Socially Engaged Buddhism and the "Just War": A Contradiction in Terms?

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In an article provocatively titled, "Engaged Buddhism: A Skelton in the Closet?," Brian Victoria presents a challenge to dominant notions that the movement known as "socially engaged Buddhism" is inherently a tradition of peace and nonviolence.[1] He contends that there is a sense in which the participation of the Japanese Buddhist establishment in promulgating the jingoistic rhetoric that was used to help justify Japan's militant expansionism during the first half of the 20th century – rhetoric couched in the language of the need to defend Buddhism against its enemies and spread "true" Buddhism across Asia for the supposed benefit of all – might be viewed as a form of "engaged Buddhism." He contends that although engaged Buddhism is usually portrayed as being a peaceful, gentle movement that seeks social uplift through nonviolent means, there is a compelling sense in which the active support of nationalistic militarism constitutes a variety of "engagement" with the socio-political sphere that might plausibly be characterized as what he refers to as "Engaged in Combat Buddhism."[2] It is worth noting that although Victoria uses specific examples from Japan to make his case, he directs his critique at socially engaged Buddhism in general, and not just its Japanese instantiation.

He argues that engaged Buddhism's "skeleton in the closet" is nationalism, a sentiment which cannot be neatly divided out from other, more quintessentially "Buddhist" motivations for engagement with the socio-political world, and he asserts that "who but the most naive will believe that Engaged Buddhism is the sole exception to the ongoing reality that national self-interest readily turns religions, all religions, into its willing and obedient servants, ever ready to condone state-sanctioned killing when called upon to do so?"[3]

It is clear that in making this argument, Victoria is being deliberately provocative, using polemical language to challenge self-described "engaged Buddhists," whom he sees as painting an overly rosy portrait of their own movement. But the question remains: does he have a point? Can there be such a thing as a variety of socially engaged Buddhism in which "social engagement" takes the form of rhetoric in support of violent action? More broadly, can the socially engaged Buddhist movement embrace the concept of necessary violence (or the "just war") as a valid expression of the tradition, or is nonviolence a *sine qua non* without which no form of social activism can be viewed as "socially engaged Buddhism?" The answers to these questions have deep ramifications for what socially engaged Buddhism essentially is. Most definitions of "engaged Buddhism" seem to agree that the distinctive characteristic of the tradition is that it involves some form of "engagement" with the world of the here-and-now, but what does this "engagement" really mean? Is any sort of "engagement" with the socio-political

sphere that is expressed in the idiom of Buddhism – by definition – socially engaged Buddhism, or are there only certain types of engagement – and certain underlying motivational factors – that can be viewed as "valid?"

This essay will begin by examining cases in which the expedient use of violence has been endorsed by Theravada Buddhists (particularly Thai Theravada Buddhists) as a means of promoting a greater good using specifically Buddhist "just war" rhetoric. The discussion will then turn to the issue of looking at how we might go about determining just how authentically "Buddhist" this just war rhetoric is, and whether or not this is even a question that scholars who endeavor to offer objective analyses are in a position to address. Finally, this essay will take up the question of whether or not – as Victoria has argued – these "militant" expressions of the Buddhist tradition can (or should) be classified under the heading of "socially engaged Buddhism." In the final analysis, due to the absence of a clear and widely agreed-upon definition of "engaged Buddhism," the line separating "valid" from "invalid" forms of Buddhist "social engagement" would seem to reside in the eye of the beholder. It will be shown that the general issue of whether or not a Buddhist "just war" could be considered a "legitimate" variety of socially engaged Buddhism is not a question that objective scholarship (conducted by individuals external to the interpretive community of socially engaged Buddhists) is in a strong position to authoritatively answer, as it relates to privileged questions of the nature of religious authenticity. Furthermore, this essay will argue that although there are some exceptions, self-identified socially engaged Buddhists in Thailand have tended to define the parameters of their own tradition in such a way that the promulgation of a "just war" has been definitionally excluded from being a valid form of social "engagement."

Buddhism as a "Tradition of Peace"

It is not uncommon to encounter some variation on the claim that "Buddhism is a religion of peace and nonviolence." In and of itself, there is nothing terribly remarkable (or distinctly *Buddhist*) about this claim, as the sacred texts and charismatic leaders of numerous religious traditions often prominently employ the rhetoric of peace, and commit themselves to the ideal of nonviolence in some sense. However, as Christopher Queen has observed, the Buddhist tradition often enjoys particularly widespread praise for "its peace teachings and the exceptional record of nonviolence in Buddhist societies over 2,500 years."[4] This purported record of nonviolence – along with the emphasis that the Buddhist *sila* (moral code) places on not harming living beings – has led figures such as prominent Sri Lankan Buddhist intellectual K.N. Jayatilleke to argue that, "it is the proud boast of Buddhism that not a drop of blood has been shed in propagating its message and no wars have been fought for the cause of Buddhism or the Buddha."[5] Jayatilleke bases this assertion not only on his particular reading of the historical record, but also on an underlying claim that the ideals of *ahimsa* (nonviolence) and *metta* (compassionate loving-kindness) form the basis for the moral governance of human interaction among Buddhists, and thus comprise the building blocks around which Buddhist social ethics are built.[6]

Notwithstanding the assertions of Jayatilleke (and those who would make similar arguments), any claim that the Buddhist code of personal ethics has always prevented Buddhists from participating in violence and/or warfare is unsupportable by the facts. Moreover, the view that Buddhism holds a special claim to not just "talk the talk of peaceful engagement," but also to "walk the walk of actualizing nonviolence" can be seen to entail an essentialist reading of what the Buddhist tradition actually *is*. Scholars have noted a tendency that exists in the Western world to contrast the ahistorical *ideals* of Buddhism (like compassion and nonviolence) with the historical *practices* of religions such as Christianity and Islam (such as crusades, holy wars, and inquisitions), which has led to the rather bizarre notion that an essentialized Buddhism comprised of texts and doctrines can be validly compared to historically embedded forms of other traditions.[7] In many ways, this construction of a textually-based, "original" Buddhism that is a paragon of peace and nonviolent interpersonal interaction can be viewed as a legacy of the European colonialist project that created a normative picture of Buddhism which privileged text over practice.[8] After recognizing this orientalist construction of the tradition to be the fantasy that it is, it becomes clear that the claim that the Buddhist world has somehow been exempt from historical acts of violent aggression cannot be supported. As Donald Swearer puts it, "while Buddhists may not have tarnished world

history by launching armed crusades to convert 'pagan hordes,' the historical record certainly shows that Buddhists – monks and layman alike – have at times condoned, promoted, and participated in violence."[9] Although the notion that Buddhist tradition has somehow been immune to violence is clearly a myth, the fact remains that there is a seeming discordance between the image that Buddhism projects as being a tradition of peace, and the reality of a historical record in which rhetoric cast in explicitly Buddhist terms has been mobilized in support of acts of violence and/or warfare.

A Buddhist "Just War"?

In June 1976, in the midst of a growing conflict in Thailand between right-wing government aligned forces and left-leaning student activists that would eventually lead to a notorious massacre of student protesters later that year, the prominent Thai Buddhist monk Kittivuddho Bhikkhu declared to a magazine interviewer that, "to kill a communist is not demeritorious." He went on to explain that "while any killing is demeritorious, the demerit is very little and the merit very great for such an act which serves to preserve the nation, the religion, and the monarchy. 'It is just like,' he said, 'when we kill a fish to make a stew to place in the alms bowl for a monk. There is certainly demerit in killing the fish, but we place it in the alms bowl of a monk and gain much greater merit.'"[10] By using this kind of language, Kittivuddho implied that not only would the taking of human life be excusable under certain circumstances, but – in fact – there are some causes that are actually worth *killing* for.

Not surprisingly, Kittivuddho's remarks caused an uproar in Thailand, as numerous Thai Buddhists came forward to critique him for promulgating what they saw as an illegitimate distortion of the true Buddhist *dhamma* wherein killing could be seen as a religiously sanctioned activity.[11] It is worth noting that Kittivuddho later declared that his comments had been misinterpreted, and that he had meant that the "killing" of "commun*ism*," and not "commun*ists*" themselves, was what he was referring to as a meritorious activity. In this rhetorical move, Kittivuddho sought to extricate himself from the furor that his pronouncement caused by shifting the focus of his comments away from the destruction of what he saw as *harmful people* and toward the destruction of a *harmful ideology*. However, as Peter Harvey has noted, it is difficult to accept this revisionist interpretation of his remarks at face value when they are placed alongside other – less publicized – speeches of Kittivuddho's wherein he makes remarks to the effect that killing 5,000 people [socialist sympathizers] to ensure the happiness of 42 million Thai people was a legitimate act that would not lead to negative karmic consequences, that Thais who kill communists would acquire great karmic merit, and that he, himself, would consider disrobing from the monkhood in order to kill the "enemies" of the nation, the monarchy, and the Buddhist religion.[12]

In the refracting light of the horrific acts of violence committed against Thai leftist-sympathizers in October of 1976 that Kittivuddho's comments eerily prefigured, it may be tempting to view his rhetoric as little more than unreasoned, cold-hearted violence-mongering. However, to do so would not be fair to the true motivations lying behind his comments, a sympathetic gloss of which might (arguably) be supposed to include a genuine desire to preserve the Thai nation and Thai Buddhism from harm. One potentially fruitful interpretive lens to be used in seeking to understand Kittivuddho's rhetoric involves viewing it in terms of constituting a variation on just war discourse. In its most basic form, just war theory represents a method of reconciling the ethical ideal not to cause harm through acts of violence (an ethical directive prominent in many religious traditions) with the competing ethical claim that sometimes an equal or greater amount of good can be attained through the expedient use of violence in order to achieve justice or avoid the suffering of the innocent.[13] Just war discourse thus provides what ethicist Ralph Potter calls "a framework within which two polar claims may be acknowledged through compromise."[14]

There is a way in which the comments of a figure like Kittivuddho can be interpreted as an effort to articulate something like a just war doctrine, which would be something like this: although the personal code of ethics of the Theravada tradition explicitly forbids the willful killing of human beings, a "greater good" must sometimes be served which takes the form of preserving society in general, and the Buddhist religion in particular. According to Kittivuddho's line of thinking, in the 1970's communism represented an existential threat to the Buddhist tradition, which he held to be inherently worth defending (using violence, if necessary) because it forms the essential core of Thai

national identity. The destruction of this identity would in some sense signal the end of genuine Thai civilization. As Keyes puts it, "Kittivuddho calls people to fight for Buddhism because to be Thai is to be Buddhist. Threats to the nation and religion are perceived, thus, as threats to personal identity."[15] Thus, although the validity of the type of "justice" that Kittivuddho seeks to actualize may be found to be suspect on moral grounds, his comments nonetheless represent a movement in the direction of just war-type thinking.

Although Kittivuddho is a particularly vivid example of the Buddhist deployment of just war discourse, he is hardly an isolated case within the Theravada tradition. Tessa Bartholomeusz has argued that the paradigm of the just war can be usefully employed with regard to the case of the contemporary conflict between Sinhala Buddhists and Tamil Hindus in Sri Lanka. Although the causes for the civil war in Sri Lanka and the reasons given to justify violent action there are multifarious, and can hardly be reduced to any single cause or principle, at least one strand of Sinhalese chauvinistic nationalism in Sri Lanka has tended to paint the conflict there in religious terms, as a struggle between Buddhists and non-Buddhists for control of Sri Lanka.[16] The textual source most often appealed to in this regard is the *Mahavamsa*, the post-canonical Pali Buddhist text that chronicles the coming of Buddhism to Sri Lanka and the establishment of what it characterizes as a righteous home for true Buddhism on the island.

In the *Mahavamsa*, King Dutugemunu is portrayed as playing the role of the traditional Buddhist monarch by striving to achieve peace and nonviolence in his land. However, in order to achieve this peace and allow the Buddhist religion to flourish, he first decides that he must eliminate the Tamils who share the island with his people and represent something of an existential threat to the establishment and success of his Buddhist kingdom. Thus, in his capacity as the defender of the dharma, Dutugemunu leads his forces into battle against his enemies and slays scores of Tamils, who are portrayed as sub-human creatures.[17] In this particular instance, then, the end of establishing an idyllic environment wherein Sinhalese Buddhism could flourish is portrayed as justifying the *means* of setting aside the Buddhist prohibition not to kill so that Dutugemunu could ride to war and vanquish his enemies. Scholars have shown that the story of Dutugemunu has been appropriated by proponents of modern Sinhalese chauvinistic nationalism and deployed as evidence of a Buddhist justification for the righteousness of using violence as an expedient method of defending the Buddhist religion in Sri Lanka from perceived threats.[18] In the words of Walpola Rahula, a mid-twentieth century Sri Lankan Buddhist monk, intellectual, and nationalist, from the time of Dutugemunu "the patriotism and the religion of the Sinhalese became inseparably linked. The religio-patriotism at that time assumed such overpowering proportions that both *bhikkhus* and laymen considered that even killing people in order to liberate the religion and the country was not a heinous crime."[19]

Returning to the case of Thailand, although the *Mahavamsa* (which is specifically relevant to Sri Lanka because much of its narrative takes place there) has not played a conspicuous role in Thai Buddhist justifications for violence, the general theme of the duty of the righteous Buddhist monarch to defend the Buddhist *dhamma* has been used in this way. Theravada Buddhist canonical and commentarial literature explicates the ideal of the *Dhammaraja* (the righteous king who rules in accordance with the Buddhist dhamma) who is typically characterized as having a *prima facie* duty to uphold the standard of peace and non-violence within his realm.[20] Alongside this commitment to peace, the Buddhist ruler is also charged with actually ruling the polity over which he presides, which – in practice – sometimes involves the use of violent force. Steven Collins notes that in the Pali Theravada textual tradition, "it is always assumed that a king will have enemies, inside and outside his kingdom, and knowing how to destroy them is a kingly virtue...[and] strength in arms is one of the five powers that a king needs...."[21] Moreover, it is worth noting that even the Emperor Asoka, the paradigmatic example of the righteous Buddhist monarch who ruled over Northern India in the 3rd century B.C.E., only declared his intention to embrace nonviolence *after* he had vanquished his enemies through warfare, and even then, he reserved the right to punish and execute flagrant transgressors of his laws in order to maintain social harmony.[22]

Max Weber has observed that part of what it means to be the ruler of state is to be one who "successfully upholds a claim to the *monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force in the enforcement of its order."[23] Thus,

there is sense in which the Buddhist king's role – as head of a state – is to be the arbiter of the boundary that exists between legitimate and illegitimate violence, and to deploy violent force as he deems necessary. As Sallie King has noted, it may be possible for individuals to live by an ethic of Buddhist nonviolence, but "the personal ethic of nonviolence does not translate neatly into a social ethic of nonviolence," particularly when it comes to the ethics of states, which may occasionally need to defend their territories and citizens.[24]

In the Thai case, the clearest example of a king attempting to use his authority as a Buddhist monarch to justify the legitimate use of violent force in the name of the greater good of preserving the Buddhist religion is probably King Vajiravudh (Rama VI), who ruled Siam from 1910 through 1925. Vajiravudh's reign was marked by a rise in levels of Thai nationalism that he himself helped to engender through his linkage of the Thai nation, the Thai monarch, and the Buddhist religion together as triad which formed the heart of an essentialized notion of what it means to be "Thai" (or "Thai-ness"). In the name of preserving the nation and defending it against its foes both foreign and domestic, Vajiravudh advocated expanding the size of the Thai military and instilling what he called the "wild tiger spirit" in the Thai people so that they would be enthusiastically willing to defend the nation.[25]

In and of itself, there is hardly anything remarkable – and certainly nothing specifically "Buddhist" – about this discursive construction of a distinctly Thai variety of nationalism. What is worth noting here, however, is the fact that King Vajiravudh explicitly made use of Buddhist rhetoric, ideas, and literature to advocate the necessity of warfare. In his capacity as a Buddhist monarch charged with protecting the *dhamma* and defending it against harm or annihilation, King Vajiravudh – through a series of speeches, pamphlets, and poetic literature – depicted Thailand as a kind of last, independent bastion of true Theravada Buddhism that must be preserved at all costs, and characterized Thai soldiers as righteous defenders of the Buddhist faith. Then, when Thailand sent forces to participate in the European theatre of warfare during World War I, Vajiravudh painted the necessity of Thai participation in the war as a matter of preserving the Buddhist dharma.[26] He even published his own version/translation of a classical *jataka* story (the Ekadasanipata Jataka, which he subtitled "The War Between Might and Right"), that he claimed lent support to his notion that the Buddha not only did not forbid violence in all contexts, but endorsed it when it was committed in the name of furthering a greater good such as moral righteousness or preservation of the *dhamma*.[27]

To be sure, this was a controversial position to take. Some prominent members of the monastic *sangha* in Thailand explicitly rejected this connection between Buddhism and militarism as being illegitimate, claiming that the overriding Buddhist prohibition not to take human life was clear, and those associated with the kind of mechanized killing that warfare involves were therefore not acting in accordance with the principles of Buddhism.[28] Still others, however, including the Supreme Patriarch of the Thai Buddhist *sangha*, Prince Vajiranavarorasa (who, significantly, was also King Vajiravudh's uncle) spoke out in support of the King's positions, and argued that the Buddha had never explicitly forbid violence in all circumstances.[29] In 1916, the Supreme Patriarch even went so far as to compose a document entitled "The Buddhist Attitude Towards National Defense and Administration" wherein he argued that the establishment of a just political realm is one of the duties of the king, and if participation in warfare to protect the nation against harm becomes necessary, the "Buddhist attitude" is that such a war would be legitimate.[30] Of course, it is not for the outside observer to judge who was "right" in this interchange about the true nature of the Buddha's teachings, but the very fact that this conversation was even going on is indicative of the fact that something like a discussion of the merits of a "Buddhist just war" was taking place, wherein a compromise was being sought between the king's duty to uphold peace and nonviolence while simultaneously fulfilling his traditional role of "protector of the *dhamma*" by sending troops to defend against what some portrayed as an existential threat to "true Buddhism" and Thai society in general.

The discursive construction of justifications for violence cast in Buddhist terms is hardly something that has been strictly confined to Thailand's past. Michael Jerryson reports that during his recent fieldwork exploring the nature of the sometimes violent conflict between Muslim dissidents and agents of the Thai state in southern Thailand, he encountered a phenomenon that he identifies as the emergence of armed "military monks" who live as members of the monastic

community in the Thailand/Malaysia border area, but who also take it upon themselves to defend their *wats* and fellow monks against potential Muslim attackers.[31] According to Jerryson's account, these "military monks" understand themselves to simultaneously fulfill the role of a soldier *as well as* that of a monk, and view it as their duty to ensure – using defensive violence against attackers, if necessary – that the promulgation of the Buddhist religion continues unabated in Southern Thailand and is not extinguished by the threat of violence against monks who preach the *dhamma*.[32] He describes a particular "military monk" informant portraying attacks on Buddhist monks as constituting attacks on the moral integrity of Thailand itself, and likens the moral reasoning of his informants – condoning the use of violence to repel a perceived threat to nation and Buddhist principles – to that which was employed thirty years earlier when Kittivuddho Bhikkhu excused the killing of communists in the name of a greater good. One key difference, however, is that while Kittivuddho merely rationalized "justified" violence enacted by others, these "military monks" are prepared to personally carry out acts of violence themselves.[33]

Can we judge how "Buddhist" these calls to violent action are?

Before moving on to a consideration of whether or not these cases of actions and rhetoric in support of purportedly "justified violence" can be meaningfully characterized as instantiating a form of "socially engaged Buddhism," it is first worth examining whether or not these examples of the promulgation of "Buddhist violence" can be portrayed as being authentically "Buddhist" at all. Returning to Brian Victoria's aforementioned charge that *nationalism* is a "skeleton in the closet" of the engaged Buddhist movement that has been the underlying motivational factor responsible for acts of violence justified in Buddhist terms, it is clear that in each of the cases from Thailand cited above, nationalism undeniably played an important role in justifications for violence.[34] Could it be, then, that the justifications given for violence heretofore laid out are only "Buddhist" in some empty, nominal sense, and that – at heart – nationalism (albeit with a Buddhist component) forms the core of what was referred to above as the "Buddhist just war?" Ultimately, it will here be argued that although one may be able to locate some measure of support for this line of argumentation, formulating judgments concerning how "Buddhist" this rhetorical justification for violence actually *is* does not fall within the domain of the proper role of the scholar.

Trevor Ling provides an important insight when he points out that although it is the case that the *reasons* given for wars and acts of violence are often "couched in ideological or, if you like, religious terms," the actual *causes* for violent conflict are often "to be found mainly in the realm of material interest."[35] Bearing this in mind, one must be cautious not to uncritically accept the *reasons given for conflict* as being identical to the *actual causes of conflict*. For instance, in a critical analysis of the underlying motivations for the intermittent violence between agents of the Thai state and disaffected elements of the Muslim populace of southern Thailand that has escalated since 2004, Duncan McCargo argues that although Islamic militants frequently employ rhetoric to justify violent action that makes reference to Islamic texts and ideas, it would be a mistake to read the conflict in southern Thailand using the simplistic (and over-utilized) interpretive trope of "Islamic violence."[36] He notes that while the language of Islamic *jihad* has certainly found its way into public discourse, this does not make "the Patani conflict a religious conflict. The primary emphasis of the militants is on historical and political grievances, not religious ones. Islam has something to do with it, but the conflict is not about Islam."[37] McCargo ultimately argues that the violent turbulence in southern Thailand is actually a conflict over political legitimacy which is "articulated in the idiom of Islam."[38]

So, could a similar claim be made about the Buddhist "just war" rhetoric laid out above, namely, that these are expressions motivated by a particular variety of Thai nationalism which are merely "articulated in the idiom of Buddhism"? To some extent, yes. Even in cases in which religion is not the underlying *cause* of violence, it does nonetheless provide a set of concepts and symbols that can be influential in determining the form that violence takes and the rhetoric put forth to support it. As Bruce Lincoln has argued, religious discourse can be deployed by members of religious communities in the service of recoding potentially problematic acts (such as violent action) as obligatory religious duties. In this way, action motivated by other, mundane factors can be legitimated by virtue of its

linkage to the "transcendent discourse" of religion.[39] Bearing this in mind, it is not difficult to imagine, for example, that when King Vajiravudh argued for the necessity of preserving a nationalistic "Thai-ness" based on the monarchy/religion/nation triad and advocated defending the true Buddhist faith against its enemies, he was also deliberately engaged in the self-interested project of actively promoting a brand of nationalism that bound the institution of the monarchy (which is to say, himself) closer to the center of Thai national identity at a time in which notions of abolishing the absolute monarchy were beginning to circulate among Thai cultural elites.[40]

However, while it is undeniably important to take note of the multiplicity of factors at play when justifications for violence are couched in religious terms, one must be cautious in making a subsequent move toward identifying these justifications as being not authentically religious. As Ian Reader notes in the context of his analysis of the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo religious movement that carried out a chemical weapons-based attack on the Tokyo subway system in 1995, there is a tendency to treat violent actions by religious groups as somehow indicative of the fact that the group in question is not truly "religious," or at least must not have been acting out of religiously-based motivations. He argues that:

> Such attitudes, however, are based on a narrow and one-dimensional view of religion and on value judgments that are incapable of being academically or intellectually sustained. Religion, I would argue, is an inclusive, value-neutral category that is certainly capable of containing and expressing 'good' elements: it does not, however, necessarily have to contain them, and nor is it limited to them. There is nothing in this inclusive nature which prevents religion from having violent, bad or negative qualities and it is important, in my view, not merely to recognise this point but also to pay attention to the potentially 'bad' qualities of religion if any serious analysis that takes account of its multi-dimensional nature is to be undertaken.[41]

As Reader points out, danger arises when deciding whether or not an action, group, or individual is *genuinely* religious, as it necessarily involves a prior, value-laden construction of what it means to be "religious." More specific to the Buddhist context, Ananda Abeysekara argues that the notion of an inherent contradiction between Buddhism and violence relies on a normative construction of a nonviolent, humanistic (and – as was noted earlier – orientalist-influenced) concept of Buddhism.[42] He continues by stating that those who argue that Buddhism and violence are mutually exclusive fail to take into account the fact that a plethora of diverse discursive conjunctures "render the terms and parameters of what persons, practices, knowledges, and so on can *count* as religion or violence *contingent*[,] and hence unavailable for disciplinary canonization as transparent objects of knowledge."[43]

Having recognized the fluid "contingency" of notions of both "religion" and "violence" that Abeysekara points to, it becomes clear that there is perhaps reason to be suspicious of some comments by prominent Thai studies scholars that imply that monks like Kittivuddho Bhikkhu – who use rhetoric grounded in Buddhist concepts and terminology to advocate the judicious use of violent force – are acting in a manner that is either "Buddhist" only in some qualified sense, or else outright not authentically Buddhist. Charles F. Keyes, for instance, designates Kittivuddho as an exemplar of what he calls "militant Buddhism," which he describes as the "darker side" of Thai civic religion.[44] Peter A. Jackson identifies Kittivuddho's rhetoric and actions as a variety of social activism that threatens what he sees as the proper role of the Buddhist *sangha* in contemporary Thailand, arguing that the involvement of monks in politics is ultimately unsustainable insofar as the ethical legitimacy of monks "is founded upon the notion of worldly renunciation and retreat from the spiritually polluting influence of involvement in lust-driven political conflicts."[45] Thai scholar Somboon Suksamran identifies the actions that Kittivuddho was advocating as a variety of "Buddhist holy war," and argues that the propagation of violence by "political monks" (his term) "runs counter to the Buddhist value [system] in which equanimity, peaceableness, and generosity are highly rated and anger, conflict, violence, and desire for material gain rated low."[46] Furthermore, he continues that the methods advocated by monks like Kittivuddho "are by no means consistent with the teachings of the Buddha."[47] To varying degrees (though particularly in the last case), these value-laden analyses fall victim to a reliance upon a particular hermeneutical interpretation of the "true" nature of the Buddha's teachings that cannot be characterized as

being constitutive of responsible, objective scholarship.[48]

To conclude this section, it important to be wary of claims that Buddhism (or any religion) is the actual, underlying *cause* of various manifestations of human conflict. However, it is equally important not to automatically dismiss rhetorical arguments for entering into situations of violent conflict as being somehow less than authentically Buddhist when these arguments are articulated in the "transcendent discourse" of Buddhism. The language of religious "legitimacy" or "authenticity" does not lie within the proper arena of scholarship, but rather is the domain of religious communities of interpretation.[49] Turning to the socially engaged Buddhist movement, we are now in a position to judge the extent to which this particular "community of Buddhist interpretation" is open to viewing the "just" use of violent force in seeking to resolve human conflict as an authentic expression of engaged Buddhism.

Socially Engaged Buddhism - What constitutes authentic "engagement"?

Among the primary obstacles that one faces when seeking to analyze the movement known as socially engaged Buddhism is the fact that there seems to be little agreement on how its parameters are defined.[50] Kenneth Kraft – among the pioneering scholars in the field of what is now sometimes referred to as "engaged Buddhist studies" – notes that "the subject matter of engaged Buddhist studies is engaged Buddhism, but the meaning of engaged Buddhism is far from settled."[51] Moreover, James Dietrick points out that although there are some ways in which "engaged Buddhism" bears signs of being a cohesive, ecumenical social movement by virtue of the existence of organizations such as the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, there is also a sense in which the term "socially engaged Buddhism" can be seen as "merely a convenient analytical construct that allows scholars to understand similar, though distinct socio-religious stirrings throughout Buddhist Asia and the West that share an interest in it relating Buddhism to contemporary social issues."[52] Further muddying the definitional waters is the contention of Thich Nhat Hanh (who is credited with coining the term) that *all* Buddhism is engaged Buddhism, asserting that "Engaged Buddhism is just Buddhism. If you practice Buddhism in your family, in society, it is engaged Buddhism."[53] Moreover, because this nascent movement lacks a single set of ideological and methodological principles upon which all members of the movement can agree, there is an important sense in which the term "engaged Buddhism" itself represents an unwieldy conceptual category, and it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of socially engaged Buddhists than it is talk about socially engaged Buddhism.[54]

On a practical level, however, most definitions of "socially engaged Buddhism" seem to agree that the distinctive characteristic of the tradition is that it involves some form of "engagement" with the social/ political sphere, but what does this "engagement" really mean? Most often within scholarship on engaged Buddhism, the quintessential "engagement" that is discussed takes the form of efforts to promote phenomena like sustainable community development through education programs, various forms of environmental activism aimed at ecological preservation, and attempts to alleviate human suffering through temple or NGO-based programs of social uplift. A recurrent trope within these efforts is the promotion of the idea that peaceful, *nonviolent* solutions to persistent human problems are preferable. Indeed, active opposition to warfare has been one of the characteristic issues with which engaged Buddhists have involved themselves.

Perhaps as interesting as the controversy over what referent "socially engaged Buddhism" *does* signify is the ambiguity concerning what it *does not* signify. How far can the concept of Buddhist "engagement" with the socio-political sphere be stretched before it is no longer falls within the boundaries of "socially engaged Buddhism?" Might authentic "engagement" include promoting – or even participating in – wars being fought in the name of establishing justice or ensuring the safety of the Buddhist *dhamma*? Kraft poses the question this way: "Can it be that pacifism and just-war reasoning are *equally valid* options for present-day Buddhists? This question deserves more attention than it has yet received." Bearing this in mind, is Brian Victoria correct when he claims that Buddhist militaristic nationalism (that is, his aforementioned conception of "Engaged *In Combat* Buddhism") is a hidden side of socially engaged Buddhism? If so, might a figure like Kittivuddho, whom

Keyes classifies as a "militant Buddhist," just as easily be described as a "socially engaged Buddhist?"

Despite the acknowledged multivocality of the engaged Buddhist tradition, the broad consensus answer to Victoria's challenge would appear to be a rejection of the notion that engaged Buddhism could encompass expedient violence (or a "just war") as a valid method of engagement.[55] For Sulak Sivaraksa, a prominent Thai social activist and self-described socially engaged Buddhist, the ideal of nonviolence (*ahimsa*) forms what he calls "the heart of the Buddha's teaching."[56] However, Sivaraksa is careful to point out that his focus on actualizing the ideal of nonviolence should not be confused with some sort of abject passivity. He argues that just as peace is not necessarily coeval with the absence of war, nonviolence is not simply an absence of violence.[57] Rather, for Sivaraksa, being an "engaged Buddhist" requires the individual to recognize that the root cause of all social ills (such as violent aggression) is ultimately to be found in the Buddhist "three poisons" of greed, anger, and ignorance. Having recognized this, the Buddhist must begin by transforming his/her own inner volitional state so as to minimize the influence of these "three poisons," which will then allow the individual to actively promote the creation of a culture of peace on the social level.[58] For instance, he notes that, "individually, we may not be ready to take on the National Rifle Association or the larger arms industry. However, we can all work on disarming the anger and violence in our own hearts and in our own families during our daily lives."[59] In this way, personal transformation can serve as a gateway into societal transformation.

Although Sivaraksa vigorously supports the active "engagement" of Buddhists in the socio-political sphere (as is evidenced by the enormous number of Buddhist NGOs that he has been personally involved in founding in Thailand), he is careful to delineate that there are certain varieties of "engagement" that he does not endorse. For instance, Sivaraksa argues that Kittivuddho's rhetoric in support of killing communists for the greater good of the Thai nation is unsupportable by the Buddhist tradition. He goes on to state that although several efforts have been made by both Buddhist kings and Buddhist monks to articulate a notion of a Buddhist "holy war," these formulations of a "just war" doctrine are always marred by a lack of Buddhist textual and doctrinal support to back them up.[60] Moreover, aside from the issue of paltry textual support, Sivaraksa is suspicious of just war doctrines on the grounds that they rarely deliver on their promise to maximize "justice" and minimize the suffering of the weak and innocent.

> 'Just war' theory is a slippery slope, and we cannot analyze it without considering social and power relations in any society. 'Just war' can always be used to legitimize the violence of the powerful against the weak...no matter how elegant a theory of 'just war' can be on paper, it is subject to the physical world of human interactions, and as such, it is subject to the influence of Three Poisons of hatred, greed and ignorance.[61]

Thus, although Sivaraksa is not blind to the fact that within the complex world of human relations obviating the need for the judicious use of violent action to achieve certain ends is easier said than done, it is clear that the "just war" is anathema to his formulation of the engaged Buddhist tradition.

From a certain perspective, Sivaraksa's rejection of the general notion of the Buddhist "just war" (and Kittivuddho's rhetoric in particular) as a legitimate expression of socially engaged Buddhism can be seen as roughly analogous to the comments by Thai studies scholars cited earlier that Kittivuddho's rhetoric is an expression of anything ranging from a "dark" form of Buddhism (Keyes), a significant and unsustainable break from the "proper" form of Thai Buddhism (Jackson), and an outright invalid perversion of the Buddha's teachings (Suksamran). However, a key difference resides in the fact that while Keyes, Jackson, and Suksamran are writing as academic scholars for whom normative judgments that presuppose an "authentic" formulation of the Buddhist tradition is inappropriate, Sivaraksa writes as an activist/scholar who is part of the interpretive community of engaged Buddhism.[62] As such, he is justified in making certain kinds of normative judgments about which kinds of actions can or cannot be characterized as "authentically Buddhist" forms of engagement. Thus, when Sivaraksa argues that his formulation of engaged Buddhism simply cannot accommodate a just war theory, and anyone who seeks to articulate one cannot be judged to be a true engaged Buddhist, his opinion must be respected. As is true with any religious tradition, engaged Buddhism must be assessed on its own terms.

However, representatives of the Thai engaged Buddhist tradition do not speak with a single voice on the feasibility of a "just war." For instance, the late, eminent monk Buddhadasa Bhikkhu – a man whom Christopher Queen proposes "may be regarded as the senior philosopher of engaged Buddhism"[63] – articulates a somewhat more open view wherein engaged Buddhism might be seen to have conceptual space available for a "just war."

> No matter what kind of activity we carry out – be it politics, economics, or, indeed, even war – if done morally will maintain the natural, harmonious balance of all things, and will be consistent with the original plan of nature. It is absolutely correct to fight for the preservation of dhamma in the world, but it is wrong to fight for anything other than that. Indeed, we should be happy to sacrifice our lives in fighting to preserve dhamma for the Greater Self, that is, for all humanity.[64]

Admittedly, Buddhadasa's comments here are somewhat vague. He refers to "war" and "fighting," but the passage retains a somewhat aphoristic quality that makes it somewhat unclear whether he is really advancing the possibility of an actual "just war" being fought in the name of preserving the *dhamma*, or merely employing the rhetoric of war as part of an effort to emphasize the importance that the preservation of the *dhamma* plays in his vision for a just society (what he calls, "dhammic socialism"). Nevertheless, as Sallie King notes, although the bulk of Buddhadasa's writings strongly convey the message that nonviolence ought to constitute a basic, normative principle upon which all human interactions should be based, a literal reading of this passage demonstrates that Buddhadasa cannot be portrayed an absolutist when it comes to implementing the Buddhist ideal of *ahimsa*, and his position might best be thought of as advocating what King calls "partial nonviolence."[65]

In some ways, it is striking how closely Buddhadasa's rhetoric here mirrors the Buddhist "just war" discourse described above. In the case of Kittivuddho Bhikkhu, King Vajiravudh (along with Supreme Patriarch Vajiranavarorasa), and the "military monks" in the south of Thailand, each of these figures articulated their reasons for advocating a form of "legitimate" violence in terms of engaging in what Buddhadasa here calls "a fight for the preservation of the *dhamma*." However, it is arguably unlikely that these are the types of conflicts that Buddhadasa had in mind when he envisioned righteous individuals fighting "the good fight" and being willing to sacrifice their lives in the service of preserving the genuine *dhamma*. As Sivaraksa notes, the notion of a just war is a "slippery slope," as much depends on *who* is deciding what a "just" cause for engaging in violent conflict constitutes. Hence, justice becomes a question of interpretive hermeneutics.[66]

Talal Asad has noted that "there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the product of discursive processes."[67] For precisely the reasons that Asad lays out, neither can there be a universal definition of "socially engaged Buddh*ism*" – what one finds instead is a constellation of socially engaged Buddh*ists* who employ their own particular understanding of their tradition and are motivated by a variety of discursive agendas in defining its parameters. Despite the impossibility of arriving at a universally agreed-upon definition of legitimate Buddhist "engagement," however, it is important for socially engaged Buddhists to retain and exercise their right to define the membership of their own "in-group." This is so that, for example, in the hypothetical scenario of a "militant" group of individuals emerging who advocate using the Thai military to aggressively conquer surrounding territories in order to usher in a era of genuine social justice in Southeast Asia and re-invigorate "true" Buddhism across the region, self-described engaged Buddhists would be in a position to claim that "this is *not* a valid expression of socially engaged Buddhism."[68] The ability of religious practitioners to define the parameters of legitimacy vis-à-vis their own tradition is crucial for the survival of any religious tradition, for without it religious traditions can become passive slaves to whatever potentially nefarious agenda "outsiders" seek to foist onto the tradition.

Conclusion

It has here been argued that although Buddhism projects an outward image of being a tradition of peace and nonviolence, formulations of just war principles have been developed in Thailand which paint in specifically Buddhist terms the necessity of committing acts of violence in the service of furthering purportedly righteous causes. There is an important sense in which

this rhetoric justifying the expedient use of violence represents a variety of militant nationalism that is merely "articulated in the idiom of Buddhism." However, to the degree that proponents of "Buddhist violence" are expressing their own understanding of the legitimate application of Buddhist principles to the real world of human relations, it is difficult for outside observers to meaningfully challenge the "legitimacy" of their claims. However, just as claims from scholars external to the Buddhist interpretive community that Buddhist militarism is *not* a legitimate expression of authentic, normative Buddhism must be viewed with extreme suspicion, one must also be wary of any claims by scholarly "outsiders" that the Buddhist "just war" *does* represent an authentic instantiation of socially engaged Buddhism. From the "insider perspective" of socially engaged Buddhists, although thinkers like Buddhadasa seem to leave some conceptual room open for the possibility of fighting for the just cause of preserving the *dhamma*, Thai engaged Buddhists (exemplified by Sivaraksa) tend to employ a stipulative definition of their own tradition that would seem to exclude the possibility of a "just war" constituting an authentic form of Buddhist "engagement."

As a final note, it has here been argued that within scholarship, "socially engaged Buddhism" is perhaps too often portrayed as an analytical category with an expressly positive valuation. As a general principle, it is wise to be wary of the tendency to uncritically refer to Buddhist social movements that the scholarly community approves of – such as efforts to feed and clothe the poor and find peaceful solutions to human conflict – as "socially engaged Buddhism," while varieties of Buddhist social action that scholars don't approve of – such as jingoistic rhetoric in support of questionable wars – are designated as "corrupt" or "inauthentic" forms of Buddhism. In brief, "social engagement" – broadly construed – comes in many forms, and we should not be surprised to learn that when the pure world of texts, doctrines, and principles is translated into the real world of complex human relationships and conflicting agendas, things can get a lot "messier" than we might expect. When dealing with this "messiness," the scholarly community needs to be vigilant in constantly questioning the validity and parameters of its own conceptual categories.

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End Notes

[1] Victoria: 2001.
[2] Ibid., pg. 86.
[3] Ibid., pg. 89.
[4] Queen: 1998, pg. 25.
[5] Jayatilleke: 1983, pg. 4.
[6] Ibid., pg. 1-10.
[7] Chappell: 2006, pg. 63-65. Chappell continues, "Like all human movements, Buddhism also shows that sometimes there develops a discrepancy between self-image and reality." Pg. 65.
[8] See Lopez: 1995.
[9] Swearer: 1992, pg. 63.
[10] Keyes: 1978, pg. 153. Keyes is here quoting an interview with Kittivuddho published in a 1976 edition of *Caturat* magazine.
[11] See Keyes: 1978, pg. 158.
[12] See Harvey: 2000, pg. 261.
[13] It should be noted that the "just war" tradition has its traditional roots in Christian moral discourse, and thus the term necessarily carries with it certain connotations that may or may not be apt in this case. Although Christianity – like Buddhism – contains within it a strong textual tradition that endorses foregoing violence in dealing with one's opponents, the just war tradition arises out of the fact that when faced with the sometimes harsh realities of the complex world of human relations, holding strictly to this ideal may not always be possible. In the Christian case, for instance, the ideal to always "love one's neighbor" would most obviously indicate that the individual ought to avoid bringing harm onto others, which would seem to preclude violence in any form. However, there is a second moral claim involved here, which is exemplified by the fact that a logical extension of the love of one's neighbor might be the protection of the innocent from harm. Ethicist Paul Ramsay cogently illustrates how these two ideals might potentially come into conflict by slightly altering the Biblical story of the Good Samaritan. Instead of the canonical version, wherein a virtuous man stops along the road to Jericho to help out a stranger who has fallen victim to a band of outlaws and thereby demonstrates the ideal of Christian charitable love, Ramsay imagines how the story might have been different if the protagonist had not come along *after* the attack was over, but rather had interrupted the bandits as they were in the midst of assaulting the man. In this case, would the demands of Christian love and charity require the protagonist of the story to try to stop the assailants and help the innocent man, even if it meant committing an act of violence? Or, would the ideal of expressing Christian love by remaining nonviolent take precedence? The just war tradition attempts to provide a framework within which ethical dilemmas such as this can be worked out. See: Ramsay: 2002, pg. 142-143.
[14] Potter, 1973, pg. 54. Also, it is important to note that for the purposes of the present discussion the term "just war" is being employed in a rather loose sense, and thus is not strictly referring to discourse related to the establishment of formal *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* criteria.
[15] Keyes: 1978, pg. 161.
[16] Bartholomeusz: 2002.
[17] As Gottlieb and Jenkins note, the portrayal of the ethnic "other" as subhuman is a recurrent trope used in the justification of violence across time and space. See Gottlieb and Jenkins: 2007, esp. pg. 308.
[18] Bartholomeusz: 2002, pg. 11-14. For further reflections on the feasibility of the application of just war theory to the Sri Lankan civil war, see: Harris: 2003.

[19] Rahula: 1974, pg. 21.
[20] Thai Buddhist social activist Sulak Sivaraksa – who, as will be shown, has a particular construction of the proper Buddhist attitude vis-a-vis violence that he wishes to promote – puts it this way: "Early Buddhist political thought envisioned an ideal ruler, a world-conquering monarch who subdued the earth through righteousness rather than war... [and] a direct link was made between a ruler's ethical standards and peace in the world. Not only did the ideal king prevent poverty and injustice domestically; his reign was also the model of a just and nonviolent transnational order." Sivaraksa: 1992a, pg. 129.
[21] Collins: 1998, pg. 454. Along similar lines, Ian Harris notes that one of the consequences of the "two wheels of *dhamma*" theory that separates the ideal of the world-conquering monarch from the world-renouncing ascetic is that "war is placed within the king's own sphere of authority." Harris: 1999, pg. 5. For further analysis of the Theravada Buddhist account of kingship and the influence of this formulation in Thailand, see: Tambiah: 1977.
[22] See Nikam and McKeon: 1959, pg. 18-19, 28-29.
[23] Weber: 1947, pg. 154. Veena Das and Deborah Poole provide an insightful account of Weber's notion of the state when they note that his conception is based, in part, on the notion that "the state is imagined as an always incomplete project that must constantly be spoken of – and imagined – through the invocation of the wildness, lawlessness, and savagery that only lies outside its jurisdiction but also threatens it from within." Das and Poole: 2004, pg. 7.
[24] King: 2005, pg. 198-199. One is also reminded here of Reinhold Niebuhr's argument that the difference between the "ethics" of human individuals and the "politics" of social groups is that while selflessness and principled nonviolence may be a feasible ethical ideal for individuals, the highest moral ideal for social groups (such as states) is "justice," even if that means that societies may be "forced to use means, such as self-assertion, resistance, coercion and perhaps resentment, which cannot gain the sanction of the most sensitive moral spirit." Niebuhr: 2001, pg. 257.
[25] See Vella: 1978, pg. 33.
[26] Ibid., pg. 221-223.
[27] Vajiravudh: 1999.
[28] Vella: 1978, pg. 223-224.
[29] See Ling: 1979, pg. 136-137; Reynolds: 1979, pg. xlviii-xlix.
[30] Vajiranavarorasa: 1916, esp. pg. 15-21. The Supreme Patriarch's pragmatic acceptance of the necessity of maintaining a strong military is also hinted at in a textbook that he composed for the moral edification of Thai school children. In this text, he affirms the critical importance of individuals maintaining the Buddhist "first precept" (which forbids the taking of human life) as a necessary condition for promoting a righteous, harmonious society, but nonetheless notes that an armed police force and military (presumably authorized to use deadly force) are required to defend the country against internal and external threats, "thereby enabling people with other responsibilities to perform their work peacefully." Vajiranavarorasa: 1975, pg. 2, 37.
[31] Jerryson: 2009.
[32] The interesting issue of whether or not these "military monks" are – in the final analysis – *real* monks, or simply soldiers masquerading as monks, is not something that Jerryson takes a firm position on. However, he does report that although his "military monk" informants do sometimes employ the language of being "disguised" as monks to describe themselves, at other times they assert that they are not just acting, but rather are "real monks." Ibid., pg. 51.
[33] Ibid., pg. 52.
[34] To review, these were: Kittivuddho's portrayal of communism as a clear and present danger to the heart of the Thai Buddhist national identity, King Vajiravudh's argument that Thailand was a bastion of "true Buddhism" that must be actively defended, and the self-image promoted by southern Thai "military monks" wherein they constitute a last line of defense against attacks on the Buddhist moral character of the Kingdom of Thailand.
[35] Ling: 1979, pg. 140.
[36] McCargo: 2008, pg. ix-x.
[37] Ibid., pg. 188.
[38] Ibid., pg. 12. McCargo is here quoting Sidel: 2006, pg. 217.
[39] Lincoln: 2006, pg. 5-6, 94.
[40] See Keyes: 1987, pg. 59-61.
[41] Reader: 2000, pg. 29.
[42] Abeyesekara: 2001, pg. 6.
[43] Ibid., pg. 8. Italics added. Abeysekara makes an important point here when he notes that not only must one be careful not to employ an overly static, arbitrary definition of "religion," but one must be cautious about taking the meaning of the term "violence" for granted as stable and self-evident as well.

[44] Keyes: 1978, 160. Keyes here makes use of Frank Reynolds formulation of Thai "civic religion." See Reynolds: 1978, esp. pg. 135.
[45] Jackson: 1989, pg. 152.
[46] Suksamran: 1982, pg. 156, 164.
[47] Ibid., pg. 164.
[48] To be clear, this is not to say that there is anything inherently wrong with formulating schematic categories such as "militant Buddhism" that may serve as heuristic devices to be used in the service of helping to understand Thai Buddhism as a social phenomenon. The problem only comes when this kind of conceptual category becomes hypostasized into a phenomenon that distinctly stands out over and against a normative construction of "authentic" Buddhism. One is reminded here of Stanley Tambiah's controversial comment – appearing in *Buddhism Betrayed*, his book concerning the intersection of religion, politics, and violence in the Sri Lankan civil war – that "the monk who has finally taken to the gun can no longer be considered a vehicle of the Buddha's religion." Tambiah: 1992, pg. 99. Juliane Schober notes that while Tambiah is able to supply sound textual support and compelling ethical arguments supporting this position, it is nonetheless ultimately an argument based on the construction of a particular notion of an "authentic" Buddhism. "Authenticity," she rightly notes, "is not defined by religious text and academic interpretation, but by the creed of communities that espouse such religious practice or belief." Schober: 2007, pg. 62-63.
[49] It must quickly be acknowledged here that the line between an "outside scholar" and a member of a "community of interpretation" is sometimes quite porous. In Somboon Suksamran's case, for example, because he is, himself, Thai (though his particular religious identity is not made explicit in the text), it might be feasible to posit that he may be seeking to engage in something akin to what H.L Seneviratne calls "liberation anthropology," wherein the scholar does not shy away from making certain value-judgments about his/her own cultural context in the interest of furthering a greater good (see Seneviratne: 1999, pg. 6). If this is the case, it may render Suksamran's comments here somewhat more defensible. However, if this is what he is attempting to do, he does not make it clear in the text.
[50] To some extent, the hand-wringing over how to properly define the term "engaged Buddhism" can be attributed to a fashionably modern deconstructionist suspicion of establishing fixed, hypostasized definitions for abstract nouns.
[51] Kraft: 2000, pg. 486.
[52] Dietrick: 2003, pg. 252-253.
[53] Quoted in Kraft: 1992, 18. See also: Hunt-Perry and Fine: 2000, esp. pg. 36. It is important to note here that Thich Nhat Hanh's comments need not necessarily be interpreted as an explicit attempt to define the parameters of "engaged Buddhism" so much as they are part and parcel of an argument against conceptualizing a "non-engaged," *other* Buddhism against which a distinctly "engaged" variety of Buddhism is to be contrasted.
[54] Although the movement is here described as "nascent," the extent to which socially engaged Buddhism represents a "new" phenomenon is a highly controversial issue. For more on this, see Yarnall: 2005.
[55] It is worthy of note that some self-described socially-engaged Buddhists even go so far as to offer definitions of their own tradition that specifically stipulate that engaged Buddhism is inherently nonviolent. For instance, Ken Jones states that "at its broadest definition socially engaged Buddhism extends across public engagement in caring and service, social and environmental protest and analysis, *nonviolence as a creative way of overcoming conflict*, and 'right livelihood' and similar initiatives toward a socially just and ecologically sustainable society" (italics added). Jones: 2003, pg. 173.
[56] Sivaraksa: 1988, pg. 197.
[57] Sivaraksa: 2004, pg. 55-56.
[58] Ibid., pg. 56-57.
[59] Ibid., pg. 57.
[60] Sivaraksa: 1992b, pg. 80-81. Sivaraksa does not explicitly use Kittivuddho's name in this passage. However, his reference to "a notorious Thai Buddhist monk [who] told the Bangkok press that 'it is not sinful to kill a communist'" is clearly an allusion to Kittivuddho.
[61] Sivaraksa: 2005, pg. 40.
[62] To be clear, it is not here being argued that it is somehow inappropriate for scholars to critically assess religious phenomena with an eye toward checking for logical consistency and evaluating the extent to which discourses and practices are consistent with the rest of the tradition. What *is* being argued here, however, is that assessments couched in the language of "legitimacy" and "authenticity" lie beyond the purview of objective scholarship.
[63] Queen: 1996, pg. 3.
[64] Buddhadasa: 1986, pg. 119-120.
[65] King: 2005, pg. 185.

[66] Moreover, in accordance with the Trevor Ling's critical distinction between *causes* and *reasons* noted above, although the *reasons* deployed in arguments for the legitimate use of force may be cast in terms of the necessity of "preserving the *dhamma*," there is no guarantee that these reasons will reflect the true *causes* that motivate individuals to engage in violent conflict.
[67] Asad: 1993, pg. 29.
[68] Of course, this hypothetical situation would become a good deal more complicated if the aforementioned group of militant individuals understood *themselves* to belong to the tradition of socially engaged Buddhism.