had discussions with the King on topics such as *cit-wang*. Grant Olson (personal correspondence) relates an anecdote conveyed to him by Suwanna Satha-Anand: The King had once mentioned that he was thinking of visiting Suan Mokkh. Buddhadasa supposedly replied in a Zen-like fashion, saying, "Your Majesty would probably not find anything of interest here, there are only rocks and trees."
15. Acharn Mun Bhuridatto was a famous Northeastern monk renowned for his supernatural experiences while practising meditation in the forest. For a detailed account of Acharn Mun's life see Taylor (1993b, 75ff).
16. Luang Phor Wat Pak Nam, or Mongkhonthepmuni (Sot Janthasaro), was the founder of the *thammakai* (Pāli: *dhammakaya*) meditation system now made famous by the influential Wat Phra Thammakai. For an account of Luang Phor Wat Pak Nam's life and the Thammakai movement that has grown around his teachings see Jackson (1989, 199ff).
17. Louis Gabaude has compiled valuable bibliographies of Buddhadasa's translated works and studies of Buddhadasa and Suan Mokkh. See Gabaude 1990a, 1990b.

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