**Buddhist Movements of New Communication during an Age of Globalization:**

**ASEAN and China**

Phramaha Somphong Santacito[[1]](#footnote-1)

Phrakhru Phipitpariyattikit (Chayan)[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Abstract:**

This article examines the Buddhist movements of new communication during the age of globalization, between ASEAN and China, which have long been connected before the turn to globalization. Buddhism in both regions has played a significant role since the past, and has had influence on Buddhist images, texts, relics and monks (Sangha). During this age of globalization, Buddhism still plays a significant role in new communications. Since the new Buddhist movement is a phenomenon of the age, communication is a key role that Buddhism is playing for the new audience of this age. Therefore, the communication of Buddhism nowadays has changed from only textual to day-to-day life experience. This paper mainly discusses the new communication of Buddhist movements undertaken by the Buddhists of both regions in this globalization age, including: 1) communication through individualism; 2) communication in the form of experience and faith rather than doctrine and belief; 3) communication through pragmatism on religious practice and trust in the leader of new Buddhist movements, i.e. more pragmatic attitude toward questions of religious authority and practice; 4) communication through more syncretism, relativism, and more tolerance of other religious perspectives and systems;5) communication through a holistic worldview, its teaching and practices are not separated from daily life; and 6) communication through organizational openness.

**Keywords:** Buddhist Movements, New Communication, Globalization Age, ASEAN and China

**Introduction**

ASEAN and China have undergone the long passage of time. They have exchanged cultures, society and people including Buddhism since the past. In the ancient times, there were Buddhist flows between ASEAN and China, such as monks, Buddha images, Buddha’s relics, texts (Tiptaka and commentaries) etc. ASEAN, according to its objectives, aims to place emphasis on first, the security of a political community through peaceful co-existence among its member countries, and have a system for conflict management as well as overall stability, a framework for handling the external threats toward regional security for the sake of security and safety of the people. Second, the economic community’s focus is on a joint economy and the facility of inter-trade resulting in regional prosperity and allowing for a competitive advantage with other regions for better livelihoods of ASEAN people. Third, the socio-cultural community’s emphasis is placed on putting the people under the concept of hospitality, social welfare and security. China was open to modernization/westernization, during the last half of the 19th and 20th centuries, for developing her country and for the betterment of her people. Globalization is a phenomenon that has taken place over the last 30 years, with the concept of flows in various dimensions, i.e. etnoscapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, mediascapes, ideoscapes, including in respect to Buddhism through buddhascapes, dhammascapes, and sanhgascapes.

The scope of this paper is largely intent on the Buddhist movements of new communication in this globalization age: ASEAN and China, since the Globalization age has seen new flows of cultures and concepts among multi socio-cultures, religions and languages. Buddhism as the living force is a main factor for pushing the concept of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha within globalization for the development of society especially the urban communities. It focuses on the six proposed communications outlined in this paper.

This paper will discuss two key words, i.e. Buddhist movements, new communication during a globalization age. The Buddhist movements involve several aspects such as socially engaged Buddhism, gender-way or feminist Buddhism, marketing or capitalist Buddhism, neo-popular Buddhism, neo-meditation Buddhism, neo-magical Buddhism and new communication movement. Only the last aspect will be focused in this paper. ASEAN and China will be included and exemplified within these contexts.

**Buddhist Movements and Buddhist Flows in the age of Globalization**

With the arrival of westernization or modernization over the last 500 years in ASEAN and China, due to trades and globalization, Buddhism in both regions learned from this age to adapt or change the channels of communication. Previously (before westernization) Buddhism was a traditional force syncretized with indigenous religions, cults or beliefs systems. While the west came in for proselytization of Christianity, Buddhism gradually opened up to accept the new communication, such as the contents of new sciences, health care, publications with mass production as well as new educational systems.

As the arrival of the western political powers coincided with the arrival of western religions, the new communications were introduced by the west for their affect on economy and trades by the private and state sectors as well as their proselytization of Christianity by both Catholics and Protestants missionaries.

The western Christian missionaries who accompanied their countries’ rulers to ASEAN and China were very active in disseminating their faiths during colonial times. The book in its modern form, with mass amount for production of the Bible, translated into several languages and dialects as per the regions that were colonized, and a health system with innovative technology were introduced.

**Waves of World Changes**

Waves of world societal changes are historically based on an agricultural society focused on agriculture, plantation, herding, and dependence on nature. It was a simple and uncomplicated society until the emergence of the pre-industrial revolution. It was the industrial age that catalyzed the shift to mechanism and other alternative forces to those of human or animals, resulting in mass production, and eventually to a society of marketing and consumption, leaping into modernism, which became a complex and multi-society since three decades ago.

During the age of information technology, computer systems were connected to the telephone, telefax worldwide; it is communication that goes beyond frontier and quickly was called ‘globalization age’, which brings immense changes for human beings, who then have difficulty to adjust and get along well within world society (future shock). This change began in the last century. The Age of Globalization is an age that brings about rapid changes in economy and society through information technology (IT). It is said that globalization is a result of the development of communication, transportation and information technology, indicating the growth and connection of economy, politics, technology, culture and religion including Buddhism which connects the individual, community, business, and government worldwide, whether it be in China or ASEAN.

A globalization is defined as of the dissemination throughout the world i.e. world community wherever they are or live can perceive, connect and obtain rapid and wide effect due to the development of information system etc. Although globalization covers world societal phenomena, it shows the connection between economics, politics, environment and culture that occurs at some place around the globe and can have a major impact on another part of the world. Globalization can have four kinds of flows of capital in the global economy, i.e. human capital (city immigration, migration, moving from one place to another), financial capital (support finance, capital, credibility and loan), resource capital (forces, metal, mines, and woods), and power capital (security forces, allies, and army).

**Global Trends and Implications**

Globalization is influential to the worldwide economy and society, especially those countries that depend their economic system on other countries such as Thailand. Below are factors leading to economic competition:

The New Demographics of the world population was around 6.1 billion in mid-2001 and will increase to 7.8 billion in 2025 (an increase of 1.2% each year), with 95% of the population increase coming from developing countries, particularly within the urban areas.

Trends of world populations will change both structure and behavior, with an increasing proportion constituting the elderly population (50 years old and up) while the young generation will decrease, especially in developing countries, due to low birthrates while the overall health of people are improved, contributing to longevity. In addition, the values and behavior of the population will change rapidly and unexpectedly.

The changes of populations will give affect as the end of single market. Previously, the market of a developed country was of a Homogeneous type, the majority occupied young generation, as opposed to predicted outcomes of the future, which indicate that the market will be divided into two obvious parts: (1) elderly people’s market–the majority of products will focus on health and the facilitation of daily life for the sake of degeneration of health, and entertainment services such as tourism etc. (2) adolescent’s market–products and services for the most part are centered around providing convenience for a fast-paced life, various kinds of luxuries including New Luxury Youth Markets, especially continuing education services for well-educated people and well-growing businesses. This is likely due to one-child families that invest extravagantly on education on the child, by means of costing education expenses each equal to previous expenses to 4-5 in total. Another luxury product is that of high technology such as Nanotechnology and Material Technology, resulting in a product called “Culture Product” which share similarities in culture, livelihood, consumption and franchises that signals this phenomena in Financial Services, while the stock market of high technology is in the hands of customers, the majority of whom are below the age of 45. In comparison, mutual fund investments are purchased mainly by the elderly.

The two-way flows between ASEAN and China have also been on the rise. Tourism is a good case in point regarding Trade in Services. ASEAN tourists visiting China totaled almost 1.1 million in 1995; the number reached an estimated 1.8 million in 2000. Meanwhile, ASEAN received about 0.8 million tourists from China in 1995. More remarkably, however, the number of Chinese tourists to ASEAN almost tripled to 2.3 million persons in 2000. The potential for two-way tourism is really inviting. ASEAN tourists were less than 8% of the total tourist arrivals (19.8 million) in China during 1999 while Chinese tourists in ASEAN made up just 10% of the 22.6 million persons visiting ASEAN in 2000.

The effect from the language and culture shift occurring in differing periods causes globalization in language and culture both in ASEAN and China. According to Appadurai, “the complexity of globalization is considered from fundamental principle of fundamental disjuncture among economy, culture and politics as 5 global cultural flows/scapes (appadurai 1998):

1) Ethnoscapes/human flows in the form of tourists, refugees and migrants and cross nation labors

2) Technoscapes/technology flow that go beyond the nation’s border especially the border line of nation-state.

3) Finanscapes/financial flow through the stock market, capital and global product market, cross national investment

4) Mediascapes/media flows as the base of the imagination of personality or identity in the world through the dissemination of information by the channels such as television, radios, movies, journal, newspaper and computer

5) Ideoscapes/Ideology flow such as democracy or communism, Buddhadhamma, multi new religious movements, cross-culture, multi languages (appadurai 1998)

These aforementioned five flows go beyond the borders of nation-states in various levels and it flows rapidly with different substantiality and different start and end points. Thus, globalization is not one harmony globe but deals with inequality and complication. This proposes cooperation, conflicts, wars among ethnic groups and countries throughout history, and this gives impact to international relationships or nationalism between neighboring countries simultaneously, this results in human flow as well as other flows that Appadurai defined. Initially, people from other regions migrated to Southeast Asia or those of neighboring countries migrated between one another as tourists, migrants, refugees or nation-cross labor. This is what gradually occurs in the age of globalization.

Meanwhile the Buddhist Flows in the globalization age are as follows:

1) Buddhist monks and laity flow, especially a monk, Bhikkhu, Bhikkhunis, samanera and samaneri, including lay Buddhists who travel as tourists, businesspeople, teachers, students and researchers, missionaries, or dhammaduta.

2) Technology flow–Buddhists use technology to respond to the new social contexts

3) Capital flow–Buddhists increasingly need to deal with the capital

4) Media flow–Buddhists use Buddhist media or the contents of media

5) Ideology flow–the dharma or Buddha’s teachings, including Buddhist matters, will go beyond traditional sects, schools, lineages, cultures, traditions, and will not necessarily remain among the same affiliate institutes or organizations or even temple.

**New Communication of Buddhism in the Globalization Age: ASEAN- China**

Buddhist movements have come into existence in the modern and globalized age. For the need of individualism, uniqueness, diverse ways of livelihoods in society, affiliated Buddhist movements are derived from individual satisfaction in daily life, and the holiness of teachings without texts or treatises and activities of new Buddhist movements deal with internal experience rather than wide social reaction. This feature is intent on religious individualism, experience and faith rather than doctrine and beliefs. In addition, it centers itself on pragmatism and questions from authorities such as monks, religious leaders, and focuses more on practices not only discussions or debates on syncretic integration, relations, tolerance and holistic worldview rather than separationist/sectarianism, and organizational openness on similar interests and issues.

The changes include the new Buddhist movement considered as a result from the changes of new societal order and globalization. The interest in studying and framing concepts for a better understanding of new religious movements took place in western countries such as USA over the past five decades. Later, efforts were made to define and classify new religious movements in terms of conceptual frameworks and theoretical arguments by scholars such as, sociologist Lorne Dawson, who summed up his argument regarding these changes and features of new religious movements in the following six ways. Employing such a framework, the new communications of Buddhism in a globalization age, between ASEAN and China are as follows:

1. Communication through more individualism whether it be ethnicity, identity or community.
2. Communication in the form of experience and faith rather than doctrine and belief.
3. Communication through pragmatism on religious practice and trust in the leaders of new religious movements, i.e. more pragmatic attitudes to questions of religious authority and practice.
4. Communication through more syncretism, relativism, and more tolerance of other religious perspectives and systems
5. Communication through a holistic worldview wherein teachings and practices are not separated from daily life
6. Communication through organizational openness

Communication through the audiences with more individualism. New religious movements center on religious individualism that possesses more identity and ideology in their social living, the affiliation or participation of these movements are based on new movements that are capable to fulfill individual needs in differing ways, and religiosity and activity is perceived through the individual, internal, and spiritual rather than wide social reaction. In globalization the communication will shift from one country, whereas Buddhist communication will take interest in individual requirements, and some may like the several concepts of dhamma. In ASEAN countries like Thailand more and more middle-aged groups are springing up, that chose the type of Buddhism they prefer, whereas in the past it was only one community or one temple that they could join and no other choices were available to them while in the globalization age, the community like in the past was a type of collaboration, togetherness, community.

Communication in the form of experience and faith rather than doctrine and belief. The new generation share their experiences through the experience of Buddhism rather than only focus solely on doctrine and traditional beliefs. In ASEAN more and more here-and-now experiences are emphasized. The traditional messages of Buddhism is not enough for the new generation who have a more scientific worldview. This accords with one of the six virtues of Dhamma, which is to challenge the new-comer to come and see for themselves, and is done by experience not only by discussion.

Communication through pragmatism on religious practice and the leaders of new religious movements i.e. more pragmatic attitudes to questions of religious authority and practice. New religious movements focus on experience and faith rather than doctrine and belief. The audiences can perceive and understand teachings and participate in religious activities of their own wish. It resonates with audiences through such experiences and they are capable of practice and self-practice more and more. Previously, the channels of communication used to be through inscribed old ways of books or publications and studying meditation was preserved for only monks. In the digital age, more people are interested in religious practices such as meditation because they are stressed, and depressed, and alternative solutions are difficult to find. It is not only text or talks but also practice. In ASEAN and China more new religious movements or Buddhist movements are mainly concerned with the mind and practice. They are not forbidden or forced to do so but they are voluntary to learn and to practice and people can choose as per their preference, while Buddhism is concerned with meditation such as Vipassana mediation, Samadhi or Chan, Zen movement. All are open to practice whenever is convenient and the practices are no longer under the control of religious authorities like monks. Laity can also be meditation masters, like Goenka from Myanmar, or as seen in the west, where meditation is applied to various fields such as psychology, psychotherapy, politics and economics. This movement of Buddhism is more popular among the new generation, and the meditation techniques must be in line with their daily life. In China, more people practice not only Mahayana meditation, but some are enthusiastic to learn other techniques from ASEAN countries like Thailand and Myanmar. Meditation in the Globalization age is one of the most practiced objects/products that can satisfy the modern people. Though chanting and textual studying used to be more popular, the practice of mediation is becoming more popular.

Communication through more syncretism, relativism, and more tolerance of other religious perspectives and systems. New religious movements are strongly intent on pragmatism on religious practice and the leaders of new religious movements (more pragmatic attitudes toward questions of religious authority and practice), the practice causes the audience from diverse backgrounds and needs to be able to run in differing characteristics. The faith in the leader of new religious movements is measured or considered from his /her practice including others. The channels of communication used to be through inscriptions and books or publications and the main contents are all religious, not concerned much with others. Whereas later texts have been more involved with history, and worldly concerns including politics and society. Buddhists with its emphasis on tolerance of other belief systems used to mingle with other religions for coexistence and harmony. For example, Buddhism tolerates other religions without destroying the others’ beliefs. Buddhists have done this throughout the history of Buddhism. Traditionally Buddhism was mixed with indigenous religions like Confucianism and Taoism and other belief systems, whereas in the globalization age, Buddhism has been assimilated and relates to innovative ideas and sciences. New religious movements place emphasis on more syncretistic, relativism, and tolerance of other religious perspectives and systems, i.e. combination in religion, other religions and other concepts, beliefs and temporal or secular ideologies such as concepts related to gender, ecology, social community, human rights, peace and conflict, blended within religious teachings. Within the context of new social movements, religious teachings are now used as concepts and ways for operation.

Communication through a holistic worldview wherein its teaching and practices are not separated from daily life. New religious movements mainly concentrate on a holistic worldview wherein its teaching and practices are not separated from daily life, and the religious sphere is not isolated from other social spheres. It has religions as well as other contexts. Thus, teaching, communication and practice go hand in hand as well as a practitioner’s physique. One example of a good holistic view is about health. During globalization, Buddhist meditation is used to resolve health, which is not limited to only the physical body but also deals with mental and spiritual health. The concept of a holistic view fits within four types of cultivation or Bhavana, not only physical cultivation but also societal, spiritual and mental cultivation. In the globalization age, people are interested in not only physical health but also spiritual life, through the concept of mind development of Bhavana, as well as proposing how to look at the physical life like money or physical health as a means for spiritual happiness. Buddhism integrates all into a happy life, leading to a peaceful life while the modern people devote most of their time to economy.

Communication through organizational openness. New religious movements are a type of organizational openness because affiliated members of new religious movements are from different life backgrounds, way of life, and with different objectives, and participation, differing in both physical and spiritual aspects. A model of a new religious movement organization is open, flexible and adjustable for new channels that are available to new comers to participate in and new channels of communication and practices that are relevant to the diversity of needs. New religious movements depend on technology, innovation of communication and more personnel resources with more competency to help develop movements for a space that satisfies the need for approaching religions more. Communication is not only for one group but for everyone and open to all. In previous times, communication among groups were seldom practiced, but in modern times it is for all people of all needs, the educated or the skilled, to help develop the organization.

**Conclusion**

In a globalization age, Buddhist communication is no longer only traditional but is adapted for modern purposes, and with new target groups for new kinds of societies, for example, urban societies, new communities, and new timing. In the globalization or digital age, new channels or ways of communication are based on adapted Buddhist concepts. Buddhism in the world will be open but focused on individuals who can tailor their own world. The Dharma product is not just for communities or social purposes but for individual purposes too. Urban people will learn how to find what is suited to them, and likewise society will be more open, organizations will be more open to welcoming newcomers. In this globalization age, the form of communication will change from that of reception to one of a proactive approach. Locations will be specific; the cities will be diverse from flows of different people, but the city will be more open and narrow for its inhabitant. The new communications of Buddhism are not limited to only the traditional interpretations of old contexts but is more open, and new phenomena are waiting for them to bring Buddhism for their supreme purpose. Nonetheless, Buddhism in the age of globalization will be re-interpreted for modern society. The essence of Buddhism is still like a diamond that waits for verification through passage of time.

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**Brief Profile’s Author**

Somphong is a simple practicing monk, in the conventional world he is appointed as acting director of ASEAN Studies Centre, MCU.

1. He is an acting director of ASEAN Studies Centre, Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, Thailand [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. He is a lecturer of Buddhist phycology, Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, Thailand [↑](#footnote-ref-2)