

Thesis Title : A Comparative study of the propagation of Buddhism and Christianity among tribal people: A case study of the karen at Ban Padech, Tambol Prathat Phadaeng, Ampor Maesot Tak Province.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to undertake a comparative study of the propagation of Buddhism and Christianity among tribal people with the focus on the method of propagation. The data has collected at Ban Padech, Tambol Prathat Phadaeng, Ampor Maesot, Tak Province.

The findings show that the propagation of Buddhism at Ban Padech was done as government development projects were implemented through the establishment of a small temple (wat) with one monk. The monk then encouraged the villagers to ordain their sons. These ordained native monks later helped to propagate the Buddhist

teachings in the village. Since 1984 there have been four native monks and twenty-three families with one hundred and twenty persons have become Buddhist.

While propagating Buddhism, the Buddhist monk stressed on instilling moral values in the Karen through the teaching of the dharma, Christian missionaries concentrated more on giving material support to the villagers. This support included health care, education for children and vocational training for trades needed in the area. Since 1982 ten Karen families (about 50 members) have become Christian.

In conclusion, both the propagation of Buddhism and Christianity at Ban Padech is concerned with the moral transformation as well as the material development of the village. In this sense both religions are similar in their approach to the Karen, i.e. the provision of material comfort. However, there is a difference in the degree of assistance rendered to these villagers. The Christian missionaries could give more material resources and other facilities. Besides, unlike the Buddhist monks, they do not have to submit to regulations against any ownership of properties. Despite these advantages, it is to be noted that the number of Buddhist Karens is greater than that of the Christian. This may be due to the charismatic leadership of the monk and to the close relationship between their old beliefs and the Buddhist teachings.