



# The Path of Ubasika Ki Nanayon(1901 – 1974) : A Thai Woman' s Dhamma Practice in the Form of "Ubasika"

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**(Citation)**

国際文化学研究 : 神戸大学大学院国際文化学研究科紀要, 48:1\*-16\*

**(Issue Date)**

2017-07

**(Resource Type)**

departmental bulletin paper

**(Version)**

Version of Record

**(JaLCD0I)**

<https://doi.org/10.24546/81009884>

**(URL)**

<https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14094/81009884>



## **The Path of Ubasika Ki Nanayon (1901 – 1974): A Thai Woman’s Dhamma Practice in the Form of “Ubasika<sup>1</sup>”**

Tomomi Ito

The prosperity of Buddhism has been represented by the purity of the Sangha that has been inheriting the teachings of the Buddha. For the sustainability of the Sangha, i.e. the association of monks who have renounced productive activities, no one would disagree that lay people’s support has been indispensable. In Thailand it is a common picture especially for lay females to offer everyday morning alms to monks, the ordained males.

In present Thai Theravada Buddhism, the National Sangha is only occupied by ordained males, no females belong to it, shaving their head and donning yellow robes. However, in Buddhism during the Buddha’s era there was ordination for women and the Buddhists consisted of four categories: *bhikkhu* (ordained males), *bhikkhunī* (ordained females), *upāsaka* (lay males), and *upāsikā* (lay females). These four are distinguished by both biological sex differences and religious roles. In Thai these four distinctive categories by two criteria are indicated by a single word *phet*, which is often translated into English as sex. Among these four categories of Buddhists, that of *bhikkhunī* ceased to exist in eleventh-century Sri Lanka and possibly thirteenth-century Burma. In contemporary Thailand, the only category that the Sangha formally allows women is that of *upāsikā*, the laity. To substitute for the role of *bhikkhunī*, Thai women who pursue an ascetic path by renouncing lay life of business and family take eight precepts in white robes to become *mae chi*, which is formally a pious variant of *upāsikā*.

In order to understand the situation of Thai Theravada Buddhist women in the early half of the twentieth century, the concept of gender is suggestive. It sheds light on an aspect of the social and cultural roles which are constructed on the basis of biological sex differences. Originally in Buddhism both males and females performed both the ordained and lay roles. However, because of the loss of the ordained category for females, the ordained life has always been associated with males in yellow robes, and such a conception became an obstacle for both ordained males and the lay public of both sexes to accept an ordained role for females. Therefore, even though in Thailand there are *mae chi* who are supposed to substitute for the lost *bhikkhunī*, both people's perceptions and the actual practices of *mae chi* are not those equivalent to *bhikkhunī*. Partly because the eight precepts they take are less precise than the 336 for *bhikkhunī* and allow flexibility in interpretations, certain practices of some *mae chi*, for example, wandering around for begging or staying with a family at an ordinary house, are not appropriate for them to be considered as renunciants or *de facto* ordained females. Sometimes, even those *mae chi* who stay at a temple are not always expected to do ascetic practice, but rather to serve the temple abbot and monks as a cook in return for shelter. Their life is not considered as valuable as that of monks for the general lay public to support by offerings. By offerings to *mae chi* people believe they gain much less merit than by offerings to monks. Some *mae chi* from affluent backgrounds rather contribute a significant amount of offerings to monks at religious ceremonies, instead of themselves performing as ordained or renounced individuals worthy to accept people's alms. In such situations, it should be regarded that the ordained life and practice has been lost for Thai women in Theravada Buddhism.

In Thailand, as early as the 1920s, there have been various attempts to improve the status of Buddhist women. There were, for example,

movements for restoring the *bhikkhunī* ordination by Narin Phasit and Woramai Kabilasingh; an attempt to introduce a kind of ordained female taking ten precepts, who are called *sila charini*; and a movement led by Mae Chi Khun Ying Kanittha Wichiancharoen to raise the status of *mae chi* by both seeking a way to give *mae chi* a legal definition as a “world renunciant” and establishing an institution for tertiary education particularly for *mae chi*<sup>2</sup>. Although these movements gained a certain degree of public support, their proposals were not fully accepted. One of the reasons was a lack of support from the existing *bhikkhu* Sangha, which is the religious authority surviving in Theravada Buddhism. A more serious reason than that was perhaps the perceived egotistical nature associated with the status-demanding movements. According to a *mae chi* who did not fully agree with Kanittha’s projects, to become a *mae chi* is to renounce a respected status in secular society, such as a doctoral degree holder or a university professor<sup>3</sup>. The institutional reform for the status of *mae chi* was perceived by Buddhist women themselves as contradicting the Buddhist principle of non-attachment and eventually to be of little help for Thai Buddhist women pursuing a religious path.

Contrary to the above-mentioned attempts, an alternative way was examined by Ubasika Ki Nanayon (1901 – 1974), who gained an exceptional reputation as a Buddhist female ascetic. Ki sought to live as a renunciant while she was still engaging in secular business. The path taken by her was distinguished from that of *mae chi* in general, and her thought was often supported by and in mutually discussed with Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906 – 1993), a Thai monk renowned for his *dhamma* teachings<sup>4</sup>. In the following I will explore ideas and practices for restoring the ordained role for Theravada Buddhist women through the example of Ki herself and Buddhadasa’s female disciples who followed after them.

### 1. The Life and Thought of Ubasika Ki Nanayon

Ubasika Ki Nanayon, who is also known as Ko. Khao Suan Luang by her pseudonym, was a Buddhist woman ascetic who was highly respected for her religious achievements and teachings, rather than demonstrations of any “supernatural” abilities. Her thought developed along with Buddhadasa’s teaching and way of practice in Buddhism, as she was one of the earliest people inspired by Buddhadasa’s journal, *Phutthasasana* (Buddhism), launched in May 1933. She visited him at the old Suan Mokkh (where Buddhadasa resided as his place of *dhamma* practice during 1932 – 1942).

Ki was born in 1901 to a Chinese father and Thai mother in Ratchaburi province. Her Chinese father had been engaged before he migrated to Thailand, and when he had a boy with Ki’s mother in Thailand, he sent this son to his fiancée in China in order to give him an education. Contrarily, Ki, a girl, did not have any formal education, but instead, she was under the influence of Buddhist culture from her Thai mother. Since Ki was three or four, her mother taught her to chant before going to bed, and also her mother often took eight precepts and told her children not to do evil. At the age of seven, Ki already knew how to offer flowers and rice to monks using a small amount of money given to her to buy sweets and so on<sup>5</sup>. She was already eleven or twelve when she started to learn how to read and write from her neighbour, who had completed the fourth grade in primary school<sup>6</sup>. When Ki was eighteen, her mother died, but Ki acquired further Buddhist knowledge by reading books of poems and aphorisms.

Ki’s ethnically mixed background gave two aspects to her life: engagement in business among ethnic-Chinese and religious pursuit in Thai spirituality. On the one hand, she lived in an ethnic-Chinese trading community, which is distinct from the rural one of Thai peasants. Ki assisted in the tailor shop which her brother opened in Phetchaburi after his return from China, and she had a success in her own business in

Ratchaburi, producing hats under the Ratthaniyom policy during the regime of Field Marshal Phibun Songkhram, which in 1941 ordered women to wear a hat when they went out<sup>7</sup>. In this business she built a fortune of 5,000 baht<sup>8</sup>, which was then valued as a considerably large amount, and it allowed her to specialise in the other aspect of her life, i.e. Buddhist practice, by renouncing secular society without her having to rely on people's offerings to monks at a temple.

Even while she was engaged in business, Ki began to pursue the Buddhist spiritual path. Fear and a sense of shyness as a girl led Ki to be attracted to *brahmacariya*, celibate religious life. At a *dhamma* talk on her seventy-first birthday, Ki related:

When I was six, I was very scared of a pregnant woman. When I saw my mother having a big tummy and still needing to work hard, I had a feeling of sorrow, and a fear of pregnancy arose in me. Because of this fear, I could not accept seeing or knowing about giving birth. The sense of fear caught my mind, and I could not even hear a groan, so I covered my ears or escaped to a distant place. When I became a teenager, a sense of shyness arose, so I would not be sociable with anyone. I spent most of my time staying at home to read books on the *dhamma*. By reading books on the *dhamma*, I took up the content of the book to think about it by myself. Because of the fear involving shyness, I was not able to ask anyone who had knowledge at that time<sup>9</sup>.

When she was twelve, Ki memorised a poem (Thai: *klon*) as “a container of the *dhamma*”. It taught her the foolishness of being captivated and enslaved by “love”, and of decorating “a monkey” in order to show off. From this poem she learnt not to be a slave of love, but to have fundamental freedom<sup>10</sup>. Ki did not agree to marry even when her father attempted to force her to do so by strangling her with a towel. From twenty-four she regularly kept eight precepts. She had *khwam-la' ai-cai* (an embarrassed feeling) to see dancing and she also avoided putting on coloured cloth contradicting the precepts. Occasionally, she attempted to do ascetic religious practice at

temples by taking leave from business for a while. Ki could only go forth in Khao Suan Luang Mountain, renouncing secular life, after she had completed her duty as a daughter, that is when her father died when she was forty-four in 1945<sup>11</sup>. Even after her renunciation, she said that her religious practice could not have endured without the feelings of fear and embarrassment<sup>12</sup>.

Based on these original feelings, Ki's religious thought and practice developed in at least two directions. First, Ki sought an independent way of her own practice, separate from any monk teachers. It is very common for Thai Buddhists who become interested in religious practice to look for good monk teachers with whom they can stay and receive instructions. A Buddhist intellectual indicated that in such a way people often failed to take a true religious path, because of an attachment to their monk teachers, instead of to their teachings<sup>13</sup>. Ki never sought to live at a temple with one particular monk teacher, in order to have regular guidance. When Ki renounced secular life in 1945, she developed a jungle site on the Khao Suan Luang Mountain as her own place of *dhamma* practice, with the assistance of her Uncle Plian and Aunt Daeng. Later it was exclusively for women, where her Uncle Plian was the only male exception<sup>14</sup>.

In Ki's own words:

... if I examine my behaviour and practice, in which from the beginning I had embarrassment and fear, such feelings made me independent, because I went away from secular society (*lut ok ma chak thang lok*). If in the world of the *dhamma* (*thang tham*) we still rush to look for a monk teacher, this place [Khao Suan Luang] would not have the same freedom as nowadays. Instead of busily looking for anyone, one should always read and teach oneself (*an tua eng, son tua eng*)<sup>15</sup>.

The last sentence of the quotation above is related to the second point. Instead of relying on any authorities to believe in and follow, Ki looked at herself to have right practice and calmness inside. She taught that no one

else, not even the Buddha can help, but only we can solve the suffering inside by applying the *dhamma*. Her saying echoed Buddhadasa's teaching:

Thus, we have to take up a suffering, gaze at a suffering, watch a suffering, see how the suffering smarts and burns, and just know it until we realise that it is not us or ours, but a sensation [arising from] a *rup* (Pali: *rūpa*; visible, material factor) and a *nam* (Pali: *nāma*; abstract, logical, invisible or mind-factor)<sup>16</sup>.

This philosophy of Ki coincided with that of Buddhadasa, and in fact Ki often borrowed the concepts Buddhadasa proposed. However, their relationship was not that of a monk teacher and a lay follower who needs a monk's counselling for overcoming suffering in life. Ki, who did not even have a chance for any formal education, highly respected Buddhadasa for his advanced study in Pali scriptures, but Buddhadasa also respected Ki's religious achievement. In an interview by his disciple monk, Buddhadasa stated his impression about Ki's first visit at the old Suan Mokkh:

From the time when I still stayed at the old Suan Mokkh, she [Ki] read the journal *Phutthasasana*. When she studied well, she came to meet me, so I let her stay at a lay supporter's house. In the daytime, she came to talk under the *kuti* facing a small pond. What we talked was about *paramattha-dhamma*, which she had studied. She just came to ask to [clarify] her understanding. She should be regarded as an exceptional woman who did not marry ... When she visited me, she did not have any sign of suffering, but came as a student of the *dhamma*. She wanted to make poems (*klon*), but she could not. So, I taught her through letters, and also published many poems by her in the journal *Phutthasasana* at that time<sup>17</sup>.

During that time the journal *Phutthasasana* was known as one of the highest quality journals of Buddhism among Thai intellectuals, and Ki was one of a few women contributors to it.

## 2. Ki's interest in reforms for Thai Buddhist female ascetics

Although Ki late in life emphasised the significance of the mind and was critical of being attached to superficialities, in the process of pursuing her way of religious practice, Ki seems to have realised the problem in contemporary Thai Buddhism: an institutional lack of the ordained female. Her interests in this issue appeared in at least two incidents: the *bhikkhunī* restoration movement by Narin Phasit and a request for the use of the title “Ubasika” for Buddhist women in *dhamma* practice.

In April 1928 Narin Phasit (1874–1950), an advocate of political and religious reform in the early twentieth century, had his two daughters, Sara and Chondi, ordained as *sāmaṇerī* (female novices) at Watr Nariwong, a place of *dhamma* practice that Narin had built especially for female renunciants who in the future would become *bhikkhunī*. Because Narin had notoriety, proposing his numerous ideas of reform to both political and religious authorities, the media gave a lot of coverage to his daughters' ordination as *sāmaṇerī*. Although most of the media were critical of Narin as a heretic, there were some people who supported his idea<sup>18</sup>. Ki was also one of those who agreed with Narin's movement.

A biographer of Ki, presumably Wan Nanayon, or Ki's younger sister, wrote:

[When] Ki heard the news of the restoration of the *bhikkhunī* ordination at Wat [sic] Nariwong in Nonthaburi province in order to give an opportunity for women to inherit the religion [Buddhism], she had an idea to have a temple just for women to do *dhamma* practice<sup>19</sup>. So, she rented a boat to travel from Ratchaburi to Nonthaburi. Ko. [Ki] rowed on the back and I [the biographer] on the front. It took three days to reach Nonthaburi. We stayed at Wat [sic] Nariwong for five days and returned home<sup>20</sup>.

Also, Mae Chi Sumana, Ki's disciple who was the head of the Khao Suan Luang in the late 1990s, said that Ki told her a story about Sara and Chondi,

who was then ordained as either *sāmaṇerī* or *bhikkhunī*, and also visited her at her brother's tailor shop in Phetchaburi<sup>21</sup>. These stories suggest Ki's strong interest in female ordination in her late twenties. Sara and Chondi were arrested and forced to disrobe by provincial authorities. By Narin's movement, neither the ordained category nor the practice appropriate to ordained individuals became available for Thai women, including Ki.

In 1939–40, around twelve years after Narin's movement, Ki was again involved in the issue of "gender" in Buddhism. This time she was concerned with the formal recognition of *ubasika* (the Thai pronunciation of the Pali word *upāsikā*) as a kind of Buddhist women distinct at least from ordinary women living in the secular society, who have little to do with actual religious practice. Under the condition where *bhikkhunī* or the ordained female is missing among the four Buddhist categories, all Buddhist women should belong to the category of lay female. However, by the word *ubasika*, Thai people rather selectively referred with a sense of respect to pious Buddhist women who were devoted to religious practice: keeping eight precepts regularly on *wan phra* or totally renouncing secular business and family duties in order to conduct religious practice in the celibate status.

It was when Ki's group of Buddhist women had an examination concerned with Buddhism, presumably *thamma sukṣa* (an examination about Buddhist doctrines for lay people) or Pali scriptural language, that they took up the issue about the title for female Buddhists<sup>22</sup>. In the certificate of the examination in Buddhism, if they would pass, their name had to be accompanied by either *Nang sao* for unmarried women or *Nang* for married women, just as for ordinary women who are supposed to be either not yet or already married. Ki's group of *ubasika* requested the use of the title *Ubasika* instead of *Nang sao* or *Nang*, but their petition was not treated seriously. Ki asked Buddhadasa for his assistance to bring this issue

to the authorities in Buddhist affairs, namely the Sangha, the association of ordained males. In her letter to him dated 17 July 1940, Ki wrote:

Because on this issue [about the title *Ubasika*] it is difficult to find someone who will help, and because [we] belong to the truly unfortunate and inferior sex/gender (*pen phet aphap tam toi sia ching ching*), we need to seek assistance from you, who belong to the supreme sex/gender (*pen udom phet*) or who belong to the sex/gender [i.e., monk or the ordained male] as high [as those who are in charge of the issue]<sup>23</sup>.

Buddhadasa then already well-known for his scholarship among Thai Buddhists, in fact co-operated to contact elder monks in responsible positions. Actually the then Supreme Patriarch also fully agreed with the *ubasika*'s claim, but the monks who were in charge of the certificate said that that year it was already time to issue and send the certificates to the candidates who had passed the exam<sup>24</sup>. Buddhadasa expected that the following year things would be able to change<sup>25</sup>, but finally he found it necessary to have a complicated legal process in which one of the MPs needed to propose the issue and the majority in the parliament would agree with it<sup>26</sup>. He wrote to Ki:

We do not have any other way but by enacting a law for this issue. [For this] we need someone to propose this issue in parliament and it should be approved there. In fact, there should be someone who agrees with and approves this issue. However, it cannot be examined when people are occupied with the war in every moment of breathing, like now in an urgent situation. ... We should wait until a time of peace, and then raise it again. People will have a mind to listen to us, have time to think about it, and recognise what we feel ... The time when we are waiting for the right moment is the best opportunity for *ubasika* who have such a wish to make efforts to become useful persons who would make politicians realise [the importance of the issue], sympathise with them, and examine it with a sense of respect. If those [*mae chi*] wearing white robes do nothing but just wander begging, chant and wait for people's support which is to be a heavy load, no one will sympathise with them to take up their claim. This is because people might consider that it is not a serious issue whether or not those [*mae chi*] have appropriate rights. When they [*mae chi*]

are not so much of use, people would think that they should not demand their rights to disturb other people. ... During the period when they do not have an opportunity to do so, those [*mae chi*] should make themselves respectable by being united and conducting obviously useful works. Then, they might be able to win [their rights] easily without any need of lengthy words of demand. Those *ubasika* are still not as much respected as *bhikkhu* and *sāmaṇera*, because they are not yet as solid [as *bhikkhu* and *sāmaṇera*] both in terms of quality and quantity. But, who knows some day they may become a remarkable group, if there were a leader of the revolution, who can set up regulations to make their life much better by making it prosper through knowledge, ability and up-datedness. If most people in the world regard those [*mae chi*] as merely cooks in a temple, their renunciation as only a tradition for unnecessary decorations, and their chanting as only a favourable sound, it is certain that politicians would not spend time on our request.

I wish there would be a revolution among [*mae chi*], and a consolidated leader to conduct activities in a way in which the usefulness of [*mae chi*] is apparent soon. This is even more significant than changing the title to a desirable one. Also, this should be consolidated and well examined to last long in the future, just as Martin Luther did in the Christian world<sup>27</sup>.

As Buddhadasa mentioned in his letter, it was during a politically tense period due to the Thai-French Conflict, Ki had to give up her request for putting the title *Ubasika* instead of *Nang sao* or *Nang* to be examined in parliament. After Ki had to despair of her request, there were several attempts and efforts by other Thai Buddhist women who felt the same as Ki. A group of *mae chi* have established their own organisation, Institute for Thai Mae Chi (*Sathaban mae chi thai*), and in the late 1990s Mae Chi Khun Ying Kanittha Wichiancharoen prepared a draft bill to give *mae chi* a legal status as world renunciants (*nak-buat*). However, even up until now Kanittha's bill has not yet been proposed in parliament, despite her expertise with legal issue as a lawyer and good personal contacts and lobbying activities with elder monks, the Department of Religious Affairs, and the then Prime Minister in the late 1990s, Chuan Leekpai<sup>28</sup>. In other words, *mae chi* related issues have still not yet gained sufficient public concerns to allow a legal and institutional reform in the formal political

process.

Five years after her petition, when World War II was approaching an end, on 16 June 1945 Ki Nanayon went forth only to do *dhamma* practice in Khao Suan Luang Mountain. Rather than leading a social movement to change the situation of Buddhist female ascetics in Thailand, Ki seems to have followed the path suggested in Buddhadasa's letter. Ki's renunciation was not even just to become a *mae chi* to wear white robes through a ceremony conducted by monks. In a formal sense she remained in the category of *upāsikā* or lay female, took the eight precepts for the pious laity and dressed in a white blouse and a black skirt, which as well as *mae chi*'s white robes are also in accordance with the dress code of the eight precepts, but in fact she spent her life as a world renunciant<sup>29</sup>. The accomplishment of her *dhamma* practice was highly respected not only by Buddhist females but also by lay males and monks. Her path itself was a restoration of the ordained role for Buddhist females.

### 3. After the path of Ki

Some of Buddhadasa's female disciples who belonged to the later generation than Ki also followed her path. Three *ubasika* disciples of Buddhadasa: Ubasika Arunwati Suannakanit (1909 – 1999), Ubasika Unchit Tirattana (1909– ), and Ubasika Chuaphan Kalakarit (1910 – year of death unknown), spent some time with Ki at Khao Suan Luang. In 1957 they established the Suan Usom Institute (Thai: *Suan usom mulanithi*) in Bangkok for Buddhist women who followed the teaching of Buddhadasa and Ki. Ubasika Khun Ranchuan Inthrakamhaeng (1921 – 2016) is another respected female disciple of Buddhadasa, and she has been teaching the *dhamma* on the radio and on various occasions. Both among Buddhadasa's female disciples and among *mae chi* in general there are many more Thai Buddhist women who determined to live as *de facto* ordained females.

Increasing numbers of these women would change people's view on *mae chi* and other forms of Buddhist female ascetics to a respectable restoration of the *bhikkhuni* in Thai Buddhism.

When approaching the end of his life, Buddhadasa proposed *thamma mata*, a type of female ascetic who would perform the role of the ordained female<sup>30</sup>. After Buddhadasa's death, by an effort of Ubasika Khun Ranchuan Inthrakamhaeng, Suan Mokkh launched a pilot project from December 1999 in order to put his idea into practice. Suan Mokkh provides favourable conditions for women's *dhamma* practice, for instance, with a distinct place for *thamma mata* independent from monks' premises, so they can concentrate their religious pursuits without a care about monks' meals. With the assistance of such an institution, Suan Mokkh will have to wait until a sufficient number of qualified female ascetics can assume the role of ordained females to benefit society.

- 1 This paper is a modified version of a paper which was originally presented as: "Complementing the loss of ordained women in Thai Buddhism: the path of Ubasika Ki Nanayon and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's female disciples," at the 8th International Conference on Thai Studies, held at Nakhon Phanom River View Hotel, Nakhon Phanom Province, Thailand, on 9 - 12 January 2002.
- 2 Tomomi Ito, "Buddhist women in *dhamma* practice in contemporary Thailand: movements regarding their status as world renunciates", *The Journal of Sophia Asian Studies*, No. 17 (1999), pp. 147 - 181.
- 3 Mae Chi Dr. Suphaphan na Bangchan, interview by author, Bangkok, 15 January 1999.
- 4 Regarding Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, see Tomomi Ito, *Modern Thai Buddhism and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu: a social history* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2012) .
- 5 *Anuson sunthratham achariya bucha: chak wan nan thung wan ni, 50 pi khao suan luang (2488 - 2538)* (Anniversary of teacher's teachings: fifty years of Khao Suan Luang from that day to today (1945 - 1995)) (Bangkok, Pha Aphai, 1995), pp. 18 - 20.
- 6 Mae Chi Sumana Hengsawat, interview by author, Ratchaburi, 24 December 1998. At the time of interview, Mae Chi Sumana was the present head of Khao Suan Luang, the women's place of *dhamma* practice, which Ki established, and she heard this story directly from Ki herself.

- 7 *Anuson sunthratham achariya bucha*, p. 30.
- 8 Mae Chi Sumana, interview.
- 9 Ko. Khao Suan Luang (Ki Nanayon), “Wan khrop rop 71 pi (pen wan koet)” (The seventy-first birthday), *Anuson Sunthratham khong ko. Khao suan luang* (Anniversary of teacher’s teachings of Ko. Kao Suan Luang) (published as a note of the *dhamma* on the ninth year anniversary of the leaving of the bodily aggregate of Ko. Khao Suan Luang, 1979) , p. 17.
- 10 *Anuson sunthratham achariya bucha*, pp. 27 – 28.
- 11 *Anuson sunthratham achariya bucha*, pp. 31, 20 – 26.
- 12 Ko. Khao Suan Luang, “Wan khrop rop 71 pi (pen wan koet)”, p. 18.
- 13 Ubasika Khun Ranchuan Intrakamhaeng, interview by author, Sakon Nakhon, 15 December 1998.
- 14 About the beginning of the Khao Suan Luang as a place of *dhamma* practice, see Ki’s poem, “Yi-sip pi thi khao suan luang” (Twenty years in the Khao Suan Luang), *Kan-patibat-tham nai chiwit khong ubasok plian raksae* (*Dhamma* practice in the life of Ubasok Plian Raksae) (Published as a twenty-seventh year anniversary for Ubasok Plian’s cremation on 16 September 1992), pp. 52 – 68.
- 15 Ko. Khao Suan Luang, “Wan khrop rop 71 pi (pen wan koet)”, p. 19.
- 16 Ko. Khao Suan Luang, “Wan khrop rop 71 pi (pen wan koet)”, p. 24.
- 17 Phra Pracha Pasannathammo, *Lao wai mua wai sonthaya: atchiwaprawat khong than phutthathat* (Talking in the twilight years: an autobiography of Venerable Buddhadasa) (Bangkok: Mulanithi komon khimthong, 1988), pp. 398 – 399.
- 18 About Narin, see Sakdina Chatrakun na Ayutthaya, *Chiwit, naew khit, lae kan-to-su khong “narin-klung” ru narin phasit: khon khwang lok* (Life, thought and struggle of “Narin Klung” or Narin Phasit: a man confronted the world) (Bangkok: Matichon, 1993). About Narin’s movement for *bhikkhunī* ordination restoration, see also Ito, “Buddhist women in *dhamma* practice in contemporary Thailand”, pp. 152 – 153.
- 19 Ki’s biographer used a Thai word *wat*, which means “a temple”, but actually Narin used another Thai word pronounced *wat*, which has a silent consonant ‘r’ at the end and means “a practice”. Narin chose the latter word for the name of his place for *dhamma* practice in order to distinguish his from a temple which needed to accord with regulations of the Sangha. In this article, *wat* refers to “a temple” in accordance with the Sangha regulations, while *watr* refers to the Thai word meaning “a practice” chosen by Narin.
- 20 *Anuson sunthratham achariya bucha*, p. 30.
- 21 Mae Chi Sumana, interview.
- 22 This incident appears in letters between Ki Nanayon and Buddhadasa. Among available materials for this study Ki’s concern with the title of Ubasika for women candidates in Buddhist education first mentioned in her letter to Buddhadasa dated 12 August 1939. Fourteen letters between Buddhadasa and Ubasika Ki Nanayon were kindly made available by Khun Metta Phanit, a nephew of Buddhadasa and a representative of the present Thammathan Mulanithi (Dhammadana Foundation). I would like to express my gratitude for his co-operation. The fourteen letters included: nine from Ki to

- Buddhadasa dated 5 April, 26 May, 16 June, 12 August, 20 September 1939, 16 January, 23 January, 19 May, and 17 July 1940; and five from Buddhadasa to Ki dated 21 April, 21 May, 12 September 1939, 18 January and 3 December 1940.
- 23 Ki Nanayon, letter to Buddhadasa, 17 July 1940, Suan Mokkh Archives.
- 24 Buddhadasa, letter to Ki Nanayon, 12 September 1939, Suan Mokkh Archives.
- 25 Buddhadasa, letter to Ki Nanayon, 18 January 1940, Suan Mokkh Archives.
- 26 Buddhadasa, letter to Ki Nanayon, 3 December 1940, Suan Mokkh Archives.
- 27 Buddhadasa, letter to Ki Nanayon, 3 December 1940, Suan Mokkh Archives.
- 28 About Kaniittha's projects for *mae chi*'s status, see Ito, "Buddhist women in dhamma practice in contemporary Thailand".
- 29 It should be noted that because of the lack of formal regulations for Buddhist female ascetics, the respective categories and distinctions between *mae chi* and *ubasika* are not well defined. In the area of Ratchaburi and Phetchaburi, where Ki spent her life, people usually call Buddhist female ascetics *ubasika* regardless of the colour of their clothes. Ki seems to have recognised a difference, as a *mae chi* at the Institute of Thai Mae Chi told me that Ki did not allow *mae chi* to *klap* (pay obeisance to a person in higher position by putting both hands together to the forehead and bending forward with the hands until they rest on the floor) because *mae chi* who had had a ceremony of renunciation should be more respected. However Mae Chi Prathin Khuan'on, the president of the Institute of Thai Mae Chi, said that the *mae chi* should perform *klap* and pay respect to Ki, because Ki's personal quality was more accomplished than theirs (Mae Chi Prathin Khuan'on, interview by author, Ratchaburi, 24 December 1998).
- 30 Regarding Buddhadasa's notion of *thamma mata*, see Tomomi Ito, "Dharmamātā: Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's Notion of Motherhood in Buddhist Women Practitioners," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (October 2007), pp. 409 – 432.

## The Path of Ubasika Ki Nanayon (1901 – 1974) : A Thai Woman’s Dhamma Practice in the Form of “Ubasika”

Tomomi Ito

現代タイの国家サンガは、比丘の対を成す成員としての比丘尼（女性出家者）の存在を未だ認めておらず、仏教の修行の道を歩む多くの女性は、メーチャーの形態をとり、事実上の出家生活を送っている。メーチャーは、家庭生活・職業生活を離れて、剃髪して白衣をまとい、男性比丘の寺院ないしは独立の修行場において、在家戒の八戒を守る女性修行者であるが、メーチャーの形態では、修行者としてふさわしい社会的サポートを十分に得られないという事態しばしば生じている。

本稿では、メーチャーの形態をとらず、「ウバーシカー」という独自の形態をとって、男性比丘の寺院から独立した女性出家修行者としての在り方を追求したキー・ナーナーヨン（1901–1974）というタイ人女性修行者に着目する。一般には、キーの知名度は決して高いとは言えないものの、真剣に仏法の道を模索した稀有な女性修行者として、一部においてキーは高い尊敬を集めている。本稿では、彼女のバイオグラフィー、プッタタート比丘との未刊行往復書簡、弟子へのインタビューをもとに、タイ女性修行者の社会的地位をめぐる問題意識を考察し、のちのプッタタート比丘の女性の弟子たちに与えた影響について展望する。

*Keywords* : Ki Nanayon, Thailand, Buddhist women, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

キーワード：キー・ナーナーヨン、タイ、女性修行者、プッタタート比丘