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Such an understanding of the organic relationship between Mādhyamika and Vijñaptimātratā is the hallmark of Professor Nagao's thinking, and it forms an always-needed antidote for the tendency to read later sectarian differences back into the formative stages of Mahāyāna doctrinal development.

John Keenan

*Introduction à la connaissance des hlvñ ba<sup>1</sup> (μζῶθω) de Thaïlande*, by Anatole-Roger Peltier. Paris: Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, vol. CXV, 1977. 214 pages, 3 plates.

The work published by A.-R. Peltier is an important contribution to our knowledge of Thai Buddhism.

After the stack of works written on Thailand, one might have thought that the essential had been said about this country and its inhabitants. However, A.-R. Peltier has us discover a category of monks who are at the center of a phenomenon that has profoundly affected the religious attitudes of Thais, and of whom no one until now has spoken, nor even mentioned the existence: the *hlvñ ba<sup>1</sup>*.

The *hlvñ ba<sup>1</sup>* are Buddhist monks, living or dead, who are considered to be endowed with supernatural powers that they put to the service of living beings, and who are objects of great veneration by faithful lay-people of all social classes. This category of thaumaturge monks, which appeared shortly after World War II, and was popularized by the press, counts around 400 representatives distributed throughout the territory of Thailand, and its audience varies from the boundaries of a village to the whole country, sometimes even overflowing Thailand's borders.

The epithet *hlvñ ba<sup>1</sup>* is neither a title recognized by the religious authorities nor a grade of the Buddhist hierarchy, but solely a qualifier attributed by lay-people, and by them alone. The giving of this qualifier, which neither the hierarchy nor the Minister of Cults condemn or even criticize, is not bound to any formal rule. Its attribution is only made to monks to whom lay-people attribute an exceptional degree of sanctity—acquired through the experience of the mental disciplines of *vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna* and the practice of *dhutaṅga*—and in whom they recognize the powers of a healer, aptitude in preparing a lustral water with magical virtues, the knowledge of “magical” formulae (*gāthā āgm* and *mantra*), as well as other accessory qualities that vary infinitely, and of which the most common are the possession of a “divine sight,” of a “speech with marvelous power,” the capacity to displace oneself from one point to another in an instant, to stop rain, etc.

In the course of these last fifteen years, the number of monks to whom the faithful have attributed the qualifier *hlvñ ba<sup>1</sup>* has multiplied, which is what has led A.-R. Peltier to treat this phenomenon. After having inventoried the 392 *hlvñ ba<sup>1</sup>* fairly noted because they have been the subject of a newspaper article or publication, he explains the causes—multiple and mutually imbricating—that are at the source of this multiplication, and which are all of psychological or economic origin. In effect, the Thais, like certain of their neighbors, have a culture that imbricates the marvelous to the everyday, which permits them to accept the exploits of the *hlvñ ba<sup>1</sup>* as a possible reality. Furthermore, they have too a predilection for protective amulets, which have been more and more in demand to the degree that wars and insecurity have developed in this part of the world. “Miracles” having been attributed to certain of them made or blessed by monks, this whole category of amulets was not long in being presented as a talisman of invulnerability. Everyone wanted to have one, which incited more and more monks to make them or bless them, and it set flowing a veritable commerce. And, as there always was one of the faithful to think he had been protected from a catastrophe by one of them, he attributed the merit to the sanctity of the monk from whom he took it, and that [monk] was not long in being seen to qualify as a *hlvñ ba<sup>1</sup>*.

The commerce in amulets that has developed over fifteen years, as well as the multiplication of *hlvñ ba<sup>1</sup>* and the extension of the geographical area of the fame of those attributed with extraordinary powers, has transformed these monks into veritable mass-media stars. This has not failed to arouse sometimes violent reactions, not by the religious hierarchy, but by the small, citified intellectual elite and by some monastic disciples of Buddhadasa, who do not hesitate, in the name of Buddhist orthodoxy, to oppose certain practices of the *hlvñ ba<sup>1</sup>* and the cult that is rendered them.

As for the mass of the faithful, the great majority refuse to deny the marvels that are the magical powers attributed to the *hlvñ ba<sup>1</sup>* or the amulets coming from them. This has led A.-R. Peltier to ask if the belief in *hlvñ ba<sup>1</sup>* does not have a Mahāyānist resonance, since deceased *hlvñ ba<sup>1</sup>* intervene in the human world as *bodhisattvas* are supposed to—but differently from the latter: it is not to restore justice or help beings attain salvation, but to protect just those faithful that venerate them and carry amulets with their effigy or coming from them. This has also led Peltier to ask if the powers conceded the *hlvñ ba<sup>1</sup>*, which most often serve only to satisfy exclusively worldly desires, are not the outcome of a distant tantric influence. Ultimately, the popularity of the thaumaturge monks called *hlvñ ba<sup>1</sup>* has seemed to the author unconsciously to be the expression of a religious pan-Thaism.

This study, which offers in its appendices succinct biographies of eleven *hlvñ ba*<sup>1</sup> and a very good bibliography in the Thai language, ". . . does not pretend to be exhaustive. As its title indicates, it only embarks upon a theme. . ." and will be followed by other publications on the *hlvñ ba*<sup>1</sup>. We hope that A.-R. Peltier will quickly produce a sequel to this first study, which could have been presented and developed with such clarity and precision only by a researcher with a perfect knowledge of the language, society and Buddhism of Thailand.

Pierre-Bernard Lafont  
(translated from French by Roger Jackson)

*Buddhism, Imperialism and War. Burma and Thailand in Modern History*, by Trevor Ling. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979. xvii + 163 pp., map, appendix, references, glossary, index.

Trevor Ling's *Buddhism, Imperialism and War* is an outstanding work of comparative history, with emphasis on Buddhism and nationalism in Thailand and Burma and on particular wars between these two nations. The details of this historical account, especially those on post-colonized Burma and the relationship between Theravāda Buddhism and nationalism, which were the main forces in creating the present-day situations in Burma and Thailand, are remarkable and useful to the reader.

In his Introduction, Ling explains that the main purpose of his book is to clarify the extent to which religious ideals affect (or do not affect) the public and political life of a society in which they may be theoretically honoured. In this same chapter, Ling admits that there are differences between Thailand and Burma and points out that these differences are partly ethnic and cultural, and partly political, the political differences arising partly out of the history of the modern period, though not entirely. Ling proceeds to prove these difficulties quite successfully by giving us comparative accounts of the different political events and situations in Thailand and Burma, particularly British colonization and the Burmese reaction against colonization as seen in the gradual development of present-day Buddhism and the political situation in Burma, as opposed to the independence of Thailand and its smoother political and religious development. These differences are demonstrated in Chapter 4, "The Growth of Nationalism: 1900–1945," in which Buddhism and nationalism in Burma and Thailand are explained and compared. Chapter 5, "Buddhism and Nationalism in the Post-War