**Introduce and discuss the different forms and models of monasticism that we have encountered in our engagement with the word of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Nepal. In doing so, differentiate also between different models found within these three regions. What does being a monk entail in these traditions? what forces and motivations determine whether individuals ordain in these traditions? what is their role in society? In your answers explore similarities and differences, continuities and ruptures.**

DUE: FRIDAY 19

Buddhism adapts and changes with society. As we will see Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Nepal have rather different models of Buddhism that has uniquely adapted to their environment. The differences range from the rules monks have to follow all the way various expectations of a Sangha. Even with these different models there is still common overlap, as seen with forest monks. Although it seems this dynamic Buddhism is straying more from its roots, such as caste system, it is more of a redefinition necessary for survival.

Therevada Buddhism is the main form of Buddhism in Sri Lanka (C 110). In Sri Lanka the monastic code is vital in achieving Enlightenment. The monks that follow the monastic code can be split up into village monks and forest monks. The village monks are seen as figures with public responsibility guiding the morals of a nation (C 111). The village monks deeply interact with society and have major influence over the villagers. In villager’s lives the monks are considered ceremonial specialists that are in charge of presiding at funerals, chanting pirit, and preaching (C111). Monks are encouraged to preach to the laypeople for the laypeople’s happiness and to help the world (D 175). This is a reasonable role for monks, since they rely a greatly on the village laymen. A monk is unable to make his own food or clothes so he must solely rely on the lay villagers (C 111). The villagers have incentive to provide for monks, since they gain merit from the ceremonial practices the monks preform for them. The merit the laypeople gain can be stored for a better rebirth, given to the gods for help with a worldly aim, or given to help a dead relative’s future (C 111). This is an ideal symbiotic relationship between layperson and monk. Village monks also have the roles of landlord and politician, yet this role is achieved only because of the Sangha.

The Sangha plays a major role in influencing lay culture. In Sri Lanka’s past the Sangha had a large influence over the ruling kings. The king gave land to the Sangha and the Sangha gave the king his legitimacy to rule (C 118). The Sangha could intimidate the king with threats of being reborn as disgusting animal if he violated any property rights or laws benefiting the Sangha (C 116). These royal land grants transformed the Sangha into vast estates with lords and heirs (C 113). The ownership of the Sangha’s temples and land would pass from an uncle to a nephew to keep the Sangha in the family (C 117). Between the Sangha and the king it is unclear who was more powerful as the king was in charge of keeping the purity of the Sangha; entailing him to disrobe monks (C 118). All the Sangha’s political power seems to stem from their ownership of land, as there was a direct correlation between land and power. The Sangha’s vast reach into politics and land ownership enables them to have a large cultural impact.

Some monks find the social influence of the Sangha monk has caused it deviate from the main teachings of Buddhism. In Sri Lanka, there are monks who believe the Sangha’s intermixing with lay life is directly opposed to moral purity (C 119). There is similar feeling that the Sangha has a tendency to become domesticated, which becomes a permanent home for the monks living in the Sangha (D 157). Focusing on moral purity or following a stricter practice of Buddhism are some reasons for a monk or layperson to go into the forest and become a forest monk. Other reasons can include yet are not limited to family problems, unemployment, or escaping social oppression (D 147). The forest dwelling monks live a solitary life devoted to moral and mental self-discipline (D 144). The forest monks’ duty concerns meditation, unlike the village monks’ duty concerns teaching and studying scripts (D157). Many laymen support their local monks, but once a year travel to visit forest monks give them alms, worship them, and seek their wisdom (C 123). Some forest monks have a ban on talking, when they are in small groups, to further isolate themselves and practice their meditation (D 177). Furthermore as seen by Tambugala Anandasiri, forest monks are very conscious and respectful of animals in the forest and view them as fellow suffers (D 180). Sri Lankan forest monks can be seen as a reform movement against village monks and Sanghas.

Thudong monks in Thailand also desire for reform of the Sangha. Thudong tradition has become very popular in Thailand. Thudong monks leave their monastery to go on foot and visit Buddhist shrines throughout the country (A 192). They tend to go in secluded areas to overcome their kilesa, mainly their fear (B 209). They are overly strict with following the Vinaya code, which includes eating one meal a day from the alms bowl without discrimination of what food he is eating (A 192). During the nights Thudong monks are allowed to use big umbrella-like shelters with mosquito net attached to protect them (A192). Similar to the Sri Lankan forest monks, when Thudong monks are in a group they tend to keep silent (A 192). The high prestige associate with forest monks in Sri Lank is not associated with Thudong monks. For fear of being identified with beggars or tramps only a small amount of Thudong monks talk about their experiences (A 192). Since the Thudong tradition is not well respected, monks that become Thudong monks usually have little concern of societies opinion on them (A 192).

Other than Thudong monks Thailand has Thai village monks living in Sanghas just as in Sri Lanka. Therevada Buddhism is the state religion of Thailand (A 186). The state has vast influence over Theravada Buddhism within Thailand. The Thai Sangha is considered a national institution mainly under control by the State (A 188). For example, civil authorities have control over and can intervene in the Sangha (A 188). This has lead to the institutionalization of the study of Dhammah, which is a main difference from Sir Lanka (A 188). One’s success in studying the Dhammah is mainly dictated by how well they do in the ecclesiastical examination system, not through meditation (A 188). The Sangha is made up of two sections, the Mahanikaya and the Dhammayuttika-Nikaya (A 189). The Mahanikaya find pastoral and parish activities to be very important, while the Dhammayuttika-Nikaya focus more on study and meditation (A 189).

Being a temporary monk in Thailand is very common. Many monks leave when the rainy season ends. Anywhere from 25 to 40 per cent of monks are considered temporary (A 191). A common reason to become a temporary monk is that young men go into the monastery for a rainy season to achieve adulthood right before they get married (A 191). The popularity of obtaining ordination into a Sangha before marriage could explain not only why leaving the Order has no stigma attached to it, but also why leaving brings prestige to the ex-monk (A 191). Even with its popularity, getting into a Sangha is not as easy as it seems.

Getting into a Sangha takes effort on behalf of the candidate

Sri Lanka

Village Monk

-Past and present Sangha

Sri Lanka & Thailand

Forest Monk

Thudong Monks

Thailand

Thai monks

-Entering the Sangha

Monk responsibility

Thudong monks

Nepal

Sakyas

Vajracaryas

* Therevada Buddhism is the Buddhism of Shri Lanka (C 110)
* There is little place for the idea that laymen may achieve Enlightenment or that Enlightenment may be achieved without the monastic code, the Discipline
* Discipline became the guiding principle of Therevada Buddhism in Shri Lanka
* The monk became a figure with public responsibility guiding the morals of a nation (C 111)
* Efforts of the king to keep the Sangha ‘pure’, well Disciplined, as the prosperity of the nation ultimately depended upon its morality (C 111)

Changes in monk’s role

* There are four: the monk as literate ceremonial specialist, as landlord, as politician, as reforming forest-dweller
* The monk must produce neither his own food, nor his own garb, nor may he house himself (C 111)
* If the monks received something of value from the laity, the laity received something of value from the monks the gift of teaching
* Spiritual good for material support
* The laity received merit
* As layman merit could be stored up for a better rebirth, given to a dead relative for their future welfare, it could be given to gods to help with a worldly aim
* Three services provided to laity by monks: preaching, presiding at funerals, and chanting *pirit*, texts designed to improve one’s material and physical state in exchange of meal or gift to the monks(C 111)
* The Sangha became the body of literate ceremonial specialists (C111)
* It became inconceivable that the Sinhalese laity could live a civilized, human life at all without the Sangha to make their merit and bury their dead (C112)
* In traditional Sri Lanka, cultural hegemony lay in the hands of the Sangha, and the exercise of this hegemony became for most monks their chief or only concern (C112)
* Laymen had a role of enduring arrangements to feed, clothe, and house the Sangha (C113)
* Sangha became lords and heirs of vase estates (C113)
* Sangha had control of its own farm to ensure enduring support (C113)
* Monks were given a status very like that of lay lords, were involved in irrigation including management of reservoirs and the people (C114)
* Monks got gift from noble person and other monks, this meant that monks had the power to command laymen (C 115)
* King gave Sangha land and Sangha had power over the kind ‘to remind anyone, including the next king, that if the grant were violated or the monastery despoiled, the perpetrator would be reborn as such a disgusting animal’ (C 116)
* Temples were passed from uncle to nephew, so that one brother in every generation could be reserved for the Sangha (C 117)
* Monks reigned both as exemplars and as preachers over the political realm (C 118)
* The king gains his legitimacy from the Sangha, but the is supposed to keep the purity of the Sangha and can disrobe a monk (C 118)
* Monks are enjoined to go out and preach, ‘for the happiness of the many and the welfare of the world’ (D 175)

Forest-dweller monk

* The cumulative effect of the Sangha’s embroilment with lay life was therefore in many ways contrary to the strict ideal of moral purity (C 119)
* Were defined in opposition to the village Sangha
* Exist chiefly as the founders or descendants of a reform movement that swept the island in the late 1940s-1950s, they are still relatively more strict than the village-dwelling monks in general (C 121)
* Tendency for the Sangha to become domesticated, so that monks are no longer truly homeless (D 157)
* The Sinhalese commentaries recognize this village Sangha as village-dwelling monks whose duty concerns books and teaching as opposed to forest-dwelling monks whose duty concerns mediation (D 157)
* Anandasiri extends this ban on talking, except for the most necessary purposes, to the entire day, and consequently his pupils spend most of their time alone in the forest (D 177)
* The meditator comprehends that inwardly all beings are like himself (D 180)
* Teaches his pupils to view the animals as fellow sufferers (D 177)
* In more than 25 years no one has been attached by an animal at Kudumbigala, though forest villagers have often been attacked and killed (D 180)
* He refused to let the land at Kudumbigala be made over to him, but insisted that it be kept as an animal sanctuary by the government (D 181)

Modern Sangha

* About 20,000 monks in Sri Lanka 600 of them are listed as genuine forest-dwellers (C 121)
* Monks compete for clientele in their immediate are who support them on a small-scale, nearly day-to-day basis (C 122)
* Many monks today regard it as part of their duty to guide their parishioners politically
* For many laymen they support their local monk and call on him for merit making, but once a year they travel in a busload to one of the centers of forest-dwelling monks, and there spend a day worshiping, giving alms, listening to the monks’ words, and imbibing the spirit of forest asceticism (C123)

Thailand

* Theravada Buddhism is the state religion of Thailand (A 186)

Sangha and state

* Sangha as a national institution virtually under State control (A 188)
* The Supreme Patriarch, a hierarchy of ecclesiastical officers, stands at the apex of the ecclesiastical pyramid, but the king has the final authority
* The civil authorities have control over and intervention in Sangha affair
* A strong and respected Sangha is regarded as an indication and affirmation of the king’s role as Defender of the Faith
* The Dhamma (Word of the Buddha) has been institutionalized and is measured by success or failure in the ecclesiastical system. Means less importance on meditation
* The Sangha consists of two sections the Mahanikaya (‘Great Group’) and the Dhammayuttika-Nikaya (Reform Group) (A 189)
* The monks of the Reform Group place greater emphasis on study and meditation and less on pastoral and parish activities unlike the Mahanikaya

Monk

* According to orthodox Theravada Buddhism, only a monk, which is to say a man who has given up secular society, can have any hope of achieving Nirvana (A 189)
* In practice few monks consider Nirvana a realistic goal, and tend to limit their ambitions to achieving a better rebirth by doing good and avoiding evil, by making merit
* Primary way of making merit is studying word of Buddha
* Avoid demerit by observing religious rule of the Vinaya, which define role and conduct
* Pastoral service provide a second source of merit making which in theory is much less important, although in practice becomes the primary activity
* The role of Buddhist monk is defined by the 227 rules of the patimokkha, which order his behavior including sexual conduct (A 190)
* For a monk sexual activity of any kind is forbidden with consequence of expulsion from the Order
* If the saffron robe becomes ‘too hot’ the monk can and should rejoin the lay world
* A second major austerity relates to dietary practice, monks should take no nourishment after midday
* Monk subsists on presentation of food made by householders who live along the route he takes on his daily alms-round
* Monk shouldn’t handle money
* Monks primary function is to give laymen opportunity to make merit by accepting ‘alms’ (A 190)

Entering the Sangha

* ‘Monastic vows’ need not be taken for life (A 191)
* Many you men go into monastery prior to marriage, for one ‘rainy’ season, to become ‘ripe’ adults
* Anywhere between 25 and 40 per cent of monks may be considered temporary and due to leave at the end of the rainy season (A 191)
* Leaving the Order has no stigma attached to it, having been a monk has a ‘halo effect’ which is carried over into lay life, bringing prestige to the EX-monk
* To get into a Sangha the candidate for ordination requires the backing of a number of lay people
* The ceremony requires he be provided with material paraphernalia needed for a monk, the Eight Requisites and other object of daily use mention above and appropriate offering of money and goods for the monks who officiate the ceremony
* The candidate must complete a form which should also be signed by three other laymen, the form guarantees the monk is >= 20 years of age and is in good health, no in debt, or guilty of any crime that his parents and wife, if he has one, has given their consent (A 191)
* Candidate is expected to be able to read and write
* Candidate has to learn the Pali responses that he must make during the ceremony
* It is possible through being ordained to receive a first-rate education in lay as well as religious subjects, which can be turned to advantage in the lay world (A 191)
* Joining the monkhood can increase their social mobility, giving individuals from poor rural backgrounds educational opportunities which enable them to rejoin lay society at a high level than the one they were born to (A 191)

Personal aspects of the monk’s role

* Thai monks have exhibited a hind of mail chauvinism about meditation, regarding it has something more appropriate to nuns, magicians, or pilgrims (Thudong monks)
* Thudong monks – means ‘austere practices’ these are the monks that leave the monastery and go on foot to visit the various Buddhist shrines scattered throughout the country (A 192)
  + They observe the Vinaya code with more than usual austerity meaning takes only one meal each day and eats it directly from his alms bowl without discrimination
  + At night he sleeps open under a large umbrella-like shelter (krot) which is equipped with a mosquito-net
  + It is usual for two or three monks to *doen thudong* (go on pilgrimage) together, not much talking between themselves, walk single file along road separating at night to pitch camp and mediate along (A 192)
  + There is much ambivalence towards the monk who renounce the system
  + Few monks will talk freely about their experience as a Thudong monk, they are in danger of being equated with tramps or beggars
  + Season for Thudong monks is during February and March when they leave their monasteries to pay their respects to well known places of pilgrimage (A 192)
  + Thudong monks is not highly respected and consequently attracts monks with relatively little interest in earning good opinion of society
  + Thudong tradition has become very populate in Thailand (B 200)
  + Since fear discourages the aspirant and dissuades him from seeking seclusion, staying in the wild is a method to reduce and eventually eliminate this *kilesa* (defilement) (B 209)

Monastic aspects of the monk’s role

* The basic categories are permanent and temporary monks, novices, monastery boys and in a few cases nuns (A 193)
* According to the Administration of the Sangha Acts all monks must be attached to a monastery and have permanent residence, and before ordination a man must obtain permission from the abbot of his desired monastery (A 193)
* There are no ordained nuns because the tradition of the ordination of nuns has been lost in Theravada countries (A 194)

Pastoral aspects of the monk’s role

* Monks play a critical role corresponding to rites de passage in laymen society (A 195)
* Monks do ordination ceremony, ceremony of cremation, also invited to recite *parittas*, merit making chants, on weddings, entry into anew house and other occasions (A 195)
* The central activity of the merit making ceremony is the recitation by the monks of one of the appropriate Pali chants

Laymen

* Observe the Five Precepts to avoid demerit, ethical code (A 189)
* Increase store of merit toward future rebirth by performing charitable activities, most rewarding is supporting monks who have renounced the material world (A 189)
* Buddha did not deny the existence of Hindu deities, ghosts, spirits, etc. but simply regarded them as irrelevant to pursuit of Nirvana (A 189)
* Lay people take ‘day trips’ by road and rail to various shrines to offer candles and incense-sticks to image of Buddha (A 192)
* Particularly pious householders visit monks encamped in special

Mahayana

Theravada

Pilgrim Monks

Nepal

Shakyas

Vajraryas

* Like Nepalese society in general, the Newars are profoundly influence by the caste-oriented values of the Indian subcontinent (E 268)
* Newar Buddhism is still a monastic tradition (G 291)
* The monks are not celibate, they do not renunciate who out of vocation have abandoned their families and live within society (G 292)
* They are married monks live outside the monastery and have professions. Where there status as monks do to the ordination they undergo as prepubescent boys. They disrobe on the fourth day but they maintain their monastic status and by virtue of this temporary ordination become permanent member of the samgha of the monastery where they have been ordained (G 292)
* All male member have undergone the *bare chuyegu* initiation ritual and usually marry and beget sons who will also be initiated into the same community (G 292)
* Only sons whose fathers belong to that monastery are eligible for ordination. The mother must come from a family that is likewise attached to a monastery, with her father and brothers ordained in the same manner (G 292-293)
* This ensures that monastic property remains in the family and is not disperse unlike Sri Lanka where property is passed by on to a nephew of the abbot (G 293)
* Caste also determines access to monastic ordination and samgha membership (G293)
* Sons of mothers who do not stem from a family with such inherited samgha membership are considered of mixed caste origin and lose right to monastic ordinations (G293)
* The boys undertaking the monastic initiation fall into two groups the Sakyas and the Vajracaryas (G 293)
* The initiation allows them to perform the fire ritual on behalf of others. They serve as family priests with fixed clientele which they perform life cycle rites of passage including funerary rites (G 293)
* Vajracaryas serve as ritual officiates, they also play a special role in religious specialist (G 293)
* Vajracaryas also function as gurus who provide religious instructions from recounting of edifying moral tales to specialized tantric instructions for initiates. They also serve as healers (G 293)
* Most hereditary Vajracaryas do not function as tantric masters, only small minority serve as priests (G 293)
* The Sakyas and Vajracaryas form an endogamous caste group, though they still don’t intermarry frequently (G 293)
* The *bahis*, used to be celibate monasticism, do not enjoy nearly the same prestige as *bahas*, tantric monasticism not correlate to celibacy, and are smaller and poorer (G 294)
* *Bahis* stopped functioning as conventional monasteries with celibate monks (G 295)
* Instead of the temporary monastic ordination or the *kaytapuja*, which is restricted to boys, girls of both Buddhist and Hindu families undergo *ihi* ritual that serves as an analogous rite of passage initiating the girls into their caste. It takes the place of the wedding ritual that normally serves the function of an initiatory rite for females. (G 295)
* Newar Buddhism embraces the ideal of the bodhisattva with its aspiration of striving for Buddhahood for the sake of benefiting all sentient beings (G 297)
* More precisely, there are two levels on which the Vajrayana operates, one more exoteric and corresponding to the Yongatantaras, the other esoteric and corresponding to the highest and most evolved class of tantras (G 297)
* Eventually, by seniority reckoned from time of initiation, A Sakya or Vajracarya man may become one of the five or ten elders of the monastery, for which it is necessary to have taken Tantric Initiation (H 309)

1. The way of the Monk and the Way of the World: Buddhism in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia
2. Forest Recollection Wandering Monks in Twentieth-Century Thailand
3. They will be Lords upon the Island: Buddhism in Sri Lanka
4. The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka
5. Nepal Mandala- A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley
6. Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest
7. Newar Buddhism. The Survival of Indian Buddhism in Nepal
8. The Disciples’ Way: the monastic ideal in Newar Buddhism