

# AIDS and Buddhism

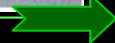


*The Psychological Benefit of Buddhism  
for the HIV/AIDS Prevention in Thailand*



# Thailand

*Hauptstadt:* Bangkok ( ca. 7 Mill. Einwohner)  
*Fläche:* 513.115 m<sup>2</sup> (ca. 1,5 mal so gross wie die BRD)  
*Bevölkerung:* 62,6 Mill. (108/m<sup>2</sup>), 94% buddhistisch  
*Bruttonationalprodukt:* 2.010 US-\$ (BRD 25.120 US-\$)  
*Geschichte:* Gründung des Reiches Siam im 13. Jhd., Thailand ist das einzige Land Südostasiens, das nie kolonialisiert wurde. 1932 führte ein Staatsstreich zur konstitutionellen Monarchie





## *HIV/AIDS in Developing Countries*

- 90% of HIV infected people living in developing countries.
  - One third are between 15 and 24.
  - Half of all new infections take place in this age group.
  - Every minute 5 more young people are being infected.
  - In Asia about 7,2 million people living with the HI Virus.
  - Almost 1 million were newly infected during last year.
- (UNAIDS 2004).

## *HIV/AIDS in Thailand*

- Reach of the prevention strategies: less than 5%,
  - Condom use in brothels: 1990 96%, 2004 50%,
  - Only about 20% using condoms regularly,
  - Infection rate of drug consumer: 1994 30%, 2004 50%,
  - Infection rate: 6% of migration worker, 10% of deep-sea fisher
- (The Nation 09.07.2004).

*The history of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Thailand – a role model for prevention?*

In the 90s **role model** for the fight against HIV/AIDS (i.e. 100% condom campaign)

**Condom use in brothels: 1991 61%, 1995 93%, customer 50% less**

Despite – or because – these successes the **efforts decreased**:

*money -25%*

*rural-urban re-movements*

*focus on sex business*

*financial crisis 97*

*complacency*

*old strategies are not appropriate for the new risk behavior and does not reach the new target groups (youth, migrant workers and indirect sex workers)*

**Comdoms are seen as**

*dirty*

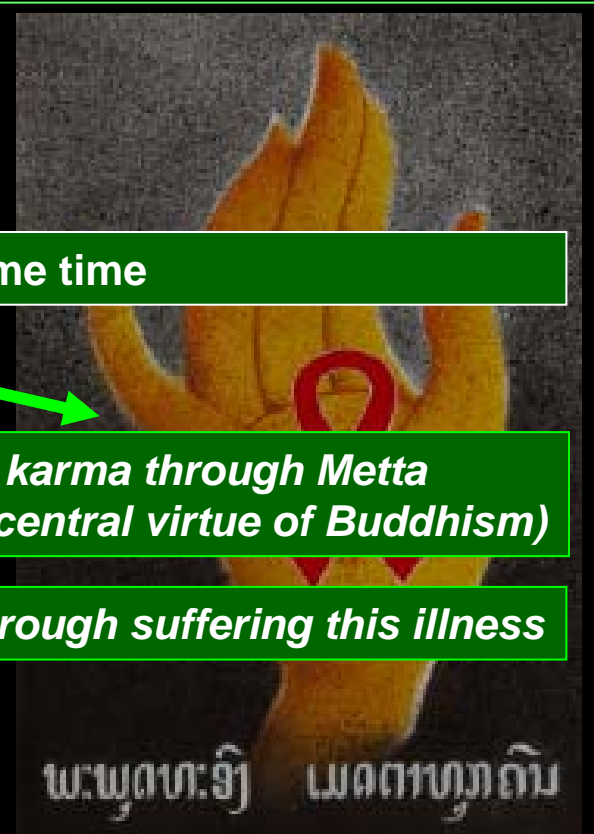
*not worthy for wives*

*even prostitutes don't use them privately*

*blotted with prostitution*

*Women carrying condoms will be **stigmatized** as prostitutes*

# Karma and HIV/AIDS



Powerful danger and chance at the same time

legimitation for refusal of people with HIV/AIDS

collect good karma through Metta (compassion as a central virtue of Buddhism)

"its their own fault"

karmic cleaning through suffering this illness

# Etiology of HIV/AIDS in Thailand

ພະພຸດທະອົງ ພາດກາມທຸກຄົນ

The AIDS death is seen as a bad death (tai mai dee) because of long suffering, deformation and many young dying people

This death contains the implicit threat to infect the living with the spiritual pollution of the dead

AIDS is perceived as a „new western illness“ of sexual liberal people

The pictures of PLWA support the association with dirt and danger (black blood)

mass media concentrates on the the angst, the thrill, the high risk groups



# THE SANGHA METTA PROJECT

A BUDDHIST APPROACH TO HIV/AIDS  
PREVENTION AND CARE



Through their temples, Tai Lau monks in Xishuan  
Panna promote HIV/AIDS awareness.

## Why “AIDS and Buddhism”?

- Culturally adapted HIV/AIDS prevention strategy,
- Priorisation of psychosocial effects,
- No literature,
- Increasing attention and consideration.

## Why prioritisation of the psychosocial effects?

- Physical problems usually first appear in the last phases
- and are minimal in contrast with emotional, psychosocial, economic problems,

- Permanent confrontation with stress, anger, depression, social problems, loss of work, economic problems, discrimination, stigma etc.
- Not only the individual will be confronted but his whole environment

➔ AIDS is not only a health but most of all a psychosocial problem and influences everyone.

# AIDS UND BUDDHISMUS

Der psychologische Beitrag des Buddhismus  
zur HIV/AIDS-Prävention in Thailand



Als Diplomarbeit vorgelegt dem Vorsitzenden des Prüfungsausschusses für die Diplomprüfung im Fach Psychologie an der Universität zu Köln

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Angefertigt bei Prof. Dr. H. Stubbe Köln, den 09. Dezember 2004

## Main Research Question

*Which factors are relevant for a Buddhism-orientated and cultural adapted conception of an prevention strategy for Thailand against the psychosocial consequences of HIV and AIDS?*

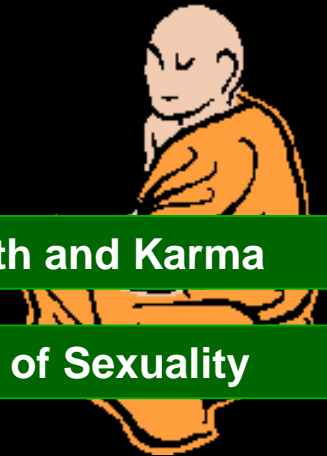


## Aim of Research

*On the background and the understanding of the psychological and psychosocial base of Thai society the research will try isolate the relevant factors of a Buddhist orientated prevention strategy.*

## Guiding Questions

- Which views of Buddhism can be helpful for a prevention?
- Which (modern) cultural frame conditions of Thai society must be paid attention to and could be an approach for prevention?
- To which basic conditions an effective prevention strategy has refer to?
- Which strategies for a prevention does the Bhuddism offer?
- To which factors we have to pay attention to in the future?



*Which views of Buddhism can be helpful for a prevention?*

Synkretism

Rebirth and Karma

Body and Illness

Compassion (*Metta*)

View of Sexuality

*Which (modern) cultural frame conditions of Thai society must be paid attention to and could be an approach for prevention?*

Modernising Processes

Homosexuality

Prostitution

Liberalisation of sexual liberty and promiscuity

Dropping of middle generation

Role of woman

*To which basic conditions an effective prevention strategy has refer to?*

Current risk behaviour

Hilltribes in the north

Media

Strategy of government

Specific informations for specific risk groups

Family

*Which strategies for a prevention does the Bhuddism offer?*

Basiv views

Holistic views

Monks

Ignorance

Meditation

„Indegenizing“

*To which factors we have to pay attention to in the future?*

Behavior of government

Homosexuality

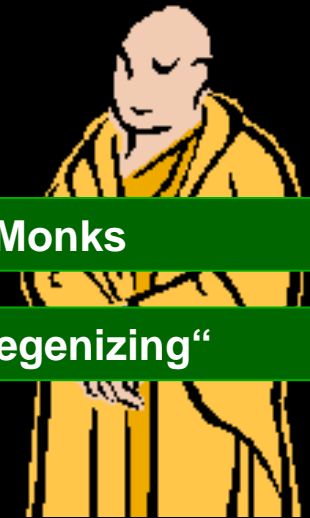
Spirituality

Cooperation of religions  
and institutions

Emphasize the strength of the buddhist approach

*For example: the “4 noble truths”*

1. *Every life is suffering* – What suffering does AIDS causes?
2. *The source of suffering* – Why people getting infected by HIV?
3. *The possibility to end the suffering* – Realize the already existing ressources
4. *DThe way to stop thye suffering* – Utilization of the ressources



*Recommendations from the interview partners*

Replace old by new formula

„Modern sexual response“

Innovative approaches of monks working with youths

Ideological shaded picture of HIV/AIDS must be corrected

Potentials of own culture must be used

More intensive cooperation of religions and institutions of civil society

Absolute priority for empathic education

Knowledge about HIV/AIDS replaces angst with acceptance

Critical view of own behavior produces „health seeking behaviour“.

# Thank you



*"AIDS and Buddhism" from Carsten Klöpfer*