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DUSITA KRAWANCHID : THE ROLE OF THE BUDDHIST MONKS IN
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION IN NAKORN RACHASIMA PROVINCE.
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The purposes of this study were to study the role of the Buddhist monks in environmental conservation and to study the variables effecting their role. The samples of the study were 317 monks but only 297 questionnaires or 93.7 % were returned. The data were collected by mail. The statistics used in the research were percentage, arithmetic means (\bar{X}), S.D., One-way Analysis of Variance with LSD method test and Pearson Correlation Coefficient.

The research results indicated that most monks played a moderate role in environmental conservation activities. The activities they performed regularly were planting, reforestation, preserving water reservoirs and temple maintenance. Most monks played a significant role in teaching people about environmental conservation. The Dharma which was applied to their teaching, was Dharma as protectors, the eight-fold path and gratitude.

The study compared personal variables with the role of Buddhist monks in environmental conservation activities and in teaching people about environmental conservation. Comparison of personal variables in this study implied that the monks played different roles in environmental conservation activities depending on 2 variables; the length of time in priesthood and the level of study in Dharma. The monks played different roles in teaching people about environmental conservation depending on 3 variables; the length of time in priesthood, the level of study and the level of study in Dharma.

In this study the environmental perception variables and the experience in learning environmental issues variable correlated positively with roles in environmental conservation activities and in teaching people about environmental conservation.

This study indicates that collaboration between environmental organizations and Buddhist monks will be beneficial in advocating environmental conservation in Thailand. Consequently, this researcher suggests future research on the subject of religion and environmental issues. It will be of great interest for other researchers to further their study on: Buddhist monks roles in other environmental issues, cooperation between monks and communities in environmental conservation, and other religious roles in environmental conservation.