

## **THE DHAMMAYUTTICA NIKĀYA (MAHĀYIN GAING) IN MON STATE, MYANMAR: A CRITICAL STUDY OF ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND IMPACT**

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to critically examine the historical background of Dhammayuttika Nikāya in Mon State, Myanmar, and its impact in Buddhism there. The Dhammayuttika Nikāya was founded by King Mongkut of Thailand in the 19th century and expanded under King Chulalongkorn's reforms, which led to regional resistance in Northern and Northeastern Thailand. The Nikāya also spread to Cambodia and Myanmar. In Myanmar, the Dhammayuttika Nikāya, known locally as the Mahāyin Gaing, was established in 1874 with minimal resistance. This research examines the lineage of the Nikāya's leaders, their ordination practices, and their monastic education. It further explores the social and historical connections between the Dhammayuttika Nikāya and other Nikāyas, and assesses the impact of the Dhammayuttika Nikāya's Buddhist text recitation ceremonies and the Chaungzon monastic examination. Employing a qualitative methodology with a library approach, this study analyzes primary sources such as Buddhist scriptures and secondary sources including scholarly writings, journals and articles, to show the Dhammayuttika Nikāya's contributions for propagation of Buddhism. This research contributes an in-depth understanding on the historical background and impacts of the Dhammayuttika Nikāya or Mahāyin Gaing in Mon State of Myanmar.

**Keywords:** Dhammayuttika Nikāya, Mahāyin Gaing, Mon State, Myanmar

### **INTRODUCTION**

Dhammayuttika Nikāya was first originated in Thailand. It was founded by the King Mongkut (1804-68) during he was ordained as Theravada Buddhist monk named Bhikkhu Wachirayan (Vajirañāṇa) who significantly reformed the monastic tradition in Thailand. He did such an endeavour after being inspired by the Mon monk Mahāthera Buddhavaṃsa. At that time, Dhammayuttika Nikāya was not prevalent throughout the whole of Thailand. However, when King Chulalongkorn, the son of King Mongkut, ruled the country from 1868 to 1910, he made a great reformation of monastic education and Thai Buddhism. He also promulgated regulation the Act of Saṅgha in 1902. As a consequence, the regional monks especially in the North and Northeast Thailand expostulated to the action, which was carried out by King Chulalongkorn. It also disseminated to Cambodia when the King Ang Duang invited Mahā Pan who received monastic lineage from the Dhammayuttika Nikāya in Thailand and established the Dhammayuttika Nikāya in Cambodia in 1855. After the end of monarchy, Dhammayuttika Nikāya was confronted with a lot of resistance with political crisis between French colonized in the nineteenth century and communism posed threat to the Buddhism from 1975 to 1979. However, there was no resistance when the Dhammayuttika Nikāya established in 1874 in Myanmar, which is known as "Dhammayuttika Mahāyin Gaing". It is important to note that in Myanmar, the terms *gaing* and *nikāya* are used interchangeably. The term Mahāyin Gaing is used in this research. In order to understand the history of Dhammayuttika Nikāya in Mon State, Myanmar, the research will examine the lineage Nikāya's leader, locations where successive generations received higher ordination, their monastic education, and their efforts in the propagation of Buddhism. This research also explores on the social and historical connection between the Dhammayuttika Nikāya and the other Nikāyas. Finally, this research will also highlight the history, advantages, and disadvantages of the Dhammayuttika Nikāya's Buddhist text recitation ceremony and the Chaungzon monastic examination.

## **METHODOLOGY**

It is qualitative research methodology with library approach. Library research means a method of gathering the data from various literature sources to analyze and solve the research problems. The data used in this research mainly based on primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources mean the valid sources taken from Buddhist scripture, such as Pali Canon and its commentaries. Secondary sources are the academic writing such as articles, journal, or books written by scholars. This research is mostly based on documentaries studies, which were written by various scholars in the history of Buddhism in Thailand and Cambodia. In order to write my dissertation, I securitize and analyze from these books and produce some information. It specially concentrates on the biography of founder Dhammayuttika Nikāya Thailand and Mon State (Myanmar). In addition, it demonstrates the biography of generation heads of Nikāya, which I translated from Mon and Burmese into English. This research reveals the generation head of the Nikāya how they took responsibility for the propagation of Buddhism.

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS**

### **The Founder of Dhammayuttika Nikāya in Thailand**

In order to understand the original history of Dhammayuttika Nikāya in Thailand, it is necessary to investigate the biography founder. King Mongkut (1804-68) was a reformist Buddhist King in Thailand, who represented a milestone in the history of modernization of Buddhism in South East Asia. He became a monk in 1832 during the reign of his uncle, King Rāma III (Smart, 2014: 457). It is believed that the primary reason Prince Mongkut, later known as Bhikkhu Wachirayan (Vajiranaṇa), chose ordination was to avoid complications related to the selection of a king following his father's death. Instead of nominating of Prince Mongkut to become a monarch, the royal authorities and ministers selected Prince Mongkut's half-brother- Prince Chetsadabodin (Rāma III) to be a king. He was believed to be more knowledgeable in state affairs administration at that time. As a result, King Mongkut became a monk at the age of twenty. Having been ordained, he was sent to Wat Samorai (now Wat Rachathiwat) forest meditation center located outside Bangkok. During his residence in this monastery, he found that the meditation monks of the monastery undertook meditation, not for the attainment of Nibbāna, but for mundane attainments such as obtaining magical power, and so on. He became aware that the intention of monks taking meditation was not conformity with the Pāli canon and that the monks practicing meditation could not give a detailed explanation regarding the meditation technique in which they practiced (Dhammasāmi, 2004: 218-219-220).

After investigating the practice of monks in the monastery where he lived, he was upset with their approach of meditation. While he was thinking to disrobe, he made a vow that unless he met the lineage monks descended from the Buddha's time; he would return back to household life. Fortunately, he met a Mon monk, Buddhavaṃsa Mahāthera who was the head of Mon Sangha and had a good reputation in royal society where he lived in a royal monastery, Wat Bovonmongkhon in Bangkok. He was inspired by Mon monk's tradition. As a result, he continued to live a monastic life and studied Pāli at Wat Mahathat. He was so diligent that within three years, he achieved the highest Pāli examination rank in 1826. Having received a degree, the king appointed him to take obligation of the *Parian* examination. It was difficult for him to make reforms at Wat Mahathat because it was part of the major of monastic tradition. As a result, in 1829, once he completed five years of ordination (*Nissaya*), he could live independently as dictated by the monastic discipline (*Vinaya*). He moved back to Wat Samorial, where he was free from being supervised. As Bhikkhu Wachirayan was expert in Pāli, he became doubtful regarding the ordination hall and ordination ritual ceremony practiced by Thai monastic tradition. So, then he asked the Mon monks who had received ordination in *Kalyanī Simā* in Pegu to give him a new ordination on a raft moored to the river bank nearby (Dhammasāmi, 2004: 220-221-222).

One of the most significant inspirations for Bhikkhu Wachirayan's reformation was that Bhikkhu Wachirayan especially embraced and advocated the Mon traditional way of monastic practice, which had been purified by Mon King Dhammaceti in 1476 (Dhammasāmi, 2004: 222). It is said that, at that time, Mon King Dhammaceti saw that the monks were infringing monastic regulation, so he sent twenty-two representative monks to take a new ordination in Sinhalese monastic tradition in Ceylon, former name Sri Lanka, in July 1476. The location of taking ordination was the river Kalyānīganga on the west coast of Ceylon. Having returned from Ceylon, the King Dhammaceti established the Simā, which was given the name Kalyānī Simā and all the local monks received re-ordination (Bechert, 1998: 152).

According to Hikkaduvē report of events in Pegu leading up to the Kalyānī ordination in Lankā, the Peguan king sought to discover where the pure Sāsana existed. He was told that in the island of Lan̄ka the Bhikkhu Saṅgha existed in an unquestionably pure condition, via the "Mahinda Parampara" which has at some point prior split into three Nikāyas. They have been united ' by a consensus brought about by the dynamic king, having made amicable *Theras* agree, following the opinion of those among the residents of the Mahāvihāra who professed the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*. On the basis of this information, the king of Pegu ordered his monks to undertake a pure *upasampāda* in the presence of Mahāvihāra Bhikkhu Saṅgha there. He referred to their completed ordination as conducted by the "Māhavihāra Bhikkhu Saṅgha of Sihala" and Pegu visitors having received a pure *upasampadā* of Sihala (Blackburn, 2012: 284-285).

This evidence might indicate that the reason why Bhikkhu Wachirayan conceived the Mon monastic tradition was more authentic and the Mon pronunciation has a much closer resemblance to the Sinhalese Pāli pronunciation (Dhammasāmi, 2004: 222-223). It is, therefore, advocated that Bhikkhu Wachirayan's reformation via Dhammayuttika Nikāya sect was influenced by Mon monastic tradition. The king attribution of Bhikkhu Wachirayan's reformation resulted in appointment in his as an abbot of Wat Bovonives at royal monastery in 1837. He studied Latin and English and western science from French and British missionary. This knowledge led him to establish Dhammayuttika "adherers to the Dhamma" as reformation sect (Dhammasāmi, 2004: 223).

Bhikkhu Wachirayan's main goal was to reform monastic regulations, transform the ritual recitations associated with the monastic community, and purify the Canon. A significant transformation in Buddhist tradition was initiated by Bhikkhu Wachirayan. His education, his charisma and, his royal lineage brought a substantial benefit, which enabled him to change the monastic tradition (Dhammasāmi, 2004: 224-225). In fact, the reform of the King Mongkut resulted in purifying monastic discipline to bring similar to the original Pāli tradition. He interpreted the authentic Buddhist teaching, which was different from Thai Buddhist traditional belief, and he obliterated the conventional Buddhist belief (Sakya, 2012: 404). Another obvious significance is that King Mongkut devised the Pāli script, which was commonly known as "Ariyaka" alphabet in order to prohibit from utilizing Khmer script (Sakya, 2012: 404-407). It means that before the King Mongkut's invention of the Ariyaka alphabet, Thai monastic community applied the Khmer script as for the Pāli canon. As stated by Wynne, the innovated Ariyaka script by the King Mongkut was quite similar to the King Mindon (Burma-1808-1878) who took responsibility for the purification of Pāli canon and wrote a new version of Pāli Tipitaka with the intention of preparation for the Fifth Buddhist Council in 1817. Afterward, the new edition of Pāli was inscribed onto 729 stone slabs at Kuthodaw Pagoda in Mandalay (Wynne, 2015: 226-228).

When the king Rāma III passed away in 1851, the royal authority, including the Saṅgha, urged Bhikkhu Wachirayan to return back to the household life in order to be enthroned. Since he became a king, he was known as King Mongkut. He ruled the country for 17 years and made a tremendous contribution to the prosperity of the Dhammayuttika Nikāya. As a result, there was a symbiotic association between Dhammayuttika Nikāya and the authority of the palace (Dhammasāmi, 2004: 227). King Mongkut brought a considerable amount of benefits to the reviving Thai Buddhism by reforming

monastic tradition and creating the “Ariyaka” script. Similarly, King Chulalongkorn, the son of king Mongkut, introduced measures to form monastic education and passed the Sangha Act in 1902.

### **King Chulalongkorn’s Reformation of Monastic Education and Thai Buddhism**

King Chulalongkorn made endeavor on the development of education in the whole Thailand. His brother Prince-Patriarch Vajirayan, who acquired secular subject in palace and Pāli degree at Makutasat, carried out his project of reformation education in Thailand (Dhammasami, 2007: 12). King Chulalongkorn appointed the prince-monk Vajiranana as the patriarch of the Dhammayuttika Nikāya in 1893. In October 1893, the Mahamakuta Royal Academy for religious studies at Wat Pavara was commenced by the Prince-Vajiranana (Reynolds, 1979: xxxiii-xxxiv). Prince Vajiranana monk led the Dhammayut monks who hold high Pāli degree in order to reform a new curriculum of Pāli teaching system. In founding the Mahāmakuta Royal Academy, King Chulalongkorn wanted to honor his father’s life and work in raising the prestige of the Sangha and to celebrate his own achievements of being on the throne for twenty years. This Academy is now known as the Mahamakut Buddhist University.

During King Mongkut's reign in the 18th century, the reform of monastic traditions did not extend widely into rural areas such as Northern Thailand. It appears that the purification of monastic traditions was primarily confined to major cities like Bangkok. However, Wachirayan who was the Son of the King Mongkut, a half-brother of the King Chulalongkorn, after becoming a monk at Wat Bavonnive in Bangkok, took the role the King Mongkut to reform monastic tradition in Thailand. In the period between 1860 and 1921, during the Wachirayan monk life, the French took control of Cambodia and Laos, and the British conquered Burma. The action of the French and British greatly motivated the King Chulalongkorn to make an official centralization government throughout the Thailand. He sent a high official to the rural regions to undermine the local governments in 1890. Additionally, the king manipulated the Sangha by appointing the Dhammayuttika Nikāya senior monks as high-ranking official positions throughout the Thailand, which conferred a great privilege to Dhammayuttika Nikāya monks from 1850 to 1930. With the assistance of royal authority, Dhammayuttika Nikāya monks took control of Mahānikāya monks in the year between 1880 and 1920 (Choompolpaisal, 12, May, 2015:). Consequently, a contention occurred when the Bangkok palace legitimized the rule of Buddhism in the North and Northeast Thailand. Prior to the King Chulalongkorn stipulated the rule in these regions in 1902, the spiritual leader contributed knowledge to the local community religious tradition harmoniously. The diversity of regional inhabitant of monks and lay people lived together with harmony and unity. They did not centralize power in one community in order to manipulate another society, which was different from them.

Conversely, it is due to the reformation of Dhammayuttika Nikāya replaced monastic regulation and Buddhist traditional practice, the regional Buddhist tradition encountered the Pāli text that is different from its language and alienated culture. Monks coming from the Bangkok disseminated the metropolitan Buddhist practice through changing the indigenous Buddhist celebration of religious ceremony day like celebration of Buddha’s birthday (Vesak celebration). Consequently, the local people feel that foreign monks came to their place and taught a new Buddhism tradition (Tiyavanich, 1997: 43).

The enactment of Sangha law in 1902 was a major initial phase of centralization of Sangha, which was mainly enforced by authority framework, and method of studying monastic education (Wynne, 2015: 226). Before the promulgation of Sangha’s regulation in 1902, a local tradition accepted that monks were eligible to carry out ordinations independently after they had been ordained for ten years. From 1902 the act of performance ordination became prerogative. Only the monks nominated by the Bangkok authority had the opportunity to act as a preceptor. The supreme leader of Sangha legally controlled people who became monks. This law adversely affected on local traditional Buddhist practice (Tiyavanich, 1997: 41). As a result, the regional monks were not happy with the influence of the

Bangkok authority controlling the right ordination. Therefore, they refused to reform Buddhist practice carried out by Dhammayuttika Nikāya and to practice their regional Nikāya (Tiyavanich, 1997: 41-43). From this point of view, the reformation of Dhammayuttika Nikāya was resisted in Northeast Thailand because the monastic tradition in this region had been manipulated into monastic tradition of Dhammayuttika Nikāya.

### **The Establishment and Developments of the Mahāyin Gaing in Mon State, Myanmar**

The Dhammayuttika Nikāya, also known as the Dhammayuttika Mahāyin Gaing, was established in Mon State, Myanmar, by the most Venerable Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa, a Mon monk who studied in Bangkok, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The most Venerable Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa (1841-1918) was born in 1841 at Krum Khru village Samut Sakhon in Thailand. It should be noted that Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa is distinct from Mahāthera Buddhavaṃsa who inspired Prince Mongkut to establish the Dhammayuttika Nikāya in Thailand. They are different individuals having the same name. Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa's original lay name was Min Yin, which means "cool" in Mon language. Following the Mon Buddhist culture and tradition, he was sent to a local monastery in order to study primary monastic education. He was a diligent student with strong perseverance in his studies, and within a few months, he successfully memorized the foundational Pāli grammar text *Suttādhīpāya* and the compendium of Buddhist philosophy *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*.

When he was fifteen years old, he became a novice and was given the name Buddhavaṃsa, 'lineage of the Buddha'. He comprehensively studied the Tipitaka, including commentaries and sub-commentaries, between the age of fifteen and twenty. He received a higher ordination at the age of twenty. Having received the higher ordination, he was not content with what he had studied, so he moved to metropolitan Bangkok where he could get an opportunity to learn the Pāli (the language of Tipitaka) and study Thai as a second language in order to communicate with Thai people.

Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa, the founder of the Mahāyin Gaing in Mon State and the Prince-monk Wachirayan (1860-1921), the 47<sup>th</sup> son of King Mongkut (Choompolpaisal, 2015: 428), the future supreme leader of the Dhammayuttika Nikāya in Thailand, studied under the instruction of Somdit Phra Mahasamana Chao Kromma Phraya Pavares Variyalangkorn, who was the patriarch of the Dhammayuttika Nikāya from 1853-1892 (Silateza, 2018: 960). Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa took part in annual a monastic examination in Thailand. He was awarded the degree of Mahā because he passed all the higher levels of the examination. Therefore, he came to be known as Venerable Mahāyin in Thailand and in Myanmar.

After achieving the higher examinations, he was enthusiastic about the propagation and development of the teachings of the Buddha both in Thailand and Myanmar. He was responsible for instructing young monks in monastic education, delivering Buddhist teachings to lay followers, and rigorously observing the Vinaya's disciplinary code. Because of these activities for the Buddha's *sāsana*, King Rāma V, King Chulalongkorn, awarded him the honorary title *Bhratrai Saranadhaja*, which means 'Holder of Triple Gems' (Vēdagu, 1976: 4-5). In 1855, the British and Siamese governments signed a treaty, which required the British consulate in Thailand to oversee British subjects residing within the British Empire. This effectively meant that the British government extended its control over citizens in lower Myanmar, including Mon people who had migrated to Thailand. As a result, the authority of Thailand has no opportunity to interfere with British authority (Choompolpaisal, 28, Jun, 2013: 98). It is probably suggested that the Mon people in Myanmar, who migrated to Thailand, had some connections with the Mon people in Thailand. As a result, Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa might have heard about the decline in Buddhism in Mon State from the Mon people in Myanmar migrated to Thailand when the British governed the lower part of Myanmar between 1824 and 1948.

In 1874, Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa had a great deal of aspiration to promote and propagate the teaching of the Buddha in Mon State, the lower part of Myanmar, when the British government occupied

this region from 1824 to 1948. He might be aware of the decline of Buddhism in Mon State because he was the descendent from Mon ethnic group in Myanmar (Silateza, 2018: 94), and he might have had the connection with people in Mon State as mentioned above the political situation between Mon State (lower part of Myanmar and Thailand). He left Thailand and came to Kado, which is six miles away from Mawlamyine, the capital of Taninthayi region during the British colonial period. After arriving in Kado village, the most Venerable Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa settled in a cemetery under a banyan tree and resided in solitude. It is generally believed that when a monk resided in an economically well-off region, it is quite easy to get support from the lay devotees and that it is easier to propagate Buddhism. As he lived close to Kado village, many people came to know that Venerable Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa had expertise in Buddhist scriptures, had serenity and good manner, and practiced the disciplinary code. As a result, these qualities left a strong impression on local prosperous merchants, leading to increasing patronage from wealthy individuals. Many devotees were deeply impressed by Venerable Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa's wisdom and his sermons, in which he profoundly explained Buddhist teachings on generosity, morality, and meditation. Additionally, he used poems in the Mon language to convey his teachings.

The Kado and its neighboring villages were very prosperous. Therefore, wealthy businessmen from this region were very much involved in sponsoring Buddhist propagation related projects. According to Venerable Vedagū's writing (1992), it is understood that Buddhism in Myanmar was originated from Thaton, and a Tipitaka translation project from Pāli into Myanmar was initiated in Kado. In 1910, Nai Shwe Haly, who was a wealthy merchant from Kado, invited Ledi U Vayama, (also known as Saya Myo), Ledi Sayadaw's disciple, who received Aggamahāpaṇḍita title from the government, and Ledi U Vayama was to lead the translation project sponsored by Nai Shwe Haly. This led to the translation and publication of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Majjhima Nikāya*, *Samyutta Nikāya* and *Anguttara Nikāya* by Pitaka Tike Press. Unlike the current economic situation in Mon State, towns and villages like Kado were prosperous in the past due to wealth from rubber plantations. Kado was a prominent village in Mon State, distinguished by its large port, which facilitated the transport of goods by numerous ships and boats from various locations. For instance, a businessman named U Na Aut, who owned nine ships and competed with the British-owned Ayeyarwady Company, lived in Koh Hnart village, close to Kado. Similar to Nai Shwe Haly, he funded the illustration of Jātaka stories on the walls of the Koh Hnart village monastery, which can still be seen today (Vēdagū, 1992: 11-14).

Unlike the Dhammayuttika Nikāya, which faced resistance in Northern Thailand and Cambodia, the establishment of the Mahāyin Gaing in Mon State encountered no such opposition. The founder of the Mahāyin Gaing, Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa, did not face problems because his approach differed from that of his counterparts in Northern Thailand. Firstly, his reputation as a meditation monk and skilled Dhamma teacher attracted local support. Additionally, the lower part of Myanmar, under British rule, lacked centralized authority over the Sangha, preventing Mon monk communities from exerting control over one another. These two factors facilitated Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa's successful establishment of a separate Nikāya. The second reason was that Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa himself was a Mon monk, and he taught the Buddhist teachings in Mon language, which was unlike the Dhammayuttika Nikāya monks in Northern Thailand, where they taught in Bangkok, elite Thai. Therefore, the communication between him and the local people was easier and thus he gained a great support from the local monks and laypeople. Thirdly, he did not replace or change any Mon Buddhist traditional ceremonies such as the celebration of the Buddha's birthday, i.e. Vesak celebration, or the end of rains retreat in Mon State. Fourthly, although the Mahāyin Gaing had some connections and communications with the Dhammayuttika Nikāya in Thailand at that time, the latter had no power over the Mahāyin Gaing Sangha in Mon State, such as the appointment of an abbot of the monastery in the Mahāyin Gaing or the nomination of a preceptor. As a result, there was no resistance to the establishment of the Mahāyin Gaing in Mon State.

### **Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa's Authority**

There are several ways in which the founder of Mahāyin Gaing gained authority. A monk's authority within the Sangha and among laypeople is generally understood to be related to his observance and practice of monastic codes. In the *Samantapāsādikā*, it is reported that the King Asoka converted to Buddhism because he met a young novice on alms round, who wore the robe in accordance with the monastic regulations, and King Asoka was attracted by the novice's deportment and, thus became interested in Buddhism (Gombrich, 2006: 132-133). Similarly, in contemporary Buddhist society, monks who strictly adhere to monastic regulations and maintain good conduct typically inspire faith in laypeople. As a result, the laity often shows respect and becomes followers of such monks. Moreover, there are generally two approaches monks use to establish their authority. The first method involves creating a new ordination lineage to avoid the influence of senior Sangha members, as exemplified by Prince Mongkut. The second method entails isolating oneself from the monastic community by focusing on meditation, thereby remaining outside the existing hierarchy and evading the power structures of the established Sangha (Crosby, 2014: 212). It can be interpreted that Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa tried to distinguish him from the local monks by practicing strict monastic code, by taking meditation and living in the cemetery. These practices seem to have helped him gain authority. In addition to his strict monastic practices, he was able to establish himself as a well-known and skillful teacher of Buddhist texts. Since he started teaching, many monks acquired monastic education under his instruction. Therefore, he accumulated a great number of student's monks. Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa was not only expert in Buddhist texts but also in Mon language and literature. He composed Buddhist poems related to meditation and morality in Mon language for laypeople. So, his way of teaching was different from, and perhaps more superior, to those of regional monks.

### **Establishment of Mahāyin Gaing and Setting up Printing Press**

Over the years, Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa received many monastic disciples. When the number of monks was adequate to found a new Nikāya, among many of his followers, he discussed his plan with senior monks, such as Venerable Moggaliputta-Tissa and Venerable Nālagiri, to establish a new nikāya. These monks initially agreed to call the new Nikāya the "Dhammayuttika Nikāya", the same name as Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa's Nikāya in Thailand. Later, this Nikāya has come to be known as "Mahāyin" because the lay name of the found is 'Yin' and he received the degree title 'Mahā' for his study from Thailand. Although there is no precise information about the year that this Gaing was first established, we could estimate that it was in the 1880s.

Having founded the Mahāyin Gaing, there were a considerable number of monks studying Pāli literature under his instruction. He also sent many of his disciples to places where people wished to establish monastery. There were sixty monasteries that were founded in Mon State, and Karen State (Vēdagu, 1976: 6-7). Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa saw the opportunity to use the new technology, i.e. printing press, in order to propagate the Buddha's teachings. Therefore, he encouraged to the lay devotees to set up a printing press in order to teach monastic education in an effective way. The printing press was initially introduced in Mon State and was called the 'Buddhavaṃsa Printing Press' (Vēdagu, 1976: 8). His intention was to publish Buddhist texts in Mon language so that that it can be widely distributed. The first text that his printing press published was the translation of the Dhammapada from Pali into Mon language. Subsequently, there were many texts written by him and published by Buddhavaṃsa Printing Press, such as *The Qualities of the Buddha*, *The Qualities of the Dhamma*, *The Qualities of the Sangha*, *The Interpretation of the Satipatthāna Sutta (discourse on the establishing of awareness)*, and books on the monastic code (Vēdagu, 1976: 8).

### **The Generation Patriarchs of The Mahāyin Gaing in Mon State, Myanmar and Their Significant**

## **Social Roles**

There are eight patriarchs of the Mahāyin Gaing are: (1) The most Venerable Nyānasiri (1851-1921), (2) The most Venerable Moggaliputtatissa (1856-1932), (3) The most Venerable Nalāgiri (1864-1944), (4) The most Venerable Mahinda Thera (1886-1956), (5) The most Venerable Jotipāla (1888-1987), (6) The most Venerable Pārama (1918-1988), (7) The most Venerable Nyānateza (1866-1995), and (8) The most Venerable Ādicca (1917-2016). Out of these Sayadaws, Ven. Moggaliputtatissa, who was born in Kwantar village Mudon Township and in Mon State in 1856, made a significant contribution to the promotion of Sāsana in the great villages of Ka Mar Wet and Ka Lawt Thawt in Mudon Township in Mon State where Christian missionaries were very active trying to convert the local people. Ven. Nalāgiri, who was born in Chaungzone Township Mu Yit kalay village in Mon State in 1864, took responsibility for the preservation Buddha's dispensation, which means that he taught monastic education till he passed away. Ven. Jotipāla, who was born in Kaw kha pone village Mudon Township in Mon State in 1888, preferred to live as solitude in the forest and always develop the four noble practice namely; compassion, loving-kindness, tranquility and joyfulness. In fact, he encouraged the devotees to develop those four noble practices. Ven. Pārama, who was born in Kanni village Kawkareik Township Kayin State in 1918, introduced meditation technique and established of mediation center in Kanni village monastery. Ven. Nyānateza, who was born in Kahnyaw village Chaungzon Township in Mon State in 1866, took responsibility as Sangha Vinicchaya (community of Sangha judgment) as a representative as advisor of Mahāyin Gaing. Ven. Ādicca, who was born in Kwan yaik village Chaungzone Township Mon State in 1917, was the priority of Mon monk passing the Dhammacāriya examination.

Based on the Venerable Dhammasāmi research, the king Mindon only introduced *Pathamapyan* examination in the royal city (Dhammasāmi, 2004: 131). This examination system probably was not widespread in lower part of Myanmar either Yangon or Mon state. Turner explained that Pāli examination held by Zetiyangana association in Yangon and Pariyatti Thathanahita society in Mandalay was still popular during the British colonized in Myanmar. Being requested by Burmese leaders, the colonial government revived the state patronage of *Pathamapyam* Pāli examination in 1895. Having held this examination just one year, like Burmese Monk sat examination in Myanmar language, Mon monk also demanded to took part this examination in Mon language. Due to monastic demanded, the British government responded to the extension of examination places around the country (Turner, 2014, 38-39).

Ven. Ādicca, the 9<sup>th</sup> patriarch, took part in the *Pathamapyan* and *Dhammacariya* monastic examination system. In addition, he studied English, Hindi and Sanskrit in Sri Lanka. As a result of his expertise in Pāli, his achievement of Dhammacāriya degree, his good management skill and communication skill, when he came back from Sri Lankan in 1952, many monks studied monastic education under his instruction. He put a lot of effort in raising and educating next generations of monks, supporting them with the four requisites and education. Since his return from Sri Lanka, he resided in Kado, where he received over hundred monks every year to study under him. He also managed to establish at least five teaching monasteries around the country, including in Yangon and Mandalay. When he was ninety-six years old three years before he passed away, he was conferred Abhidhajamahāratthaguru, the highest honorary title, by the Myanmar government in 2013.

## **Mahāyin Gaing develops on Burmese Monastic Culture and it officially gained recognition as one Nikāya in Myanmar**

It is interesting to note that the seventh head of Mahāyin Gaing studied monastic education in both Mahāyin Gaing teaching monasteries and Burmese teaching monasteries. Since then, it seems that the members of Mahāyin Gaing have been influenced by Burmese monastic traditions, especially regarding the style of wearing robe. Similarly, the majority of senior monks in the present day studied



monastic education in Mahāyin Gaing teaching monasteries and Burmese teaching monasteries in Yangon, Myaung-mya Ayeyarwady division and Mandalay. For example, Venerable Upāli, who is the meditation teacher in Mon State, studied at Mahāyin Gaing monastery in Kado and Myaung-mya in Ayeyarwady division. In addition, he also acquired meditation technique in Dawei Township Thaninthayi division from Yin Ngae Sayadaw, a disciple of Mahāsi Sayadaw.

It is understood there are many advantages of Mahāyin Gaing monks studying in Yangon and Mandalay. Through their education, they are able to communicate with all ethnic groups in Myanmar easily. The ninth head of Mahayin Gaing studying Yangon and Mandalay resulted in a great benefit for this Gaing. In Myanmar, nine Nikāyas, or Gaings, were officially recognized during the reforms under the Ne Win in 1980. They are Sudhamma Gaing, Shwe- Gyin Gaing, Mahā Dwāra, Mūla Dwāra, Anauk ChaungDwāra, Veluwun, Hngettwin, Ganawimok Gado, Mahāyin. (Crosby, 2014, 214) When Ne Win made the constitution of Sangha, Mahāyin Gaing was recognized as one of the nine Nikāyas (Gaing) in the Sangha constitution in Myanmar. This is because the Mahāyin Gaing was able to present its history and regulations as well as the evidence that most members of the Gaing had achieved higher monastic degrees, such as the Dhammacariya, to the Sangha and government officials. Although it has a small number of percentages of monks, it has sufficient quality to establish independence Nikāya. It is also different from other Nikāyas (Gaing) lineage in Myanmar because Thai-Mon monk Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa founded Mahāyin Gaing, which was originally established in Thailand under the name of the Dhammayuttika Nikāya.

### **The Significant Role of Mahāyin Gaing**

Approximately, there are five hundred numbers of monks in this Gaing, which has a very small number, compared with other Gaings such as Rāmaṇṇa Gaing (Mon Sudhamma Gaing). However, it consolidates community of monks and it has strong monastic education center in Mon Buddhist society. Currently, there are three monastic education centers: Kado monastic education, which is the original birthplace of Mahāyin Gaing, which has over one hundred monks. Kadar village Chaungzone Township monastic education center, which has about seventy number of monks, and Kyaik Sei Mon monastery located in Yangon where teaches only Dhammacāriya degree level has fifty monastic students monks. There are approximately four monks pass the Dhammacāriya every year. It means that the main object of Mahāyin Gaing emphasizes on preservation of the Pariyatti monastic education.

In term of propagation of Sāsana (Buddha's dispensation) to young generation, the Mahāyin Gaing monastic education center freely accept all the Mon Sangha without discrimination any lineage. To clarify it, nowadays there are three Mon Sangha Gaing namely; Shwe-gyin Gaing, Sudhamma Gaing and Mahāyin Gaing. Although Mon Sudhamma Gaing was included in the Sudhamma Gaing-the largest percentage of monks in Myanmar, all the Mon Sudhamma Gaing regard themselves as Rāmaṇṇa Gaing. Similarly, the entire of Mon Shwe-gyin Gaing was cooperated into the second largest population of Sangha in Myanmar. This Gaing, however, recognizes themselves as a Mon Shwe-gyin Gaing.

Both Mahāyin Gaing and Shwe-gyin Gaing are compatible with the interpretation of monastic regulation. As a result, a great number of Mon Shwe-gyin Gaing abbots encouraged their followers to study monastic education in Mahāyin Gaing monasteries especially for the level of Dhammacāriya degree, but some Mon Shwe-gyin Nikāya membership studied monastic education in Kado. Mon Shwe-gyin Gaing also has monastic education center for the *Pathamapyan* level of examination. A limited number of monks from Mon Sudhamma Gaing studied at Mahāyin Gaing monastic education center. Membership of Mahāyin Gaing monks hardly studied monastic education at Mon Sudhamma Gaing.

In regard to education, there is no compulsory rule for the membership of Mahāyin Gaing monks need to be followed. It depends on individual's desire and donor's sponsor to study education in Mandalay and abroad. It is obvious that a small number of monks study at Mandalay, Yangon State Saṅgha University, International Theravada Buddhist University, Sri Lanka Buddhist University and

Thailand Buddhist University. In present day, there are only eleven monks got MA degree from Sri Lankan Buddhist university, and just only three monks accomplished PhD degree from abroad.

### **Cooperation with Other Nikāyas (Gaings)**

Initially, Dhamma School is widespread throughout Myanmar in these days. The main center of this school is located in Yangon, which is cooperated by many different Nikāyas in Myanmar in order to educate Buddhist knowledge to youngster generations. It takes the paradigm of Sunday school in Sri Lanka. Venerable Indalinkāra, a lecturer of Kyaik Sei Mon monastery Yangon, a member of Mahāyin Gaing, cooperates with this organization on order takes responsibility for the Dhamma school foundation. One of the advantages of his cooperation is that, he acts as mediator between Mon monasteries in Mon state and the main center of Dhamma school in Yangon. As a result, a large number of Dhamma schools are prevalent throughout in Mon State too. Currently, he is the second president of the Dhamma school organization.

Secondly, there is another relationship in Rāmaṇṇa Gaing (Mon Sudhamma Gaing), which has the largest number of Mon monks in Mon state. The monks from this organization studied in Sri Lanka and Thailand. Because they have many numbers of monks, they are able to organize Mon monk's student organization in these countries. With the intention of harmony and unity for Mon Sangha, they also invite Mon student monks from Mahāyin Gaing and Mon Shwe-gyin Gaing. It is generally accepted when young monks studied education abroad, they do not discriminate between any ordination lineage, and they lead a flexible condition of social life and adaptation to way of life in society.

Thirdly, the Venerable Sunanda, who is the chief of monk at Santi Sukha monastery in Thanphyuzayat Township, leads to translation of Chattha Saṅgāyana Tipitaka edition into Mon language. Although this translation was organized by the member Mahāyin Gaings instead of giving the name Mahāyin Gaing Tipitaka translation, it was titled the "Mon Tipitaka translation organization" in order to represent the entire whole of Mon Nation. In addition, it also appointed the head of Mahāyin Gaing, the head of Mon Shwe-gyin Gaings and the head of Rāmaṇṇa Gaings as advisor of this organization.

Fourthly, there is some communication with other Nikāyas in term of celebration *Kathina* ceremony in monastery; many monks invite each other in village regardless of Nikāya. Moreover, when an abbot of celebrates birthday ceremony, he is able to invite all the monasteries in villages and township, including Burmese monastery. For example, the abbot of Kawkhapone village Bin haling monastery, who is well known meditation teacher in Mon State, celebrates birth ceremony. He invites all the monks he had familiar, including Pha Auk Taw Ya monastery in Mon State.

Fifthly, there is a connection between Dhammayuttika Nikāya in Thailand and Mahāyin Gaing in Mon State (Myanmar). As a result of the same lineage, they invite some abbot of monks their counterpart when they celebrate a great ceremony such as celebration of Buddhist texts (Silateza, 2018: 102). Before Myanmar and Thailand did not make contract agreement of free visa between two countries. With purpose of Mahāyin Gaing monks in Mon State to travel to Thailand without difficulty, the abbot of Ban Phai Mon monastery at MahaChai Samut Sakhon district Thailand, who was the state Saṅghamahānāyaka, gave sponsor letter to Mahāyin Gaing Mon State, Myanmar.

Finally, it is vital to indicate the place of Mahāyin Gaing in Myanmar. Although it is a separate sect, it is very small in terms of number of monks within the Gaing, compared to other Nikāyas such as Shwe-gyin Gaing. According the whole nine Nikāya in Myanmar in 1997, there are 51157 monasteries and the number of Saṅgha 403481. Among them Mahāyin Gaing monasteries has only 61 and the Saṅgha number has about 600 hundred. There are three levels of the ecclesiastical body in Myanmar: State Central Working Committee of Sangha, State Advisory Committee of Sangha, and the State Saṅgha Mahānāyaka Committee. There are three hundred members in the State Central working Committee of Sangha. At this level, there is one position from the Mahāyin Gaing. There are one

hundred and eleven members in the State Advisory Committee of Sangha, and one member is from the Mahāyin Gaing. There are 47 members in the State Sangha Mahānāyaka, but there is no position at this level from Mahāyin Gaing. Only Mon State has sufficient number of monasteries and monks from Mahāyin Gaing to hold two positions at the first two levels of the ecclesiastical body. At the level of Mon State of the Vinicchaya Committee, 7 positions are held by monks from Mahāyin Gaing.

According to the Sangha constitution, there are 3810 level of township Sangha Nākāya position, and Mahāyin Gaing gets only (30) position. In the village Sangha Nākāya level, there are on 31804 positions, Mahāyin Gaing obtains only 40 positions. This information is still true today for the Mahāyin Gaing. From this evidence, the percentage of monks is a very small number, compared with other Nikāyas. The reason Mahāyin Gaing has lowest Sangha population is that it is weakness in administration (Bannya Eain Zaphut, 1999: 143-154). The Mahāyin Gaing was unable to secure the position of State Sangha Mahānāyaka because it did not have enough monks to meet the requirements for representing its Nikāya at the central Sangha authority. Mahāyin Gaing was founded during the British ruled Burma, which was earlier than Pah Auk Tawya meditation center located in Mawlamyine in Mon State. However, the number of monks and the number branch in Pha Auk Taw Ya meditation is higher than Mahāyin Gaing. There is a stability of population of monks of Mahāyin Gaing.

### **The Survey of Mahāyin Gaing Recitation of The Buddhist Texts and The Chaungzone Monastic Examination in Mon State**

The Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa, who emphasized on promotion and dissemination of Buddha, embraced the view as mentioned in the *Anguttaranikāya*. There are five things, which lead to decline and disappear of the Dhamma. They are: (1) monks do not study widely related to the Dhamma such exposition of verses; (2) monks do not teach the Dhamma comprehensively to others; (3) monks do not ponder the Dhamma as they have learned (4) monks do not recite as they have memorized; (5) monks do not ponder the Dhamma (Bodhi, 2012: 767). The Sāsana (the teaching of the Buddha) will not disappear if there is existence of Pariyatti, the teaching of the Buddha. He consulted with his senior disciples to launch the celebration of examination in 1260 (Vēdagu, 1976: 7). According to Vēdagu's illustration, having held the monastic examination at Kado monastery for 8 years, this examination was transferred to Nigraw Dha Rāma monastery Warduot village Changzone Township. In this region, it became both Dhamma and Vinaya writing and recitation of the Buddhist texts. There was a gradual disappearance of writing examination after the most Venerable Buddhavaṃsa went back to his native town in Thailand (Vēdagu, 1976: 8). In 1908, a great number of Sangha were not able to sit writing examination. In order to entire Sangha to participate in the special ceremony, it had been changed from writing examination to oral examination. Since changing the feature of oral examination, it was more significant and well known than writing examination because all the novices and monks got the opportunity to participate in the recitation of Buddhist texts.

It is supposed that the intention of the Bhikkhu Buddhavaṃsa was to understand the meaning of Pāli in the Buddhist text, to interpret Buddhist texts righteous way and to understand philosophy of Buddhism because he was willingness to set up the monastic examination as he had studied in Thailand. It is obvious that initially he did not celebrate the recitation of Buddhist texts. Later on, his disciples transformed the writing examination into recitation of the Buddhist texts. The change from oral examinations (recitation from memory) was implemented because monks needed to attend Pāli classes or lectures to learn methods for interpreting Buddhist texts, such as the *Visuddhamagga*. At that time, only the Kado teaching monastery offered instruction on major texts like the *Visuddhamagga*. The Chaungzon region could not provide extensive teaching due to a lack of lecturers.

In 1959, Venerable Nyannasāgi a meditation teacher, who preached the Dhamma that making donation and keeping the precept is not integral part of attaining the Nibbana (The Final Goal of Buddhism). The only way to attain the Nibbana is to practice the meditation. His doctrine disseminated

around the Chaungzone Township, and many regional monks and lay people expostulated to his concept of practicing the meditation. Consequently, the local monks hold the concept that all the monks in their region need to be harmony and unity to prohibit form Adhammavāda (wrong view) occurring in their region. Consequently, they established the Chaungzon monastic examination to produce monastic scholar in order prevent monks preaching wrong view in the future.

### **The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Two Examinations**

There are a great number of benefits for the Mahāyin Gaing recitation of Buddhist texts. Due to holding of this ceremony, it probably encourages its community of monks to study monastic education, and it might be attractive to student's monks who study monastic education in its Gaing. Moreover, it provides monastic education to its young generation monks and to produce monastic scholar monks. It can be assumed that if the monastic students monks are able to memorize by heart such as *Pātimokkha*-disciplinary code of monks and *abhidhammatthasangaha*-higher teaching of Buddha, they probably pass the government monastic examination without having difficulty. Furthermore, it preserves Mahāyin identity in Mon Buddhist society, and it also maintains the tradition of recitation by heart such as *Pātimokkha* (disciplinary code of monks). It can be interpreted that celebration of the Buddhist text is one of the significant roles of Mahāyin Gaing because all the member of Mahāyin Gaing monks participate in the reciting of the Buddhist texts. Besides, it is the second most formidable ceremony, compared with Rāmaṅga Gaing monastic funeral in Mon Buddhist society.

The Chaungzon monastic examination has several advantages. It produces scholar monks who are well-equipped to counteract wrong views (Adhammavadi) and preserve the Buddha's teachings. Additionally, this examination fosters harmony and unity among the monastic community in the Chaungzon region, as the examination board includes monks from various Nikāyas, promoting broader collaboration and cohesion. It also gives permission to monastic student monks all Mon regions without discrimination on the grounds the Nikāya. This examination also able to provide student monks to pass the government monastic examination

Additionally, there are a significant number of advantages for devotees. Lay people get a great benefit for supporting these examinations. It can be assumed that patronage of the celebration Buddhist text and monastic examination generates a great merit in life because there are many merit making activities to be performed at the ceremony such as donation food to the monks. Approximately six hundred monks are participated in celebration of recitation of Buddhist text, and three hundred and fifty monks take part in sitting Chaungzone monastic examination so that people are happy to see a great number of monks in their villages.

However, there are drawbacks to both monastic examinations. One significant disadvantage is that the Mahāyin Gaing restricts participation to its own community of monks. This limitation means that its recitations of Buddhist texts do not represent the entire monastic community in Mon State, reducing its influence and recognition in the region. Consequently, the Mahāyin Gaing struggles to gain support from laypeople throughout Mon State due to its restricted scope. The downside of the Chaungzon monastic examination is that its authorization is limited to Mon State, meaning it does not represent the entire monastic community of Myanmar. Consequently, it is not widely recognized across Myanmar. This regional limitation may encourage other monastic examinations to restrict their own communities similarly, potentially leading to reduced cooperation among monks and hindering efforts to preserve Buddhism collectively. In addition, there are a lot of monastic regional examinations such as Mudon Kyaung Thit monastic examination gives permission only in Mudon Township monastic students monks. It is possible that the reason why holding regional monastic examination is in order to be supportive government monastic examination. The ideal for holding organization of examination or Gaing examination is to support its own community and to take part government monastic examination.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Dhammayuttika Nikāya was initially established in Thailand by the King Mongkut (1804-68) during he was a monk named Bhikkhu Wachiraya. This Nikāya also established in the North and Northeast Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar during the King Chulalongkorn ruled the country. This present research contributes comprehensive understanding on the Dhammayuttika Nikāya (Mahāyin Gaing) in Mon State, Myanmar. The most Venerable Buddhavaṃsa, who was monastic lineage of Dhammayuttika Nikāya, came to Mon Sate and founded Dhammayuttika Nikāya in Mon State in Myanmar when the British governed the Myanmar in 1824-1948. He took great responsibility for the propagation of Buddhism, such as teaching monastic education, setting up a printing press, preaching the Buddhist's doctrine to lay people and celebration of monastic examination. His work greatly contributed to Mon society. He was not only honored by the king Rāma V with an honorary degree but he was also appreciated by Myanmar well-known scholar monks Thingazar Sayadaw and Ledi Sayadaw. Mahāyin Gaing was founded by a Thai Monk, but the style of wearing robe has been changed in to Burmese form because since the seven head of Nikāya study monastic education Mahāyin Gaing teaching monasteries and Burmese teaching monasteries. The generation of patriarchs took responsibility for the propagation of Buddhism such as preaching the Buddhist doctrine, teaching monastic education and establishing meditation center. The significant role of Mahāyin Gaing is learning and teaching monastic education because teaching monastery is more well-known than meditation center in Mon Buddhist society. Although Mahāyin Gaing is a separate Nikāya, it cooperates to other Nikāyas in the ceremony such as *Kathina* and translation of Mon Tipitaka. It has a small ecclesiastical body in Myanmar. One of the objective goals of Mahāyin Gaing is to celebrate recitation of Buddhist text annually to encourage a young generation of monks to participate recitation related to *Pathamapyan* curriculum and to sit the monastic examination successfully. Moreover, all the membership of Sangha monks has to attend this ceremony and at least need to recite Bhikkhu Pātimokkhu in order to be aware of the disciplinary regulation of monks. The celebration of recitation of Buddhist text and holding Chaungzone monastic examination is beneficial to only its community and Mon region, these cannot represent the whole monastic community of Myanmar because they are very small community in Myanmar. Mahāyin Gaing was founded during the British ruled the Myanmar. However, the number of monks has not increased up to the present day and remains unchanged. Although it has a strong monastic education center, it does not have a small Buddhist institution to train young monks for higher study of education. As a result, the Mahāyin Gaing should train management skill to its young generation and should establish a small English language center to open the door of young generation monks to study in local and international university for prosperity in future.

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