

The Façade of Militarized Buddhist Language in Post-Colonial Southeast Asia

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Abstract:

Southeast Asia has numerous religions and diverse forms of state-governance, so the populations largely have the freedom to express themselves within the context of their society. Expressing oneself can occur within the context of their religion, using the language they have been cultured within, if they remain in their cultural-context. This paper explores the context of Buddhist nations using militarized-language, seen as problematic by Dr. Matthew Kosuta, who professes in his masters-thesis that it is a contradiction. A portion of my article refutes his position, on the grounds that Buddhism developed within the Hindu-Brahmanism context and caste was normalized in regions influenced by such culture. Equally, it could be noted, the Buddha also used a language that was suitable for agriculturalists, merchants, Brahmins, so a militarized-language was just one way to speak to some people within their own social context, which was understandable not just to them, but to anyone interested in attaining Nibbāna.

Keywords:

Theravada Buddhism, Militarization, Language, Critical Thinking, Zizek.

Introduction:

Southeast Asia has numerous religions and diverse forms of state-governance, seemingly populations would have freedoms to express themselves within their social-context. Religious expressions occur within the context of their environment, using the language they have been cultured within, if they choose to remain within their cultural-context. This paper explores the context of Buddhist nations using militarized-language, seen as problematic by Dr. Matthew Kosuta, who professes this as a contradiction as the premise for his masters-thesis. A portion of my article refutes his position, on the grounds that Buddhism developed within the Hindu-Brahmanism context and caste was normalized in regions influenced by such culture. Equally, it could be noted, the Buddha also used a language that was suitable for agriculturalists, merchants, Brahmins, so a militarized-language was just one way to speak to some people within their own socio-economic circumstance, which was understandable not just to them, but to anyone interested in attaining Nibbāna.

Post-Colonial Southeast Asia:

Currently, there are eleven nations in Southeast Asia: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam. The region contains about 650,000,000 people, and has numerous ethnic groups and religions. Most of the mainland-Southeast Asian nations are Buddhist, but most of the people in the region are Muslims because of large Indonesian population, along with those in Malaysia and others in outlying islands; there are large groups of Christians in the Philippines and in small percentages elsewhere, as relics of their former colonial masters. There are a large number of people who claim to have no religion probably adhering to principles advocated by the socialist-state, if it is not just their personal choice to be free of some dogmatic experiment of social-control.

Post-colonialism is a loaded term comprised of local histories, experiences, traditions religions, ethnicities, ideologies, and other variables that are not easily and readily accountable. It means several things, and different ideas to different people.

To begin with, a colonized-society by Europeans had to endure that othering period, then many nations experienced a common war-period when the Imperial Japanese took over, then communist-forces activated, and eventually nations became decolonized, and entered into the post-colonial period of its history with different groups competing against each other. A form of nationalism based on local and ancient identity and future intentions had to be crafted to unify diverse elements within these nations. Previously, groups antagonistic towards external power, now turned around and sought power within themselves, and with their own troubled history, endure a future with former enemies as comrades. One residual-effect of post-colonialism is that the diverse nations and their cultures are now placed into a commonly-understood predicament, where principles of Eurocentric-conceptions of defining what is being learned becomes the foundation of the common-knowledge globally understood from what was sanctioned to be published and put into the education-realm. Putting the propaganda into the world into one's own structural framework for comprehending and propagating phenomena was even noticed by Thomas Dubois, through his references pertaining to Edward Said; Dubois says: "...the control of knowledge as a universal function of power, acknowledging that all cultures impose corrections upon raw reality, changing it from free-floating objects into units of knowledge.ⁱ

Edward Said probably read Edward Bernay's Propagandaⁱⁱ, the text on how a few powerful people control the minds of the masses. Often the Southeast Asian nation is not speaking or presenting itself, but is reacting defending itself from the othering. In some sense Dubois (p. 125) rightfully suggests, there is: "...a tendency to treat religion as symptomatic or derivative of other social functions and phenomena." He's saying: a religion, or a variation from a new interpretation birthed from the oppressive-state would then emerge from the colonial experience, as a reaction or as a liberation-movement. This civilizational-identity (p. 126), derived from the region's Islamic and Theravada-Buddhist heritage as functional lenses within social ethics and structures (p. 126)? These Buddhist and Islamic nations in Southeast Asia emerged from conversions from prior Hindu-Buddhist cultures – most people in the region have common ancestral-experiences, and only recently have their histories differed. Hack's work, suggests: "They perpetuate premodern conflicts about ethnicity, preventing the development of more modern notions of civic and inclusive nationalism. In this model, the course for Africa and Southeast Asia is that

post-independence states refuse to complete decolonization via separation, or Swiss-style federalism, or granting more substantial measures of autonomy, or more equal, civic rather than ethnically-based citizenship. Self determination remains incomplete, and rule is therefore based on coercion as much as on consent.”ⁱⁱⁱ The suggestion is to let the people organically develop without a hierarchy dictating how people should behave – but many Southeast Asian nations developed under foreign dominion. Hack suggests the problem in Southeast Asia is identity-management (p. 162), and that nations should find working-models towards their decolonization, while remaining vigilant to prevent ethnic-ghettoization. Hack says: “Further fragmentation is inherent in the logic of decolonization as bestowing freedom through self-determination for territorially concentrated groups who demand it.” (p. 162) Models, examples to follow as exploitable tools, are readily available should a foreign power seek to intervene or manipulate the course of power within a nation.

Placement within Southeast Asia:

Peter Skilling^{iv} writes, “Southeast Asia is a neglected area in international Buddhist studies...” (p. 46), and he goes onward to compare regional literature against what is published on India, China, Japan and elsewhere. He ponders if Bangladesh should be included into Southeast Asia because large Buddhist populations reside there, and in Northeastern areas of India. He goes onward to discuss ancient cities and cultures that existed in the region, and briefly ponders why local histories are only about a thousand years old. He asserts Southeast Asia is a blank post on the map of Buddhist studies. (p. 50) Oddly, the rest of the article goes on to discuss all of the published literature on the theme, so he sets up his writing by saying there is a problem, and then answers his own problem, which turned out to be no problem at all. Skilling suggests (p. 47) that boundaries were largely unknown and generally contained within geography, so Southeast Asia was not the lines that we see on modern-maps. Skilling also suggests there is little interest among Southeast Asians to even study their own nation, and neighboring nations, language and culture. (p. 52) He suggests Buddhist studies was not really a genre and if someone wanted to discover data, it was found in other specializations: archeology, history, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, etc. (p. 53) Most of the writings by Skilling pertain to cataloging various regional Buddhist-texts, so much of his article discusses textual themes. Again, the tactic here is to create a problem.

Civilizations are the result of constructed stages of human social development and advanced urban-organization, incorporating social stratifications, cultural-ideals, communication-systems, as well as the ability to control the natural-environment through agriculture, irrigation, sanitation, management of the ecology, and so forth. Forces engaged in social-control implement processes to civilize people, bringing them into stages of social, cultural and moral development concerned to be more advanced – usually this is military-force, not words of wisdom from teachers or advice from capitalists. Thailand’s military-leaders after the 2014 Coup have now implemented the policy of Thailand 4.0, but many people wondered about Thailand 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0. Research suggests 1.0 was the previous period when Thailand was and still is a vital agricultural society, 2.0 is a stage of light-industry, stage 3.0 is heavy-industry so that the nation will be more self-reliant, and stage 4.0 is an innovation-society.^v The military is often a tool of the leading social-leaders, because they can implement beneficial policies that political-parties would just argue about. Civilizations are often webs or networks of people relating to the duties or activities of people in relation to their town, city or local civic-area under the persuasion of the vision of the elite. People who are not within the power-structure, or the military/police-forces are considered civilians. Something civil relates to ordinary and controlled citizens and their concerns, as distinct from military or ecclesiastical matters, and it annotates their submission to power.

It could be stated from the biased Eurocentric-scholarship that the Buddhist militarized society is a failed-society, or one that has failed to grasp the proper comprehension of the Buddha’s dhamma – but even that approach towards the assessment is flawed, because it retains the framework of colonialism without considering the happiness of the people. Where, then, does that leave nations adhering to the Theravada-doctrines or Islamic-doctrines found in a Southeast Asia filled with a slower and simple-living? Yes, it is equally noted that these traditions are also imported from abroad, and have only been influential within the last thousand years – so perhaps the guiding ideologies are not dominate positions held by the native-populations following what has been passed down upon them from generation to generation void of any real scholarly assessment of their own traditions. They themselves know they adopted a foreign-tradition, one which they cannot themselves completely embrace^{vi}, yet want Buddhism to be declared the national religion. Is it, as Dubois (p. 124) ponders: “European philologists of the

nineteenth century held up arcane Hindu and Buddhist texts as the crystallization of ancient wisdom, while often denigrating the practice of the modern faithful as superstitious and untrue to the principles of faith they but vaguely understood”? Europeans roughly know their own tradition, and what they ascertain of other-tradition is only a partial-grasp of the totality comprising that subject; equally, this applies to native-Buddhists, as national protests demonstrate. Slavoj Zizek asks: “Why the need to decaffeinate the Other, to deprive him or her of their raw substance of *jouissance* [physical or intellectual pleasure]? I suspect this is a reaction to the disintegration of the protective symbolic walls that kept others at a proper distance.”^{vii} Eurocentric-scholars as defenders of collapsing empire cling to some hope of superiority; rather: demanding religious-pluralism is actually an avenue to destroy a national-identity – a composition of ideas that are not universally held within boundaries. Some Buddhist monks were ready to become violent if the state declined to enshrine Buddhism as the national-religion, to the detriment of Muslim and secular-minded people contributing to the development of Thailand, although they retain their minority-status. Monks from a sectarian-faction led by a fugitive monk, denied soldiers the opportunity to arrest or speak to the abbot – eventually the soldiers left: it could be said that monks appear to be more violent than soldiers. All local schoolboys are trained to be soldiers and face the draft before age twenty-one, and age twenty is the required-age for Buddhist monkhood ordination^{viii} - monks know how to be soldiers; and soldiers of course were trained as schoolchildren within Buddhist culture to respect monks, regardless of one’s religion. People believe monks are supposed to be non-violent.^{ix} Confrontations between soldiers and monks can be troublesome, and if anything goes wrong, usually armed soldiers are blamed. Nations under scrutiny as subjects of post-colonialism have seen through the façade of the divisions advocated by colonizers recovering from a global-war – divisions which attempted to secularize and personalize the religious-experience, opening the avenue for the deconstruction of whatever religion, and its subsequent replacement by new mechanisms for social-control. The political elite still demand fresh bodies to fill positions needed in its internal conflict zone between Muslims and Buddhists in Southern Thailand. Most people don’t want to die in bomb-attacks within their own country and citizens fear the draft – being a gay or transvestite is considered one way to escape the mandatory military draft and potential service, but along with that choice is a remark on one’s public-record.^x

Maintaining Power & Social Control:

Dr. Matthew Kosuta, wrote a summary of his masters-thesis: "*The Buddha and the Four-Limbed Army: The Military in the Pāli Canon*"^{xi}, and suggests various points which offer an allowance for contentious debate. Before any analysis of his work is undertaken, it should be known that both of us have military-experience; and it is noted that his article is a summary of his masters-thesis, so any missing details that he should have known and presented in the article, might actually be referenced in the unavailable text. Therefore, I issue an apology for not seeing or knowing what he may already know; nevertheless, his available work exists to be comprehended. An internet-blog "Egregores: A Blog about Paganism, History, Philosophy, Politics, and more.", suggests it is "thorough research", but as one continues to examine the article, it could be determined that Kosuta's work is biased or not-completely informed, while maintaining a sense of positional-superiority, after all he is defending a thesis, defending the truth is not relevant.

A common theme in some anti-Buddhism scholarship is to illuminate social-militancy and violence that occurs in otherwise Buddhist-nations. It's improper to suggest that just because a nation's individual citizens respect or honor Buddhist-ideas, that a nation cannot defend itself from aggression. Eurocentric-scholarship wants to denounce Southeast Asians as hypocritical for not upholding doctrines within their heritage, they want to assert local leaders are unqualified to lead, and the nations are failed-experiments in Western-style democracy or holdovers from a colonial-legacy. Whatever the assessment becomes, the blame is still on the traditional-system, and never about the disruptions brought by regional colonizers. Kosuta, therefore suggests, the pacifist-ethic that Theravada Buddhism advocates for, is a contradiction in reality, despite being connected with universal love and compassion. It becomes the responsibility of the scholar of Buddhism and scholars of Thailand to suggest or adjust the tone of the presentation of Buddhism, or correct misleading points. Buddhism is a system for renunciates to lead a moral existence; the generation of universal love and compassion, which Kosuta speaks about, are aggregate-components of an entire training system utilized towards the extinction of defiling mental-characteristics. An example of a monk leading a protest from a moral-position would be the Venerable Buddha-Issara who rallied citizens against the corruption of the former government – for such protests tear-gas was shot at the

monk and protesters.^{xii} A Jewish publication recently echoed these anti-Buddhist sentiments highlighting situations where Buddhists actually went on a defensive against a perceived threat, thereby casting Buddhist-activists in some demonic-light.^{xiii} Ashin Wirathu was being responsive to his concerned audience, and has been demonized globally. The Buddha once, advocated for killing – but the meaning behind the term for killing actually had a hidden-meaning, so if someone only exposed a soundclip, even the Buddha would have been demonized and taken out of context. Ignorant media defenders would have misinterpreted this sense of killing; the misbehaved-monk was to receive the silent-treatment – in that sense: the monk was killed. It becomes really important to investigate into the truth of what was really said, and in most instances, irresponsible-writers create content merely to fulfill deadlines.

It's important to note, moving away from Kosuta, that Buddhism, rather the Buddha – the former-prince trained as a member of the military-caste – intentionally used caste-language, so rather than restating Kosuta's apparent contradiction, countries indeed have a pacifist-ethic socially and possess a military-tradition structurally – where is the abnormality? The presence of a nation's military or a police-force, is a necessary component of any free nation not relying on military of another foreign-power for its defense. This is a reality and a circumstance of human-civilization – yes, if nations demilitarized, armed-forces would not be a necessary component but few nations are willing to take that chance as technologies become more advanced and stakeholders worry about their capital-possessions. The culture producing factors for generating Buddhism believed in a system that had the military as one of the core elements of society, as with any society. Traditions like Islam and Buddhism developed through a mercantile-class that spread the new-doctrines along trade-routes, but it was military and police force, along with a judiciary, which protects or serves the converted-society. European history is full of violence, conflict and war – the majority of any large nation, again, has soldiers or a police-force. Private-citizens usually have personal freedoms to be religious, or to follow some –ism, but undertaking an –ism doesn't mean they must embrace the totality of the doctrine, because there are so many lessons to be learned. Each individual as an –ist of the –ism takes what is important to themselves and probably ignores other teachings. The existence of a pacifist, or rather a collection of renunciates, is a normative-circumstance, there is nothing contradictory about any society containing

any extremes. Societies contain extremes; leaders are praised, deviants are jailed or killed. Islam, in sayings from the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be unto Him), urges followers to not live in monasteries, and in some respect: Islam transformed Islamic society into a society that is regulated as if it could be within itself, a form of a monastery for a functioning society.^{xiv}

Towards critical-thinking, Kosuta utilizes the criteria of: examine, find, and verify - selecting issues, creating his own problem, and tries prove his own point, rather than letting the data speak for itself. A deeply-trained Buddhist would look at the military and other social-groups very differently. Buddhist critical thinking skills, such as those previously elaborated upon provide the track upon which a better assessment can be made, if utilizing Buddhist analytical tools. Kosuta could have examined the Buddhist view of a military or a pacifist-system, through: characteristic, function, manifestation, proximate cause. However, as Dubois (p. 114) provides, Kosuta's analysis-mechanism retains Eurocentric-perspectives: "the language of politics, economics, and culture do remain largely American, or at least Western, in origin." Alternatively, another basic assessment method could have been: understanding, comprehend, interpret, and demonstrate; or using the most famous Buddhist method of determining if something is unprofitable, blameworthy, censured by the intelligent, or conducive towards loss or sorrow – this is basic and important criteria advocated within the popular, Kalama Sutta.^{xv} In this way, a person could ascertain a view that offers a more accurate perception of a Buddhist-position; however using the term Buddhist, then becomes a problem, and then, to restate again, it becomes another problem of the intention of language. Using the militarized language becomes just an exercise in engaging with society or expressions of normative violent social-values, or even retains a hegemonic-perspective. Being Buddhist and being employed as a soldier is an exercise within a hermeneutical-praxis – textual interpretation and how a philosophy is actualized in practical daily-life. Interpreting what one performs would be another basis for investigation.

Although Kosuta is being generalistic through language, a deeper look into Theravada Buddhist nations could provide missing details for his old^{xvi} assessment of the military in Theravada Buddhist nations. There is no reference to *A Special Auspicious Allocation*, a book written by a former Sangharaja^{xvii} to his relative in the position of Monarch for the Kingdom of Thailand. A generalization of a few excerpts could be made: if there is a sickness of the body, people use methods to dispose of

an illness. A military or a police-force, by metaphoric-extension, would be method to purify the civic-body of a sickness; armed-forces are the purification method – he and I would both know the function of a military, since we are both veterans.

Kosuta’s article misses any connection to this Buddhist allocation. Here are a few of the quotations expounding upon the generalization - page 59, of the text by the Supreme Patriarch of the Kingdom of Thailand, His Holiness Prince Vajirañāṇa, reads:

“Such being the case, each nation finds it necessary to organize some of its own citizens into a class whose duty it is to fight against its enemies... it was on this account that all princes, who were the descendants of Kings who successfully performed such duties became known as Kshatriya; also the followers of the Kshatriya also became, as their masters, all warriors or fighting men. The defense against external foes is one of the policies of governance, and is one that cannot be neglected. War generally occurs suddenly, and victory cannot be won solely by having a large number of men, arms and munitions; it must also depend upon presence of mind (sati), knowledge (paññā), bravery, experience, readiness in commands, good fighting positions, and so forth - in order to make victory certain. Therefore, war must be prepared for, even in time of peace, otherwise one would not be in time and one would be in a disadvantageous position towards one’s foe.”

An excerpt by the Supreme Patriarch of the Kingdom of Thailand, His Holiness Prince Vajirañāṇa, on page 60, reads:

“As towns that are situated on the borders of a state must be prepared both inside and out, so be ye prepared likewise. Let not any opportunity escape you, for those who have let opportunity pass by will be completely full of sorrow as in hell. [Thailand] has enjoyed great prosperity because all her citizens used to be warriors. In time of war all used to be mobilized for fighting; but when in peace, each used to go about his separate occupations, until [the citizens] subsequently became divided into the military and civilians. Owing to the fact of the citizens having been warriors, the Kingdom enjoyed a long period of peace, so that civilians became totally inexperienced in warfare, and even the military were none too proficient...”

An excerpt from page 65 of the text by the Supreme Patriarch of the Kingdom of Thailand, His Holiness Prince Vajirañāṇa, reads:

“... by virtue of the holy power of the Three Jewels acting as a repellent agent against harmful influences. May neither harmful misfortune or obstacles to happiness touch or trouble this great land of [Thailand] on any occasion, but may they all pass by this [country]... May the guardian angels who abide within [Thailand] from those who abide within the Royal Palace to those abiding in every part of this dominion, and to whom Your Majesty has made due offerings of Pious Oblation and Food Oblation, be benevolent and keep watch over Your Majesty and Your Kingdom, granting all that is desired for beneficial welfare, and guarding against every kind of evil which may militate against prosperity, so that such evil may never occur.”

An excerpt from page 82, of the text by the Supreme Patriarch of the Kingdom of Thailand, His Holiness Prince Vajirañāṇa, reads:

“In religion, he who has overcome evil-passions must also find a way to hold down such passions so that they should never recur again, in order to merit the appellation of *ariyo*, the truly venerable.”

To summarize all of the above quotations from the *Special Auspicious Allocation*: wars must be prepared for, and the body should be purged of afflictions. This is a common medical and military prescription. Kosuta thinks that pacifism and military are diametrically opposed – and although this is rather a look at basic extremes it is not noteworthy, it's obviously too easy to state. In some sense, the presence of a military can bring or maintain peace, a strong military is a deterrent to foreign-belligerence. Buddhism and the military know each other and are born from the same parentage. Consider the centuries-old battle of the Ahura/Asura-tribes and the Deva-tribes, consider the deification of those elements into the great epic tale, the Ramayana, known throughout areas of Indo-Aryan influence.^{xviii} Furthermore, it could have been easy to state the existence of the Yodhajiva Sutta^{xix} which highlights how a militarized-headman cries because he was misled by his militarized-tradition to think that dying in battle brings one into a realm of deities, or that there is honor-in-dying-in-battle - think of that as if someone becomes a martyr; instead the Buddha asserts that since one's mind is already in the low-position for killing, when

engaged within the service of the military, then if someone dies only a rebirth into an animal or lower-realm becomes the reality. Kosuta wants to mention it – fragmentary-elements of the tale are brought up, but there is no blatant, specific knowledge of it, the list of references in his article show obligatory texts and secondary texts, but no specific excerpts taken directly from the discourse. Using accurate sources defuse generalist-viewpoints and corruptions.

Kosuta later suggests the Vinaya (monastic-training-regulations) states active-duty military-members cannot join the Buddhist sangha; Kosuta claims the reason is because it's a political position which allows for the monkhood to be protected from danger. Kosuta's position is misleading because although the Buddhist-sangha does get armed protection in the Southern-regions of Thailand, the real intention was for soldiers to serve out enlistment-terms instead of being absent-without-leave. The mind of the Buddhist monk is to be ideally pure, the monkhood is not a collection of vagabonds or social-miscreants. Kosuta's statement then reads like an intentional twist of the Buddha's intention, and it is noted that the Thai-government does protect its national-heritage. There is nothing prohibiting a soldier to be a lay-follower of the temple or being a disciple during his off-duty time.

Thai history suggests three associates seen a Khmer-governor over the area where Myanmar, Thailand and Laos now connect, and disposed of him, enabling each of the three to govern areas which later become Myanmar, Thailand and Laos.^{xx} This began the first Thai dynasty, which needed a strong military to ward off antagonists to the newly created kingdom, around the same time-period the Mongols were on their global conquest. Dynastic-leaders and those later usurping crowns, needed strong forces to attain towards their political-goals – this goes without saying, and has happened repeatedly throughout global, regional, and national history. When people are speaking within their cultural context they often use slogans that are knowable to the people, it makes the language somewhat coded, and an outsider might not be aware of nuances. Just because a language is militarized, as suggested by Kosuta, and even within a militarized society, it doesn't mean that the language favors the military, it just means that violent language is used in a way that is familiar to violent people without quenched passions. Familiar doesn't mean favorite, and a mature mind would discern the truth from circumstance. The Buddha often twisted the words used by sectarians to mean something different within his

own dispensation – redefinition doesn't reflect favoritism, and may be more in line with familiarity and a transformation.

Kosuta presents: “Nibbanic Action is War”, as a metaphor, but it's important to note that Nibbāna is not war. Nibbāna, by definition means: cooling, extinguished, and extinction – not any confliction with mental defilements. The implication of Nibbāna is akin towards psychotherapy rather than tactical-maneuvers, although paths towards nibbana use strategic-language. Buddhism provides a path to peace and liberation, more coded militarized-language, but again, the Buddha uses languages strategically so that the common person can understand his message. It is an interpretation, an active exercise of hermeneutics; interpretations are allowable. Kosuta states: militarized actions come across as perfectly normal in ancient India – no doubt about this, of course militarized terminology and action is known globally. “Onward Christian Soldiers”, itself, is a song from 1871, made famous by Winston Churchill, borrows a Christian biblical phrase as a slogan reflecting universality, and other traditions use similar motivational-utterances. The initial publication of Buddhist-texts were under the sanctioning of a king who sponsored the Buddhist council which finally wrote down whatever was passed along orally – translators with their own intentions can select terminology through synonyms, when representing the teachings.

Discussion within Buddhist Texts:

Kosuta claims any passage from the Tipitaka that deal with military-issues or uses militarized-language, can fill a large textual-volume. There is no doubt about this because there are forty-five volumes of texts within the Theravada tradition within Thailand, and there are other important texts not accounted for in that totality. In that respect, the presence of one large volume is not extensive, considering the complete body of texts. Unaccounted for, but also looming largely in Buddhist texts is the language of Brahmins, agriculturalists and even a set of language for merchants – would each of those deserve its own equally large volume? Large sections of texts deal with judiciary matters, so highlighting militarized or violent language isn't really a point of signification – and no one is going to rearrange the Tipitaka according to caste-dialogue, although years ago a scholar annotated the caste-condition of recipients to the Buddha's sermons. Militarized-language can be rendered irrelevant in the grander scope of the entire forty-five years of the Buddha's

teaching career that was later chronicled, which illuminates that writers of the Buddha's words could also have selected synonyms that were impactful or militarized the language, allowing missionaries to bring these Buddhist teachings into hostile neighboring territories. If a monk was able to receive a discussion within a king's court, the monk hypothetically could speak in the militarized-language of the terrain's figurehead. There is a famous teaching that suggests: it doesn't matter what you call the bowl, as long as what is wanted is understood – this equally applies to militarized-language. Violence is like a universal trademark of civilization, something everyone within humanity recognizes and wishes we could *eradicate* – to use a violent word, peacefully.

Kosuta also wrote: "The Jataka stands out as the division of the Canon, which contributed the most references. Of the one hundred ten references to the military collected nearly half of them come from the Jataka.... Thus, there is an exaggerated importance of the Jataka in teaching the Theravada point of view on the military." This is an incorrect-viewpoint. First of all, the Jatakas are old-world, past-life stories told for the sake of converting followers to higher mental attainments; and secondly: within the Theravada-tradition of Thailand, there are forty-five volumes of texts, six of which are Jatakas. If Kosuta is correct in saying of the one-hundred and ten references, almost 50% are from any of the five-hundred and forty-seven Jatakas; and supposing nearly 50% is exactly 50%, meaning fifty-five references from the Jataka, the rest of the fifty-five references are spread out in other undisclosed volumes. Using adjusted-data: nearly 10% of the total portion of the Jataka, or 3% of the entire Tipitaka, regardless of specifics, even one volume of forty-five suggests forty-four do not contain militarized language. As a result of obscure-mathematics: forty-four of forty-five volumes suggests 97% of the Tipitaka would be free from violent or militarized textual-language. It is no exaggeration to assert: militarized language is irrelevant in the grander-scope of Buddhist ideology. It's there if you want it to be present, but the idea of Buddhism is to escape from mental conditions of bondage, and a militarized language would shackle the practitioner. One idea in Theravada Buddhism is to move from being a seeker into a non-seeker, one who has already attained mental-purification, or enlightenment – language such as this, is not militarized or violent.

Kosuta begins to conclude his summarization with the notion that soldiers, themselves, try to make sense of Buddhadhamma or the militarized-language. The

Buddha already prescribed the Mirror of Dhamma to Ananda^{xxi}, a self-assessment tool chanted every day in the monastic-tradition within Theravada Buddhism - allowing anyone reflecting upon the verses to assess their placement within the stream of the Buddha's teachings, suggesting where one can see his or her own reflection in the entire scheme of things. Kosuta further misses the greater scheme of things when mentioning again: the Buddha banned fighting-men in the service of a king from joining the sangha. While that prohibition is true and referable, the actual intention is for the ordaining-monk to be free from any stain of guilt; a man must clear his responsibilities, and should not be absent-without-leave, worrying every day if he will face arrest and imprisonment. Again, nothing prohibits a soldier from visiting a temple and hearing dhamma in his spare time and even becoming a Buddhist, while employed in the armed-services. The Buddha knows about skipping out on responsibilities, because antagonists assert he was a deadbeat-father, since he didn't directly raise his biological-son. After the boy, Rahula, ordained as a novice, he was placed under a chief-discipline known for his caring-abilities. Guilt is a defiling mental characteristic which inhibits Nibbāna. Kosuta concludes: "...it becomes evident that the military is not conducive to Buddhist Ethics and this not conducive to performing Path actions... the military even loses its value in the mundane." There is nothing surprising within this obvious conclusion. There is one illustration elsewhere in modern Buddhism that it is not the fault of the soldier for holding the bayonet that the enemy ran into – because the enemy didn't have to be present. Such militarized attitude can free a person from guilt, blaming the antagonist for his unfortunate presence; however, why is the soldier even holding the bayonet? If the recollection is correct, it was the scholar Brian Victoria who cited D.T. Suzuki, using the expression of running into the knife^{xxii}, Zizek himself borrows the same story – these sources are absent from Kosuta's limited, yet selected, bibliography.

Empire-building Activities:

Militarization of a society is empire-building activities, and Buddhism was and is just a tool of this mechanism utilized by authority. State sanctioned Buddhism or other empire-building mechanisms are tools utilized for advancing new civilizations. Research on the work of Emperor Asoka demonstrates his utilization of Buddhism as a mechanism to unite the lands that he devastated through war, through later

implementing social-improvement projects to demonstrate his benevolence and concern over his empire. Dubois (p. 118) claims: “Colonial natives were ruled as subjects, not as citizens, and this meant allowing and even encouraging cultural and religious difference between metropole and colony.” Asoka erected pillars in far away places which inscribed his intentions for people to remember. People don’t write about how a Buddhist King Asoka killed 18,000 Ājīvikas over a disrespectful drawing of the Buddha bowing down before Mahavira.^{xxiii} King Lithai was the 5th King of the Phra Ruang Dynasty [Thailand’s Sukhothai-period], learned Buddhism from foreign-monks and contrived the text, Traibhumikatha, which within the fifteenth-chapter, discusses: A New World Order, detailing how the world was formulated out of immorality, how castes were formed, and thus is under the introduction of Buddhist-ideals.^{xxiv} Castes, deemphasized, have been a prominent presence in Southeast Asia; David Ronfeldt suggests society organizes itself into tribes, institutions, markets and networks^{xxv}; occupational and trade networks existed facilitating the market communities across the region; elites were granted personnel to be utilized as slave-laborers (sakdina-system) to build up national infrastructure – these are Buddhist-nations: no one discusses how slavery seems to be sanctioned within Buddhism.^{xxvi} It’s likely that the formation of Buddhism overlapped the transition from tribal towards more urbanized-institutionalized groups: occupations (the military) begin to think they can rule over the nation – and with weapons and their unity, they can overrun or demand allegiance. If these occupational-groups battle for supremacy (merchant-capitalists versus the military), someone like the Buddha would need to thematically address social-elites, often the audience for the Buddha.^{xxvii} It has to be remembered that the Buddha distanced himself from social-engagement, and was not someone wandering around aiming to liberate people from caste-oppression.

Moving forward, Buddhist societies could turn into fundamentalist-states and act from dictates from the Buddha, but he was not a dictator (also consider: armed-forces have other motives); and even rejected some seemingly logical demands by his main-antagonist, Devadatta. Eurocentric-scholars see perfection when texts mention perfection, but often alternative divergences are rarely mentioned; but they are quick to announce the smallest of alleged contradictions. There are different kinds of Buddhists, people with variations in their interests, so avoiding hypocritical accusations, a world-renunciate could welcome the entire Tipitaka or be committed

to meditation – or balance both; but there are people within society who are interested in developing their careers, using Buddhism to assist with private mental or behavioral problems. Karl Hack writes: "...colonial societies had many layers of identity – peasants, class, ethnic, religious, regional – that were not in the first place 'national', and often resisted subjection to the leadership of postcolonial as well as colonial-elites."^{xxviii} Individuals have private-concerns, and Eurocentric behaviors are often: denigration of other people and places, ideological biases, lack of sensitivity to cultural variation, setting of ethical norms, stereotyping other people and places, create deterministic formulations, express empiricism in analysis, have a tendency towards male-orientation^{xxix}, be reductionistic, building up of a grand-theory, have racial overtones, and express unilinearity and universalisms.^{xxx} Scrutiny is often undertaken from the position of power, rather than examining the foundations and ways of various people. Even a basic statistical analysis suggests that militarism is not the normal language used by the Buddha, although some expressions exist, it is certainly not common; again, equally, the language could have been brahmanistic, agriculturalistic, mercantilistic, as well as militaristic, and occasionally the Buddha had stories dealing with slaves and deities. The Buddha's speech was rooted in the sociology of the day, entrenched within the caste-structure, using normal language.

Conclusion:

A monk once advocated for the killing of communists, other monks wish to suppress Muslims of various nationalities – the Buddha another method of killing others by using the silent treatment. Most Buddhist monks seek their own determination: living in relative comfort or the seeking of Nibbāna – these are rare phenomena; and while extreme fundamentalist positions exist within every segment of society, the larger-body of the national population maintains normal civilized positions. What is the expectation? Is the expectation: the nation must abandon Buddhism because one monk advocated for an extreme position, and thus the entire tradition has been rendered ineffective? Myanmar, for instance, could not be effectively controlled by a colonial-power, and as a union of various ethnic-states, it may struggle as independent cultures within boundaries are respectfully diverse; yet many of them still retain a dual-legacy, mixing hybrid-traditions with residual baggage from the postcolonial legacy. Nations now must be mature, and cognize that differences exist; nations should move forward rooted in the tradition of choice,

but have modern-state-apparatuses necessary to integrate with other nations in the globalized world. Hostility from ignorance and the frustration of not knowing how to deal with an unknown phenomena, such as a traumatic-intruder^{xxxix} must be reduced. The world proclaims to aspire towards peace and yearns to be a cooperative place; but there are antagonistic forces, and now to use agricultural language, these mutations have not been rooted out yet. The dominate force of Western-implemented globalization may suggest various native-traditions (religions) have now been rendered as obsolete because their reach is deep within foreign nations' traditional cultures. It's paramount that post-colonial Southeast Asia become more aware of what is happening, and potentially look into exploring better relationships and endeavors within ASEAN.

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Notes:

- ⁱ DuBois, T.D. (2005) "Hegemony, Imperialism, and the Construction of Religion in East and Southeast Asia," *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 44 (December 2005), p. 114
- ⁱⁱ Bernays, E.L. (1928) *Propaganda*. New York: Routledge.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Hack, K. "Decolonization and Violence in Southeast Asia: Crises of Identity and Authority," *Beyond Empire and Nation: The Decolonization of African and Asian Societies, 1930's -1970's* (Brill: 2012) p. 152
- ^{iv} Skilling, P. (2009) *Buddhism and Buddhist Literature of Southeast Asia, Selected Papers*. Bangkok: Fragile Palm Leaves Foundation
- ^v United Information Highway What is Thailand 4.0? <https://www.uih.co.th/en/knowledge/thailand-4.0> - accessed on 6 March 2018
- ^{vi} Wongcha-um, P. (2016) "Thai monks protest against state interference in Buddhist governance," available at: <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/thai-monks-protest-against-state-interference-in-buddhist-govern-8175218> - accessed on 2 March 2018 - Monks are often protesting against government action, recently (two years ago at the time of this writing), some Buddhist monks attacked soldiers.
- ^{vii} Zizek, S. (2008) *Violence*. New York: Picador Profile Books, p. 58
- ^{viii} Dawn (2011) "Thai military draft a lottery many hope to lose," available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/621188> - accessed on 5 March 2018, Thailand has compulsory military service, usually fulfilling the quota via lottery-system
- ^{ix} Luisuwan, N. (2016) "The Complexities of Thai Buddhism," available at: <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/nicholas-liusuwan/the-complexities-of-thai-b-10624430.html> - the abbot was never arrested, and was said to have disappeared, or secretly led out of the country. Also, the embezzlement case situation can be read here, in the temple-response: Dhammakaya Uncovered (2016) "Statement of Dhammakaya Followers to Foreign Correspondents," available at: <http://www.dhammakayauncovered.com/letters-to-the-editor/2016/6/22/statement-of-dhammakaya-followers-to-foreign-correspondents> - accessed on 2 March 2018 Additionally, this seems to be a website which serves as a cover for the excuses made by the sectarian-temple.
- ^x Reuters (2015) "When transgenders and monks turn up for Thailand's army draft," available at: <http://www.asiaone.com/asia/when-transgenders-and-monks-turn-thailands-army-draft> - accessed on 6 March 2018
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- ^{xiii} Ilany O. "Opinion: Just how Viscious Buddhist Killer Monks Can Be," available at: <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/asia-and-australia/.premium-just-how-vicious-buddhist-killer->

[monks-can-be-1.5867001](#) – accessed on 2 March 2018, not available to me on 8 June 2018, so I used the cached-version.

^{xiv} Professor Timothy Gianotti expressed this idea to us within his classroom at the University of Oregon, in 2003, when sharing his story how his soccer-team visited Egypt. At the time of hearing his story, I had formerly spent time as a Buddhist monk, so the revelation became very important as something for me to consider. <https://uwaterloo.ca/studies-in-islam/timothy-gianotti> - for his short biography. Prior to being in his classroom, I spent time in Adana, Turkey, in early 1994, while serving in the US Air Force as an intelligence-analyst. I was able to see firsthand elements of an Islamic society, I am also very familiar with the Nation of Islam, within the United States.

^{xv} Peoples, D. (2016) *Increasing Intellectualism in Buddhist Studies*, available at: https://www.academia.edu/28653240/Increasing_Intellectualism_in_Buddhist_Studies - accessed on 2 March 2018

^{xvi} Old, stated here respectfully, in the sense that he has now spent a considerable amount of time in Thailand and may have an updated position, but I've not learned if he has adopted any new perspective.

^{xvii} Prince Vajirañña (1995) *A Special Auspicious Allocution*. Bangkok: Mahamakut University Press, various pages, as shown above, with minor spelling-corrections. The king at that time, himself, was the original translator of the text.

^{xviii} Armstrong, K. (2006) *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions*. New York: Anchor Book – story of the Ramayana.

^{xix} Peoples, D. (2012) "The Yodhajiva Suttas," *The Chulalongkorn Journal of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 6, Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, also available at:

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^{xx} Baker, C. & Phongpaichit, P. (2005) *A History of Thailand*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

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^{xxii} Sato, T.K. & Kirchner, T (2008) "D.T. Suzuki and the Question of War," *The Eastern Buddhist*, 39/1, available at: http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/CriticalZen/Suzuki_and-Question_of-War.pdf - accessed on 2 March 2018; Zizek has also used this metaphor as I covered it in my previous work on Zizek and Buddhism, available here: <http://www.ojs.mcu.ac.th/index.php/jiabu/article/view/748/0> .

^{xxiii} Strong, J.S. (2008) *The Legend of King Asoka: A Study and Translation of the Asokavadana*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publ. and Barua, B.M. 1920) *The Ajivikas*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta.

^{xxiv} King Lithai (1374) *Traibhumikatha*, trans. by the Thai National Team for Anthology of ASEAN Literature, Volume Ia (1985), Bangkok: ASEAN.

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^{xxvi} Peoples, D. (2016) *Ancient Indian Texts and human-Trafficking (Slavery) in ASEAN*, available at: https://www.academia.edu/26735391/Ancient_Indian_Texts_and_Human-Trafficking_Slavery_in_ASEAN – is one account of slavery in the region.

^{xxvii} Bailey, G. and Mabbett, I. (2003) *The Sociology of Early Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

^{xxviii} Hack. K. (2012) "Decolonization and Violence in Southeast Asia: Crises of Identity and Authority," *Beyond Empire and Nation: The Decolonization of African and Asian Societies, 1930's -1970's*. Brill:

^{xxix} Amirell, S.E. (2012): "Progressive Nationalism and Female Rule in Post-Colonial South and Southeast Asia," *AJWS*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Korea: Asian Center for Women's Studies, Ewha Womans University Press, 2012), pp. 35-69: These nations are: Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines, at various periods in time, the research suggests that women rule when there is a sort of continuation of a dynastic-ideal – the women are somehow related to a predecessor, and therefore are not governing from their own merits but through the former and existing connections.

^{xxx} Rigg, J (1997) *Southeast Asia: The Human Landscape of Modernization and Development*, London: Routledge.

^{xxxi} Zizek, S. (2008) *Violence*. New York: Picador Profile Books