

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."