

Research Report on

Researcher

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The Role of Buddhist Monks in Community Development

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ABSTRACT

This Research Report on the Role of Buddhist Monks in Community Development is the result of a study of the role of the Buddhist monk institution in Thai community and society, which examines the role point by point as follows:

The first point deals with the role of Buddhist monks in the Thai society of the past by presenting the picture of the relationship between the ecclesiastical institution and the community. The Thai society of the past held to the religion as the main post. Religious virtues were admitted as determinants of ethical values in the society. Religious teachings and practices, therefore, reflected the spirit of the Buddhist monk institution in regard to its relationships with the society, which were expressed in various forms, with the institution acting as the center of the community and society, i.e., Buddhist monks acting as community or social leaders.

For the second point, the study deals with the role of Buddhist monks in the present Thai society, which points to the evolution of the administration of the Buddhist monk institution. The important point of this issue is that which has seen the change and the loss of the leading role as well as the status of being the center of the community due to several factors, for instance the acceptance of Western culture, the inability of the Buddhist monk institution to adapt to social changes, the displacement of the role by government policy, etc. Thus, the role of the Buddhist monk institution has changed until it is now reduced to leading religious ceremonies only.

The third point is a study on the role of Buddhist monks in community development, which represents a look back to the Buddhist monk institution with hope that it still remains a shelter and able to resume the role in the community and society, if adjustment is made to the laity, which includes the government, for a constructive policy toward the ecclesiastic body, i.e., strengthening the Buddhist monks in various areas in terms of both ethics, religious virtues and technical knowledges. This is not all too easy, because Buddhist monks themselves need to adjust their status to changes and to show a firm determination to carry the religion forward in order to assist and support needy people genuinely.