



**THE METHOD AND PROCESS FOR ESTABLISHING A CENTRE FOR THE PRODUCTION OF BUDDHIST DIGITAL COMMUNICATION ERA 4.0 THROUGH THE CO-OPERATION OF A GROUP NETWORK IN CHIANG RAI PROVINCE**

**Phra Akkharaphisut Siri wattano (Loonlawan), Dr.<sup>1</sup>**

(Presenting Author), Phrakrukittipatananuyut<sup>2</sup>, Phrakrupaladnattaphon, Dr<sup>3</sup>, Mr. Timothy Walker<sup>4</sup>

Phra Akkharaphisut Siri wattano (Loonlawan), Dr, Bachelor of Arts Programme in Buddhism,

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Chiang Rai Buddhist College, Chiang Rai, Thailand

E-mail : [Thanit\\_loonlawan@hotmail.com](mailto:Thanit_loonlawan@hotmail.com)

**ABSTRACT**

Academic article concerning the method and process for establishing a centre for the production of Buddhist digital communication Era 4.0 through the co-operation of a group network in Chiang Rai province. The study shows that the establishment of a Buddhist digital centre for the propagation of Buddhism, comprised of 3 main centres, namely, 1) a network-based centre to produce academic communications, with the function of gathering and developing information, including information from the Tripitaka and the lives of great disciples, and so forth, including academic training in propagation for monks, novices, and lay men and women; 2) a centre to produce communications to develop practices with the characteristic of a network of personnel to propagate Buddhism, as a centre for people to meet and practise disseminating Dhamma correctly and to actively practise disseminating Dhamma to the people; and 3) a knowledge centre for Buddhist digital communication Era 4.0, a centre for developing a model and method for propagating Dhamma using various media in order to foster the dissemination of Buddhist teachings. There will be a centre in each province and district, which will also be a centre for communication between different branches of the Sangha, between the Sangha and the Buddhist community, as well as between the Sangha and the State or related organisations. It will produce all methods of communication in order to propagate Dhamma to the people, so that relevant organisations, including temples and monks, can make use of these media in order to spread the teachings of Buddhism, according to what is appropriate.

*Keywords* : รูปแบบการจัดตั้งศูนย์ผลิตสื่อพุทธดิจิทัล ยุค 4.0, กระบวนการจัดตั้งศูนย์ผลิตสื่อพุทธดิจิทัล ยุค 4.0, การมีส่วนร่วมของภาคีเครือข่ายในจังหวัดเชียงราย

**1. INTRODUCTION**

“In the digital age, technology has come to have an influence on the way of life of people of all ages, from children to working people to older people. Almost everyone has a smartphone or smart device, and the government is moving forward with the development of a high-speed internet service (broadband) to service and cover every village in the country, in order to reduce blank spots in servicing learning centres and to increase the convenience of use. This will create improvements in many areas, both in earning a living and in reaching centres of learning, such as using e-commerce in selling commodities to the market here and in other countries, spreading knowledge of agriculture from one region to another to improve products, and so on. This will all enable items of information and knowledge to be at people’s fingertips, so they can get knowledge in all times and places.” This pursues the strategy which the government is pushing with high importance in its 20-year National Strategic Plan to Develop the Economy and Community Version 12, and the Policy for Thailand 4.0, whose major objective is to strengthen and develop the population to possess the skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to create and develop innovations. It uses a base of knowledge in science and technology, as well as developing local wisdom to increase the range of ability and create new



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opportunities, as well as lifting the country up to the level of developed countries, with a high level of income, in the next 20 years.

“The Digital Age will see the work of monks. We learn to meditate and then go out to help the community, such as by performing the religious activity of the summer ordination of novices. Ours is a meditation which is mixed with helping the community be free from suffering and helping to resolve social problems. We call this Buddhism in the Community. Monks mustn’t shun society. When a situation of division arises, how will we sit and meditate? We have to go and help. When we are working, we are practising at the same time. We don’t need to await liberation and then go out and practise. We don’t need to finish our studies and then go and help the community, which we call ‘social work’. We must develop ourselves to have knowledge and to be peaceful. Monks mustn’t be a burden on the community.” Lay people and monks must be able to rely on each other – monks by giving the gift of Dhamma, lay people by providing the necessities of life. This is our collective responsibility, to address suffering in society. It will bring an integration in being Buddhism in the Community, walking in the path of Kruba Siwichai in the development of society. At the time of Kruba Siwichai there was a division with the central Sangha, because they stopped communicating with each other, unlike today, when we have communications technology which is up-to-date and fast. We can’t blame anybody. So there was a pronouncement that “all monks are instructed to follow what the King says.” We must behave according to the law of the land. The Sangha operates according to convention, but we mustn’t forget to operate under the law. Monks must follow the law, and we can study it.

This is the age of news and information, which has 3 characteristics, namely, speed – any monk who doesn’t know who the owner is must find out so as to be an instrument; worldwide, unlimited; and network, quickly spreading communication online. We can very quickly expand in a positive or negative manner. How will we make good use of it? There is both creation and destruction, and we need to be aware of this. We have to use digital technology to assist in teaching moral behaviour in society, for the information superhighway has no traffic regulations.

It is the duty of monks to make the community aware. At the present time news information shows conflict because we don’t talk about morality in the digital age. How will we put our heads down to find the middle path in the modern age? How can we use news information to find the proper balance? In the digital age people use false information to destroy each other. In the West there is now a “World Day of Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention”. We have advanced technology without morality. The resources of wisdom in the digital age are used to guard against copying information. Presently we hear stories of people copying theses. The 4 Obligations of the Buddha comprise: 1) dhamma study – we can use digital technology for study in the digital age at beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. It may not be used at present for study, but one day must be used for the obligation of study, as Rai Chern Thawan does in its online study for farmers; 2) dhamma practice; 3) spreading dhamma; and 4) protecting dhamma. We must use the strong point of the digital age, namely, the ability to create a network. We don’t have to work alone; we can create a network for study, administration and dissemination. We need to shake hands with people, look for friends in the community who can support the religion. The network will expand of its own accord. We must work so as to connect what we disseminate online. (Phijit Vichitbunyarak, 2005, p.34)

## **2. TEXT**

In Thai society, from former times up till today, every village has its own temple which is the centre of the village, and regarded as the common property of the entire village. The temple was therefore the life-centre of the people and was influential in many ways: 1) it was a place of study, where villagers could send their children to be trained in both morality and academic learning; 2) a place for those needing assistance, where children of poor families could come and live as well as



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study, and adults who were poor could make a living; 3) a place of healing, where sick people could receive traditional treatments; 4) a place where travellers could find lodging; 5) a meeting place where the villagers could get together and relax; 6) a happy place, where village festivals and celebrations were held; 7) a place to settle disputes, by consulting with the monks to solve problems of life, family and suffering in general; 8) a centre of art and culture, with the temple storing works of art like a museum; 9) a storehouse for keeping various articles for common use, either in the temple or to borrow for personal use; 10) an administrative centre, where the village leaders and elders could summon the villagers for a meeting, or to inform them of activities; 11) and a place to hold rites or serve in the rites. All these served to join together people at all stages of life. The temple was the spiritual centre of the people, and the monks were the representatives of the temple, with various roles as spiritual leaders of the people. The temple was a place of respect, trust and co-operation which generated unity and good behaviour. Monks also had an important role in social control for the country, as they were held in respect by the people at all levels of society, from the King down to ordinary people. Factors which exalted the status of monks in society were: 1) their purity; 2) their helping others before themselves; 3) and their wise leadership. In the present day the influence of the temple and monks has begun to disappear, because the Western style of development has come into Thai society over the past 70-80 years, starting in the cities and extending to the countryside. Nevertheless, monks continue to exert an influence, great or small according to the changes in each sector of society, especially in the countryside or remote localities, where monks still influence many things as in the past. It's true to say that almost all Thais will have to return to the temple one last time in their lives, for when they pass away the cremation ceremony is everywhere held in the temple. In short, the periods in the lives of Buddhists, past, present and future, must always be linked with the Buddhist religion, until Buddhism should disappear from the land where the Thai people live.

We can see that, on 12 June 2561, at Wat Rai Khing, a royal temple in Amphoe Sam Phran, Nakhon Pathom Province, Somdej Phra Buddhajinawongsa, senior officer of the Sangha Supreme Council and abbot of Wat Pitchaya Yatikaram Worawiharn in Bangkok, and chairman of the National Office of Buddhism, chaired the Seminar on the Propagation of Buddhism for Fiscal Year 2561 on 12-13 June 2561. In his opening address, Phra Dharmakosajarn, member of the Sangha Supreme Council and Rector of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, spoke about "The Propagation of Buddhism in Thailand in Era 4.0". Phra Thep Suwanmatee, a member of the National Committee for the Propagation of Buddhism, spoke regarding "The Master Plan for the Propagation of Buddhism 2560-2564". In brief, he spoke about the propagation of Buddhism in Thailand in Era 4.0, the master plan for the propagation of Buddhism from 2560 to 2564, driving the operation to propagate Buddhism in the present day, the development of personnel engaged in propagating Buddhism in the future, and the use of digital media in the propagation of Buddhism.

At the present time, Chiang Rai Province is led by Phra Dharmarajanuwat, Head of Region 6 and Abbot of Wat Phra Kaew. He stated that 'all those performing duties should consider carefully that they aren't simply comfortable with their own specific area, or that their facilities aren't filled with obstacles and problems, but rather with the endeavours and determination of monks of all ranks to perform their functions well. After a year they have a meeting, to be a working seminar, in order to adopt an approach that will help in the ongoing performance of their duties. It's worth observing, and it's well known, that the reason why the National Office of Buddhism holds meetings in two places, namely the Northern Region and the Southern Region, or North and South, is that they can investigate the serious problems facing Buddhism. It can be seen that there are problems in both the North and the South, which we are all well aware of through the sensational reporting in the newspapers, on television, and in pictures all over the place. But the threats to religion in the North, East and Central areas through various media are hidden dangers, due to the fact that the various religions are trying to increase their own members, especially in Chiang Rai



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Province. In the 5 provinces that make up Region 6, namely, Lampang, Chiang Rai, Phrae, Nan and Phayao, various problems have enabled these religions to enlarge their membership and add new members. And then, we who have responsibilities to have the tools to support various approaches, have remained the same. Therefore, in this meeting I think it will be of benefit to bring up problems, obstacles and experiences. You senior monks who have responsibilities in one particular area or in various areas can tell us your experiences, and then indicate your approach in the performance of your duties in those areas. We will receive that knowledge and then put it into practice. The duty to propagate Buddhism, which you have heard the Director of the Buddhist Studies Division address already as a central responsibility in the work of the Sangha, has these main functions: 1) government; 2) education; 3) propagation; 4) public assistance; 5) supporting education; and 6) supporting religion. Propagation is a central religious activity in all 6 functions, but it is a special responsibility, in that it was a legacy conferred by the Buddha himself. Monks, in all activities we should recollect well the Buddha's life. After Lord Buddha attained enlightenment, he took as his first responsibility to teach the Dhamma to the five ascetics along with Yasa and his friends, who all became arahants – a total of 60 monks. He then announced to all sixty monks to go and proclaim the teaching of Buddhism in the homes of people. This became their work, until it has become firmly established in our generation. And thus, Buddhism has depended on its followers, until we in the present day have inherited this legacy. And so, in order for Buddhism to progress forward and be secure, we must perform this ongoing function. In the name of the Sangha in Region 6 and in Chiang Rai province, I am proud, very proud, that the National Office of Buddhism has honoured Chiang Rai province and the Sangha of Region 6 as the location of this meeting of senior monks who are carrying on the function of propagating Buddhism in their own regions. (Phra Dharmarajanuwat, 2559)

From this it can be seen that the form and process of creating a centre to spread Buddhism digitally in Era 4.0, through the co-operation of a group network in Chiang Rai province, should consist of the Office of Buddhism in Chiang Rai, the Governor of Chiang Rai province, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Communication Technology, the Heads of Region 6, of Chiang Rai province, of districts and sub-districts, all monks of rank, and officials who are experts in communications technology. These should meet and consult one another, and seek an approach a Buddhist digital centre for the propagation of Buddhism, comprised of 3 main centres: 1) a centre to produce academic communications, with the role of collecting and developing information, providing information from the Tripitaka, the lives of great disciples, and so on, including laying down academic training in dissemination for monks, novices, and lay men and women. It would also be a centre or base to operate a network; 2) a centre to produce communications in the area of developing the principles of practice, as a network of people to propagate Buddhism. It would be a place to methodically gather people with qualifications to propagate Dhamma and to actively spread the Dhamma to the people; and 3) a centre of knowledge to communicate Buddhism digitally in Era 4.0, a centre to develop the form and pattern of spreading Dhamma in various methods of communication to support the propagation of Buddhist Dhamma. It will be set up as individual centres in each province and district. Its function will also include being a centre for communication between different centres of the Sangha, between the Sangha and the Buddhist community, between the Sangha and the State or its related organisations, and producing communications on all aspects of Dhamma to propagate to the community, so that all relevant organisations, including temples and monks, can use it to spread Buddhist teaching as appropriate. Henceforth, Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya, through the Chiang Rai Buddhist College, will be assigned as the centre for the production of digital communications on Buddhism. (Brahma Bikkhu (Prayun Thammachitto) 2558, page 32).





### 3. CONCLUSION

There are 7 different forms which the spreading of the Buddhist Dhamma has taken from the past to the present: teaching Dhamma to people who come to enquire, from one person to many, according to the opportunity; teaching Dhamma by selecting one topic which people should know and practise; teaching Dhamma in the form of training or advice; training in the consciousness of good and evil; teaching Dhamma in the form of instructing or inculcating; teaching in the form of discussing the Dhamma, that is, exchanging knowledge about the Dhamma with each other; teaching in the form of questions and answers, where one party asks and the other one responds; and teaching Dhamma by clearly demonstrating its use. And so, in the present day, monks can improve the methods of spreading Dhamma according to the needs of the changing times, such as updating the format for sermons, lectures, discourses and talks on the Dhamma; teaching samatha or vipassana meditation; using media and tools as part of Dhamma teaching, presenting programs, writing presentations for radio and television, writing articles for journals and newspapers; being a guide, teacher, lecturer or expert; organising radio and television programs; and teaching Dhamma through activities. The status of the problem of the form and method for propagating Buddhism for the Thai Sangha at present has 4 points, namely: the problem of the policy for dissemination, since the Sangha hasn't mobilised its thinking in unison between the central and regional areas, which has caused the policy for the propagation of Buddhism to be out of step with the lifestyle of the people; the problem of personnel, since the temples which hold activities to spread Buddhism have a severe shortage of people and there has been no creation of people to compensate for those who have been lost, and in addition, monks charged with the propagation of Buddhism lack the necessary skills in dissemination; the problem that the method and procedure used in propagating doesn't match the social value and isn't in line with the needs of society in the present day; and the problem that the media used aren't up-to-date and lack efficiency, both in communication, and in the development of the ways and means of active dissemination by the Thai Sangha.

And so, the establishment of a centre to produce Buddhist digital media in Era 4.0 with the co-operation of network groups in Chiang Rai province should consider the receiver, meaning the person, group, or mass of people who are receiving news and information from the person communicating and sending feedback to him, or communicating afterwards to other receivers, according to the objective of the speaker. In research on this topic, the receiver is composed of Generation Z, aged 6-10 (the children's group), Generation Y and Generation D (Digital), aged between 15 and 30 (teenagers, school and university students and the group just starting work), Generation X, aged 30 to 45 (working people, academics, experts, politicians and mass communicators), and the group of people in general.

Generation Z, aged between 6 and 10, is the youngest group, which has been born and grown up in the age of digital technology, and thus is the most advanced technologically. Children in this group strongly desire to use technology, because, apart from being users, they also create or adapt technology to fulfil their own needs. They desire individual freedom and like to use social networking in order to acquire information. This generation comes with a strange new culture and has flexibility in adapting to changing cultures. They prefer to live together before marriage, don't believe in religion, never listen to their parents, and have great confidence in themselves. This generation has seen the advent of video games, computers, the internet, the dot com boom, Hip Hop, and is concerned about the AIDS epidemic.

The form of Dhamma for this group should be as follows: in order to reach this group, we need to use online media that are easy to understand, use principles of teaching Dhamma that are up-to-date, such as stories, cartoons, videos and animation, including inserting principles of Dhamma in between. They should be media that are watchable, not complicated, easy to understand and enjoyable.



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Generation Y and Generation D (Digital) are aged between 15 and 30, that is, the group of teenagers, high school and university students and those just starting work (First Jobbers). This group grew up alongside the development of information technology (IT), a new age which has seen rapid expansion and impacted the lives of this group in obvious ways, such as Analog mobile phones and Web 1.0, which was the beginning of wireless communication. As a result, this generation is used to change in leaps and bounds and likes modern digital technology, which they use for enjoyment and to make contact with friends, such as to play games, download songs, movies or videos on Facebook, YouTube or websites. People in this group are an important force in laying the foundations of modern society, and in the next 10 to 20 years they will step up and take responsibility for what they have created, replacing Generation X.

The form of Dhamma for this group should be as follows: in the present day technology has come to play an extremely important role with this group and it has received wide influence, especially from internet media, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Generation X, aged between 30 and 45, is the working-age group, such as academics, experts, politicians and mass communicators. It is mostly the receiving group for technology (User + Consumer), which they use for seeking news and information, communicating with clients, and as a tool for communicating with the market, searching for knowledge and reading the daily news, such as Wikipedia, Google Earth, Twitter, Webblog, and news agency websites. Over and above the various uses according to different age groups, the format of utilising Social Networking has expanded to numerous activities also.

The format for Dhamma for this group is as follows: due to the fact that it is a group with a rather wide range of objectives, different groups may be reached by different means. For example, Dhamma for working people should be that which is related to their daily lives, work that they will encounter, suffering at work, meditation between work in order to relieve suffering. For academics, it should be very detailed information, with references to the Tripitaka, clearly showing cause and effect, origin and objective. Politicians have an important role in the development of the country. Personally, I would like to address them along the lines which would make the people strong, have moral standards, goodwill towards one another, and help each other, to show the reward of acting for the public benefit, in order to impel this group to assist in developing the country. We could even address topics of Dhamma to their supporters, or the general public. As for mass communicators, who are skilled in means of communication, the Dhamma they need to hear is professional ethics, such as teaching them to have respect for human beings. If someone is distressed, or doesn't consent to communicate, then they shouldn't be involved with that person. This group should receive instruction about the Four Principles of Virtuous Existence, to go together with their occupation.

#### 4. บรรณานุกรม

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