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THE ROLE OF THE BUDDHIST MONK IN DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES*

The role of the Buddhist order (*saṅgha*) in the social and economic development of the Theravāda countries of South- and Southeast Asia has, directly or indirectly, been discussed in recent publications. The works of Keyes, Suksamran and Tambiah focus on mainland Southeast Asia, and especially on the situation in Thailand (Keyes 1971, 1977, 1978; Suksamran 1977, 1980; Tambiah 1973, 1976, 1978; see also Piker 1973; Kirsch 1978; Sivaraksa 1974; Skrobanek 1976 and Bunnag 1973 on the *bhikkhu*'s 'pastoral' activities). They refer to the *saṅgha*'s present occupation with development in the wider context of its historical and traditional relations with the state, and of the recurrently felt need of the political authorities to legitimate their power by means of these *saṅgha*-state relationships.

Bechert, Gunawardana and Malalgoda are among those who have studied the situation of Buddhism and society in Sri Lanka (Bechert 1966, 1970, 1978; Gunawardana 1979; Malalgoda 1976; see also Phadnis 1976; for extensive bibliographical references see Goonetilleke 1970 and Bechert 1973), the role of the *saṅgha* in its history and the recent debate on the monk's place, especially in the light of his involvement in the political sphere.

In the approach of some scholars (e.g. Spiro 1971; Smith 1966; Pye 1962) there is a tendency to describe recent events relatively auto-

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nomously. When they use the terms 'change', 'adaptation', 'modernization' or 'innovation' in this connection they suggest that the *saṅgha* is developing in a new direction. In so doing they give little or no attention to the historical place and role of the monk (*bhikkhu*) in Theravāda society.

Some authors go further than this and speak of the development of a completely new role of the *bhikkhu* in the Theravāda Buddhist nations (e.g. Bechert 1978:199; Malalgoda 1976:11), a role which they consider contrary to the *saṅgha*'s original motivation and purpose, which was directed purely at individual salvation from this world of suffering and bondage. Hereby all activity relating to the world had to be rejected as leading to more entanglement and thus to suffering.

It is a generally accepted view that the present developments should be evaluated only in their proper historical perspective. There is, however, a methodological problem connected with the study of historical data where only certain elements in the relevant tradition are emphasized or where an individual scholar attaches more importance to certain historical data – usually those which seem to support the rest of his argumentation – than to others which can be considered as being equally important for his subject. There are of course many obvious reasons to come to a relatively well-founded conclusion about the value of manifest elements in the tradition, but there remain a large number of data that may be given priority by one scholar and denied relevancy by another.

In connection with our subject this is exemplified by the controversy between those scholars – usually western – who point to the original rejection of worldly activities by early Buddhism and those authors – among them many Buddhists – who, referring to the same canonical texts and traditions, as well as to the historical role of the *saṅgha*, legitimate the *bhikkhu*'s active interest in society. One might argue, as Bechert does (Bechert 1978:205), that the respective sides each have a special reason for doing so. But then the question remains why the latter condemns them for emphasizing this aspect of Buddhist teaching and history, while he himself stresses another aspect.

The same question could be raised regarding the reluctance of various western scholars to include in their works 'sociological' items in Buddhist history. The answer – which falls outside the scope of this article – might tell us more about western Buddhological research and the culturally determined attitudes of the researchers than about Buddhism.

What is of interest here is why Buddhist authors are keen on bringing out this particular aspect of the monk's active participation in society and what their arguments are for doing so. Within the scope of this article it is unavoidable to be selective in the choice of material and to simplify the problem to some extent.

A main point of interest is firstly how the value system defines development and secondly what is presented as the ideal of the role of

the *bhikkhu*. We will confine ourselves to the participation of the *bhikkhu* in socio-economic development, and leave aside the political interests of *bhikkhus*, as far as this is possible, since the two spheres often overlap.

The value system comprises all the factors which condition, motivate and channel human and social activities. The values are usually based on religious concepts, which in their turn are influenced by these values. In the case of economic and social development the value system has roughly two functions: it provides the goals which have to be promoted and it sanctions the means to be used (Ayal 1963). With respect to Theravāda Buddhist countries this implies for example that the pursuit and accumulation of wealth should be seen in relation to the pursuit and accumulation of merit, which is basically an affair of the individual Buddhist woman or man. Here it also means that the accumulation of 'surplus' capital as a basis of a capitalist economy cannot be brought into agreement with the value system. Regarding the means used for economic development Sarkisyanz (1972) has already pointed for instance to the problems arising in Theravāda countries with regard to the development of science and thereby of industrialization:

1. in traditional Buddhism the main intellectual efforts have always been directed towards the overcoming of personal suffering and bondage in the transitory world;
2. causality in nature (natural harmony or calamities) was linked to causation from the moral sphere;
3. 'pre'-Buddhist monistic or pantheistic attitudes were opposed to scientific detachment from and observation of nature.

In the case of the *bhikkhu*'s active participation in development work it is clear that he is restricted by the rules of discipline (*vinaya*) to which he has bound himself, although situations occur in which these rules are being transgressed¹ or considered less important.

It is not relevant here to give an all-embracing definition of development – if such were possible. What is relevant is how Buddhists define development.

Therefore some of the development ideologies which have been evolved by Buddhist authors will be discussed, in the first place those of Sinhalese authors connected with the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement. We will also refer to other Sinhalese views, as well as to the situation in connection with *bhikkhu* participation in development in Thailand.

Originally inspired by Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave, the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka acquired a specific Buddhist character. A. T. Ariyaratne, the immediate inspirer of the movement, says about this: 'The Sarvodaya philosophy of the movement is a synthetic ideology and a universal concept. All forms of creative altruism and evolutionary

humanism, be it the Marxian aim of material integration, Rousseau's option of social integration or Asoka's endeavour of moral integration, . . . are inherent in the Sarvodaya philosophy practised by us, for ours is an attempt to bring about total human integration. The philosophy that influenced us most in evolving our Sarvodaya concept in Sri Lanka is Lord Buddha's teachings' (quoted in Kantowsky 1980:43).

In its initial phase the movement was greatly influenced by the Buddhist modernist revival and the need of mainly western-educated urban Buddhists to formulate a new social ethic (Bechert 1966:37 ff.), which was adapted to a modern, post-colonial society. According to Buddhist modernists, only Buddhist ideals could disengage technical progress and scientific development from aggression and violence and connect them with a new, non-violent, order (cf. also Wismeyer 1981:32 ff.).

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement (SSM) was officially founded in 1958 to stimulate the participation of young students in community development projects on the basis of an ideology of education and development. The Sarvodaya concept of development has been worked out in many publications and pamphlets (cf. Wismeyer 1981:bibliography). It was first made accessible to the interested student of Buddhism by the publications and lectures of Prof. L. G. Hewage and *bhikkhu* Dr. H. Ratanasara. It is interesting to compare their views, remembering the discussion on the *bhikkhu*'s political involvement in which they were both engaged in the forties and fifties.

Hewage considers development 'an integrated life-long process within the individual who lives in a social group'. He distinguishes four constituents: 1. individual development, which provides the individual with the basic physical necessities, and also with conditions to develop the emotional, intellectual, social and cultural aspects of his personality; 2. social development, the development of the socio-economic and political aspects of the individual's environment, which also includes, e.g., facilities for education and the maintenance of social justice; 3. ecological or environmental development, which means: protection of the environment and the individual's tasks or attitude towards it, viz. contentment, simplicity and non-violence; 4. spiritual development, the recognition of a higher potential in all beings, which has been worked out in the past in, e.g., the spiritual training of Buddhist meditation.

Thus it is the Sarvodaya opinion that material progress cannot be pursued without due emphasis on the moral, cultural and spiritual aspects of individual development – a not altogether new concept, which, however, is presented as rather revolutionary (Hewage 1974:37 f.; 1976:1-7 (Education for development defined); see also Goulet 1981:8 ff.). To effect this, Sarvodaya gives priority to the growth of the individual, which in turn will affect the whole of society. Ariyaratne spoke of a new era in this connection: 'the Age of Science is coming to an end; that is about to dawn upon us . . . the Age of Science and Spirituality'

(Ariyaratne 1963:3). This stress on the individual is a striking feature of the ideology and is fully in accordance with Theravāda values.

The doctrine of *kamma* as formulated in Theravāda Buddhism teaches the responsibility of the individual for her or his personal condition and circumstances and emphasizes the need of the individual's moral and spiritual development for the general progress of all living beings on the road towards happiness and liberation. Therefore traditional Buddhist ethics place personal growth through religious merit before participation in community development.

Sarvodaya is trying to change this traditional attitude – which has given rise, for instance, to the general opinion that socio-economic development is the responsibility of the government and of public agencies – by stressing the importance of social responsibility and cooperation (cf. also the recent discussions at all levels in Buddhist countries on the question of whether there is such a thing as 'group-*kamma*').

Sarvodaya is doing so on the basis of the Buddhist ideals of the four so-called 'sublime states' (*brahmavihāra*) or 'immeasurable states' (*appamañña*), viz. loving kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathy/joy (*mudītā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*), and by reinterpreting these four states of meditation into attitudes with regard to social action. Ariyaratne (n.d. I:131 ff.) thus adapts the four *brahmavihāras*: *mettā* means the opposite of violence, thus *mettā* is non-violence. *Karuṇā* is concrete compassionate action. When these two are applied in the right way, there will be a positive emotional and intellectual reaction in the form of the immediate joy of service (*mudītā*). A more permanent result of putting the above three 'sublime states' into practice will then be the development of a new characteristic in the personality, namely equanimity or *upekkhā*.

The ideals as they are schematized here feature in all Buddhist theories of development. The latter accordingly emphasize the importance of the spiritual and material freedom of the individual; the role of education to turn the individual into a responsible member of his family, an active member of the community, and a responsible citizen of his country and of the world, with the responsibility for education and social security being almost everywhere considered a concern of the government (if possible in cooperation with the *saṅgha*); respect for the raw materials on hand and the available employment; and the ultimate aim of spiritual growth which will lead to salvation (cf. Kloppenborg 1982).

In the elaboration of its various projects, the movement is making use of the *saṅgha*'s influence and of *bhikkhu* leadership by repeatedly pointing out their historical role in education and guidance. It intends to reinstall the *bhikkhu* in his traditional place, since socio-economic development is considered primarily as an educational process of the individuals concerned.

According to Hewage (Hewage 1976) it is necessary for the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement to acknowledge that its concepts are incorporated in Buddhist teaching and in the Buddhist culture of Sri Lanka: what it is doing is rediscovering and re-applying ancient values and practices. He, and the other Buddhist authors with him, indignantly rejects the view that Buddhism is a world-negating religion. Examples galore are given from the canonical texts and from the Buddha's own teachings and his instruction of the *bhikkhus*², as is a survey of the role played by *bhikkhu* leaders in history. All this is taken as evidence that Buddhist values and Buddhist religious institutions are the most effective tools in development as defined above, provided that *bhikkhus* have the facilities to (re)gain the necessary knowledge and skills.

The traditional training of *bhikkhus* in the monks' schools (*pirivena*) should be adapted to the modern *bhikkhu*'s 'new' task, as has also been requested by the *bhikkhus* themselves who have already been involved in development work.

To meet the demands of (young) *bhikkhus* who wanted to be active in the field of social work, the well-known Bhikkhu Educational Institute of the venerable H. Nāṇasiṃha Thera in Pāthakada was renamed Sarvodaya Training Institute (STI). The objective of the institute is described as follows (Nāṇasiṃha, as quoted by Kantowsky 1980:125): 'Today the relationship between the Bhikkhu and the villager is limited to the discharge of a few traditional religious duties. But in times past, the villager treated the Bhikkhu as the active leader for social progress and as religious mentor. The Bhikkhu has the potentiality in him to assume that position even today. Its functions involve not only the spiritual development of the village in the emancipation of the individual but also the material development of the community'.

Bhikkhus were sent from all sects (*nikāya*) to the STI when it offered its first course in 1975. The curriculum (then four months, now usually six) comprised: Buddhism, Sarvodaya philosophy, community development, agriculture and English (all of them 60 hours), village culture of Sri Lanka, psychology, human welfare, health and sanitation, cooperatives, sociology and economics, management, government departments and organizations connected with village work (20 or 30 hours).

Although very successful in the beginning, the interest of *bhikkhus* in following a course decreased in the years thereafter. One of the reasons for this decrease in enthusiasm is connected with the fact that many *bhikkhus* who choose to follow some educational course or other take into account the possibility of giving up their monastic status and returning to lay life in the future. With this possibility in mind they prefer an education which is valued more highly in society, viz. a university course in the humanities.

Of those *bhikkhus* who finished a training course at the end of 1976 about one fourth is really active in community development work

(Kantowsky 1980:130). In this case, too, there is evidence of a gap, which is slowly widening, between the plans and expectations of Buddhist modernist leaders and ideologists and the experiences of those who are supposed to put their ideas into practice.

A discussion with 15 young *bhikkhus* who had just finished a six-month training course at the STI in December 1982 showed that being a *bhikkhu* and doing social work are not separable but are closely related in their opinion. To be a *bhikkhu* means that one has chosen to work for others – in the canonical words of the Buddha: ‘for the happiness of many’ (*bahujanasukhāya*). Also the traditional tasks of a village monk, viz. accepting gifts (*dāna*) from the laity and preaching (*bhāṇa*), are considered as social work. What these *bhikkhus* considered necessary for their future task was a training to ‘become politically sensitive’. Most of them, however, rejected the involvement of *bhikkhus* in party politics.

All of them valued the application of the four ‘sublime states’ and underlined (as did almost all the *bhikkhus* I met) the necessity of the cultivation of equanimity as an effective means against becoming too involved personally, which is considered incompatible with their role as *bhikkhu*. They had some wishes as regards other subjects to be included in the curriculum, namely more practical experience (during the last week of their training they visited hospitals, prisons and various social institutions), Tamil and astrology³.

The Sarvodaya scheme is presented as a valuable contribution to the solution of development problems – problems which would not have arisen if the western imperialist powers had not destroyed the ancient civilization, in which the *bhikkhus* had their due place as leaders and educators (Hewage 1974:46-7; Ratanasara 1974a:28-9). It provides for missionary ambitions, the Sarvodaya concept of development distinguishing four stages, namely from individual development to village development, from there to national development, and finally to world development (Goulet 1981:7 ff.; Wismeyer 1981:63 f.). It is therefore recommended as a useful and fitting ideology for other Theravāda countries, and – with some modifications – for the rest of the world.

The venerable Dr. H. Ratanasara is interested mainly in the *bhikkhu*’s participation and lays strong emphasis on the traditional place of the *bhikkhus* as leaders of the community. As has already been mentioned, the debate on the *bhikkhu*’s ‘worldly’ involvement has a fairly long history in Sri Lanka. For the proper historical perspective we would refer to the excellent and detailed work of Bechert (1966:210 ff.), and for the Sarvodaya situation to Wismeyer 1981 and Wismeyer’s forthcoming volume II.

Ratanasara, too, bases himself on the canonical passages describing the Buddha’s admonitions to *bhikkhus* to play a role of leadership in society and on the history of *bhikkhu* leadership in development as

something 'accepted, acknowledged and preserved by kings and people'. The attention is concentrated on this in his arguments, to the exclusion of other aspects of early and historical Buddhist doctrine, which also, and repeatedly, provide for *bhikkhus*' withdrawing from society and dedicating themselves to the quest for liberation.

He, too, rejects the representation of Buddhism as a basically world-negating religion. This rejection contains echoes of the memory of Christian attempts to convert Buddhists under pressure, cf. Ratanasara 1974a:23: 'Perhaps what he would like to see happening in this country is that the Sangha should look on supinely while Christian missionaries carry on merrily the task of proselytisation and forcible conversion of Buddhists. – Certainly the Buddhist Sangha are not foolish enough to oblige!'

For effective development he considers *bhikkhu* leadership necessary. Therefore the government should provide facilities by engaging *bhikkhus* in development projects and by seeing to it that education is adapted through the introduction of social subjects in the curriculum of *pirivenas* and Buddhist universities.

We may ask how the majority of Sinhalese lay Buddhists have reacted to these proposals. Since the forties the *bhikkhus* have pointed out their historically legitimated responsibility as 'Guardians of the Life and Liberty as well as Sponsors of the Wellbeing and Happiness of Society' (Kelaniya Declaration of Independence of 1947, see Bechert 1973: 456). In the declaration of the Vidyāṅkara Pirivena of 1946 ('Monks and Politics', quoted by Phadnis 1976:331 ff.) no distinction is made yet between the political and social activities of *bhikkhus*: 'politics embraces all fields of human activity directed towards the public weal'. The declaration urges *bhikkhus* to act 'for the welfare of our people', basing itself again on the historical role of the *bhikkhu* 'in the forefront of movements for progress'. This view has also been defended by Rahulu in his *Heritage of the Bhikkhu* (Sinhalese version of 1946!) and by D. C. Vijayavardhana in his *Revolt in the Temple* of 1953. In the Report of the Buddha Sāsana Commission of November 1959 a clear distinction is drawn between the *bhikkhu*'s social work, which is described as one of his main tasks, and his political involvement, which is considered as being incompatible with Vinaya regulations and with tradition.

The influence of the lay members of the Commission is very obvious in the Report. Also in this case they have expressed the general opinion of the Buddhist laity in public. Recent interviews with Buddhist laymen as well as monks have emphasized the general acceptance of this view. *Bhikkhus* should engage in social work – recently the example of Christian ministers and priests who are involved in social work has given an extra impetus, as representing an example to be followed and implying the threat of comparison with them, with the attendant risk of being

considered less useful socially – and naturally social activities cannot be separated from political ones. This does not imply, however, that the *bhikkhu* may ever become involved in party politics. Only a few monks did not agree with this interpretation; all of the laity supported it (see also the reports and resolutions of the Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, Colombo, 1-5 June 1982, on the subject of Survival and Development – the Buddhist Perspective).

A discussion (see e.g. Jayaweera 1974; Dissanayake 1979; de Silva 1976; Sivarakasa 1976) on the interaction of development and Buddhist values is still continuing on many levels. It is placing emphasis on the need for material and spiritual and social and individual development to go hand in hand, and therefore for spiritual and temporal leaders to cooperate to achieve a balanced development. Many point to the agreement between Buddhist social and political ethics and economic concepts and Socialism and Marxism (Dissanayake, Vijayavardhana, de Silva, Jayaweera), especially in connection with the expectation as regards the role of the state in the development process.

With regard to the *bhikkhu*'s role, one could say that his social activities, including his participation in community development projects, are generally accepted by Sinhalese laymen. There is some reserve when there is question of the leadership of *bhikkhus*, as many laymen are unwilling to give up the status and autonomy they have acquired in Buddhist modernist movements.

In contrast with Thailand, I have up till now found no real evidence of the active involvement of *bhikkhus* in governmental development projects, although there are *bhikkhus* active in mobilizing the community to oppose governmental development plans for their area. Some ideologists, as has been said before, desire the active cooperation of government and *saṅgha* in all public matters. Also in the SSM there is a growing tendency to allow governmental agencies to participate in decision-making and thus exercise an influence on the *bhikkhus* participating in Sarvodaya projects (see also Goulet 1981).

There are several parallels with the situation in Thailand (cf. the works of Keyes, Tambiah and Suksamran), viz.:

1. In both countries there is a definite connection between the call for *bhikkhu* participation and leadership – not only from the *bhikkhus* themselves but also from educated urban Buddhists, who are critical of the alleged passivity of the *saṅgha* – and the rise in popularity of views which consider Buddhism a religion capable of giving concrete answers to the problem of how to live a life of satisfaction and fulfilment in this world, thereby sometimes overlooking its ascetic and world-rejecting elements;
2. In both countries the younger, educated *bhikkhus* want an active role in society, in accordance with their concept of Buddhist responsibility for better conditions of life which must make it possible for people to

find a basis for spiritual growth. Did not the Buddha himself refuse to preach to a hungry person until the latter had eaten? And are there not many examples in history of the active involvement of the *saṅgha* in practical life, so much so that Buddhist culture itself can be considered as their contribution to the new nation? In both countries there is, correspondingly, a call for the adaptation of *bhikkhu* education through the incorporation of courses teaching the necessary social skills and methods of socio-economic development;

3. In both countries it is becoming clear that the participation of *bhikkhus* in development projects – whether at the instigation of governmental or semi-governmental agencies as in Thailand, or on the initiative of private organizations or the *bhikkhus* themselves – entails the serious risk of the *saṅgha*'s forming connections with the political authorities and subsequently of a fall in the esteem in which it is held by the people, to which esteem it is currently appealing in its call for lay cooperation in development projects. It also involves the risk of the government gaining a firm grip on the life of the *bhikkhu*.

On the other hand there is the fear of the political authorities – a fear which has been in evidence throughout the modern history of Thailand, ever since king Mongkut, and to an even greater degree in the recent events and discussions in Sri Lanka – that they might not be able to control the influence of *bhikkhus* on politics.

In the course of this exposition we have raised the question of whether strictly speaking one can talk of 'change' when comparing the present attempts to change the role of the Buddhist monk with the traditional descriptions of his position in early and historical times. Moreover, we wondered whether the ascetic and world-rejecting tendencies in Buddhist canonical scriptures should be stressed or whether the examples illustrating the importance of the *bhikkhu*'s role of leadership in society should be given prevalence.

In relation to our subject one can use the word 'change' in a well-defined sense. In each period of history the existing values have to be assessed anew, and if necessary adapted so as to provide new solutions for the same problems in different situations or for altogether new problems. If these are to be useful and acceptable solutions, they must be based on the social and religious values which are still considered as functional components of the society's basic assumptions.

When we accept that the value system sanctions particular means to be used for development, we can see that the participation of *bhikkhus* is one of these means, which, moreover, seems necessary for the solution of immediate problems and is legitimated as well as limited by the value system.

A distorted picture emerges when only one aspect of the *bhikkhu*'s possible and acceptable way of life is accentuated as forming part of the

original Buddhist concepts. The early ascetic tradition, which has its roots in pre-Buddhist times, has proved to have retained an enormous attraction and appeal throughout Theravāda history, in spite of the direct and onerous demands on the *bhikkhu* from society, demands which increased as Buddhism and the *saṅgha* allied themselves more and more with the state (cf. Kloppenborg 1981).

On the other hand one cannot overlook the original insistence of the Buddha on the necessity for the *saṅgha* to accept a definite role and a certain amount of responsibility in society and in its contact with the laity – a role on which its survival could depend.

Some scholars who have studied textual and historical material, but also scholars whose main interest is in the present state of Buddhism (cf. Suksamran 1980:28, where he speaks of normative Buddhism), make a point of insisting on the world-rejecting views of early Buddhism and the views regarding the ideal life of the *bhikkhu*, to the exclusion of other aspects of Buddhist ideology; this tendency can be traced back in the history of Buddhist scholarship to the works of Oldenberg and Weber (cf. Kloppenborg 1979). It looks as though scholars are telling Buddhists what Buddhism is, or rather, what it should be, instead of observing what is happening in the development and adaptation of Buddhism today.

What is happening at the moment is the result of the strong sense of responsibility of many Buddhists with regard to the need to find new applications for the ancient values in order for these to continue to serve their purpose. In this process the withdrawn presence in society which many *bhikkhus* have maintained during the past two or three centuries has been modified and adapted to the new demands, in line with their former more active role in society. Their previous aloofness had strengthened the idea of many Buddhists and observers of Buddhism that this was the prescribed way of life for the *bhikkhu* which was sanctioned by tradition.

I fully agree with Suksamran (1980:30) where he says that 'the survival of the Sangha as well as Buddhism very much depends on the decision of the Sangha to adjust its roles in accordance with change'.

NOTES

- 1 For instance, with the rise of *gāmaṇvāsī* monks, who aspired after a role of leadership in society, and the rise of monastic landlordism in Sri Lanka (see Malalgoda 1976:26-58). Another instance is provided by the activities of the Ari (*araññika*) monks in 14th century Burma, who supposedly brought jungle areas under cultivation from their *taw kloṇ* or jungle monasteries (see Than Tun 1959; see also Vinaya (PTS edition) IV, 32 f. (Pācittiya X)). Cf. the remark of many monk informants that as long as equanimity is preserved, a *bhikkhu* may transgress certain rules, e.g. when dealing with women.
- 2 E.g. Vyagghapajja Sutta, Sigālovāda Sutta, Maṅgala Sutta, and Parābhava Sutta. See also the many passages quoted by Rahula 1974.
- 3 Cf. Wismeyer's research report, to be published at the end of 1984 or the beginning of 1985, which includes interviews with *bhikkhus* working on Sarvodaya projects. In the

evaluation of activities which may be carried out by *bhikkhus*, astrology ranked high, together with religious instruction, meditation and (though not so high with senior monks) social service. In the case of astrology it is striking that young *bhikkhus* considered it more important than their seniors. Some of my informants considered it important because astrology is what the villagers ask of them, so that this may facilitate their entry in the village community. Looking at the Nikāyas to which Wismeyer's respondents belonged, it is noticeable that 50-52% of the Siyam Nikāya and the Amarapura Nikāya considered astrology important, while only 12.5% of the Rāmañña Nikāya did so (I am indebted to Hans Wismeyer for showing me the preliminary results of his research).

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