

Thesis Title : The Roles of Mahāyāna Monks in Social Development : A Case Study of Chinese and Vietnamese Sects in Central Region of Thailand

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this thesis were : firstly, to study Mahāyāna monks' role behavior in social development, and, secondly, to study the relationship among social factors, psychological factors, and the role behavior. The sociological role theory was utilized in the thesis. It was postulated that human role behavior was affected, through symbolic interaction process, by status-positions of incumbents. In this process, the incumbents would interpret social members' role expectations, form their opinions or attitudes towards those expectations, and have role performance accordingly. According to this theory, the social factor-status-positions, the psychological factors-commitment to Mahāyāna monk-status, role expectations on social development, and perception of social acceptance from Thai people-were likely to have an impact on role behavior in ethical, educational, social welfare and occupational development. This proposition was construction the ground that the Bodhisattva doctrine the tenet of helping creature relieve their suffering-in Mahāyāna Buddhism was compatible with social development principles.

Eleven empirical hypotheses were derived as follows : first of all, Mahāyāna monks' behavior in social development was likely to be affected by their role expectations; secondly to

sixthly, their role expectations were likely to be affected by (1) monk education, (2) ages, (3) duration of ordain, (4) ranks, and (5) commitment to Mahāyāna monk-status; seventhly, their role behavior in social development was likely to be affected by perception of social acceptance from Thais; and eighthly to eleventhly, perception of social acceptance from Thais was likely to be affected by (1) Thai-descent, (2) ranks, (3) country of origin, and (4) monks' role expectations. These hypotheses were tested by Chi-Square method and the association was measured by Cramer's V.

Documentary research, non-participant observation, informal interview, and questionnaire survey were methods used in collecting data. Field research was done from 16th to 26th, 1984. Ninety Mahāyāna monks in six Chinese temples and four Vietnamese temples in Bangkok and those of each in Chinese and Vietnamese temples in Karnchanaburi province were samples.

Relating to social factors, it was found that 47.78 percent of Mahāyāna monks was in Chinese sect and 52.22 percent in Vietnamese sect; 70 percent was non-Thai descent; 82.22 percent was born in Thailand; and those who were foreign-born had been living in Thailand for 27-43 years. The findings also indicated that 77.78 percent of them was low educated (Pratom 7 or lower) and only 6.67 percent was educated in educational institutions of clergymen. Occupations before becoming monks were merchants and agriculturists respectively. Their economic statuses were in subsistent level.

Relating to psychological factors, 64.44 percent of Mahāyāna monks was not sure of their roles in social development, and most of them was not sure of social acceptance from Thai people. However, 67.78 percent agreed that Chinese accepted them while 45.56 percent of them felt no acceptance from Vietnamese, 36.67 percent was not sure, and 17.78 percent felt that they were accepted. Most Mahāyāna monks strongly committed to Mahāyāna monk-status, but were not sure of their permanent ordaining. Moreover, they were not totally internalized Bodhisattva ideal.

Relating to social development activities, there were few activities in ethical, educational, social welfare, and occupational development. However, most Mahāyāna monks performed activities on ethical development and least on social welfare development. In consideration of the frequency of performing activities, educational development was the most and social-welfare development the least. The distinctive activity of Mahāyāna monks observed was "Kong-Tek" ritual.

The statistical testing revealed that there were significant relationship among social development activities, role expectations, and perception of social acceptance from Thais. Role expectations were significantly associated with ages and commitment to Mahāyāna monk-status. Perception of social acceptance from Thais was significantly associated with country of origin and role expectations.

Limitations of this research were mentioned and possible solutions were also suggested.