

This paper examines the organization, management, and propagation of the Wat Phra Dhammakaya (Dhammakaya Temple) in foreign countries, which is a newly arisen Buddhist group in Thailand. This group started its activity in 1970, and in 1977 it was recognized by the Thai government as a formal Buddhist temple belonging to the Sangha of Thai Theravada Buddhism. For this reason, it is difficult to term the Wat Phra Dhammakaya as a New Religious Movement. However, this temple has unique meditation practices, and its doctrines regarding Nirvana are different from mainstream Theravada Buddhism, hence, it is categorized as a new type of Buddhism in the Thai Buddhist Sangha.

In orthodox forms of meditation in Theravada Buddhism, one starts with concentration on one's own breathing or on one's senses and emotions, then moves to the monitoring of and detachment from of the senses and emotions. However in the Dhammakaya style of meditation, one starts from meditating on a light (sphere) crystal ball or on a Buddha image in their mind, then cultivates the inner self along various stages that eventually lead to Dhammakaya, the Dharma body. This meditation aims to achieve "Nirvana" as the "true self" through the experience of unity with the Dhammakaya in the mind. Furthermore, it is believed that Dhammakaya meditation produces supernatural powers of protection and worldly happiness.

Most of the members of this temple belong to the new urban middle class, who have a higher educational level, it has also spread to urbanites with less education and to the local people. The Dhammakaya Temple and its related organization adopted new propagation methods using the mass media and IT, and held an attractive huge ritual at a very large ceremony hall. The temple also attaches greater importance to fundraising activities and provides attractive religious goods for donations. Some people criticize the fundraising and donations activities of the temple, as consumerism. However in my opinion, it is more complicated than this, and it is more appropriate to term these activities as "sacred consumption."

The first foreign branch of Wat Phra Dhammakaya was established in 1992. Quite a few people in Thailand are critical of the temple because of its active recruiting and unique doctrine and practices. For this reason, propagation in foreign countries has become an important strategy to keep the temple going. Furthermore, the temple acquired its method for managing a religious organization from the Japanese New Religions, and they have also incorporated the academic outcomes of Buddhism studies at foreign universities in constructing their doctrine. It can be said that the organization itself developed as a result of globalization.

At present, Wat Phra Dhammakaya has foreign branches in more than 20 countries. There are 7 branches in Japan, and the temple has been registered as one of the religious juridical persons by the Japanese government. Most of followers at the temple in the Japanese branch are Thai who are living in Japan. The recruitment of Japanese has not yet succeeded very well. However, there is another religious group of Theravada Buddhism, which has more than 2000 Japanese members.

What causes the gap between success and lack of success in propagation to Japanese? As a study about internationalization or globalization of religious groups, this paper will also address this point.