Monks and Just Wars*

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Introduction

After the Buddha's time, Buddhism has spread to places in and outside India. As carriers of religious messages, Buddhist monks would invariably find themselves in different social, cultural and political environments. Some places were embroiled in war. There is substantial evidence that a number of monks were directly and indirectly involved in the conflict. For example, they were known to give blessings and motivating sermons to soldiers headed intowar, explaining the rationale of warfare, while some evenvolunteered to fight alongside the force or set up an army of monk warriors. Here are some examples:

1. In Sri Lanka, King Dutthagamani Abhaya waged war against the Damilas (Tamils). Before going into battle, he would attach the Buddha's relics to the spearhead and then go to the monastery to persuade 500 monks to fight with him, believing that this would boost the morale of the army. After his accession to the throne, he was filled with remorse about the high number of casualties inflicted in the war until he heard the following sermon from a monk:

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> "…killing with intent to preserve the religion does not bar the killer from entering Heaven. To kill an immoral person is a sin, the weight of which is equal to killing a half-human, for a person who does not respect *Tisaraṇagamana* or a person without *Pañca-sīla* has lost his humanity. He is an imperfect being. His death is akin to the death of a *Tiracchāna*". (Mahanamathera, et al. 2010: 60-61)

2. After the former Thai capital of Ayutthaya fell to the Burmese army for the second time, an army of monks was organized by Chao Phra Fang (Maha Ruean), a senior Thera of the *Saṅgharāja* level of the city of Sawangkhaburi (Fang), and fought alongside other groups of Thai soldiers to re-capture the city (Dr. Bradley, 2008: 25:50).

3. During the reign of King Rama I, a Burmese army invaded the southern region of Thailand and was about to enter the city of Nakhon Si Thammarat. A group of Thai citizens, led by Phra Maha Chuai, was able to drive the enemy away. (Phra Brahmagunaphorn (P.A. Payutto), 2011: 12-13).

4. During the rule of Korean King Sonjo (1567-1608), Korea was invaded by the Japanese army, and the king fled. Seeing the country at a loss, about 600 Korean monks formed their own army and were able to drive the Japanese invaders away (The Korean Buddhist Research Institute, 1993: 191-192).

5. In China and Japan there were incidents in which the Mahāyāna Buddhist monks formed an army of monk-warriors to defend their temples against anti-Buddhist authorities. Some examples include the Shaolin Temple in China and the Enryaku-ji Temple in Japan (Turnbull, 2003: 4-11).

These incidents raise an interesting question. The Buddha never approved of war or the use of force. He did not allow the *Saṅgha* to meddle with the affair of the armed forces. Why is it, then, that after his time there were increasing accounts of monks engaged in discordant situations? They were seen giving blessings to the belligerents, motivating them, rationalizing the war in religious terms, joining the army, and forming an

army of monk-warriors. What then is the true position of Buddhism in relation to warfare? What is the Buddhist attitude toward just wars or wars waged to protect the good and the righteous? An example that comes to mind is the attempt to protect Buddhism against destructive and hostile forces. When monks became involved in war-like activities, how did they justify their actions? Consideration must also be taken for events that have an impact on their survival or the survival of Buddhism. Will such consideration be enough to justify the monks' involvement in warfare?

"Just wars" in the Western world

The Western thinker who first raised the issue of war in moral and philosophical terms, which gave rise to the idea of "just wars", is St. Augustine. He is often called "the father of the just-war theory". This does not imply that there were no other such thinkers before Augustine. The Greek philosopher Plato and the Roman thinker Cicero had addressed this issue before. In what follows, the researcher wants to present the Greek, Roman, and Christian backgrounds of "just wars" in the Western tradition.

1. Plato

Long before Augustine, Plato discussed the concept of just wars, saying that "the State is set up to justify its use of force in the lawless world" (Mattox, 2006: 1). His view is that during wars, the matter at hand is between the State and its citizens (2006: 1). In the *Laws*, Plato considered warfare the duty of the State and not the duty of any individual (1961: 1500). The same point was raised by St. Augustine several times. In The *Republic*, Plato maintained that both Greek citizens and residents should not be the target of wanton destruction. When the war ends, no Greek who lost the war should be made a slave (1961: 710). This is also another point that Augustine later took up.

2. Cicero

Cicero (106 BC-43 BC) was a Roman thinker who had considerable influence on Augustine. He praised Cicero as being "one of the most

learned orators of humanity" (reference in Mattox, 2006: 14). Augustine also cited Cicero's *City of God* at least 18 times and remarked how reading Cicero's *Hortensius* led him to the world of philosophy. Augustine admired the Roman orator, referring to him as a thinker of just wars (2006: 14).

The just war theory has evolved over several centuries thanks to a series of Roman thinkers. According to John Brinsfield (1991: 25), a Cicero scholar, in the 4th century the Roman just war theory was part of warfare thinking. Components of a just war were just cause, just conduct, proper authority, and intent to establish peace and justice. A just war was waged as the last resort. Cicero suggested that innocent non-combatants be separated from perpetrators, and that punishment should be proportional to the crime. These rules did not apply to rebellion, guerilla warfare, and war against the uncivilized (1991: 25).

Cicero discussed the principle of a just war, focusing on the just cause and the just act. Bainton (1960: 42-43) suggested that Cicero's just war was based to a certain extent on the ancient Roman practice. For example, a just war must be waged by the state. Warriors who had not given their oaths were not legally allowed to fight. A state should not enter into war against another without formal declaration. Treatment of the enemy must adhere to the principle of good faith. Efforts must be made to separate innocent persons from enemies. Actions of the ruler and the public should follow the humanitarian principle, because humanity is characterized by excellence and dignity, qualities that deserve respect.

In short, Cicero's just war theory is centered on the State as the authoritative and legitimate entity that can wage a just war. The following are some of the important principles:

1) Only the State can wage a just war. A just war cannot be initiated by an individual.

2) Combatants have declared their oaths.

3) War must be waged with the right intention.

4) Fighting must not cause harm to innocent non-combatants. Humanitarian principles must be observed. Attempts must be made to separate innocent persons from perpetrators.

5) War is waged to maintain peace and to benefit the people of the State.

6) War is waged to protect the people of the State from destructive aggression of the enemy.

7) War is waged primarily to ensure the survival of the State against the destructive force of the enemy.

8) Punishment must be proportional to the crime of the perpetrators.

3. Christianity

Most academics are in agreement that early Christianity was based on Jesus Christ's teachings about love, peace, and refusal to use violence in any form, especially war. The Christian God was not a warrior against the enemy of the Jews. Christ was presented as having nothing to do with the traditional sacred warfare of Ancient Jews. However, after Emperor Constantine I (272 AD-337 AD) was converted to Christianity, it became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. With this the approach to war underwent a complete change from emphasis on love, peace, and non-violence to acceptance of the use of force in what is known as a "just war". The researcher wishes to present some Christian approaches here.

3.1 Clement of Alexandria

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-c. 215) is considered to be the first Christian thinker to introduce the just war theory into the Christian world. Although the evidence about his thought is rather scarce, he is recognized for defining just wars in two ways: 1) the war is waged to defend the empire; this is known as just cause, and 2) the emperor's authority is the right authority (Bruce Duncan, www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au).

3.2 St. Ambrose

Aurelius Ambrosius, better known as St. Ambrose (339-397), ruled a province in northern Italy. He was appointed a bishop of Milan who exerted tremendous intellectual influence on St. Augustine. He wrote a book *On the Duties of the Clergy* based on Cicero's *De Officiis*. It may be said, therefore, that his treatment of just wars was influenced by the Roman author, especially the idea that war is waged to protect the State.

It must be remembered that the Roman Empire was under threat from foreign invaders whom he called heretics.

According to St. Ambrose, the use of force are of two kinds: force used in self-defense and force used to protect the State. He did not approve of the first kind of violence but condoned the latter. The war in defense of the State or its allies would be undertaken in the name of the common good and was, therefore, brave and just (Mattox, 2006: 20-23).

3.3 St. Augustine

In St. Augustine's view, waging war or using force could be either a just or an unjust action. If force was used for self-interest, say, killing a neighbor in self-defense or to protect one's own property, the act would be unjust. On the other hand, if war was waged to maintain peace or to defend the State from destructive forces, it would be just. He said that "a just war is not one which avenges injuries on the perpetrators, but an act to restore what was unjustly taken" (http://www.unitypublishing.com/Government/JustWarCatholic.htm).

St. Augustine believed that intention is a crucial component, saying "The desire for harm, the cruelty of avenging, the unruly and implacable animosity, the rage of rebellion, the lust of domination and the like – these are the things which are to be blamed in war" (http://unitypublishing.com/Government/JustWarCatholic.htm).

To Augustine, the attempt to restore peace was also an important motivating factor. He said, "For peace is not sought in order to rekindle war, but war is waged in order that peace may be obtained. Therefore, even in waging war, cherish the spirit of the peacemaker, that, by conquering those whom you attack, you may lead them back to the advantages of peace" (http://unitypublishing.com/Government/JustWarCatholic.htm). Thus, Augustine's just war is defined by the following three factors:

1) Purpose
2) Authority
3) Conduct

To him, war was the greatest physical evil on earth, but we could justify it if it was waged to protect the vulnerable or innocent victims. He weighed the rights of innocent victims against the rights of the aggressors. Evidently, in cases of illegitimate aggression, the rights of the former prevail. In such situations a war could be waged in self-defense. It is not to be waged to pose a threat against others. The declaration of war must be made by lawful authorities, e.g. monarchs. Furthermore, war must be waged on the principle of love, which was considered one of the most important components. Humans are dignified beings, even our enemies are dignified. War should be waged with the motive of peace. He said, "We do not seek peace in order to be at war, but we go to war that we may have peace. Be peaceful, therefore, in warring, so that you may vanquish those whom you war against, and bring them to the prosperity of peace" (http://unitypublishing.com/Government/JustWarCatholic.htm).

3.4 St. Thomas Aquinas

In 1096 the Crusade began. This was a religious war between Christians and Muslims. The conflict started when a group of Muslims occupied Jerusalem, a sacred site for Christian pilgrimages. Pope Urban II, the supreme Roman Catholic leader in Rome, gave an eloquent speech in favor of a crusade against the Muslim aggressors. He promised to purge the crusaders of the sin and cancel all the debts. At the Council of Clermont in the south of France, on 18-28 November 1095, the crusade or the Holy War was declared, "as God wills it", to win back the city of Jerusalem. Following the Pope's sermon, many Christians joined the Crusade. The Pope's declaration of war started off a war that lasted for 196 years.

Towards the end of the Crusade, St. Thomas Aquinas wrote the *Summa Theologica*. The treatise was built on St. Augustine's just war theory. Aquinas proposed that a just war be made on the following three principles (Jones, 1998: 30).

a.) Authority of the ruler

War is not the business of a private citizen. The authority to summon the people in wartime is in the hands of those who hold supreme authority. It is their legitimate business to protect the common good of

their people against threats. In his *Summa Theologica*, he asserts that in the just war, the legitimate authority "bears not the sword in vain, for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil" (www.catholiceducation.org/articles/politics/pd0051.htr), and urged the said authority "to rescue the poor and deliver the needy out of the hands of the sinner" (www.catholiceducation.org/articles/politics/pd0051.htr).

b.) Just cause

Those who are attacked are attacked because they deserve it on account of some wrongdoing. This was also mentioned by St. Augustine that "a just war is one that avenges wrongs, when a nation or state has to be punished, for refusing to make amends for the wrongs inflicted by its subjects, or to restore what it has seized unjustly" (reference, Mattox, 2006: 46).

c.) Rightful intention

Participants in the war should have rightful intention in the sense that they intend to bring about the good and avoid evil. Hence, St. Augustine proposed that the legitimate just war is not waged for aggrandizement purposes. Fighters should not rejoice in waging war, but consider it an unavoidable necessity. They must not engage in war as an act to provoke further aggression (The Just War Tradition, www.south-alabama.edu/history/faculty/sirmon/Just%20War.ppt).

Monks and just wars in Theravāda Buddhism

What is the Buddhist attitude towards just wars? In what ways can Buddhist monks' involvement in just wars in a number of countries be justified in light of the Buddha's teachings? Is it possible that in unavoidable situations Buddhism allows the waging of war as a necessary sin? In what follows, the researcher attempts to address these questions.

1. *Dhammavinaya* and just wars

In the Buddha's time, there was no evidence of a monk or group of monks taking part in war whether directly or directly. There were incidents, however, in which the Buddha was present in the conflict but only to act as

the conciliator to prevent the conflicting parties from going to war. Some examples include the Buddha's relatives quarreling over the use of water the Rohinī, the incident of King Vidūdabha and Brahmin Vassakāra. It could be said that the Buddha's conduct reflects his position that he did not support war or the use of force in any form.This position is based on *Dhammavinaya* that he taught. In *Vinaya*, for example, Precept 1 of *Pañca-sīla* is about abstaining from killing. In Dhamma, e.g. in *Kūtadanta Sutta* (D.I 9/199-237), he radically changed the animal-sacrifice ritual practiced by old-school Indians to that of a non-killing kind. Again, in Cakkavatti Sutta (D.III 11/33-50) he taught *Kusala-kammapatha*, comprising ten precepts about refraining from harmful action mentally as well as physically. In addition, there are a lot of other teachings on loving kindness, compassion, and forgiveness (Hatred is never appeased by hatred. By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased). These principles of *Dhamma* are the opposite of war and the use of force.

In the researcher's view, the Buddha's position towards war is consistent with the rest of his teachings. All of his teachings, at the *Sīla* level, *Samādhi* level, or *Paññā* level, are incompatible with war. War is considered an evil act or "*Akusala-kammapatha*". This is something to be abandoned, as shown in the teaching on *Kilesa* in the *Akusalamūla* group, the three roots of evil, i.e. greed, anger, and delusion or *Kilesa* in the *Papañca* group of *Taṅhā* (craving), *Māna* (conceit), and *Diṭṭhi* (speculation). All these are impurities that lie behind the use of force. They are inner enemies that need to be purged through the practice of *Dhamma*. Thus, it can be said that the use of force in the form of war is an act under the influence of *Kilesa*, as found in *Dhammapada*: "Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts, suffering follows him as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage" (Dh. 25/11). If one thus analyzes war in the human context, it means that war is driven by the human mind. If there is no such intent in the mind, war will not occur. If the mind is impure or dominated by *Kilesa*, the action that follows is also impure. War is an external behavior which in Buddhism is

called "impure act" (*Akusala-kamma*), so the mind that drives the action must also be impure or dominated by *Kilesa*.

So, it is the position or principle of Buddhism not to support war or the use of force in any form, because it is an evil act (*Akusala-kamma*) not conducive to the moral growth of an individual or a society. This position is in line with the natural law (*Kammaniyāma*) and cannot be compromised or bent to suit the social value system. According to Buddhism, the intention to use physical, verbal, or mental violence is an evil act (*Akusala-dhamma*). It does not matter when, where or why the action is done, for it is always an evil act. The severity of the act depends on the inherent conditions of each individual.

2. *Dhammavinaya* and just wars in socio-political contexts

If we apply the Buddhist principle of not supporting war or the use of force to socio-political contexts, we begin to see that problems may arise. Socio-politically speaking, people live together in the form of a State or a nation. In the State, a group of people will govern or exercise the State authority on the people's behalf. This state of affairs is called "government". One of the duties of the State is to provide protection to its citizens against internal and external threats, including invasion by another group or country. If the State fails to do so, its citizens will not be able to continue their existence, and the State will inevitably come to an end. For a sovereign State to be able to provide such protection, a military army equipped with the necessary weaponry is usually required. In such cases, the question may arise how it will be possible to implement the Buddhist principle of no-war? Does the State's duty to provide safety to its citizens conflict with the Buddhist principle?

Before answering these questions, the researcher wants to refer back to the socio-political background in the Buddha's time. The Buddha spread his teachings in 16 provinces ruled under diverse forms of government. Each province had its own army to protect its citizens. Evidently, the Buddha did not encourage these provinces to wage war against one another. Yet, there is no evidence that he taught them to give up armed forces either. This might be because a) he thought that in the

socio-political context of the time, it was necessary for these provinces to have armies to provide safety for their people; or b) he did not approve of the military preparedness but did not admonish them to cast aside their military might because the conditions were not right for him to do so.

How would Buddhism view the situation in which the State needs to wage a just war to protect its sovereignty, religion, and people against the enemy's aggression? It is the researcher's belief that this is an ethical dilemma not unlike such issues as abortion, capital punishment, and euthanasia. Any position one takes will have an upside and a downside. For example, if one opts for self-defense, one may guarantee the safety of the nation, religion and people, while losing out on Buddhist ethics regarding abstention of killing and violation of *Kusala-kamma*. On the other hand, if one takes a non-war option, no Buddhist ethical principles are violated, while the nation, religion and people suffer the aggression of a foreign army. If the State was to face this dilemma, what would Buddhism do? In the researcher's view, consideration must be taken at two levels:

2.1) At the *Sacca-Dhamma* level

Admittedly, war involves the use of destructive weapons. Buddhism regards taking someone's life for whatever reason as an immoral and sinful act. The severity of the act depends on the extent to which the killer is influenced by *Kilesa* as well as how valuable the killed person is. For instance, if Mr. Daeng's intention to kill is driven by a revengeful motive, the act will be more sinful than the executioner's pulling the trigger out of duty. Killing a person with high morality like an Arahant is, naturally, more sinful than killing an immoral bandit. Buddhism regards this principle as the law of nature (*Kammaniyāma*). Therefore, if the State chooses to wage a just war to defend the nation, its religion and people against hostile aggression, the argument may be validated. Yet, war entails killing, and that is against the *Sīla* and, therefore, sinful.

2.2) At the *Paññatti-Dhamma* level

Paññatti refers to the rules, regulations, criteria, traditions, and government systems that a society agrees to follow. In Buddhism these

social provisions are not the laws of nature, for they can be modified or cancelled if need be. Be that as it may, Buddhism proposes that for the *Paññatti* to benefit human development, they should be as consistent as possible with the *Sacca-dhamma*. If the State feels that a just war is the only way to benefit most people, it may claim to commit a "necessary sin" to protect the nation, religion and people; at any rate, in Buddhism the choice taken is immoral and sinful.

3. Theravāda monks and just wars

The researcher wants to focus the discussion on four groups of Theravāda monks here: monks in the early period of Buddhism, monks in Sri Lanka, monks in Myanmar, and monks in Thailand.

3.1) Monks in the early period of Buddhism

If one uses the *Tepiṭaka* as evidence for what went on in early Buddhism, especially *Vinaya* or the 227 rules of *Sīla*, no permission was given to Theravāda monks to engage in a just war either directly or indirectly, or in any activity that might have been somehow related to war. For example, monks would not go to watch the war procession of the army; they may not spend the night in the army camp without a proper reason; or they may not visit the sights around the battlefields. All this is against the *Vinaya* and unbecoming to the status of monks which is relatively higher than laypeople.

In *Brahmacariya Sutta* (D.I 9/1-90) there is another set of *Sīla* practiced by the Buddha. Although they are not part of the usual 227 rules of *Sīla* of the monks, Theravāda monks need to observe them all the same, because their essence is no different. For instance, "the Gotama refrains from killing, lays down allarms and punitive instruments, is ashamed to do a wrongful act, has compassion, and wants the best for all beings" (D.I 9/3), and "the Gotama refrains from cutting up (organs), killing, imprisoning, robbing and extorting people" (D.I 9/8). These two rules of *Sīla* are intended for the monks to refrain from killing and hurting all beings. The adherence to these two rules of *Sīla* will make it most

unlikely for Theravāda monks to become involved in wars whether directly or indirectly.

In terms of *Dhamma*, statements from *Ovādapāṭimokkha* to "not talk ill of others" (*Anupavādo*), to "not harm others" (*Anupaghādo*), and "those who hurt others are not considered Pabbajita and those who exploit others are not considered Samana" [*Na Hipabbajito Parūpaghāti, Samaṅo Hoti Paraṃ Vihеṭhayanto*] (D.II 10/44) can be used as criteria for the legitimacy of Buddhist monkhood. In other words, no Buddhist monk will hurt or talk ill of others, and those who do so are not considered *Pabbajita*. In addition, monks are required to adhere to other *Dhamma* principles such as loving-kindness and forgiveness.

As mentioned earlier, society tends to put monks on a status higher than ordinary people. The higher status comes with certain social expectations that their moral behaviors be above the normal standard. In this regard, it may be acceptable for the laity to get involved in a just war to protect the nation, religion, and people, even though the act is considered against *Sīla* and sinful. On the other hand, there is no possible ground for monks to do so whether directly or indirectly. Perhaps the only way that that they may do so is by following in the Buddha's footsteps, i.e. by acting as a mediator for the warring parties with the aim of putting an end to the hostility.

3.2) Monks in Sri Lanka

Historically, the only Buddhist text used in Sri Lanka is the *Mahāvamsa* in which some passages could be interpreted as supporting the waging of a just war:

> Killing with intent to preserve the religion does not bar the killer from entering Heaven. To kill an immoral person is a sin the weight of which is equal to killing a half-human, for a person who does not respect *Tisaraṇagamana* or a person without *Pañca-sīla* has lost his humanity. He is an imperfect being. His death is akin to the death of a *Tiracchāna*.

> You have helped the Buddha's *Dhamma* to prosper in all directions. Do not let this burden your heart.
>
> (Mahanamathera, et al. 2010: 60-61)

The above statement is what an *Arahant* told King Dutthagamani Abhaya who felt unhappy about causing a heavy loss of life in the war against the Damilas (Tamils). The monk's sermon eased his mind.

The above statement can be broken down into three parts for further analysis:

a.) The part about the intent to wage war: "Killing with intent to preserve the religion does not bar the killer from entering Heaven." Here the *Arahant* justified the Lankan king's waging war as an act to preserve the religion.

b.) The part about the victims (of war): "To kill an immoral person is a sin the weight of which is equal to killing a half-human, for a person who does not respect *Tisaraṇagamana* or a person with out *Pañca-sīla* has lost his humanity. He is an imperfect being." Here the *Arahant* apparently wanted to convey that the dead or the victims do not have enough worth to warrant the "abstaining from killing" principle of Theravāda Buddhism, because they did not adhere to the Triple Gems and did not practice *Pañca-Sīla*.

c.) The part about the effect of the war: "You have helped the Buddha's *Dhamma* to prosper in all directions." It seems that the *Arahant* here wanted to say that as a result of the war Buddhism had prospered and spread in all directions.

As can be seen, such justifications are in line with the Western just war theory in view of its four components:

a.) Just cause

Although the cited passage does not touch on the cause of the war, it is common knowledge that King Dutthagamani Abhaya went to war because of the Tamil invasion.

b.) Legitimate authority

As the ruler of Sri Lanka, King Dutthagamani Abhaya had a rightful authority to declare war against the Tamils.

c.) Rightful intention

The cited statement indicates rather clearly that it was not the Lankan king's intention to kill the Tamils but to preserve the religion.

d.) Positive expectation

Evidently, the Lankan king succeeded in his venture. The success did not lie in the killing of many Tamils but in the attempt to make Buddhism prosper far and wide.

Although the just war argument in the *Mahāvamsa* can be compared against the Western model, there are still significant differences. The *Mahāvamsa* admits that waging war for whatever reason is a sin. The extent of the sin depends on the main intention of the doer and on the worth of the enemy. In the researcher's view, although the *Mahāvamsa* can be said to deviate from Theravāda Buddhism in its essence and can be used by some as a pretext to wage a just war, its main argument follows the traditional Buddhist concept that killing is sinful and immoral, and that the extent of the sin depends on the moral quality of the victims.

The question whether the *Arahant's* preaching to the Lankan king indirectly supported the idea of a just warneeds to be treated in its proper context. The sermon took place after the war had ended. The king felt distressed over the killing and requested the monk to ease his mind. The monk explained the situation in light of the Buddhist principle with the advantages and disadvantages of waging a war. The advantages included the king's intention to preserve the religion and the effect of the war causing Buddhism to prosper far and wide. The disadvantages included loss of lives, the sin of which was minor compared to the king's intention to preserve the religion rather than to take life.

3.3) Monks in Myanmar

The researcher would like to present the case of Burmese monks and just wars at the time when Burma was under the British

rule, for there were a lot of monks involved in the struggle against it. According to Donald Eugene Smith in his *Religion and Politics in Burma*, monks came forward as the first group of nationalistsin the anti-colonial movement (Smith, 1965: 85).

Originally the role of Burmese monks did not go beyond the teaching of *Pariyatti*, just like Theravāda monks in other countries. With the British rule (1824-1938) modern education was introduced to reinforce its colonial ideals and trade. Monks were told to teach general subjects, which they declined, not willing to be part of the colonial indoctrination. Besides, it was against the Burmese custom to let general teachers teach in the monastery. The British policy went against the Burmese tradition and was viewed as a threat to and interference with the ecclesiastical affairs. Furthermore, the British authorities allowed Christians to run general schools and employed their graduates in the public sector, thus causing considerable resentment among students of the monasteries.

An incident leading to a series of conflicts between British rulers and the Burmese was over the wearing of shoes in monasteries. The Burmese strictly adhered to the practice of taking off their shoes before entering the monastery, especially in the area around the Shwedagon Pagoda – a custom the British did not follow. The Young Buddhist Association submitted a letter requesting the British authorities to issue instructions forbidding the wearing of shoes in the sacred area, but to no avail. The shoe issue became one of the first incidents that caused much anger and resentment to the British rule. On 4 October 1919, a group of Buddhist monks angrily used violence against some Westerners who wore shoes on the premises of the Eindawya Pagoda in Mandalay. Four monks were arrested. Their leader, Ven. U Kettaya, was charged with attempted murder and given a death sentence (1965: 88).

A Burmese activist monk, Ven. U Ottama, led an anti-colonial movement and was proclaimed the father of the country's independence movement. He was educated at Calcutta University in India and was influenced by Indian nationalist movements and Mahatma Gandhi. Upon his return to Burma in 1921, he became concerned with the plight of

Buddhism and started an anti-British movement. With much public support, the movement grew into a strong armed force, attacking and occupying Sagu Town. When it was later re-taken by the Burmese forces, the authorities put a price of 200 rupees on U Ottama's head. The monk was captured and was also given a death sentence. He was given a chance to appeal, which he declined because he did not want the Burmese history to record that he bowed to foreign authority.

A noteworthy point is that although U Ottama was a leader of the movement to free Burma from the British rule, he was opposed to its separation from India. He felt that Burma should be part of India, the birthplace of Buddhism. He wrote an article entitled "The Case Against the Separation of Burma From India", stating that Burma must preserve its friendship on an equal footing with India and China for political and economic survival (Human Rights Watch, 2009: 30-31).

Another Burmese monk by the name of U Wisara was imprisoned on several occasions for speaking against the colonial rule. He died in prison in 1929 after 163 days of hunger-strike. His picture appeared on the front cover of the October 2007 issue of the *Irrawaddy Journal*, and he was hailed as the monk who led the protest in Burma: "Two monks (U Ottama and U Wisara) inspired political activists and student activists in the movement for independence"(Aung Zaw, 2007: 25). Academics like Michael Mendelson wrote in his report on "Monks and States in Burma" that monks who were involved in political activities were often labeled by the colonial rulers as political instigators in saffron robe, and that it is interesting to note that a similar statement is now being issued by current Burmese leaders against protesting monks.

3.4) Monks in Thailand

The discussion on Thailand will include the three following cases: Phra Thammachot, Chao Phra Fang's gathering, and Phra Kittiwuttho.

a.) Phra Thammachot

Phra Thammachot was a monk that lived towards the end of the Ayutthaya period. Known for his mystic power, he resided at Wat

Khao Nang Buat in the province of Suphan Buri. When the Burmese army besieged the former capital of Ayutthaya and captured many Thais in the process, a group of Thai patriots gathered at Bang Rachan Village, Wiset Chaichan District, and waylaid the Burmese troops. They asked Phra Thammachot who had already moved from Wat Khao Nang Buat to Wat Pho Kao Ton to hand out talismans and good luck charms and give blessings to the villagers. Significant village leaders included Khun San, Village Headman Phanruang, Nai Tong Men, Nai Chan Nuatkhiao, Nai Thong Saengyai, Nai Thaen, Nai Chot, Nai In, Nai Mueang, Nai Dok, and Nai Thong Kaeo. For five months the villagers put up a brave fight against the Burmese on five separate occasions, but their stronghold was eventually captured in 1767 (Fine Arts Department, 1962: 277).

The case of Phra Thammachot is an example of a monk who became involved in a war not as a combatant but as a moral support to the fighting villagers. There is no evidence about his motive in giving out the talismans. One of the reasons for his presence may have been the villagers' requests for his blessings. Another possible reason is that as a citizen of Ayutthaya who was affected by the Burmese invasion, he may have sensed, similarly to his compatriots, an impending danger to the nation and religion. He may have witnessed people and monks killed during the invasion. His sense of patriotism may have spurred him on to do something, which may explain why he obliged, as far as a monk could, when asked by the villagers for his blessing.

b.) Chao Phra Fang's gathering

Chao Phra Fang and a group of monks in the north of Thailand gathered to drive away the Burmese troops after the second fall of Ayutthaya. This group has usually been presented in a negative light. For instance, they were portrayed as *Alajjī* or immoral monks who formed a militia in peacetime. Sometimes, they were said to be the rebels who were put down by General Tak (who later became King Taksin). However, in view of the turmoil and trouble the nation was experiencing then, when there was no central authority or a group of individuals strong enough to withstand the Burmese force, it should not come as a surprise that a number of Thai citizens, whether ecclesiastical or lay, would gather to form some

kind of force. Some such examples were the gatherings of Phraya Tak in the Central Region, Chao Phraya Phitsanulok in the Lower Northern Region, Chao Phra Fang in the Upper Northern Region, Governor of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province in the south, and Chao Phimai in the northeast[1].

It must be borne in mind, however, that the incident of Chao Phra Fang's gathering was connected not only to the fall of the capital but also to the virtual demise of the *Saṅgha*. In the absence of any order, the monks under Chao Phra Fang might be recorded as having acted inappropriately, but one can by no means conclude from that that they did not possess a sense of nationalism or did not intend to recover the country's sovereignty and religious order. In the researcher's view, during the time when the people were deeply suffering from the effects of wars, it would be inadmissible for a group like Chao Phra Fang's to exploit the situation. Chao Phra Fang's gathering was different; its force was strong enough to defeat Chao Phraya Phitsanulok's group. This indicated that it must have received much public support from the north, hence attesting to its commitment to recovering the nation and religion.

c.) Kittiwuttho Bhikkhu

Phrathep Kittipanyakhun (Kitisak Kittiwuttho) or Kittiwuttho Bhikkhu was one of the most talked about Thai monks in the aftermath of the 6 October 1976 student uprising. The interview he gave to Chaturat, a weekly magazine, dated 17 June 1976, was often quoted as him saying that "killing communists is not sinful." This was, however, not what he actually said, at least not directly. The following is the transcript from the interview:

> **Chaturat:** Is killing the left wing or communists a sin?
>
> **Kittiwuttho:** I think such an act should be done. Although Thai people are followers of Buddhism, they should still do it. Such an act is not regarded as killing. Whoever is bent on destroying the nation, religion and monarchy is not a

[1] For detail, see Prince Damrongrajanubhap. n.d. (399-400).

complete person. Bear in mind that we are not killing a person but a *Māra*, an act which every Thai citizen has a duty to do.

Chaturat: Does it violate the rules of *Sīla*?

Kittiwuttho: Of course, it does. But it is less wrong and more right. To kill a person to preserve the nation, religion and monarchy is more right. The soldiers who carry out their duty have no intention to kill. Their primary intention is to preserve the nation, religion and monarchy. The fact that they dedicate their life to preserving them is a meritorious act. Here killing is a minor sin; rather, they gain more merit. This can be compared to killing fish for food as offering to a monk. It is, of course, sinful to kill fish, but what we offer to the monk fetches more merit.

Chaturat: So, if several left-winged persons got killed at this time, the killers would earn merits.

Kittiwuttho: Killing a person who is bent on destroying the nation, religion and monarchy is beneficial.

Chaturat: So, those who killed left-winged elements are not caught and brought to justice because the merits come to their rescue.

Kittiwuttho: That is possible, thanks to their good intention for the nation (laughs).

(*Chaturat* Magazine, 1976)

Here, Kittiwuttho Bhikkhu confirmed that, according to the Buddhist principle, killing a communist was wrong but it was less wrong and more right.

Nevertheless, on subsequent occasions Kittiwuttho Bhikkhu offered further explanation. What he meant by "killing a communist" was "killing an evil ideology and not a person who is communist" (Suksamran, 1982: 153). Again, in a speech delivered to a group of soldiers, he re-affirmed that it was the monks' duty to kill communism but the soldiers' duty to kill communists when the nation, religion and monarchy were facing serious threats. He himself would be willing to leave monkhood to kill

them. However, this clarification was at odds with another speech given to another group of soldiers when he said that killing 5,000 persons to ensure the happiness of 40 million Thai people was a legitimate act, because it was meritorious and would not cause the killers to go to hell (1982: 155). He said: "If we want to preserve our nation, religion and monarchy, sometimes we may have to sacrifice Sīla for the survival of these institutions" (reference in Suksamran, 1982: 155), and "Let's make a resolution to kill all communists and purge Thailand of these insects ... Those who kill these communists will earn a big merit ... If we Thai people do not kill them, they will kill us" (1982: 155).

Of the above three cases, only those of Phra Thammachot and Chao Phra Fang may be considered tofall under the category of a just war according to the Western theory, because they happened at the time when the nation was under threat. Be that as it may, in light of the *Dhammvinaya* of Theravāda Buddhism, Chao Phra Fang's monks clearly violated both the *Vinaya* and *Dhamma* because they were actually engaged in the fight. In *Vinaya* terms, a monk who kills is said to commit a grave ecclesiastical offense and thereby loses his monkhood. They also violated the *Dhamma* anti-war principle as well as those of loving kindness and no hatred. In the case of Phra Thammachot, it was not clear what *Vinaya* rule he had violated.

So, as far as the *Dhamma* rules are concerned, Chao Phra Fang's group violated the Buddhist principles of no violence, loving kindness and forgiveness. For Phra Thammachot's group, it was not clear what *Vinaya* rules were broken, although in *Dhamma* terms the fact that he gave talismans to those about to fight indicated his intent and therefore his indirect involvement in the fight. This goes against Theravāda Buddhism. In the case of Kittiwuttho Bhikkhu, it was not clear what *Vinaya* rules were broken. His encouragements to use violence against communists were made out of concern for national security under communist threats. Still, the fact that he, as a monk, encouraged the use of force against another group of people for whatever legitimate reason did not correspond well with the *Dhammvinaya* and practice of Theravāda Buddhism.

Monks and just wars in Mahāyāna Buddhism

The researcher will here discuss two components: the concept of just wars as propounded in the Mahāyāna scriptures and the cases of Chinese monks.

1. Just wars as propounded in the Mahāyāna scriptures

In Mahāyāna scriptures such as *Mahāparinirvāna Sutta* and *Upāyakosala Sutta*, it is evident that Mahāyāna Buddhism condones just wars when it is necessary to protect *Dhamma*, the ecclesiastics, and Mahāyāna Sutta. In *Mahāparinirvāna Sutta* one reads: "When I heard that some Brahmins attacked Vaipulya Sutta, I brought death unto them immediately. For that act, I will not go to Hell in my next existence" (Yamamoto, www.shabkar.org) or "to protect *Dhamma*, they come to protect the *Saṅgha*, the protector of *Dhamma*" (Yamamoto, www.shabkar.org) or "those who adhere to *Dhamma* should carry arms and sticks to protect the Saṅgha" (Yamamoto, http://www.shabkar.org). Although the Mahāyāna Sutta allows for a just war in necessary cases, like the Theravāda tradition it admits that killing is a sin. Yet, committed to protect *Dhamma*, an act of great merit, it is considered a minor offense.

Like *Mahāparinirvāna Sutta*, *Upāyakosala Sutta* mentions how Buddhists can go to war if necessary. It narrates one of the following incidents. Some long time ago a boat carried 500 *Bodhisatta* merchants under the navigation of the boat captain who was to become the Buddha later in another life. There was a bandit on the boat who planned to rob and kill those *Bodhisatta*. When the *Bodhisatta* captain knew of the evil plan, he had three options open for him:

1) Do nothing and let the bandit kill all 500 *Bodhisatta* merchants,
2) Warn them about the bandit, or
3) Kill the bandit himself to save 500 lives.

If he chose Option 1, his *Sīla* would be kept intact, but 500 merchants would lose their lives, and the bandit would go to Hell for eternity. If he chose Option 2, the 500 *Bodhisatta* would violate their *Sīla*, for they would kill the bandit and go to Hell when they die as a result.

If he chose Option 3, he alone would violate his *Sīla* and would go to Hell alone, while saving the 500 *Bodhisatta* and preventing the bandit from committing one of the most serious offenses, i.e. killing 500 *Bodhisatta*. After careful consideration, the captain chose Option 3, because it led to the least loss and the most gain.

2. Chinese monks and just wars

The researcher wishes to present three cases here: those of Ven. Taixu, Ven. Leguan, and Chinese monks waging war against the Japanese. All these monks claimed to wage just wars to protect the nation, religion and people from the Japanese invasion. Although they did not cite the scriptures in support of their action, it could be assumed that they were influenced by the two Mahāyāna Suttas mentioned above. For instance Ven. Taixu said, "the Bodhisatta should kill them out of loving kindness to protect a multitude of people and prevent them from doing evil ... to stop their foolish acts, it is right to join in the war against Japan" (reference in Xue, 2005: 83). Another Chinese monk, Ven. Leguan, said, "Although the Buddha's teachings are pervaded with loving kindness, we cannot use it toward evil-minded people. We have to conquer them, for they are big *Māra* bent on destroying the wisdom and life of the people" (2005: 52-53). Other monks who joined the war said: "We will kill those evil people who bring misery to the Chinese people. This killing is done not only without a desire to cause trouble but also with intent to do merits" (Xue, 2005: 89-90). All this shows that the Chinese monks' idea of just wars against the Japanese invaders was charged with compassionate killing to protect the multitude of the people and to stop the invaders from committing further evils.

In conclusion, this study of Buddhist monks and just wars both in the Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions reveals that there is clear evidence from early Buddhism that Buddhism did not support any involvement in war and use of violence in any form for any reason. If monks adhered to the *Dhammvinaya* of early Buddhism, they would never be allowed to engage in a just war. They were not allowed even to watch the army or stay overnight in the army camp. After the Buddha's time, Theravāda

monks in several countries were known to get involved in fighting both directly and indirectly, e.g. Burmese and Thai monks. They might have an intention to protect the nation, religion and people, but good intention alone was not sufficient to cancel out the provision in the *Dhammavinaya*.

In the Mahāyāna tradition, on the other hand, there is evidence in the scripture that lends support to the waging of a just war. The statements in *Mahāparinirvāna Sutta* and *Upāyakosala Sutta* state that if necessary, Buddhist people can resort to the use of force or wage a just war. Cases that warrant such action include the protection of *Dhamma*, protection of Mahāyāna Sutta, and protection of *Dhamma* practitioners. The action must be accompanied by compassion, but such use of force is against the *Sīla* and is considered a sin.

Conclusion

The study of monks and just wars in both Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions reveals that in early Buddhism the *Dhamma*, *Vinaya*, and the Buddha's conduct fall along the same line. They did not support violence in any form, especially warfare. If society finds no other means than war, in the Buddhist view, that society has the right to decide what is best for it, but waging a war for whatever reason is still against the *Sīla* and therefore a sin.

The researcher also finds that for Theravāda Buddhism after the Buddha's time there are statements only in Mahāvamsa scripture that could be interpreted in favor of waging a just war. Nevertheless, the scripture seems to adhere to the principles of early Buddhism when it says that waging a war means killing, which is against the *Sīla* and therefore a sin, the extent of which depends on such factors as the intention (to protect the religion or to kill the enemy) and the worth of the enemy killed (of much or little worth, moral or immoral). In the researcher's view, the criteria set out in Mahāvamsa scripture are also generally acceptable in Theravāda Buddhism.

With regard to the role played by Theravāda monks in just wars in various countries, it is found that in general they adhered to the Buddha's

Dhammavinaya as set in the *Tepiṭaka*, but they also found themselves in abnormal situations in which the nation was caught in a war or invaded. As a consequence, there would be groups of monks who decided to enter into just wars, whether directly or indirectly. Of course, such an act was unprecedented in the history of early Buddhism.

As for Mahāyāna monks, it is found that they hold similar ideas to those of their Theravāda counterparts. In other words, when the nation was engaged in a war or invaded by hostile forces, a group of Mahāyāna monks would directly join the fight or indirectly provide support in any other way.

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