



**In Memory of the Royal  
Cremation Ceremony of  
The Most Venerable**

**Somdech Phramahadhirajahn**

**Former Abbot of Wat Chanasongkram, Bangkok, Thailand**

**One of the eight patriarchs of the Thai Bhikkhu Sangha**

**At Wat Tepesirin Bangkok, Thailand**

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## **Biography** **of the Most Venerable** **Somdech Phramahadhirajahn**



His Eminence Somdech Phramahadhirajahn, one of the eight patriarchs of the Thai Bhikkhu Sangha, passed away in his residence at Wat Chanasongkram, Bangkok, Thailand on March 11, 2011 CE/2554 BE at the age of 88, having completed 75 years of monastic life. In commemoration of his accomplishments and long, glorious life, His Eminence's biography may be put forth in brief as follows.

### **Birthplace**

Somdech Phramahadhirajahn in his early years was known as Niyom, born to Nai Hrong and Nang Him Chantanintr on February 11, 1923 CE/2466 BE in Ban Tahin Village in the Dhanu Sub-district of Utai District in Thailand's Ayutthaya Province.

### **Elementary Education**

At the age of seven, His Eminence started his schooling under the supervision of Abbot Phra Adhikan Un at Wat Huntra in the Krungkao District of Ayutthaya. Two years later, he began to attend public school at Wat Huntra and completed the fourth grade in 1935 CE/2478 BE. After the completion of his mandatory education, his father sent him to Wat Tongpu's Buddhist Institute for Dhamma and Pāli-language Studies in the same district.



### **Monastic Ordination**

On June 28 of 1936 CE/2479 BE, at the age of thirteen, His Eminence went forth into monastic life as a novice at Wat Krasang, the temple nearby his birthplace in Utai District, with Phrakru Borankanissorn as his Preceptor.

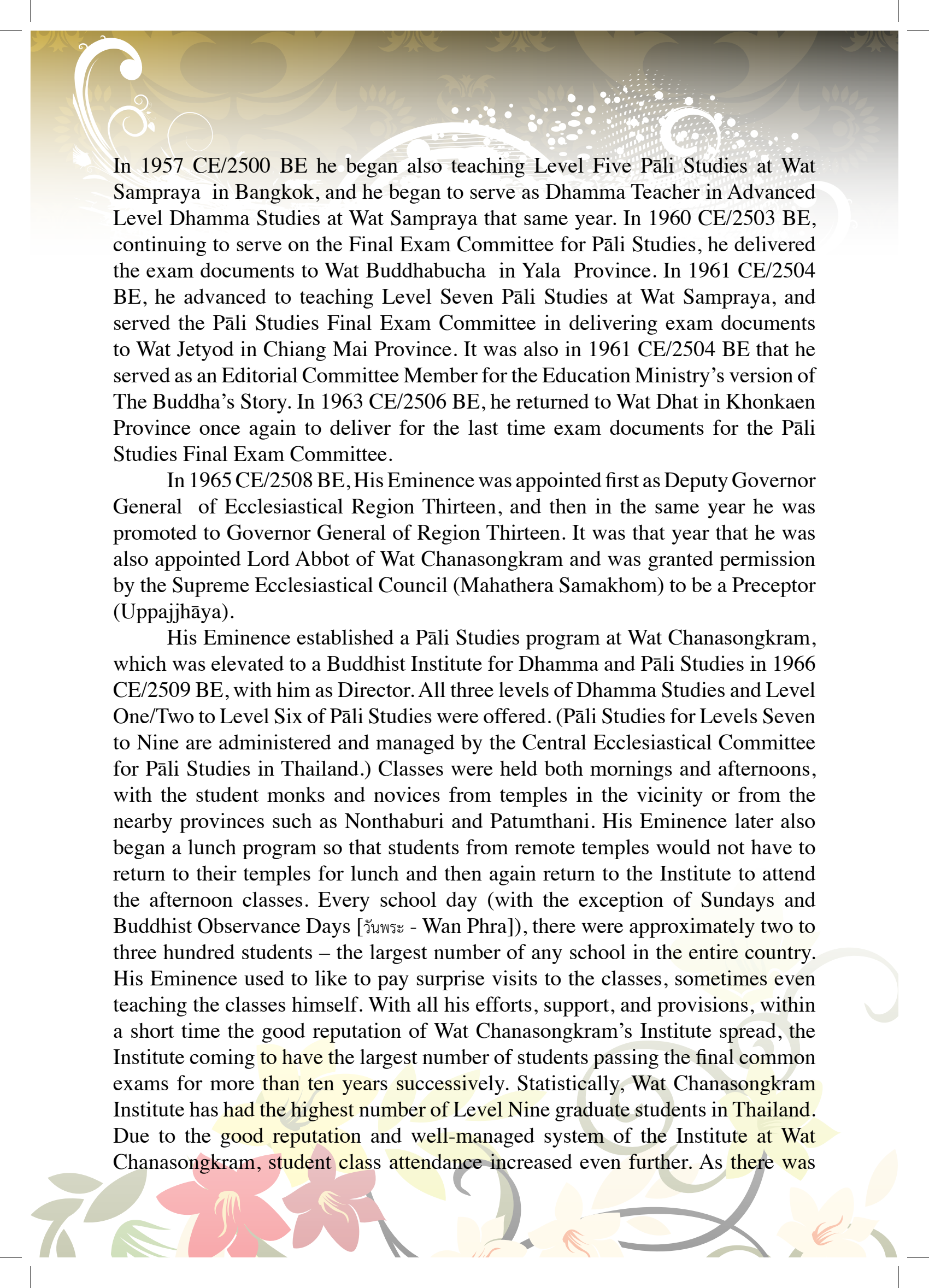
On March 10, 1944 CE/2487 BE, at the age of 21, His Eminence was fully ordained as a Buddhist monk (bhikkhu) at Wat Prayatikaram, a temple not far from Wat Tongpu, with Phra Borankanissorn as his Preceptor (Upajjhāya), Phrakru Sadhukitkarri as his Act-Announcing Teacher (Kammavācācāriya), and Phrakru Utaikanarak as his Ordination-Proclaiming Teacher (Anusavanācāriya). He was given the Pāli Buddhist name of Ṭhānissaro.

### **Ecclesiastical Education**

After entering the Buddhist monastic community as a novice in 1936 CE/2479 BE, His Eminence returned to Wat Tongpu in Ayutthaya to continue his Dhamma and Pāli studies. At this temple, he passed examinations for the first two levels of Dhamma Studies and the third level of Pāli Studies between 1937 BE/2480 BE and 1939 CE/2482 BE.

In 1941 CE/2484 BE, to obtain further higher education, His Eminence moved to Bangkok and stayed at Wat Rajaburana, where he passed Advanced Level Dhamma Studies. He then completed the Fourth and Fifth Level of Pāli Studies between 1942 CE/2485 BE and 1944 CE/2487 BE. When World War II broke out, he had to retreat temporarily to Wat Prayatikaram in Ayutthaya Province, but after the war ended he returned to Bangkok full-time to continue his education, completing Sixth Level Pāli Studies at Wat Suthat's Institute in Bangkok in 1946 CE/2489 BE. He then moved back to Wat Rajaburana and began studying at the Institute at Wat Saket, where between 1949 CE/2492 BE and 1955 CE/2498 BE he completed the Seventh, Eighth, and finally the Ninth (and highest) Level of Pāli Studies in the Sangha's Ecclesiastical Education system, then comparable to a Western doctorate degree.

Meanwhile, His Eminence's dedication to returning and sharing the knowledge gained through his studies had begun in full. Having already completed Advanced Level Dhamma Studies six years earlier, in 1947 CE/2490 BE, he began to serve as a member of the Final Exam Grading Committee for Dhamma Studies. In 1951 CE/2494 BE, while completing the Eighth and Ninth Level Pāli Studies himself, he began to teach Levels Three and Four of Pāli Studies at Wat Rajaburana in Bangkok, which he continued for the following eleven years. In 1955 CE/2498 BE, he began to teach Level Five at Wat Suthat in Bangkok, and in 1956 CE/2499 BE as a Final Exam Committee member he began to serve as the Representative for the Central Bangkok Ecclesiastical Committee for Pāli Studies in delivering exam documents to Wat Dhat in Khonkaen Province.



In 1957 CE/2500 BE he began also teaching Level Five Pāli Studies at Wat Sampraya in Bangkok, and he began to serve as Dhamma Teacher in Advanced Level Dhamma Studies at Wat Sampraya that same year. In 1960 CE/2503 BE, continuing to serve on the Final Exam Committee for Pāli Studies, he delivered the exam documents to Wat Buddhabucha in Yala Province. In 1961 CE/2504 BE, he advanced to teaching Level Seven Pāli Studies at Wat Sampraya, and served the Pāli Studies Final Exam Committee in delivering exam documents to Wat Jetyod in Chiang Mai Province. It was also in 1961 CE/2504 BE that he served as an Editorial Committee Member for the Education Ministry's version of The Buddha's Story. In 1963 CE/2506 BE, he returned to Wat Dhat in Khonkaen Province once again to deliver for the last time exam documents for the Pāli Studies Final Exam Committee.

In 1965 CE/2508 BE, His Eminence was appointed first as Deputy Governor General of Ecclesiastical Region Thirteen, and then in the same year he was promoted to Governor General of Region Thirteen. It was that year that he was also appointed Lord Abbot of Wat Chanasongkram and was granted permission by the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council (Mahathera Samakhom) to be a Preceptor (Uppajjhāya).

His Eminence established a Pāli Studies program at Wat Chanasongkram, which was elevated to a Buddhist Institute for Dhamma and Pāli Studies in 1966 CE/2509 BE, with him as Director. All three levels of Dhamma Studies and Level One/Two to Level Six of Pāli Studies were offered. (Pāli Studies for Levels Seven to Nine are administered and managed by the Central Ecclesiastical Committee for Pāli Studies in Thailand.) Classes were held both mornings and afternoons, with the student monks and novices from temples in the vicinity or from the nearby provinces such as Nonthaburi and Patumthani. His Eminence later also began a lunch program so that students from remote temples would not have to return to their temples for lunch and then again return to the Institute to attend the afternoon classes. Every school day (with the exception of Sundays and Buddhist Observance Days [วันพระ - Wan Phra]), there were approximately two to three hundred students – the largest number of any school in the entire country. His Eminence used to like to pay surprise visits to the classes, sometimes even teaching the classes himself. With all his efforts, support, and provisions, within a short time the good reputation of Wat Chanasongkram's Institute spread, the Institute coming to have the largest number of students passing the final common exams for more than ten years successively. Statistically, Wat Chanasongkram Institute has had the highest number of Level Nine graduate students in Thailand. Due to the good reputation and well-managed system of the Institute at Wat Chanasongkram, student class attendance increased even further. As there was



food leftover after lunch each day, His Eminence started a free pre-school and lunch program for children in the neighborhood, providing food for close to one hundred children.

After having served for a full twenty years as Lord Abbot and Preceptor, nearly forty years after he had begun formally teaching and with a full fifty years of experience in Dhamma and Pāli Studies, in 1986 CE/2529 BE His Eminence was appointed Commissioner of the National Tipitaka Rectification Commission. Nearly another twenty years later, and seventy years after beginning his Dhamma and Pāli Studies, in 2004 CE/2547 BE he was appointed Advisor to the National Educational Support and Advocacy Committee for Dhamma and Pāli Studies.

### **Special Contributions and Recognition**

When young, still studying and just beginning to teach, His Eminence moved back and forth between Bangkok and Ayutthaya Province several times. In 1948 CE/2491 BE, he moved to Wat Prayatikaram and provided assistance in various temple activities including the pagoda (chetiya) restoration project. In the following year, His Eminence was invited back to Bangkok by Phrakrupalad Suwattanadhutagun, Lord Abbot of Wat Rajaburana, to assist him in temple activities and management. During this time His Eminence spearheaded the renovation and restoration of the war-damaged temple.

In 1962 CE/2505 BE, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadech bestowed upon His Eminence the first ecclesiastical rank of Phra Pariyattisopone. Various works and responsibilities came along with this rank. In the following few years, His Eminence played a major role in the renovation of the war-damaged temple buildings and the main sanctuary (Uposatha Hall) at Wat Rajaburana, and the





second rank of Phra Rajamolee was bestowed upon him in 1964 CE/2507 BE.

As mentioned earlier, three major events occurred in His Eminence's life in 1965 CE/2508 BE: his role was expanded when he was first appointed Deputy Governor General; he was then promoted in the same year to Governor General of Ecclesiastical Region Thirteen; and he was appointed a Preceptor and Lord Abbot of Wat Chanasongkram, where he then remained for the final forty-five years of his life.

His Eminence's years at Wat Chanasongkram were the time when the great fruit of his many years of diligent study, practice, and service began coming to fruition for the benefit of not only his temple, but also the greater Thai Bhikkhu Sangha, the Thai community as a whole, and the Buddha Sāsana. His contributions ranged from teaching Dhamma and meditation, to the aforementioned Dhamma and Pāli education, temple renovations and improvements, traditional Song Thai architectural design, providing food for poor children, and care for both himself and others with traditional Thai medicine, as well as the making of both large and small Buddha images and amulets. Further instances of some of his very many contributions follow here in brief.

Prior to His Eminence's arrival at Wat Chanasongkram, most of the temple buildings and structures, including the monastic residences (kutis) and the main sanctuary (Uposatha Hall), were in deteriorated condition. Kutis at Wat Chanasongkram were built in sections (คณะ) much like Thai-style wooden houses, where the floor is raised high and spaces are left open underneath. The kutis were grouped in a rectangular pattern, with a common building in the center. Each section was separated by an avenue, similar to the layout in modern American cities. His Eminence began renovating the kutis section by section, keeping the Thai-style architecture on the top and building concrete walls underneath. Monks lived in the upper level of the building and the novices lived in the lower level. This type of mixed-style kuti became popular from that time with many temples continuing building this type of kuti to this day. His Eminence also restored the main sanctuary as well as the buildings around the sanctuary. These surrounding buildings are mainly used for Dhamma and Pāli studies and sometimes for religious ceremonies such as memorial services. As part of its new and well-organized layout, the temple compound was complemented by the addition of small bushes, shrubs, and gardens, giving Wat Chanasongkram its serene appearance and pleasant atmosphere.

After becoming Lord Abbot of Wat Chanasongkram, Preceptor and Regional Governor General in 1965 CE/2508 BE, His Eminence accomplished much in the various projects he undertook, for example temple and monastery renovation, ecclesiastical education and management of the Sangha, and lunches

for poor children, and in 1968 CE/2511 BE the third rank of Phra Thepsophon was bestowed upon him.

In the 1970s and 1980s, His Eminence greatly expanded the sphere of his service to the monastic community. In 1972 CE/2515 BE, he began to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the Sangha Hospital and he became a member of the Renovation Committee for the ancient pre-Bangkok temple and royal vihara, Wat Rajaoros. The fourth rank of Phra Dhammapidok was then bestowed upon him. He continued expanding his role in serving the monastic community, not only domestically but also in terms of the international relations and activities of the Thai Bhikkhu Sangha, when in 1975 CE/2518 BE he became a member of the Sub-committee of the Monks Foreign Travel Office. In 1986 CE/2529 BE he became a Committee Member for the creation of the Phra Chai amulet that was made for His Majesty the King's birthday as a contribution to his beneficent works.

His Eminence was honored and acknowledged for his great skill in his work with the Thai Sangha when in 1986 CE/2529 BE he was elected and appointed as an Executive Member of the Thai Ecclesiastical Supreme Sangha Council. In 1987 CE/2530 BE, he went on to serve on the Special Committee to select significant contributors to the Buddha Sāsana for the celebration of the Day of Vesakha Puja, on the Committee of the Meditation Retreat to honor His Majesty King Bhumibol, and as a Member of the Ecclesiastical Board of Directors for the development





and construction of the national Buddhist park Buddhamonton. It was this year that the fifth of the six ranks – Phra Dhammavarodom was bestowed upon him. Following this, in 1988 CE/2531 BE he went on to become the Ecclesiastical Chief Superintendent of the entire Southern Region of Thailand.

By then, his great works and contributions to the Thai Bhikkhu Sangha and to the Thai community in general had become well-known in the monastic and lay community alike. In 1992 CE/2535 BE, he became a member of the Regulations Committee which drafts rules, regulations, orders, ordinances, and decrees for the Thai Ecclesiastical Supreme Sangha Council, and was elevated to the sixth rank and became Somdet Phramahadhirajahn, a patriarch of Thai Buddhism. There are only eight patriarchs in the Thai Sangha's ecclesiastical ranking system. The Supreme Patriarch is chosen from amongst these.

His Eminence's Mentorship and Support of Wat Buddhanusorn

### **His Eminence first met Phra Vitesdhammakavi (Phramahā Prasert Kavissaro**

when Phra Vitesdhammakavi was a sāmanera (novice) at Wat Rajaburana in Bangkok in 1965 CE/2508 BE. At that time, His Eminence was the assistant abbot of Wat Rajaburana. When His Eminence was promoted to the position of abbot of Wat Chanasongkram, he suggested to the abbot of Wat Rajaburana that Sāmanera Prasert come to Wat Chanasongkram for his bhikkhu ordination, and return to Wat Rajaburana. Thus, in the year 1968 CE/2511 BE, at His Eminence's invitation and with his abbot's blessing, His Holiness Somdech Phrabuddhakosājāhn (Jutindhara Mahāthera) of Wat Sampraya became Phramahā Prasert's Upajjhāya (Preceptor). The abbot of Wat Rajaburana, Most Venerable Phrarājaputhājāhn, became his Kammavācācārya (Act Announcing Teacher), and His Eminence became his Anusāvanācārya (Ordination Proclaiming Teacher). His Eminence kindly supported Phramahā Prasert in many ways. He would invite Phramahā Prasert to participate in various ceremonies as the second monk in addition to the abbot of Wat Rajaburana, allowing Phramahā Prasert opportunities to learn and gain experience. After Phramahā Prasert completed his studies in India and returned to Thailand, His Eminence offered another opportunity for him to work with the variety of eminent monastic and laypersons from all around who served as the Caretaking Committee of Wat Rajaburana, another excellent learning experience. His Eminence's support continued on to the later development of Wat Buddhanusorn, the Thai Buddhist Temple in the San Francisco Bay Area.

After Phramahā Prasert visited the United States for the first time and spent two years establishing Wat Buddhanusorn, he returned to Thailand. At that time, His Eminence gave his blessing that Phramahā Prasert could either return to America or Thailand. He decided to return to the United States. Three years after

the founding of Wat Buddhanusorn, Phramahā Prasert went back to Thailand to consult with His Eminence regarding the making of the main Buddha image for Wat Buddhanusorn's main hall and sanctuary. Thus, in 1986 CE/2529 BE, what was to become Wat Buddhanusorn's main Buddha image was conceived by His Eminence, who became actively engaged in advising about the design and production of the main Buddha image. His Eminence was highly knowledgeable in Thai traditional arts and provided his expertise supervising and directing the sculpting of the image with the artist.

His Eminence also arranged for the monks who offered blessing chants for the casting of the Buddha image and recommended which monks to invite for the chanting to inaugurate the image. He stipulated that all of these monks be highly-educated and knowledgeable, having attained to at least the ninth and highest level of Pāli Studies, and gave Phramahā Prasert the list of names to invite. His Eminence Somdech Phra Buddhājāhn Upasena Mahāthera of Wat Saket was invited as the lead monk in the chanting to inaugurate the Buddha image. In July of 1986 CE/2529 BE, His Eminence then invited His Holiness Somdech Phra Buddhakosājāhn (Jutindhara Mahāthera) of Wat Sampraya to both preside over and lead in the ceremonial sanctification of the image.

With the support of the abbot of Bangkok's Wat Rajaburana, in November of 1986 CE/2529 BE, there was a final ceremony called "Empowering the Buddha" held under His Eminence's guidance at Wat Rajaburana. There, the image of the Buddha was blessed by His Eminence with his gift of the holy and auspicious name "Somdech Phra Buddha Varo Sukhothai Trailokanath Prasathporn Buddhanusornsathit." The top ten monks (for instance, Phra Dhammamolī or Luang Por Pae of Wat Pikulthong in Singburi and Phra Dhammadhīrarājamahāmuni or Luang Por Chodok of Wat Mahādhātu in Bangkok) who are famous masters of meditation endowed with meditative powers were invited for the empowering of the Phra Buddha-Varo-Sukhothai image, with His Eminence himself sending the invitations from Wat Chanasongkram. After the image of the Buddha was installed, His Eminence advised that the Ratana Sutta's Varo varaññū varado varāharo, anuttaro dhammavaram adesayi, idampi buddhe ratanam pañītam, etena saccena suvatthi hotu, verse be chanted and meditated upon in conjunction with the Phra Buddha-Varo-Sukhothai image. He also gave the mantra: Araham, buddha-varo, sugato, bhagavā, sabba-mārajito, mahāddhāno, mahālābho, namo-buddhāya, na-ma-pa-ta, and directed Phramahā Prasert in its use. Both of these practices have become Wat Buddhanusorn traditions.

In 1993 CE/2536 BE, Her Majesty Queen Sirikit came to San Francisco, California in the United States to receive the 1993 Woman of the Year Award from Stanford University. She was contemporaneously invited to perform the



Laying of the Foundation Stone Ceremony for the new Uposatha Hall – the main sanctuary – at Wat Buddhanusorn in Fremont, in the San Francisco Bay Area of California. It was a great blessing and honor for all the Thai people, both in California and everywhere, that she so graciously accepted this invitation for the sake of the Buddha Sāsana. According to Thai tradition, ranking and highly respected monks are invited to perform religious ceremonies when a member of the royal family is present. Phramahā Prasert requested that His Eminence come to preside over this ceremony. It was only then that, in his kindness and beneficence, His Eminence travelled abroad for the first time.

When His Eminence arrived he gave guidance in all things to be prepared, both confidently and competently supporting and arranging everything. His Eminence also presided over the Wat Buddhanusorn Board of Directors and Trustees meeting on the day before the ceremony. At that time, the architectural design of the Uposatha Hall was changed from the original plan to the existing design in accordance with His Eminence's advice. On the day for the ceremony, he was seen at 4 am, having risen early, reciting blessing chants for the making of holy water for the ceremony. He then dedicatedly prepared the stakes and bricks for the laying of the foundation stone, each of which he blessed with his calligraphy of sacred mantras. The stakes were of nine different types of auspicious wood from Thailand and painted with mantras in the Khmer (sacred Khom script) in white sacred powder. The nine bricks, also painted with His Eminence's sacred



mantra calligraphy, were covered, three each, with gold, silver, and a mix of gold and silver.

When the main structure of the building was completed, His Eminence offered his advice about the design for the spire at the peaks of the rooftops, as well as the decorative leaf embellishments that fall from the spires around the gables. He also put his heart into the design of the Phra Buddha-Varo emblem united with the yantras of the Four Noble Truths which he offered and were artistically placed within the northern outer gable of the hall. They are not only beautiful, but are holy, describing the heart of the Buddha together with his first teaching Turning the Wheel of the Dhamma. Later, His Eminence also envisioned and advised upon the making of the two great disciple images of Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna that flank the main Buddha image on each side, including their composition, size, posture and mudras. It was he himself who presided over their ceremonial sacralization in 1997 CE/2540 BE.

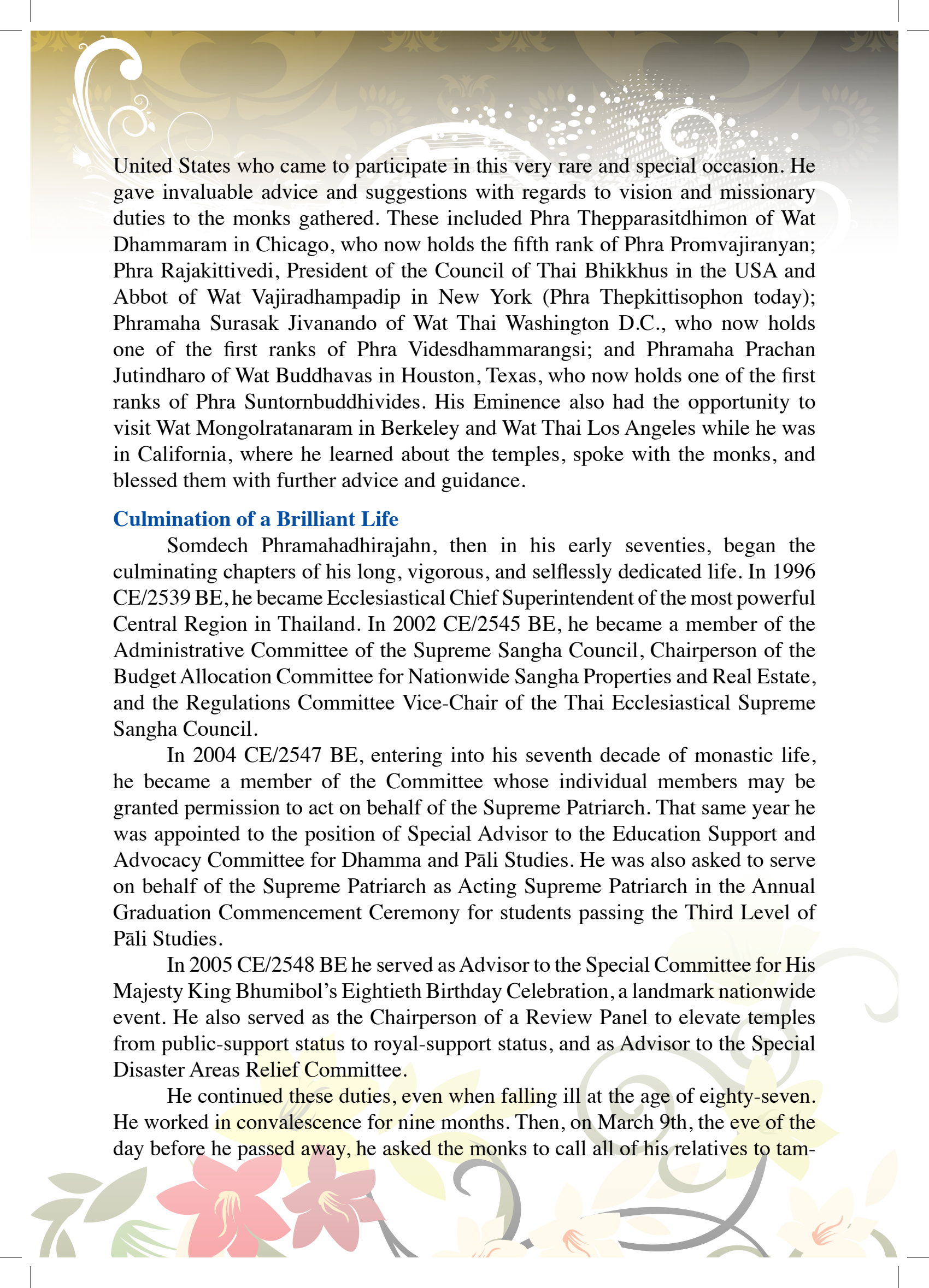
His Eminence truly put his heart into Wat Buddhanusorn, from its early days to its present form; the temple is shining and replete with his blessings and care.

### **Involvement in International Buddhist Missions**

His Eminence never travelled abroad in his life, except for one year. In that year he travelled both to the San Francisco Bay Area of Northern California in the United States, and at the Supreme Patriarch's order, together with the Sangharaja, on a diplomatic mission to China. He mentioned his reasoning for not travelling to one of his disciples: that the travel cost to Western countries was quite high, and the money could be spent in a more useful way on such things as education and construction – especially in the remote rural areas of Thailand where every bit of help is so needed and so greatly appreciated.

In 1993 CE/2536 BE, Her Majesty Queen Sirikit came to San Francisco, California, to receive the 1993 Woman of the Year Award from Stanford University. She was contemporaneously invited to perform the Laying of the Foundation Stone Ceremony for the new Uposatha Hall – the main sanctuary – at Wat Buddhanusorn in Fremont in the San Francisco Bay Area of California. According to Thai tradition, ranking and highly respected monks are invited to perform religious ceremonies when a member of the royal family is present. Phramaha Prasert Kavissaro, Phra Videsdhammakavi today, one of His Eminence's disciples and the abbot of Wat Buddhanusorn in Fremont, requested then that His Eminence come to preside over this ceremony. It was only then that, in his kindness and beneficence, His Eminence travelled abroad for the first time. During his short visit, His Eminence met with monks from Thai temples all around the





United States who came to participate in this very rare and special occasion. He gave invaluable advice and suggestions with regards to vision and missionary duties to the monks gathered. These included Phra Thepparasitdhimon of Wat Dhammaram in Chicago, who now holds the fifth rank of Phra Promvajiranyan; Phra Rajakittivedi, President of the Council of Thai Bhikkhus in the USA and Abbot of Wat Vajiradhampadip in New York (Phra Thepkittisophon today); Phramaha Surasak Jivanando of Wat Thai Washington D.C., who now holds one of the first ranks of Phra Videsdhammarangsi; and Phramaha Prachan Jutindharo of Wat Buddhavas in Houston, Texas, who now holds one of the first ranks of Phra Suntornbuddhivides. His Eminence also had the opportunity to visit Wat Mongolratanaram in Berkeley and Wat Thai Los Angeles while he was in California, where he learned about the temples, spoke with the monks, and blessed them with further advice and guidance.

### **Culmination of a Brilliant Life**

Somdech Phramahadhirajahn, then in his early seventies, began the culminating chapters of his long, vigorous, and selflessly dedicated life. In 1996 CE/2539 BE, he became Ecclesiastical Chief Superintendent of the most powerful Central Region in Thailand. In 2002 CE/2545 BE, he became a member of the Administrative Committee of the Supreme Sangha Council, Chairperson of the Budget Allocation Committee for Nationwide Sangha Properties and Real Estate, and the Regulations Committee Vice-Chair of the Thai Ecclesiastical Supreme Sangha Council.

In 2004 CE/2547 BE, entering into his seventh decade of monastic life, he became a member of the Committee whose individual members may be granted permission to act on behalf of the Supreme Patriarch. That same year he was appointed to the position of Special Advisor to the Education Support and Advocacy Committee for Dhamma and Pāli Studies. He was also asked to serve on behalf of the Supreme Patriarch as Acting Supreme Patriarch in the Annual Graduation Commencement Ceremony for students passing the Third Level of Pāli Studies.

In 2005 CE/2548 BE he served as Advisor to the Special Committee for His Majesty King Bhumibol's Eightieth Birthday Celebration, a landmark nationwide event. He also served as the Chairperson of a Review Panel to elevate temples from public-support status to royal-support status, and as Advisor to the Special Disaster Areas Relief Committee.

He continued these duties, even when falling ill at the age of eighty-seven. He worked in convalescence for nine months. Then, on March 9th, the eve of the day before he passed away, he asked the monks to call all of his relatives to tam-

boon together on the 10th. He then invited all of the monks in his gana (monastic section of the monastery) to come and chant together for his relatives. After they had departed, with just a few monastics around, he then passed away quietly in his kuti, having fulfilled seventy-five years of distinguished monastic life.

### **His Legacy**

His Eminence was very humble and modest. He said exactly what needed to be said and led people by example. He treated monks and novices like fathers and sons. His smiling face was always visible to everyone. His kindness to others was also well known. For example, the story is told that one day His Eminence saw a very young novice carrying a bag full of text books and walking tiredly back to his nearby temple after the class. His Eminence called the novice up to his kuti and had a talk with him, encouraging him to study Pāli. At the end, His Eminence gave him a set of yellow robes as a gift. Eight years later, that novice passed the final exam for the Ninth Level and was fully ordained under His Majesty the King's sponsorship. (There is a tradition that if a student passes the Ninth Level exam while still a novice, the King will sponsor his bhikkhu ordination).

During his forty-five years at Wat Chanasongkram, His Eminence gave an abundant number of sermons, normally giving a Dhamma Teaching every Wan Phra Buddhist Observance Day without fail. For more than a decade, whenever His Eminence gave a Dhamma teaching (Dhammadesanā), he always both began and concluded his teaching with the final words of the Buddha from the "Maha Parinibbana Sutta": "Vayadhammā saṅkhārā appamādena sampādethā" – "All conditioned things are rising and passing; strive on with diligence." His preaching was of a traditional style in which the words and sentences rhyme. This type of preaching is not easy, it being very rare that a person have such a level of mastery of the language and thought process. Thus, his sermons were very smooth and easy to listen to. He liked to take his sermon's topics from events in the daily newspapers, events which he compared to those in Lord Buddha's time. He explained both the causes and effects of the events clearly and exactly in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha.

His Eminence authored a book on Buddhist meditation. He particularly taught and practiced Buddhānusati, Recollection of the Buddha; Ānāpānasati, Mindfulness of the Breath; and both Samatha, Calming Meditation, and Vipassanā, Insight Meditation, in addition to Mettā Bhāvanā, Meditation on Loving Kindness. His practice of samatha was well known to all the Sangha, and he was recognized for his achievement of mental power and insight. His special kammaṭṭhāna method of practice was thus: After sitting down, one should first relax the body and mind by broadly viewing the fivefold sense base: kesā, lomā,



nakhā, dantā, taco— hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth and skin— at least three times, or until the breath becomes smooth and the body relaxed. Then, observe nāma rūpa aniccā –the impermanence of name and form (everything of body and mind); nāma rūpa; dukkhā – the unsatisfactoriness of name and form; nāma rūpa anattā – the non-self of name and form; and impermanence and the three characteristics (tilakkhaṇa) together with the breath for some time until feeling relaxed and ready. Then, begin with bhāvanā and silently recite: “Araham” with a long inhale, and “Buddho” with a long exhale. And then, considering the three characteristics, contemplate the nature of life with regards to them, over and over. According to his instruction, before the end of every meditation, one should practice mettā bhāvanā thus: “Sabbe sattā... sukhitā hontu... averā hontu...” – “May all living beings be happy...free from enmity...”

His Eminence also wrote Buddhist literature. One of his well-known works is The Story of Parittā (Parittā is a form of chanting of suttas selected from the Buddhist Canon or Tipiṭaka). A few well known verse sayings of His Eminence have also been documented. Some of his sayings require deep thinking to understand.

#### **A few of them follow here:**

*Accomplishment in life is measured by works, knowledge, morality, and right livelihood,*

*not by being born in a famous family or being rich.*

*One should view the person who points out another’s mistakes as a person who points one to wealth.*

*Taking the rough road (so that one can learn)*

*is better than taking an easy route (where one never gets such a chance).*

*Being in difficulty (necessity is the mother of invention)*

*is better than being pampered (with one never learning how to survive on one’s own)*

*All bad things happen because of lack of self-discipline.*

*To do good requires sacrifice and restraint.*

*On this death bed, His Eminence gave this last verse:*

*We’re all bound to birth, decay, illness, and death.*

*We cannot escape them.*

*Be mindful.*

*Don’t lament.*

*Care well for what you need to care for.*

*My duties have been fulfilled.*

The value of Somdech Phramahadhirajhan’s life was to serve as a good example, a role model and symbol for us. He was a pillar of righteousness in his

administration. He touched our hearts and remains always in them as a shining example for life.

### **Dedication**

#### **Kataññūkataveditā Uddissanakathā**

All the Dhammadhuta monastic members of the Council of Thai Bhikkhus in the U.S.A. together with the Thai temples that serve as the centers of the Thai community in the U.S.A. from their beginnings, to this day, and this book: all these are dedicated to him.

**“Do your duty; my duty is completed”**

*- Somdet Phramahadhirajahn*

#### **Vayadhammā saṅkhārā**

#### **Appamādena sampādeṭhā**

The nature of conditioned things is to rise and pass;  
strive on with earnestness.

*- The Buddha, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*







**CHANTING BOOK**  
**PĀLI LANGUAGE**  
**WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATION**



# Chanting Book

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## FIRST EDITION

1. Chanting in Buddhism can be classified into two main types according to tradition : i.e., Theravāda and Mahāyāna. Theravāda uses Pāli as the principle language, but Mahāyāna uses Sanskrit translated into the native language of each country.

The purpose of chanting can be outlined as follows:

- a. To maintain the original tradition by reciting the Buddha's teachings;
  - b. To use chanting as part of the religious ceremonies and traditional rituals;
  - c. To strengthen the faith of newcomers to Buddhism;
  - d. To use chanting for meditation;
  - e. To be a basis for Buddhist education and the increase in wisdom;
  - f. To build up inner strength of mind to enhance the power of meditation;
  - g. To dispel wicked and inauspicious thoughts occurring in one's mind.
2. The chanting of the Thai Theravāda sect is further divided into two styles. In one the chanting uses the original Pāli, in the other a Thai translation. Those who chant for the purposes of "d" and "e" above may like to use the translation, comprising Dhamma discussion from the Buddha, verses from the senior monks, and verses from the senior nuns. Sections 7 and 8 of this book consist of important suttas from the Tipitaka (the Buddhist Canon), such as the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, Ādittapariyāya Sutta, Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta, and the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Section 7 contains the reflections on the seven books of the Abhidhamma; Section 5 the Anumodanā Gāthā, the Appreciation of Offerings which are verses used on various occasions.

Daily chanting in morning and evening chanting includes special prayers used in rotation each day; the Paccavekkhaṇa, which con-



tains reflections on the four requisites, clothing, food, shelter, and medicine; the Dedication of Merit; and the Prayer of Loving Kindness. The present book contains some changes in these passages for clearer understanding and for easier chanting in English. The translations here are derived from other sources (see part 3 below). The Council of Thai Bhikkhus in the U.S.A. set up a committee to see to it that the new Pāli-English chanting book is as polished as possible. The committee members have worked dutifully to ensure a certain level of quality as regards both the Thai language and the English.

Chanting in the original Pāli follows the old custom for the most part. Consequently, the kind of result a person achieves in his or her mind depends on the effort. If one pays enough attention while chanting, one will get a good result; otherwise little benefit will be gained. Each individual has a specific purpose for chanting according to their beliefs and understanding. For example, some may chant to transform their minds from wicked thoughts to pious ones, others to change their attitudes so that blessings can come into their lives.

So why is chanting important for Buddhists? Chanting is important for a variety of reasons.

In the first place, it is a way in which the teachings of the Buddha are brought to mind. The chants represent a significant number of Buddhist texts that can teach as well as inspire. Chanting reinforces our commitment to the Buddhist way of life by redirecting our sense of purpose at the beginning and end of the day.

Secondly, chanting is important because it effects the purification of the mind in two ways. Chanting purifies insofar as the words are a guide for banishing evil from the mind and directing thoughts toward the true and the good. Thus chanting is not just a ritual but also a spiritual tool deriving its power from the truthfulness of the words. Moreover, regular chanting purifies the mind insofar as the repetitive action produces a wholesome affect on the chanter. The





chanter gains merit through his participation in a virtuous activity. Chanting was taught by the Buddha as a direct route to Enlightenment. In this regard, chanting can help develop the perfections of morality, resolution, truthfulness, and generosity.

Thirdly, chanting serves to provide a kind of emotional relief from the troubles of daily life and contemporary society. In the way in which it can calm and focus the mind it is somewhat akin to the more powerful sitting meditation. Furthermore, group chanting not only provides emotional relief but also a sense of belonging and common purpose as the chanters together engage in the purification of their minds together.

Fourthly, chanting is important because it is a way of paying respect to the Triple Gem, the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha—the Enlightened One, the Path to Enlightenment, and the Community of Monks. For instance, it is out of respect and humility that we fold our hands and bow three times, first to the image of the Buddha, then to the Dhamma, finally to the Saṅgha.

In another respect chanting is now something that is intrinsic to every ritual or ceremony performed by Theravāda monks on auspicious or inauspicious occasions. Above and beyond the aims of the Buddha Dhamma, nowadays it is very popular to chant.

3. The first part of this Pāli-English chanting book is a collection of various passages written by different scholars specializing in Pāli for the use of the Theravāda sect. These passages are not the Buddha's own words. The sources of these passages are as shown in APPENDIX 1 : Reference Books section.
4. The original reason for producing this English-Pāli chanting book was the need of the Thai missionary monks abroad, especially in the U.S.A., to fulfill their duties regarding the propagation of the Theravāda Buddhist teaching. As a priority apart from meditating, they are required to be able to communicate in English with mem-



bers of the non-Thai community. Initially, only Thai translations of the Pāli were used. As time went on, Thai-American families came to Buddhist services and wished to take part in the chanting. The Thai monks who were bilingual started to produce English versions of the Pāli texts. They produced these texts from the old books and altered them to suit the needs of each temple. However, not all temples used translations, even those into Thai. Besides, contents and styles varied from temple to temple as each sought to develop the chants in the best possible fashion.

At the 29<sup>th</sup> annual general conference of the Council of Thai Bhikkhus in the U.S.A. at the Wat Thai Washington, D.C., in June, 2548 B.D./2005 A.D., a suggestion to standardize the Pāli-English chanting book was presented to the assembly. Since the council is one of the largest Theravāda Buddhist organizations in the United States, members thought it should assume responsibility for such a book, printed in its name for international use. The assembly agreed to form a working committee of seven missionary monks to collect the materials and improve the English translations. The editorial committee were as follows:

- a. *Phravivek Vivekānando, Ph.D., Adviser*
- b. *Phramaha Sakchai Āhitamedho, Ph.D.*
- c. *Phramaha Thanat Atthacārī, Ph.D.*
- d. *Phramaha Thongchan Suwanso, Ph.D.*
- e. *Phrakrupalad Rit Thiracitto*
- f. *Phramaha Somboon Sammāpuñño*
- g. *Phramaha Direk Buddhayānando, Secretary*

5. The compilers, with long experience in chanting, carefully arranged the passages in the book according to the occasion as follows:

**Section 1** begins with morning chants comprised of passages revering the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. It is followed by passages for reflection at the moment of using the four requisites, for the dedication and transference of merit, and for sharing loving





kindness. Altogether ten passages suitable for the morning period are included.

**Section 2** contains evening chants, fifteen passages in all. More time is available in the evening because all the daily business is finished, and the chanting period can be extended. Then a variety of passages to be chanted can be selected, including the discourse on the benefits of loving kindness, and verses on sharing blessings. If time is limited, different passages can be chosen each day. It is not necessary to do all the chanting in one evening.

**Section 3** contains special chants used as tools for meditation to help to understand the purpose of meditation practice and to gain confidence to continue with it. The chants originally came from the Wat Suan Mokka Phalaram, the forest temple in Surat Thani in southern Thailand founded by Bhikkhu Buddhādāsa.

**Section 4** includes the most popular prayers used at auspicious ceremonies in Thailand and also by Thai Buddhist monks abroad. Since the old teachers composed them especially for rituals, they do not really represent the words of the Lord Buddha. They may express views similar to Hindu beliefs.

**Section 5** is comprised of blessings used by the monks daily at auspicious or inauspicious ceremonies inside or outside the temple. For the most part these texts are presented only in Pāli, though some temples have Thai translations. The aim is to encourage the faithful to encourage the faithful to offer gifts to the Buddhist temple.

**Section 6** presents prayers for the inauspicious “death ceremony.” This section contains the reflections on the seven books of the Abhidhamma to be used daily up to the time the corpse is moved from the house or the temple. The Mātikā Pangsukūla, or the passage on the Matrix of the Dhammasangani, is prayed at the crematory or graveyard before the corpse is cremated or buried according to the Buddhist custom.

**Section 7** is a collection from the first period following the Enlightenment when the Buddha gave major Dhamma discourses to his disciples. The selections are long suttas, the core of Buddhism, which every serious student should study.

**Section 8** contains the chanting version of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta,



The Foundations of Mindfulness. It is difficult to find a Romanized Pāli version of this sutta in the form of a chant together with a translation. Therefore what is presented may not completely cover the subject matter. However, the presentation is sufficient to offer some understanding of what the Buddha said. This sutta is of the utmost importance as regards the practice of insight meditation. Altogether Section 8 includes sixteen selections besides the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. This presentation should be sufficient enough for the person who wants to study the texts.

**Section 9** is concerned with the Upasampadā, the rite of higher ordination as a monk (bhikkhu). It explains the steps leading to the ordination of a novice (sāmaṇera) and to a full-fledged monk. Buddhists regard it as most important for a person to change his life style by becoming a monk in spirit or in reality. Therefore, all Buddhists should be educated so they understand the ordination process and are able to thoroughly explain it to non-Buddhists.

**Section 10** is concerned with regularly performed Buddhist Theravāda ceremonies regarding various offerings. Presented here is the Jinapañjara Gāthā, which many people enjoy chanting often. It is included for the sake of convenience.

**The Council of Thai Bhikkhus in the U.S.A.**





## Acknowledgment

This book benefited greatly from different chanting books and references, which were kindly given to our working committee, we would like to thank all of them.

Many thanks to Phra Wut Suvuddhiko, Phramaha Wirat Manikanto, Phramaha Prasarn Vajirajayo and Phra Nicholas Thanisaro who generously spent a lot of time for edition and laying art work of this book.

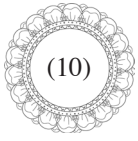
Special thanks to many monks and persons who we cannot mention all the names here, who gave us advices, funds and helps to make this work a success.

Any nenefit caused from this book we would like to dedicate to other Buddhist ancestors whom gave had the compassion and sacrificed their lives to protect and continue Buddhism to be handed to our generation.

May we all keep the practice of following the teachings of the Buddha with insight wisdom generated from reading, studying, and chanting from this book, and gain the highest happiness and peace as this is Nibāna.

As this book is compiled with the intent of sharing, we welcomes suggestions and comments on ways of improving it. We are liking forward to such communication.

**Editorial Committe**  
**The Council of Thai Bhikkhus in the U.S.A.**



## The Second Edition

This second edition of Buddhist Chanting is published in the name of the Council of Thai Bhikkhus in the U.S.A. as a remembrance of the services performed by The Most Venerable Somdech Phramahadhirajahn of the Supreme Council.

As the Introduction to Buddhist Chanting states, chanting is important for Buddhists for several reasons. It is a way in which the teachings of the Buddha are recalled. Second, chanting helps bring about a purification of the mind. Third, it provides emotional relief from the troubles of daily life and contemporary society. Fourth, chanting pays respect to the Triple Gem, that is, the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha.

At the 29<sup>th</sup> annual general conference of the Council of Thai Bhikkhus in the U.S.A. at the Wat Thai Washington, D.C., in June of 2005, the preparation of a Pāli-English chanting book was suggested, and work for such a book was planned. The object was to standardize the various English versions of the chants that had been developed by Thai missionary monks so they could fulfill their duties regarding the propagation of the Theravada Buddhist teachings to non-Thai members of the community. Buddhist Chanting was the result of the efforts of the compilation committee.

The second edition of the book has been supplemented by the addition of one section: Basic Introduction to Buddhist Meditation and Practice; and Requesting to Profess Buddhism (Buddhamāmakā-Vidhī), the Ritual of Declaring Oneself a Buddhist. Last but not least, special thanks go to Mr. Duwayne Engelhart for his support in production efforts.

**Phramaha Thanat Inthisan, Ph.D.**  
**Secretary General**  
**The Council of Thai Bhikkhus in U.S.A.**





## THE PĀLI ALPHABET

The Romanized Pāli alphabet is divided into eight vowels and thirty-two consonants:

### Vowels

a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, e, o

### Grouped Consonants

Gutturals	k,	kh,	g,	gh,	ṇ
Palatals	c,	ch,	j,	jh,	ñ
Linguals	ṭ,	ṭh,	ḍ,	ḍh,	ṇ
Dentals	t,	th,	d,	dh,	n
Labials	p,	ph,	b,	bh,	m

### Ungrouped Consonants

y, r, l, v, s, h, ḷ, ṃ

## PĀLI PRONUNCIATION

The principles of pronunciation employed in this book are in accordance with the Pāli chanting in the Thai of the Mahānikāya tradition in Thailand.

In general, letters or words are pronounced the same as in English, but some may be different. The following are illustrations:

### Vowels

#### *Short Vowels - pronounced short sound*

a - as o in ton or u in sun, e.g. tassa (*tas-sa*)

i - as i in sit, e.g. iti (*i-ti*)

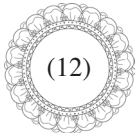
u - as u in put or oo in look, e.g. Upāli (*U-paa-li*)

#### *Long vowels - pronounced long sound*

ā - as aa in father, e.g. kāyena (*kaa-ye na*)

ī - as ee in tree, e.g. veramanī (*ve-ra-ma-nee*)

ū - as oo in moon, e.g. lokavitū (*lo-ka-vi-too*)



**Compound Vowels - pronounced long sound**

e - as e in beg or a in cave, e.g. etena (*e-te-na*)

o - as o in no, e.g. anariyo (*a-na-ri-yo*)

**Addition :**

am - as -um, e.g. Tatiyam (*ta-to-yam*)

am - as -ung in lung, e.g. Buddhāṃ (*bud-dhung*)

an - as -ung in lung, e.g. saṅgha (*sung-gha*)

**Grouped Consonants**

**Gutturals** (*formed in the throat*)

k - as k in kind

kh - as kh in blackhead

g - as g in game

gh - as gh in ghost

ṅ - as ng in lung

**Palatals** (*formed in the throat, tongue against front palate*)

c - as j in jar or ch in rich

ch - as ch-h in witch-hazel

j - as j in jaw

jh - as dge-h in sledge-hammer

ñ - as gn in signore

**Linguals** (*tongue tip against dome of palate*)

ṭ - as t in tap

ṭh - as t-h in ant-hill

ḍ - as d in dad

ḍh - as d-h in red-hot

ṇ - as n in now

**Dentals** (*tongue tip against the teeth*)

t - as th in thumb

th - as t-h in pot-holder

d - as th in then

dh - as dh in adherent

n - as n in not

**Labials** (*formed with the lips*)

p - as p in papa

ph - as ph in uphill

b - as b in ball

bh - as bh in abhor

m - as m in mom

**Ungrouped Consonants**

y (palatal) - as y in yes

r (lingual) - as r in rain

l (dental) - as l in law

v (labial) - as v in voice

s (guttural, sibilant) - as see or skull

h (guttural) - as h in hot

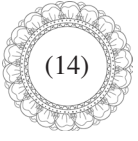
ḷ (lingual) - as l in felt

ṁ (nasal) - as ng in sing

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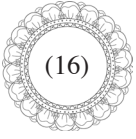
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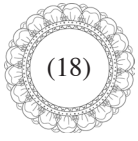
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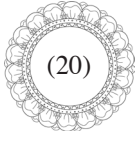
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