

A Development in Managerial and Administrative Pattern of Nuns Organization and Affects to the Patronage of Buddhism in Northeastern Thailand

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Abstract: This research study, aims to explore the states of problems in management and administration of Nuns organization in Northeast Thailand or Isan in order to study and develop the managerial and administrative patterns that can be applied and effect the patronage of Buddhism. Research data has revealed that Nuns in the monastery/guild are worried about administrative rules and regulations strictly imposed by its administrator. Administration of the monastery/guild mainly depends on the abbot/head of the guild. It has caused, concern and tension because the Nuns have no say in policy or administrative rights. Most of them are of low education of the elementary level and opportunities for further education are limited. The public have a double standard between Monks and Nuns in dissemination of Buddhism. In addition, Nuns in their guild have clearly shared the tasks of administration, burdens and duties with Head of Nuns acting as the top administrator and respect the system of seniority. However, they must be under the ruling and policies of the abbot and must attach to the Buddha's disseminations, administrative rules of Thai Nun Institution as a criterion in administration. The Nuns organization of Thailand has promoted many activities towards the development of Nuns in Thailand. The main activities, include regular meetings to discuss management and administrative policies every 3 months. General elections for committee members are held every 3 years. Activities to promote Buddhism patronage include Buddhism training, publishing of Prayer books, Nuns Journal and Publishing of Nuns official ID card.

Key words: Northeast Thailand, Isan, nun, buddhism, management, administration, patronage

INTRODUCTION

The status and roles of the female gender in society has always been defined by culture. Human culture since ancient times have long depicted women as the weaker sex or of lower intelligence than males, lacking leadership skills and cannot make decisive decisions (Warunee, 2001). Thai Nun's gender has been a major factor limiting their roles, status and acceptance of the general public in disseminating Buddhism. As a category Mae Chi or Thai Buddhist Nuns are not admired or respected, but remain an anomalous and ambiguous group (Thitsa and Khin, 1980). Thai women are among Buddhism's most devoted faith keepers. Traditionally, however, they have not been associated with the Buddhist monastic world. The role of Thai women renunciants is ambiguous, since they are formally considered to be lay women, but are also concurrently treated as religious persons. In Thailand the difference between the categories of religious and lay persons rests

upon the number of Buddhist precepts that the person is following and the boundary is between the 18th and the 10th precepts. Thai Nuns generally follow 8 precepts, while novice Monks received 10 precepts at their ordination (Ellison Banks Findly, 2000).

It is widely, accepted in modern times that good management structures and practices of an organization will lead to the effectiveness of the organization as a whole. Development guidelines and policies are needed to develop the management and administration of Nuns organization in Northeast Thailand.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Qualitative research method is applied to this research by purposively sampling the research areas of Nuns, who are in training and studies at The Nun's guild at the Maha Pachabohde Tehri Wittayalai in the district of Pakdongchai in the Province of Nakorn Ratchasima, Wat Prachakohm Wanarahn at the village of Bahn Kohk Klang

in Srisomdej Sub-district in the District of Srisomdej in Roi-et province, Nuns at the Wat Tuhm Pah Nahm Tihp Temple at the village of Bahn Kohk Klang in the District of Nong Pauk in the province of Roi-et, Nuns at the Wat Burapahpirahm in the District of Muang in the Province of Roi-et and the Nuns at the Wat Khao Pradhuchumpohn in the District of Thepsatit in the Province of Chaiyapum. The sampling group comprised of 189 individuals of Nuns and citizens were included in the research studies where the tools used to gathered the data was primarily from document analysis of interviews, observation forms, group discussions and workshop activities. The final data was presented via descriptive analysis and data triangulation. The initial questions of the research include: the obstacles that Nun's associations and guild have in management. What are the management principles of the most effective Nun's organization. How to develop Nun's organization in Northeast Thailand to be efficient and management strong. The main purpose of this study is to, to study the management problems of Nun's organizations in Northeast Thailand and how it is currently managed. To study and develop the management of Nun's organization in areas that regard maintaining and preserving.

RESULTS

Management and administration: The problem in management and administration are minimal. Most Nuns face difficulty and tension when faced with strict regulations that are imposed in certain temples, monastery and Buddhist residence. Management policies in each location are different. Some temples have lenient rules, while others are very strict and prohibit Nuns activities. The difference in rules that each temple applies is because of the lack of communication between temples and the management is the sole responsibility of the abbot or the venerable monk. Nuns have no say in policy or management activities. Senior Nuns (ordained period) rarely accept the talent and competence of junior Nuns. The Buddhist Clergy have different views of Nuns and many are not charitable towards Nun's activities. The general public still view that Nuns are not religious leaders such as Buddhist Monks and Clergy and also that Nuns benefit to Buddhism and society are still minimum. Nuns organizations in Northeast Thailand is divided accordingly to each others responsibilities. There are clear policies among Nuns. There administration of Nuns will comprise of a leader and every Nuns have regards towards senior Nuns. But all Nuns are still under the governance of the temple's abbot and must follow the Nun's guild restrictions, which are used to administrate

activities and practices. Buddhism organizations in Thailand still do not support Nuns administration as an independent religious entity. Junior Nuns must obey and respect the ruling and suggestions of senior Nuns. The development of Nuns administration should be that the Nuns should be brought under direct governance of the Buddhist Clergy of Thailand where the highest administration be delegated to the most senior Nun. This administration structure will enable efficiency and provide the same level of governance of Buddhist Monks.

Nuns organization of Thailand has promoted activities to support the development of Thai Nuns, which are: Meetings to discuss the management and administration of Nuns is held every 3 months. Where members will nominate and elect the leaders of each organization or group for rural groups, provincial groups and committee members of the Nuns organization of Thailand. The 25-30 committee members are elected to serve a 3 years, where each committee member will be responsible for managing funds, arranging meetings and seminars, charity work, donations and training to Nun's group in rural communities. Create guidelines and policies for Thai Nuns. Publishing of Nun's ID card to confirm their religious status. Publishing of Nun's Prayer books and journal to disseminate Nun's activities and Buddhism (Thai Nuns Foundation, 2008).

Nun's education: Most Nuns enter the guild aged between 31-40 years old. Eighty five percent of Nuns come from families with agricultural backgrounds and are mostly single (Chatsumahn, 1995). Currently, most Nuns are elderly have minimal education and most only graduated elementary education. There are many limitations to educational options that are available to Nuns. Limited funds and school courses that are made available to Nuns have hindered the intentions many Nun's to pursue higher education. At the same time, educational institutions have many courses that are open to Buddhist Monks and dedicated campuses for Buddhist Monks. There are also, no educational funds available to Nuns. The support of the development of Nun's education in world affairs and religious teachings should be expanded. The knowledge level of Nun's should be elevated and funds provided so that opportunities in extending education are available to Nuns if needed. Promoting education to Nuns will provide confidence so that Nuns will willingly pursue higher knowledge in world affairs and Buddhism. Educational institutions should also provide diverse courses so that Nuns can choose educational fields that suit their needs and benefit society and Buddhism as a whole.

Dissemination of Buddhism: Dissemination of Buddhism by Nuns has not been widely accepted by the general public at the same level as Buddhist Monks. Many Nuns are not proficient and experienced in dissemination practices. The funds allocated for Nuns to participate in the dissemination of Buddhism is limited and in most cases not supported. These factors have contributed to the discouragement of many Nuns and has underdeveloped the dissemination of Buddhism by Nuns. Many Nuns feel unconfident when it comes to dissemination of Buddhism.

Only a small number of Nuns engage in Buddhism dissemination activities on a regular basis but that their main priority is to gain personal insights into Buddhism truths. Training in Buddhism doctrine and ethical behaviors are provided to youths and children. And dissemination by Nuns through Journals, Radio and Television mediums should be pursued by Nuns. Dissemination practices must always abide by strictly following Buddhism Doctrine and dissemination to the general public should be extended. Very little people give importance to the dissemination of Buddhism by Nuns. Very few attend Nuns session at temples or at their homes.

Public assistance: Research data has revealed that there is a wide practice of involving Nuns in labor when it comes to temple maintenance and cleaning. The practice is highly viewed by the general public as inappropriate and should be forbidden. The reasons for the Nuns involvement in taking care and maintenance of temple areas and Buddhist sanctions include. Temples lack sufficient funds to keep up with the maintenance of temples and do not have enough tools and labor saving equipment. The number of Nuns and Monks in temples are different and everyone must participate in cleaning activities and the preparation of temples and monastery's before religious events. Most locations are small and designated areas are limited. Therefore in many areas, kitchen duty relies solely on Nuns to perform. The development and maintenance of temples and monasteries by Nuns should be expanded to include other activities besides labor. The cleaning and mending of temple grounds should be the responsibility of everyone within the temple. Areas for Nuns should be clearly designated and provided. But currently every temple relies on Nuns to do kitchen work, decorations, sewing and housekeeping.

Social work and welfare: Social work and welfare activities by Nuns is limited and not accepted on a high level by the general public. The factors of the Nuns

education level, un-supporting factors in educational funds, dissemination of Buddhism and discrimination have made many Nuns scared to teach children and youths. This feeling and lack of confidence has affected Nun's social work and welfare to be specific to each individual. Those that are confident continue to be involved in social welfare activities, while others refrain. Nuns themselves must develop and willingly engage in public social work and welfare activities to prove that they are capable and their activities can really benefit communities. The support of Nuns and social activities will help their status viewed by the general public to be elevated and accepted. Opportunities for Nuns to teach children and youths on Sundays should be supported with active roles in providing mental development to the general public. Small children nurseries should be supported in temples and monasteries. Service by Nuns to handicapped citizens should also be made available.

CONCLUSION

Nuns Development in Managerial and Administrative Pattern of Nuns Organization and Affects to The Patronage of Buddhism in Northeastern Thailand is currently still undermined by the bias of their female gender. Nuns Organization in Thailand and has clear lines of administration and responsibilities with the Head of Nuns as the top administrator and respected seniority and they are strict to disciplines of Buddhism and administrative rules of Thai Nun Institute as the criterion of the administration. However, they have to be under the supervision of the abbot and lack independence in administration and policy. Many nuns feel unconfident and shy when it comes to the propagation of Buddhism and social acceptance. Their self doubting comes primarily from the bias from monks and the general public towards their female gender and also the low level of education of most nuns. In relation to Nuns education, they have to develop their education for both worldly and spiritual fields to raise their levels of education. Additionally, state offices concerned should provide them with selective courses in a wide field of education of common courses, vocational or religious discipline. In respect of their religious missions, they somewhat undertake dissemination of Buddhism, but they regularly practice themselves to achieve personnel religious goals. Nuns have always offered training courses on virtues and ethics to general people, children and the youths. They also disseminate Buddhism in every sector of mass media on an individual basis. Nuns should be encouraged to have their opportunity to disseminate Buddhism to a wider audience and should be open to opportunities to

develop their monastery or guild in other forms apart from using labor. Their living quarter's in the monastery/guild should be screened off, clean and safe. However, most of Nuns act as a housewife of their monastery/guild, doing work of decoration, sewing, embroidery, household chores, cooking, which can be seen in almost every monastery/guild. Above all else, Nuns must improve their roles to be accepted in their abilities by increasing their activities and participation in dissemination of Buddhism to children, youths and offer courses to the general people in accordance with their skills, which include roles in spiritual welfares, handicraft, sewing and embroidery.

SUGGESTIONS

The data gathered from this research should be used towards the development of Nuns Guilds in a realistic practice because research data concludes that much development is needed in many areas such as Management Policies, Education Programs and Buddhist studies to the public. The Nuns Guild of Thailand has provided basic management principles and preliminary governance but much more practical and realistic policies are needed to maintain the numerous groups of Nuns that are initiated annually. Studies should be supported to research the effectiveness of Nun's activity in dissemination Buddhist principles and disseminating Buddhist activities to the general public, in which method is more effective. Further studies should also be extended in the research of developing work skills that Nuns have

given to the public so that those skills can be applied and create real income. Studies in how the public view Nun's activities and their personal opinion on why the Nun's Guilds status is restricted even though Thailand regarded as a Buddhism nation. The purpose of such studies, should also include the public's suggestions of what the status and roles of Thai Nuns should be besides nurturing Buddhism belief and what other benefits they can provide to society. To complete these studies, further research should also be undertaken to collect the suggestions and viewpoints of the Nun's themselves to determine how they view their role and status towards the development of Thai society and Buddhism.

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