
NIBBĀNA FOR THE LAYMAN: THE LINEAGE OF THE DYNAMIC MEDITATION TECHNIQUE OF LUANGPOR TEEAN JITTASUBHO

Jakkrit Ployburanin
Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

ABSTRACT

In this paper I will argue that a significant force that promotes Buddhist ideas of mindfulness outside the limits of the exclusive Buddhist institutions (Buddhist monasteries) is the secularization of *vipassanā* meditation. One such instance is the Dynamic meditation of Luangpor Teean Jittasubho that uses rhythmic bodily movements to induce mindfulness. This form of secular form of *vipassanā* meditation has influenced healing, education, environmental conservation, art, architecture, and meditative engagement activities at resorts and modern lay meditation centers, allowing it to become one of the prominent schools of meditation practice in Thai Buddhism. This paper will discuss the lineage, or the origins and influences of Luangpor Teean's approach. It will analyze why this form of *vipassanā* meditation has become popular and more accessible to lay people.

Keywords: Dynamic meditation, mindfulness, secularization

Introduction

In contemporary Thai society, the Dynamic meditation practice of Luangpor Teean Jittasubho (1911-1988) that uses fifteen rhythmic bodily movements to induce mindfulness, is regarded as a prominent school of meditation practice in Thai Buddhism.^{2,3} Within the monastery wall, the lineage monasteries⁴ are spread to every part⁵ of Thailand; 6 in Northern, 56 in Northeastern, 5 in Central, 4 in Eastern, 3 in Western, and 2 in Southern. Whereas, among the secular world, the lineage has been covered and promoted on social media including TV channels, YouTube, Facebook, newspapers, and magazines. Also, the practice has proliferated to various secularistic activities such as healing, education, socially engagement activities, environmental conservation, and meditative engagement activities at lay meditation centers and resorts.

This began in 2007 when Wallop Piyamanotham, a psychotherapist, had inserted an illustration of rhythmic Dynamic meditation into his publication, *Self Psychological Therapy: Anxiety Disorder* (จิตวิทยาการแก้ไขอาการวิตกกังวลกลัวด้วยตัวเอง) as a method to cure psychological disorders. This was followed in 2011, when MGR ONLINE published a column *Welcoming Sati as Kindergarten Children's Best Friend* (ชวนสติมาเป็นเพื่อนซี้กับเด็กอนุบาล) which discussed the benefit of implementing Dynamic meditation to Chutaporn kindergarten. In April 2016, *Sarakadee* (สารคดี) Magazine published the issue 375 with Phra Paisal Visalo pictured on the front cover; entitled *Sati to Era* (สติสู่สมัย) tried to understand meditation practices from forest monasteries to the contemporary world. Within the same year Phra Paisal's Wildfire Forest Reviving project entitled *Growing Peas, Reviving Phu Lhong Forest* (ปลูกถั่วทั่วภูผาฟื้นฟูป่าภูหลง) was used by several media outlets such as 3D News by Channel 3 to address public concerns on the environment by the adoption of a Buddhist approach.

Also in 2014, 2017 and 2018, Puen Ti Chiwit by Thai PBS had broadcasted a documentary film that centered on mindfulness and the Buddhist path at Watpa Sukato and Watpa Somphanas among urban practitioners. Meanwhile, several treatments of Dynamic meditation practiced by prominent figures such as Luangpor Teean, Luangpor

Khamkian Suwanno, Phra Paisal Visalo and Luangpor Somboon Chatrasuwanno, were covered by social media channels such as the *Outlook* column on *The Bangkok Post* newspaper, *True Little Monk* on *True Plookpanya* TV Channel, and by Facebook groups.

Gradually, Dynamic meditation has spread to many secularistic activities in contemporary Thai society. Started in 2000, the Dhamma Yatra project, a walking pilgrimage that aims to promote mindfulness with awareness towards environmental concern was initiated by Luangpor Khamkian Suwanno (1936-2014). Followed in 2003, with Phra Paisal Visalo's contribution, the Buddhika Network was founded, that focuses on promoting Buddhism, its application into lay life, and social development, by using social engagement activities. One of the network's famous works is *A Peaceful Death Project* (เผชิญความตายอย่างสงบ) that later gained support from the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (สสส.) in 2018. In conjunction with this, Phra Ajarn Kanchit Akinjano has been working with patients since 2014. His project "I see you" is the integration of a monk's role in community health care. The remedial treatments, various forms of mindfulness psychotherapy, and palliative Care use the Dynamic meditation method.

This Dynamic meditation method has been used by many hospitals such as, Namphong hospital in Khon Kaen which has been implementing 'rhythmic Dynamic meditation' as a procedure for ten years with support from Watpa Sukato in Chaiyaphum. As well as this, the hospital is working in co-operation with Wat Nawakaram of Phra Kru Thaworn Pattanakit in developing the local community by focusing on spirituality, health and healing through the project *Happiness Community* (ชุมชนอยู่ดีมีสุข).⁶

At present Dynamic meditation has been implemented among schools such as Chutaporn, Baan Ploypoom, and Darawee kindergarten as well as Roong Aroon, Thaw Si and Jaruwon School, as a medium to develop the concentration, mindfulness and moral conduct of students. Also, Luangpor Teean teachings have been applied into architectural designs by using his animation technique which compares thoughts to rats and mindfulness to cats. In 2013 Ruu Suksa Ruu Suktua building

(อาคารผู้ศึกษาผู้สีกตัว) was established in the city center of Phuket to promote education, mindfulness and ethics targeted at the new generation. Also, this practice has spread to lay Buddhist associations such as YBAT and BIA; a significant arena for meditation instruction in contemporary Thailand.⁷ Moreover, there are lay meditation venues that focus on the propagation of Dynamic meditation such as the Baan Aree Foundation and the Dhamdee Roongroj Building, as well as Kru Sati Satharn (ครูสติสถาน), with support from the Roong Aroon school foundation (มูลนิธิโรงเรียนรุ่งอรุณ) to facilitate Dynamic meditation practice. This method has also spread to resorts as meditative engagement activities for Thai and foreign tourists. An example is the mindfulness meditation retreat at Apsara Beachfront Resort and Villa in Khao Lak in Phang Nga, held in August of every year.

Prior to the 1976 establishment of the prominent Dynamic meditation practice in Thai society, where a national ground level lineage was formed, the first lineage monastery was established (Wat Sanamnai in Central Thailand). This has become a prominent school of meditation practice in contemporary Thai society, spreading now to Central Thailand and also becoming the first lineage interaction with followers of Buddhādāsa and Paññānanda. In 1957, Dynamic meditation had emerged amidst conventional practices influenced by local traditions, beliefs and practical Buddhism. This paper aims to explain how Luangpor Teean had established a secular form of *Vipassanā* meditation through socio-cultural perspective, and to trace back the lineage of Dynamic meditation to the ‘*Wai-Ning*’ Laos meditation, and Burmese meditation.

Socio-Cultural Perspective of the Origin of Dynamic Meditation

Luangpor Teean or Por Teean⁸ as a layman was born in Buhom village, a community in Chiangkhan, Loei which is influenced by traditional beliefs in spirits and superstitions. According to Pathom (2015), the Mekong Trans-boundary River communities such as Loei among them Thai-Laos, have many indigenous cultural belief systems.⁹ Also, Thairoj (2001) found that Loei social structure is derived from the unique culture of the ethnic peoples of Laos.¹⁰ Luangpor Teean’s biography

reveals that as a layman, he had practiced several kinds of meditation such as walking, *kasīṇa* and ‘*Buddho*’ as well as *dhutaṅga*, chanting, incantations and mantras from palm leaf manuscripts that necessitated using supernatural forces.¹¹

Noticeably, these practices were linked to superstitions and locally held beliefs that everyone should have their own protective power for himself and his family. Por Teean was recognized as a protector among his family, relatives, and neighbors. Having been interested in merit-making ceremonies since his childhood, Por Teean became the village leader in merit-making ceremonies, obtained respect and abundant support from the local people which led to his selection as the community headman. All of this occurring in his late twenties. He was also known as a successful steamboat trader along the Mekong River between Nongkhai and Chiangkhan. Accordingly, as a layman, Por Teean was able to form a reputation for trustworthiness and to form community networks.¹² His acceptance as a community and spiritual leader through socio-cultural interaction among the local villagers and communities reflects the successful establishment of his charismatic leadership and social capital accumulation among the local villagers and communities which was essential for his future lineage propagation, especially as a layman Dhamma preacher. Lawrence (2008) states, leadership is not only an individual attribute but also a social process where networking, social trust, and relationship building are necessary to build social capital, contributing to leadership development.¹³

Luangpor Teean’s biography reveals that prior to his journey, searching for dhamma, he had practiced a certain degree of meditation including *Bud-dho* meditation, walking meditation and *kasīṇa* meditation as well as incantations such as invulnerability-verses. Yet, those methods could not alleviate his sufferings. Therefore, he rejected the concept of incantations, miracles and supernaturalism being practiced within his local community, because he viewed them ineffectual. Tavivat points out when Por-Teean reached his mid-40s, he had realized that although he spent many years avoiding “sin”, making merit and practicing meditation,

he could not expel anger from his heart. Consequently, he decided to commit himself to seeking the Dhamma.¹⁴ This set him on the path to develop Dynamic meditation, using fifteen rhythmic bodily movements, inducing mindfulness. According to Tavivat, Luangpor Teean's life is of special significance because he had attained the Dhamma while being a layman, which is very unique. For some, this is difficult to comprehend, especially in the monastically centered world of Thai Buddhism.¹⁵

In 1957 almost no one in his community had ever heard of the word *vipassanā*. Preaching and establishing a lay meditation center was regarded as being a radical concept. Therefore, gaining support from an authority was essential. Prior to Por Teean's initial teaching within the community, he had obtained support from his ecclesiastical peers, including the *saṅgha* provincial head monk of Loei, Sihanad Bhikkhu, the *saṅgha* provincial head monk of Nongkhai, a friend of Sihanad, the *saṅgha* provincial head monk of Udon Thani, Por Teean's old friend, and Phra Maha Paitoon's group from Tha Bo, one of Por Teean's experienced monks.¹⁶ This was due to his reputation and significant involvement with religious and social welfare activities established in the past.¹⁷

Regarding the pedagogical method, Por Teean used rationalization and demythologization to rectify local beliefs and practices not righteous or Buddhistically acceptable. For example; he pointed out the disadvantages of some misleading customs such as offering betel nuts and cigarettes to monks during Buddhist ceremonies, killing animals, serving alcoholic beverages and gambling on merit-making occasions.¹⁸ He also focused on the Buddhist engagement with mystical beliefs in the communities as being wrong. Por Teean appealed to a rationalized approach to Buddhism to support his claim. For example, 'shorten the land' incantation of Yakhu¹⁹ Phong that was believed to gain further distance of walking was simply due to his physical advantage.²⁰ Also, he demystified the 'Owl-Cliff shrine ghost' that was believed to have supernatural and mystical power, which required offerings of grilled chicken and beverages from passing people to the shrine as a form of worship. Luangpor Teean pointed out, if dogs can walk into the charnel grounds late at night without fear of ghosts,

this proves that the human fear of ghosts is misplaced. Meanwhile, he disproved the myth by employing his novice disciples to eat the food of the shrine. Once the monks experienced no ill effects, this local myth started losing its influence and control over the local people and thus it slowly disappeared.

Merit should not be based only on places for worship such as ubosot and kuṭī but should be through the cultivation of mind. Also, he disregarded beliefs in preparing holy water, luck-bringing rituals and the use of horoscopes, because in his opinion they did not make a significant contribution to setting one free from suffering.²¹ In consequence, his teaching focused mainly on the normality stages of the mind, not to get elevated when being praised or dejected when being blamed, through the fostering of mindfulness.²²

Connecting Burmese, Laos and Dynamic Meditation

In this section I shall trace how Por Teean developed and innovated his Dynamic meditation practice, where it is found that his journey to seeking the Dhamma is similar to the hero's journey, presented by Vogtilla. He proposed that the hero's journey starts from the ordinary world, once faced with the call to adventure or quest that must be undertaken, the hero therefore meets with a mentor, and is committed to the journey. The hero is then challenged by various trials until they finally cross a threshold. Once the spiritual mission is completed, the hero returns to the ordinary world with superior status, sometimes bringing back an elixir to help others.²³

Geographical Contribution

According to Luangpor Teean's biography, while returning from Paklay in Laos, he met his old friend Maha Srijantr in Panpraow or Sri Chiangmai, Nongkhai. In former times Por Teean had offered him alms and cruise rides between Nongkhai and Chiangkhan. Their talks on *vipassanā* meditation during this period had instilled in Por Teean a wish to undertake a quest to search for the Dhamma. Accordingly, Por Teean had finished all his businesses and made provisions for the care of his family until his path began in 1957.



Figure 1: Map shows locations that connected Luangpor Teean to Mekong Trans-boundary River and Thai-Laos border

When Por Teean began the journey, he headed directly to Maha Srijantr. This was perhaps due to the geographical location of his hometown in Buhom, Chiangkhan located along the Mekong River. Having travelled back and forth during trading, Por Teean became acquainted with Maha Srijantr and was inspired by his meditation experience. Park (1994) pointed out, geography and religion are curious bedfellows and there are myriad ways in which the two interact.²⁴ The biography of Luangpor Teean reveals his consistent association with Laos and the Mekong River from his middle childhood. He began his journey to Laos as a novice with Yakhu Phong and resided in Laos during the Buddhist rainy season retreat as a layman with Yakhu Boonma Don. Becoming friendly with Maha Srijantr through his travels and their unintentional meeting on his return from Paklay, Laos. Subsequently, once Por Teean was more clear about his search of Dhamma, he approached Wat Rangsimukdaram directly in Panpraow or Sri Chiangmai, Nongkhai where Maha Srijantr had once resided. During this period Maha Srijantr had gone to Luang Phrabang in Laos to spend the rainy season retreat. During his stay at the retreat, there were only two others present. These were Luangpor Wanthong, a former deputy district chief who had been ordained after his retirement and Phra Ajarn Maha Pan Anantho, a Laotian monk.

When Por Teean sought a Buddhist soteriology, he did not approach the Forest Tradition of Phra Ajarn Mun Bhuridatta that dominated Northeastern Thailand.²⁵ Even though there were three Forest Tradition monasteries located within the catchment area that could have had an influence on Por Teean including Wat Pa Summanusorn of Luangpu Chob Thannasamo (1901-1995) in Loei, Wat Hin Mak of Luangpu Thet Thetrangsi (1902-1994) and Wat Aranya-Banpot of Luangpu Rien Voralapho (1912-2005) in Nongkhai. The establishment of these monasteries had occurred after Por Teean's journey in search of Dhamma. Although the '*Buddho*' meditation of the Forest Tradition had spread to Por Teean's community from his early years in studying and searching for the Buddhist path, there seemed to have been none of the Forest monks within his locale. The spread of the '*Buddho*' tradition within Por Teean communities could be considered with reference to what Park classified as a contagious diffusion, and the most common type of diffusion process of religious ideas and practices through a population by their contact, and not an establishment by the initial group of carriers or main figures.²⁶ Accordingly, 'geography and religion' is found to be a dominant factor that contributed to the emergence of Dynamic meditation. The meeting with Phra Ajarn Maha Pan Anantho proved to be a significant turning point for Por Teean that would later give rise to his ideas and innovations of his lineage.

Burmese - Laos Meditation

Phra Ajarn Maha Pan Anantho previously named Dao²⁷ Pan Kaewchompoo was born in 1911 in Muang Songkhon, Laos. Similar to Luangpor Teean, Phra Ajarn Pan's biography reveals his involvement with incantations that were believed to give protection. In 1928, he was ordained as a novice according to traditional heritage to bid farewell to his father, called *songsakarn* in Laos. Meanwhile, he remained robed as a novice until 1931. He continued, being ordained as a monk the same year and given the title of Khuba²⁸ Pan Anantho.

Then, Khuba Pan Anantho searched and learned together with some masters in Southern Laos and Ubon Ratchathani in Thailand Moolakajjyana Sutta. Once he had completed the Sutta, he returned and set up the Moolakajjyana school in Muang Phong, Laos. In 1935, Phra Ajarn Pan moved to Vientiane to study at Vat Chanthaburi established by the Chanthaburi Buddhist Council²⁹ located in Vientiane. In 1941 he completed Pāli level three and was appointed as a Pāli teacher at Vat Up Mung in Vientiane. Meanwhile, Phra Ajarn Pan in 1943 had completed Pāli level six, which at that time was the highest level available at Vat Chanthaburi.

In 1946, as a result of a civil war in Vientiane, Phra Ajarn Pan crossed the border to Sri Chiangmai in Nongkhai and resided at Wat Pho Chai until 1951. Then moved to Wat Marukatayawan (Dong Khaem) in Nongkhai where he started practicing *vipassanā* meditation, but found it unsuccessful. Subsequently, he headed to Bangkok to search for *vipassanā* meditation school in which he had settled himself at Wat Mahathat in Bangkok of Phra Phimolatham (Arj) that had been influenced by the Burmese tradition, while Phra Suk Pawaro was his master.³⁰

To point out the significance of Wat Mahathat in the early 1950s, Cook (2010) has stated that since the 1950s, meditation practice has become available to large numbers of Thai laity³¹ and it was Phra Phimolatham (Arj) who was the key person who brought meditation practice to the nationwide movement among both monastics and laity. The *vipassanā* technique that he promoted was developed by Mahasi Sayadaw (1904-1982), and emphasized the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Phra Phimolatham's focus was also on spreading *Abhidhamma* studies to Thailand (Cook: 26-7).³²

To further his understanding, in 1952, Phra Phimolatham dispatched Phra Maha Chodok with Pāli level 9 completed, to study Burmese *vipassanā* meditation at Mahasi Thathana Yeiktha (MTY) of Mahasi Sayadaw in Yangon, established by U Nu, Burma's first prime minister (1947-1962). According to Jordt (2007), MTY is Burma's largest lay meditation center. It is unique among *pongyi kyaung* (monk's

monasteries) prototypes because of the presence of so many laypersons taking their rounds side by side with ordained monks. Numerous monks and laypersons are undertaking practices of meditation with a twenty-four-hour meditation schedule within MTY.³³ Phra Maha Chodok returned to Thailand together with Bhaddanta Asabha, his master and a disciple of Mahasi Sayadaw, together with Bhaddanta Indawangsa. The Burmese *vipassanā* meditation and lay meditation center model of MTY was implemented and later Phra Phimolatham established a *vipassanā* meditation center at Wat Mahathat in 1953. In 1969 U Nu and his family visited Thailand. This had been suggested by Bhaddanta Asabha, *Dhamma Sakajcha* (คณะกรรมสภาจันนา) assigned Pitoon Maliwan to invite U Nu for giving a dhamma speech at Wat Mahathat entitled; *Vipassanā Dhammathan* (วิปัสสนาธรรมฐาน) with approximately one thousand participants, including monastic and lay-persons.³⁴

Subsequently, Phra Rajawithetpanyakhun³⁵ revealed that Phra Maha Chodok had developed Burmese meditation into what is widely known in Thailand as ‘*Nor*’ tradition.³⁶ To explain this, Mahasi Sayadaw pointed out, that the objective of *vipassanā* or insight meditation is to allow the meditator to understand the nature of the ‘psycho-physical’ phenomena (*Nāma-Rūpa*), taking place in one’s own body. His method is, to initially note the rising and falling of the abdomen by noting “rising” and “falling” to induce mindfulness. Whenever and whatever thoughts or reflections occur, they should be duly noted. For example, if meditators feel happy, note this as “happy” or “happy-happy”. If meditators feel bored, note this as “bored” or “bored-bored”. If meditators think, note this as “thinking” or “thinking-thinking”. When thought or reflection disappears, return and realize the rising and falling of the abdomen. The essence of this practice is to realize that there is no self or “I” within ‘psycho-physical’ phenomena by being aware of every single one of these occurrences.³⁷

The practice of the ‘*Nor*’ method developed by Phra Maha Chodok who was also known as Luangpor *Nor*; was designed to induce practitioners to be aware of their physical body and mind. Phra Rajawithetpanyakhun pointed out, that ‘*Nor*’ is actually equivalent to the word *aware* (รู้); of

the present moment, for example, “angry *nor*” is to be aware of the anger that is arising in a meditator’s mind. Phra Maha Chodok’s pedagogical method is more of a set of systematic instructions. While those of Phra Phimolatham are more pertinent to the giving of a Dhamma sermon, but still remaining as a reference to the ‘*Nor*’ method.³⁸

Noticeably, before the establishment of Burmese *vipassanā* meditation at Wat Mahathat in the early 1950s, the tradition had previously been introduced to Thailand. In 1931 Bhaddanta Vilasa, a second-generation disciple of Mingun Sayadaw and Mahasi Sayadaw master was invited to Thailand to Kanchanaburi and Bangkok at Wat Prok in 1932. His prominent disciples included Ajarn Nab Mahaniranont, Ajarn Sai Saikasem, a Burmese laity and Phra Ajarn Suk Pawaro of Wat Rakhang Kositaram Bangkok, who was also a master of Phra Ajarn Maha Pan Anantho.³⁹

After Phra Ajarn Maha Pan completed *vipassanā* meditation with Phra Ajarn Suk along with the study of *Abhidhamma*, he studied at Mahachulalongkorn Monastic University (Wat Mahathat) with the rank of Udombarinya (Justin, 2008).⁴⁰ In 1954, his lay followers from Dong Khaem, Nongkhai invited him to return to Wat Marukatayawan where he had propagated his *vipassanā* tradition known as ‘*Wai-Ning*’ or ‘*Dting-Ning*’ to a wide circle. Reputed as being a meditation master, he was offered twenty-five *kuti* or monk huts at Wat Noen Panao in Nongkhai for his lay followers. He then crossed the border into Vientiane, Laos, to visit and preach his teachings to several monasteries where he had previously resided, such as Vat Up Mung, Vat Si Than and Vat Xieng Vae.⁴¹ Vat Xieng Vae is on the opposite bank of the river to Wat Rungsrimumkdaram in Nongkhai where Luangpor Teean as a layperson first met Phra Ajarn Maha Pan in 1957. Phra Ajarn Pan’s traditions at Wat Noen Panao have been continued by Phra Ajarn Boonsong Kovito (1932-2013) and the present abbot, Luangpor Sa-Nagad Puntito who took over in 2013.

According to Khamvone (2015: 213) Phra Ajarn Maha Pan is perhaps the most famous *vipassanā* master in Laos.⁴² He resided at Vat Sok Paluang in Vientiane since 1955. At present ‘*Wai-Ning*’ tradition is

being taught on every Saturday by *Mae Chee* or *Mae Kaow Kaew*, and being combined with herbal saunas which have grown in popularity amongst tourists (Justin 2008).⁴³ Meanwhile, Vat Pa Na Khoun Noi established by Phra Ajarn Maha Sali Kantasilo, a disciple of Phra Ajarn Maha Pan in 1999 is the most significant hub that propagates ‘*Wai-Ning*’ Laos meditation. Phra Ajarn Sali was born in Yasothon in Thailand, but spent the majority of his life in Laos. After his ordination, he met Phra Ajarn Pan in Nongkhai, followed him back to Vientiane, and resided at Vat Sok Paluang prior to his pioneering work of Vat Pa Na Khoun Noi along with *Mae Chee Kaew* in 1999. Phra Ajarn Sali was appointed as the Vice Supreme Patriarch of Laos and the commissioner of the Moral Propagation and Insight Meditation of Laos, he passed away in 2013.

Nevertheless, Vat Pa Na Khoun Noi maintains its role in preaching ‘*Wai-Ning*’ tradition. The monastery has been looked after by Phra Ajarn Maha Sithonh Xayavongsone, a disciple of Phra Ajarn Boonsong and Phra Ajarn Sali. He was appointed abbot in 2003 as well as the commissioner of the Moral Propagation and Insight Meditation of Laos, under the Central Buddhist Fellowship Organization of Lao PDR, in 2016. Having resided and practiced ‘*Wai-Ning*’ at Wat Noen Panow in 1998, Phra Ajarn Sithonh moved to Vat Pa Na Khoun Noi in 1999 until the present. The monastery regularly arranges Buddhist ceremonies that integrate *vipassanā* meditation activities, where several hundreds of thousands of participants participate with the presence of the supreme patriarch, Ya Than Yai Maha Ngon Damrongboon and Ya Mae Naly Sisoulith (Laos prime minister’s wife). Meanwhile, ‘*Wai-Ning*’ tradition is now practiced by a number of Phra Ajarn Maha Sali’s disciples including Phra Ajarn Phutthasorn at Vat Vieng Thong in Vientiane, Phra Ajarn Lucky at Vat Tham Phra Rasi in Vientiane, Phra Ajarn Soonthorn in Saravan and Phra Ajarn Khamkoon in Bokeo.⁴⁴

In Venerable Sayadej’s viewpoint, Phra Ajarn Pan’s tradition is distinct from conventional Laos meditation practices. His tradition is a new form of *vipassanā* meditation technique that originated in Thailand and Myanmar and which fosters an mindfulness of the present. In Laos,

the method is called “*Nāma-Rūpa* or “*Wai-Ning*,” moving and static meditation. Also, Venerable Sayadej pointed out, Luangpor Teean was one of Phra Ajarn Pan’s disciples, “who succeeded and adapted the technique into his meditational technique called, the dynamic meditation which is now widely professed.”⁴⁵

‘Wai-Ning’ Laos Meditation and Dynamic Meditation

In Thailand Phra Ajarn Pan’s tradition is generally known as ‘*Dting-Ning*’ which Luangpor Teean had learned as a layman in 1957. His tradition is termed ‘*Wai-Ning*’ in Laos (Venerable Sayadej, Phra Ajarn Sithonh and *Mae Chee Kaew*).

According to Tavivat, Phra Ajarn Pan had taught Por Teean a form of body-moving meditation called ‘*Dting-Ning*’ where each rhythmic arm movement and the pause at the end of that movement was accompanied by the silent recitation of the words ‘moving-stopping’.⁴⁶ While Venerable Tones explained, ‘*Dting-Ning*’ as ‘moving-stopping’ in which the practice needs to be recited inwardly while making the movements. The only difference is that with ‘*Dting-Ning*’, one uses words to label the acts, whereas Luangpor Teean forbade the recitation because he perceived it as a kind of mind fabricating or a false creation, and is therefore not a pure awareness. With Luangpor Teean’s technique, one simply experiences the existing sensation directly, in the present moment, without trying to name the experience.⁴⁷ Anchalee added, during the practice with Phra Ajarn Pan, Por Teean did not recite the words ‘*Dting-Ning*’ but instead developed awareness by using bodily movements.⁴⁸

Phra Ajarn Pan ‘*Wai-Ning*’s tradition is found to have some similarity to ‘*Yub Nor, Phong Nor*’s taught at Wat Mahathat, derived from the Burmese meditation that uses bodily movements to develop meditative stages and induce mindfulness illustrated in Figure 2, where practitioners observe the rising and falling of the abdomen.⁴⁹ While, Phra Maha Chodok had added the word ‘*Nor*’ at the end of each psycho-physical phenomena such as “rising – *Nor*” or “falling – *Nor*”. Phra Ajarn Pan differentiated bodily movements by using “*Wai*” as moving and “*Ning*” as static at the

end of each movement.

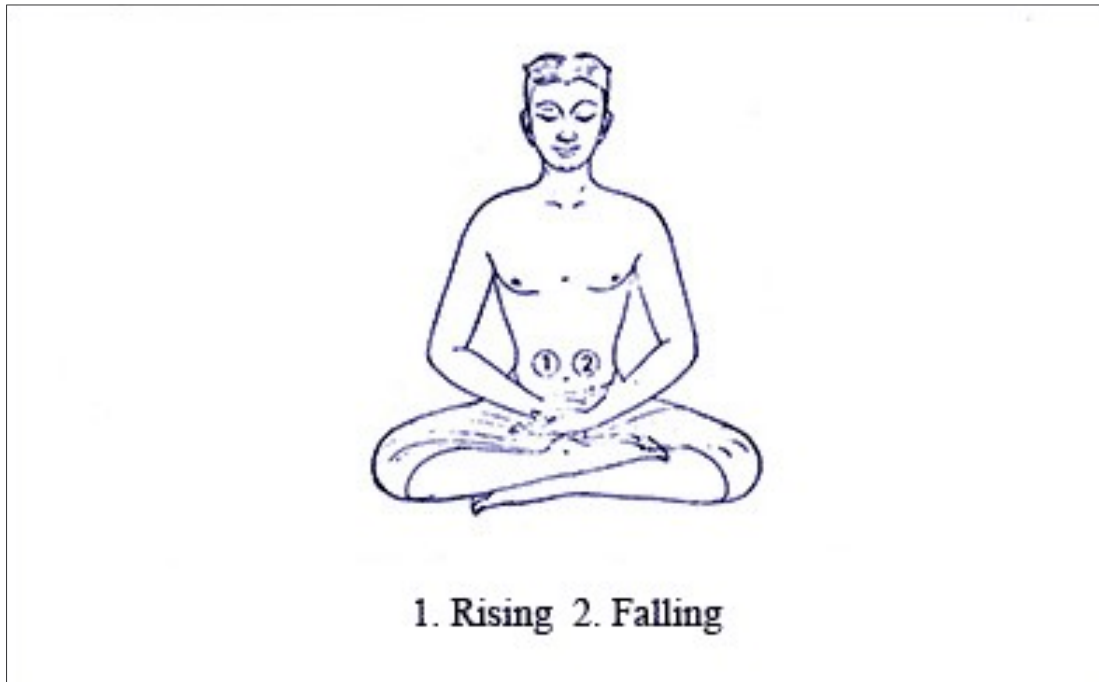


Figure 2: Rising and falling of abdomen Burmese meditation

According to Eller (2015), religious change also involves social, cultural and spiritual change through the process of innovation and diffusion. With an invention or discovery of a new idea, belief, myth or practice, it often provides an addition, extension or development to a pre-existing notion or practice.⁵⁰ The ‘*Wai-Ning*’ tradition of Phra Ajarn Maha Pan, began with the Burmese meditation of Mahasi Sayadaw that has spread to Thailand with a unique form of practice by focusing on the rising and falling of the abdomen as a starting point. Ajarn Maha Pan had made his journey from Laos to learn the tradition with Phra Ajarn Suk in Thailand at Wat Mahathat of Phra Phimolatham (Arj) and adapted the practice into ‘*Wai-Ning*’ Laos meditation. Once Luangpor Teean as a layman had learned the practice, he developed the method of Dynamic meditation making it suitable for lay practitioners. Accordingly, the journey represents an innovation and diffusion of Burmese meditation from Myanmar to ‘*Nor*’ tradition being practiced at Wat Mahathat continuing to ‘*Wai-Ning*’ traditions of Laos, and later to Dynamic meditation of Luangpor Teean, signifies cultural interactions

and transformations over time.

According to Phra Ajarn Maha Sithonh, using bodily movements is an effective tool to develop *sati* or mindfulness whereas Phra Ajarn Pan ‘*Wai-Ning*’ meditation comprises ānāpānasati, walking with three to seven movements, standing with seven movements, sitting with seven movements, paying homage with seven movements, lying down with five movements, and *Keb Sati* (เก็บสติ) which is also known as ‘*Wai-Ning*’, ‘*Dting-Ning*’, or *in-five – out-five* (เข้า 5 ออก 5) with twenty movements. Although, this technique is found to have a certain similarity to the rhythmic bodily movements of Dynamic meditation, their methodologies are remarkably different.



Figure 3: ‘*Wai-Ning*’ meditation of Phra Ajarn Maha Pan Anantho

‘*Wai-Ning*’ illustrated in Figure 3, bodily movements are conducted in a very slow motion with eyes closed. During twenty bodily movements, classified into *in-five* and *out-five*, practitioners are taught the realization of each movement and its stop motion (static motion) by using an idea of ‘*Wai-Ning*’ (moving-stopping) as a medium to guide them to a realization

of their bodily movements. Practitioners can also silently recite the word ‘*Wai-Ning*’ along with each movement (*Wai*) and its stop motion (*Ning*), or simply keep the realization of their bodily movements without a recitation until they are familiar with the practice.

During the practice when a thought arises, practitioners are taught to stop at the movement where it arises and contemplate the arising thought (as *Nāma*) before continuing the practice. Also, during the practice, practitioners are encouraged to a realization that mind is totally separate from body, for example, the realization of a feeling such as intention or ‘willingness to move’ within the meditator’s mind before making such movement. Moreover, Phra Ajarn Pan’s technique promotes the contemplation of *Nāma-Rūpa* (psycho or mental-physical phenomena) during the practice. Contemplation of thinking, when ‘thinking’ arises, meditators are taught to realize ‘thinking’ as *Nāma* and the body as *Rūpa* in which the realization is *viññāṇa* or consciousness (mindfulness) that must be developed by the ‘*Wai-Ning*’ method. This tradition embraces the contemplation of the arising six internal-external āyatana; eye-visible objects, ear-sound, nose-odor, tongue-taste, body-touch, and mind-feelings (psycho or mental phenomena) by using *Kāyanupassanā Satipatthāna* or mindfulness of the body, based on the practice through ‘*Wai-Ning*’ bodily movements. For example, when ‘sound or hearing’ arises through the ear, meditators are taught to realize the ‘sound or hearing’ as an arising *Nāma* through the ear, while the body is *Rūpa*, the realization is *viññāṇa* or mindfulness. Meanwhile, contemplation of the arising thinking, six āyatana, and five aggregates is encouraged to be conducted in parallel to ‘*Wai-Ning*’s’ bodily movements where the monastery arranges a schedule for different types of meditative practices. To base meditative practices only on ‘*Wai-Ning*’ is found to have a tendency to fall into a single form of concentration but there are several contemplations required during this practice as well as the bodily movements which are encouraged to be conducted very slowly.

Meanwhile, in Dynamic meditation illustrated in Figure 4, practitioners are taught to be mindful of each bodily movement, to

cultivate mindfulness (awareness) and let mindfulness see the thought and break through the chain of thoughts that Luangpor Teean pointed out is the root cause of suffering. Noticeably, Dynamic meditation is conducted with the eyes open and at a moderate speed whereas Luangpor Teean had adapted this method purposely to serve lay practitioners. This has been done since his early preaching period, as a layman organizing lay meditation *vipassanā*, at the meditation center in his hometown of Buhom and nearby communities in Loei (Luangpor Maha Buathong).⁵¹



Figure 4: Rhythmic Dynamic Meditation

Luangpor Sa-Ngard, a disciple of both Phra Ajarn Maha Pan and Luangpor Teean, had varying perspectives regarding ‘*Dting-Ning*’ and Dynamic meditation. Both parties focusing on the development of awareness but using different methods, including, movements, teachings, and techniques. Luangpor Teean developed his own unique style of teaching methodologies that could access numerous audiences, while the recitation of ‘*Dting-Ning*’ along with its slow movements of Phra Ajarn Pan’s tradition could be regarded as a preliminary technique prior to the same focus on developing *sati* or mindfulness.⁵²

The Secularism of Dynamic meditation

Since a layman Luangpor Teean (Por Teean) had reshaped meditative practices to body and mind observation that everyone could practice. He stated, the practice can be performed by all, regardless of religion, nationality, age, race or gender. The elements of body and mind do not discriminate between people, therefore all can perform these practices equally.⁵³ By proposing the rhythmic Dynamic meditation to induce mindfulness, Luangpor Teean used ideas of thought and mindfulness to facilitate his pedagogical method in which he refers to two basic psychological elements in a human being as thought and mindfulness. To free one from psychological suffering, his technique uses one's own body movements in order to develop mindfulness that opposes thought streams, which he views as the root cause of suffering.⁵⁴ While people collect vast mental images in their daily activities, these images are reflected in the act of thinking. When mindfulness is weak, thought takes them to the past and future, and when mindfulness is strong, this chain of thought is broken.⁵⁵

His methodology is comprised of short stories, comparisons, analogies and thought quotes, for example, the story of *A Cat and Rats* where he pointed out, 'when our house has rats, we need a pet cat. When a kitten, it could not catch big rats. Once the kitten became a grown cat (by developing mindfulness), it would be able to catch the rats regardless of the rat's size. An analogy of this would be, when one's mind falls into this stream of thought, it is like a kitten being dragged by a big rat. Therefore, one needs to develop strong mindfulness, where eventually, it can itself, oppose the stream of thought.

Luangpor Teean's meditation lineage leads to his carefully constructed methodology. Accordingly, it opens up opportunities for the engagement of Dynamic meditation practices comprising various types monastics and laypeople. For example, an innovation of the online meditation retreat program for stress relief, an implementation of Chinese old characters and Yin and Yang signs to teach mindfulness, the implementation of mindfulness in schools as a medium to develop

children, arrangements for a meditation retreat program and also as a therapy to help heal patients. An engagement between Buddhist practices with environmental conservation campaigns can act as an aid to conserve natural resources, as well as various presentations of Luangpor Teean's Dynamic meditation and his teaching, in the form of architectural design, art, cartoon animation, and literature.

Summary

To summarize; The primary concepts that have contributed to the Dynamic meditation lineage's significant growth and development in Thai Buddhism include; 1) An innovation of the rhythmic Dynamic meditation, to induce mindfulness, 2) A promoting of a Buddhist version of *vippasanā* which is more accessible to laymen by using secular and rationalistic perspectives, 3) An use of thought and mindfulness to facilitate his pedagogical method, 4) A promotion of meditative practice involving an observation of body and mind that can be practiced by all, and 5) A non- attachment towards Luangpor Teean himself as a charismatic figure; focusing instead on his practice..

Accordingly, it opens up the opportunity for boundless implementation of the Dynamic meditation practice into various platforms as seen in creative applications of mindfulness in contemporary Thai society. These movements signify the significance of Dynamic meditation for contemporary Thai society as well as showing that secularism an arena receptive to the propagation of Buddhist practice. Therefore, it is a significant movement that disseminates the practice of mindfulness outside the sphere of exclusively Buddhist institutions. Luangpor Teean has shown that an alternative forms of mindfulness meditation, namely the Dynamic meditation derived from traditional Laos *vippasanā* meditation and earlier forms of Burmese meditation can be readily accepted in the secular world.

ENDNOTES

¹ This article is a part of the author's Ph.D. dissertation entitled "The Dynamic Meditation of Luangpor Teean Jittasubho Lineage: Emergence, Proliferation and Significance to Contemporary Thai Society" under the supervision of Professor Dr. Sunait Chutintaranond and Assistant Professor Dr. Arthid Sheravanichkul. The research is partially funded by the Empowering Network for International Thai Studies (ENITS), Institute of Thai Studies, Chulalongkorn University and Khyentse Foundation.

² Tavivat Puntarigivat, and Chris Standford, *Thai Buddhist Social Theory* (Bangkok: Institute of Research and Development, The World Buddhist University, 2013), 80-81.

³ Patrick Ong Pei Wen, "The Meditation System of the Supreme Patriarch Suk Kaitheun as a Living Tradition at Wat Ratchasittharam," (Bangkok, Chulalongkorn University, 2011).

⁴ Dynamic meditation monasteries involve with long-term monastics residence founded and operated by either monastics or lay people.

⁵ Parts are classified according to the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board.

⁶ Somjit Somwang, Interview by Jakkrit Ployburanin, Personal Phone Interview, Khon Kaen, April 4, 2019.

⁷ Prakirati Satasut, "Dharma on the Rise: Lay Buddhist Associations and the Traffic in Meditation in Contemporary Thailand," *Rian Thai: International Journal of Thai Studies* 8 (2015): 173-207.

⁸ Por Teean or father of Teean is called according to the local tradition to call a parent by the name of the eldest living child.

⁹ Pathom Hongsuwan, "Dynamism and Creation of Invented Traditions among ISAN community along Mekong River," in *Creative traditions in contemporary Thai society* (Bangkok: Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre, 2015), 245-317.

¹⁰ Thairoj Puangmanee, "The Traditional Identities of Phi Takhon, Phi Khon Nam, and Floral Float Local Parade: An Image Creation into Series Performance for Promoting Tourism in Loei Province," Accessed May 21, 2019, <http://research.culture.go.th/index.php/research/item/892-ne188.html>.

¹¹ Loo-ang por Tee-an Cittasubho, *Normality*, trans. Venerable Tone Jinacamso (Bangkok: Loo-ang Por Tee-an Cittasupho (Pun Indapiw) Foundation, 2008), 66-68.

¹² *Ibid.*, 68-72.

¹³ Lawrence Jacob Van De Valk, "Leadership Development and Social Capital: Is There a Relationship?," *Journal of Leadership Education* 7, no. 1 (2008): 47-64.

¹⁴ Tavivat Puntarigviwat, “Luangpor Teean Jittasubho-The Dynamic Practices of Luangpor Teean,” Teean ‘s Life, Access May 20, 2019. <http://www.stlthaitemple.org/Teean’sLife.pdf>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Phra Teean Jittasubho, *Pak Ka Ti: Luangpor Teean Jittasubho Lae Sing Tee Fak Wai* = ปกติ: หลวงพ่อเทียน จิตตสุโขและสิ่งที่ไม่ใช่, (n.p.: Perdpadoojai Group, 2009), 70.

¹⁷ Phra Khamkian Suwanno, “Define your Destiny-KK490108am-Luangpor Khamkian Suwann = ลิขิตชีวิตคน-K490108am - หลวงพ่อคำเขียน สุวัณโณ” (video), March 14, 2014. Access May 14, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyJAEFtzbAM>.

¹⁸ Phra Teean Jittasubho, *Pak Ka Ti: Luangpor Teean Jittasubho Lae Sing Tee Fak Wai* = ปกติ: หลวงพ่อเทียน จิตตสุโขและสิ่งที่ไม่ใช่, (n.p.: Perdpadoojai Group, 2009), 74.

¹⁹ It was a tradition in his local community to pour water on monks who had ordained for years. The first pouring will be given a title; Somdej, and followed by Za and Yakhu, respectively.

²⁰ Loo-ang por Tee-an Cittasubho, *Normality*, trans. Venerable Tone Jinacamso (Bangkok: Loo-ang Por Tee-an Cittasupho (Pun Indapiw) Foundation, 2008), 67-68.

²¹ Phra Ajarn Thanachon, Interview by Jakkrit Ployburanin, Personal Interview, Chaiyaphum, July 4, 2017.

²² Loo-ang por Tee-an Cittasubho, *Normality*, trans. Venerable Tone Jinacamso (Bangkok: Loo-ang Por Tee-an Cittasupho (Pun Indapiw) Foundation, 2008), 89-91.

²³ Stuart Voytilia, *Myth and the Movies Discovering the Mythic Structure of 50 Unforgettable Films*, (Studio City, CA: Wiese, 1999), 8-12.

²⁴ Chris Park, *Sacred Worlds: An Introduction to Geography and Religion*, (n.p.: Routledge, 1994), 1.

²⁵ Tavivat Puntarigviwat, and Chris Standford, *Thai Buddhist Social Theory* (Bangkok: Institute of Research and Development, The World Buddhist University, 2013), 80-81.

²⁶ Chris Park, *Sacred Worlds: An Introduction to Geography and Religion*, (n.p.: Routledge, 1994), 100.

²⁷ In Laos, Dao is a name title given to men.

²⁸ The name given to monk in Laos who has been ordained and has not yet been invited to a Thelaphisek, Buddhist ceremony for the veneration of the monks organized by lay Buddhists to promote and celebrate the monks as well as pay respects and support them to remain in the Saṅgha community.

²⁹ In 1930, the council was established by Prince Somdejchao Phedsaraj for the purpose of reviving study of the Lao and Pali languages, the bases of Lao language and literature, www.watlaodc.org.

³⁰ Phra Phaowana Phiramthera, *Meditation Manual*, (Bangkok: Meditation Committee of Soi Thong Temple, 2497).

³¹ Joanna Cook, *Meditation in Modern Buddhism* (n.p.: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1.

³² Ipid, 26-7.

³³ Ingrid Jordt, *Burma's Mass lay Meditation Movement: Buddhism and the Cultural Construction of Power*, Research in International Studies, Southeast Asia Series (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), 15.

³⁴ U-Nu, *Dharma Lecture: Vipassanaā Khammathan by Mr.U-Nu (Former Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar)*, (Bangkok: Sammitr Press, 1971), 1-71.

³⁵ Vice Chairman, The Council of Thai Buddhist Monks UK and Republic Ireland and the abbot of Wat Mahathat UK Kings Bromley & Plymouth.

³⁶ Phra Rajawithetpanyakhun, Interview by Jakkit Ployburanin, Personal Interview, Bangkok, May 26, 2018.

³⁷ Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw, *Basic Meditation Instruction* (Burma: Buddha Sasana Nuggaha Organization, 2016), 13-7.

³⁸ Phra Rajawithetpanyakhun, Interview by Jakkit Ployburanin, Personal Interview, Bangkok, May 26, 2018.

³⁹ Jamanom Network Group, *Tok Tung Mai 3: Changing is Life = ตกตั้งใหม่ 3: ความเปลี่ยนแปลงเป็นชีวิต*, ed. Suvichanon Rutanapimon (Mukdahan: Ban Chom Manee Tai Abbey, 2012), 11.

⁴⁰ Justin Thomas McDaniel, *Gathering leaves and lifting words: Histories of Buddhist Monastic Education in Laos and Thailand* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 53.

⁴¹ Phra Achan Thongpanwaradho, "A Biography of Phra Achan Pan Anantho," The Buddhist Art Conservation Club Of Esan (North Eastern Part Of Thailand), Accessed September 15, 2018, <http://www.ubonpra.com/board/index.php?topic=2670.0>.

⁴² Kamvone Boulyaphonh, "The Life, Work and Social Roles of the Most Venerable Sathu Nvai Khamchan Varachitta Maha Thela (1920-2007)," (PhD diss., University of Hamburg, 2016).

⁴³ Justin Thomas McDaniel, *Gathering leaves and lifting words: Histories of Buddhist Monastic Education in Laos and Thailand* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 56.

⁴⁴ Phra Ajarn Maha Sithonh Xayavongsone, Interview by Jakkit Ployburanin, Personal Interview, Laos, July 17, 2018.

⁴⁵ Phra Sayadej Ekaggacitto, "The Tradition of Buddhist Meditation in Laos," Khmer Studies, Accessed April 20, 2018, <https://mceuubu.wordpress.com/2014/01/11/the-tradition-of-buddhist-meditation-in-laos/>.

⁴⁶ Tavivat Puntarigviwat, "The Dynamic Practices of Luangpor Teean," Accessed May 25, 2018. <https://cfmim.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/The-Dynamic-Practices-of-LPT.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Loo-ang por Tee-an Cittasubho, *Normality*, trans. Venerable Tone Jinacamso (Bangkok: Loo-ang Por Tee-an Cittasupho (Pun Indapiw) Foundation, 2008), 75.

⁴⁸ Anchalaee Tiyanon, “Swimming Against the Stream of Thought,” *Paramatthasacca*, Accessed May 25, 2018, <http://www.paramatthasacca.com/against-the-stream-of-thought>.

⁴⁹ Patrick Ong Pei Wen, “The Meditation System of the Supreme Patriarch Suk Kaitheun as a Living Tradition at Wat Ratchasittharam,” (Bangkok, Chulalongkorn University, 2011), 17.

⁵⁰ Jack David Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion: Culture to the Ultimate*, 2nd ed., (New York: Routledge, 2015), 151.

⁵¹ Pornthip Phuwabunditsin, Self-reliance – “Forest Monk Plant Forests = ฟึ่งตนฟึ่งธรรม – พระป่าปลูกป่า,” *Komchadluek* (Bangkok), November 6, 2010, Accessed May 9, 2018, <https://www.komchadluek.net/news/lifestyle/78493>.

⁵² Phra Sa-Ngan, Interview by Jakkit Ployburanin, Personal Interview, Nong Khai, March 16, 2018.

⁵³ Loo-ang por Tee-an Cittasubho, *Normality*, trans. Venerable Tone Jinacamso (Bangkok: Loo-ang Por Tee-an Cittasupho (Pun Indapiw) Foundation, 2008), 15-6.

⁵⁴ Taiwat Puntarigvivat, “Buddhism and Psycho-Analysis: The Teachings of Luangpor Teean,” *Journal of the World Buddhist University* 10, no. 1 (2014): 80-1.

⁵⁵ Tavivat Puntarogvivat, and Chris Standford, *Thai Buddhist Social Theory* (Bangkok: Institute of Research and Development, The World Buddhist University, 2013), 80-81.

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