



**The Association of Theravada
Buddhist Universities
(ATBU)**

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The Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities
Conference Volume
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Preface

Dhamma hi bhikkhunam dhajo
“The dhamma is the symbol of the bhikkhus”.

Whatever a bhikkhu or indeed a disciple of the Buddha does has to relate to the dhamma, a tool in overcoming problems and suffering. This is what the Sangha and the Buddhists in general have made efforts to achieve for more than the past two thousand half millenniums.

The Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities has this very aim and wish to focus its work primarily but not exclusively, at the university level. This year we hold the 2nd Conference of the ATBU. I am very pleased we are able to publish this ATBU Conference Volume along with the Journal of ATBU.

Venerable Dr. Ashin Nyanissra, Ph.D., DLI.tt.
Aggamahapandita
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Foreword

The Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities is young but energetic and possesses so much potential. Within two years, the first Journal of the Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities is presented to you. Moreover, it is so uplifting to see so many academic papers related with the 2nd ATBU conference theme from all over the world. This ATBU Conference Volume is the second publication we could proudly present to the Theravada Buddhism academia and alike. This is to prove to ourselves as much as to others the aspiration of the ATBU members.

Mahamakut Buddhist University is a member-university and also where the ATBU Secretariat has its office. And, through the ATBU, the university looks forward to contribute even more to the promotion of the Buddhadhamma as taught in the Pali Canon.

I am grateful to all scholars from different countries who have contributed their learned articles to this conference volume. On behalf of the ATBU, I also wish to thank The Bank of Thailand and Venerable Phra Khruva Boonchum Nyanasamvaro (Maing Phong Sayadaw) and devotees for their generous financial support toward the publication of this ATBU Conference Volume. I am also grateful to all Executive Council members of the ATBU and staff from my own university for their hard work and dedication to the ATBU cause.

P. Phratheppariyattivimol

Phratheppariyattivimol
Vice Chairman, ATBU &
Rector, Mahamakut Buddhist University



Introduction

The Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities, ATBU, was founded by eighteen, mainly Theravada, colleges and universities from ten nations in South and South-east Asia at their historic gathering in March 2007 at Mt. Popa Resort, near the ancient city of Bagan in central Myanmar.

The aim is to create “an inclusive global network” and “unite the people, knowledge and skills of every Higher Education Institution with a specific mission to educate students to understand and practice the Buddha's Dhamma as presented in the Pali Canon”.

After that first conference, the nine-member strong members of the Executive Council have met in at the ATBU Secretariat, at Mahamakut Buddhist University, Bangkok three times to coordinate some of the exchange programmes for teaching staff and to plan for the next bi-annual conference. Some modest number of exchange programmes has already taken place, mainly between member-universities from Myanmar, Thailand and India.

And, the Popa conference also decided to hold the 2nd ATBU conference at Sitagu International Buddhist Academy, SIBA, with the financial support of the Venerable Chairman, Dr. Ashin Nyanissara (Aggamahapandita) who is also Chancellor of SIBA. The conference is scheduled for 4 – 8 March 2009. About 260 delegates from eighteen countries are expected to attend. In addition, a few hundreds of scholars and participants, monks and lay, from Myanmar are also attending. The conference happily coincides with the convocation and the opening of the grand Convocation Hall of SIBA. The magnificently decorated hall is built on the model of the famous Sanchi Stupa in India with six hundred seats and inbuilt latest sound systems.

These papers are what we have received before and on the 10th February 2009 deadlines. They represent all aspects of the theme of the conference:

Theravada Buddhism: Origin, Identity and Development. Some of the papers that came in very early were selected and published in the first ATBU Journal. Together the papers in the Journal and in the ATBU Conference Volume indicate the potential of the ATBU as an academic force that may grow stronger with each challenge that lies ahead.

What is unique is the papers and indeed the panel in Pali. For so long, many scholars have thought that Pali is dead and there is hardly any one who can converse or compose in Pali. Some of the Pali papers in this ATBU Conference Volume may not be in the canonical Pali standard or even early commentarial Pali standard. However, the ATBU is encouraged by the fact that these scholars have been contacted at a short notice because the Pali panel was not part of the original plan. Some of these authors have less than a week to meet the deadlines because they are all very busy teaching. Now these scholars are going to communicate with each other in Pali. The ATBU has also come to know that these Pali scholars form a very tiny part of the existing traditional Pali scholastic communities in Theravada countries. Given time and resources, there can be a much great conference, just for those who write and speak in Pali alone.

In any case, the ATBU believes that its initial efforts have been worth and is determined to do whatever it can to promote the subject among the Theravada Buddhist practice and academic communities around the world.

A global networking such as the one being promoted by the ATBU will benefit Pali scholars. In particular, they will learn new vocabularies from each other. For example, there is no vocabulary for the English word university in Pali. Nalanda Buddhist University in India, which existed seven hundred years before Oxford, used the word *mahavihara*. Now, Pali scholars in Myanmar use the word *vijjalaya* but some use *takkasila* the name of a town famous for learning in ancient India. *vijjalaya* means only a college in Thailand and *mahavijjalaya/mahavidyalaya* means university there. However, *mahavijjalaya* denotes high school in Sri Lanka and the word used for university is *vissavijjalaya*. The term examination faces the same problem. Pali scholars in Myanmar use the word *ussava*, but in Sri Lanka, it is *vibhaga*. One day, at Oxford a British Pali scholar asked me how do you say teaspoon in Pali? I hope if the ATBU continues with this trend in promoting Pali I will have that answer one day. Because at the moment, the word for association *samiti* is settled although it was hardly found in use during the Buddha's time.

One thing that should be made clear is that all these papers, in both English and Pali, are left unedited. The footnotes and bibliographies are published as we have received them. We only have time to edit the ATBU Journal.

When some of the papers in this ATBU 2nd Conference Volume are resubmitted for the next ATBU Journal, they will be edited.

Now I will not have done my work well if I do not put on record the sincere gratitude that the whole ATBU community has towards the Bank of Thailand and Venerable Khruva Boonchum Nyanasamvaro (Maing Phong Sayadaw) and his devotees, the main sponsor of this publication. We all are so joyous by the generosity of this greatly admired financial institution of the Kingdom of Thailand and Ven Khruva Boonchum who has dedicated his life for the service of Buddhism. This is after all a joint venture in our “specific mission to educate students to understand and practice the Buddha's Dhamma as presented in the Pali Canon”. Mahamakut Buddhist University of Thailand and Sitagu International Buddhist Academy of Myanmar have been the main pillars of the ATBU for the last two years. Many of these articles have been communicated through them. So, the whole ATBU member-universities would like to thank the two member-institutions for their leadership and support.

Venerable Dr. Khammai Dhammasami, DPhil (Oxford)
ATBU Executive Secretary

Contents

Preface	(iv)
Forward	(v)
Introduction	(vi)
Engaged Buddhism	
Buddhism — a Balancing Factor for Current World Developments <i>Venerable Dhammavamsa</i>	2
Engaged Buddhism in India and Role of Theravada Buddhism: Perspectives and Prospects <i>Dr. Siddharth Singh</i>	8
Engage Buddhism in Thailand: A case study of monks of New movement in interpretation and dissemination of Buddhhadhamma <i>Venerable Phramaha Hansa Dhammahaso</i>	17
Are We ‘Socially Engaged’? A Preliminary Study on the Modes of Teachings and Practices of the Theravadins in Indonesia <i>Wilis Rengganiasih Endah Ekowati</i>	23
Buddhist Entrepreneurship to improve performance of Buddhist College <i>Heri Catur Meruvipassana</i>	32
How fundamental Buddhism Responds to present issue? <i>Jo Priastana</i>	40
Contribution of the Sangha to Contemporary Society <i>Ashin Ukkamsa</i>	54
Time should be understood on Buddhism <i>Ashin Nandavansa</i>	60
Engaged Buddhism & Mahidol Monks <i>Phramaha Boonmee Poungpet</i>	64
Engaged Buddhism <i>Asst.Prof. Methee Sumpukdee</i>	70
Engaged Buddhism <i>Ven. Phrakhrusunthondhammasophon</i>	75

Monasticism

- A Description of a Typical Rural Shinpyu-nartha-ahlu
in Myanmar Today 81
Ven. Parami
- Sangha Theravada Indonesia Leading in Service from
Period to Period 92
Bhikku Cittagutto Thera
- Theravada Buddhism in Cambodia: Restoration Development
and Challenges 100
Preah Maha CHUON Bunsim

Pāli Literature

- The Latest Vaṃsakathās in Pāli Literature 106
Ven. W. Piyaratana
- A Contribution of Ashin Janakabhivamsa to New Pali Education 118
Venerable Vicittasara
- Pāli and Myanmar People 125
Venerable Sundara
- A Development of Computer Assisted Instruction on
Pali-Language for Thai Students (CAI) 129
Mr. Vet Bannakornkul
- Venerable Aggavaṃsa and his Saddaṇīti Text 132
Venerabel Ashin Kumuda
- Let's open the door of Nibbana with Modern Pali Education 135
Dr. Ashin Sajjana

Pariyatti and Paṭipatti

- Theravada Buddhist Movement in Nepal 139
Dr. Keshab Man Shakya
- Theravada Tradition on Local Society in Lombok Island 157
Edi Ramawijaya Putra, S. Pd

A Lay Meditator's Perspective of Indifferent Feeling <i>Jenny Ko Gyi</i>	166
Relevance of Abhidhamma Studies in Modern World <i>Dr. Bimalendra Kumar</i>	170
Women Meditation Instructors in Myanmar <i>Daw Nimala</i>	179
Pariyatti and Patipatti-Dhamma in Theravada Countries <i>Asst. Prof. Methee Sompukdee</i>	183
Mutual contribution of Pariyatti and Patipatti-dhamma of Sangha in Thailand <i>Pramaha Kornduch Kambuwanno</i>	189
Pariyatti Dhamma & Patipatti Dhamma in Thailand <i>Dr. Saneh Dechawongse</i>	199
 Pāli Papers	
Tipiṭakadharapuggalavisesā <i>Bhaddanta Sīlakkhandhābhivaṃso</i>	207
Pāliuggaṇhavidhī <i>Ven. Dhammalankara</i>	212
Abhidhammapariyāpuṇanampi kātabbaṃ <i>Ven. Nyanakusalo</i>	219
Kaccāyanabyākaraṇassa nidānaṃ <i>Bhaddanta Paṇḍito</i>	221
SriLaṅkāyaṃ Pālibhāsāya Obhāso <i>Ven. Dhammananda</i>	223
Parittasuttavaṃsakathā <i>Āyasmā Ñāṇindo</i>	225
Buddhavaṃsagantuppattikathā <i>Bhaddantakesaro</i>	228
Mahāmakūṭarājābhithutikathā <i>Suchattajayabhikkhunā</i>	235