Obituary & Brief Biography:
The Most Venerable Phong Samaleuk (Piyadhiro Bhikkhu)

Venerable Sayadej Ekaggacitto
Wat Ongtue, Vientiane, Laos
Revised & Edited by Dr. Dion Peoples

Venerable Phong Samaleuk (Piyadhiro) was born on 10 April 1916, in the Year of Dragon at Baan Kungnoi Village, Unit No. 6, Kusakorn Sub-district, Takarn Pheoutphon District (Khulu), Ubon Ratchathani, in Thailand. His house was near the village-temple, Wat Bhurirat. He was the sixth child to his father Siha and mother Vanna who had nine children (five sons and four daughters). At the age of ten, he entered into primary education at the Kusakorn sub-district school (at that time, there was only Pathom 3). He finished the third-grade of primary school when he was 14 years old, then he moved to Phonthong District, Champasak Province, Laos. When he was 15 years old, he went back to his hometown, Baan Kungnoi, to become a novice. He remained as a novice for 1 year and 3 months, then disrobed due to his poor health condition, and after recovering, he went back to Phonthong District, Champasak Province, in Laos.

At the age of 20, he again moved back to his hometown in Thailand and took his higher ordination as a Bhikkhu at Wat Phosy on 1 October 1936. His preceptor was Venerable Rith (famous for his healing holy-water), Venerable Xou, Venerable Suan, and Venerable Phoun as Kamavācāriya, the act-announcing master; altogether forty-one monks participated his ordination ceremony. When he was newly ordained, he lived at Wat Siphonthong, Baan Kusakorn village for six months. Later, on 8 April 1937, he moved to Bangkok for his further education. He passed the highest Dhamma studies and earned Pāli Grade Six (VI) from Wat Chanasongkram, Bangkok, Thailand. He had taught Pāli at Wat Chanasongkram, Bangkok, Thailand, for eight years. He joined the revolutionary movement in 1946 with Chao Phetsaraj in Thailand and Laos and during this time, he met and was adopted as a son of Uncle Ho Chi Minh. There, he lived in Wat Chanasongkram until 1952, for almost 16 years.
In 1952, he moved to Laos and had taught at Pakse Sangha High School for 3 years. He fully attended four courses on the political theories of Marxism and Leninism, in Laos. In 1955, he moved to Vat Ongtue, Vientiane and taught at the Pâji Institute, in Vientiane. At the same time, he was working for the political movement both locally and outside the country.

In 1957, he went back to Champasak province and was appointed as the Ecclesiastical Governor of Phonthong District. From 1957 to 1970, he had been an Ecclesiastical governor of Phonthong District, Champasak province, Laos. Throughout the many years, he would construct some primary schools, high schools for children in his adopted hometown, Phonthong District of Champasak Province. He has led the construction of two forest temples, Wat Pa Phousamli, Wat Thamprachaokhok, at Phonthong district, Champasak province. He led and supervised the construction of Phonthong High School in which he also led the construction the building of Kindergarten School in the same this high school.

From 1970 to 1975, he was elected as the Ecclesiastical Governor of Champasak Province, and following some political change in 1975, he was again appointed as Ecclesiastical Governor of Champasak Province. In 1975, he joined the revolutionary movement to liberate Champasak Province. After that, he was invited to Vientiane to form a temporary government and went back to Champasak province, to mobilize and unite Buddhist monks. In 1976, he paid a religiously courtesy visit to the Soviet Union. In 1976, he went to Vientiane, to attend to the General Conference of Buddhist monks. The conference unanimously dismantled the old administrative system and formed the new one. According to the party and state’s policy in compliance with Buddhist teachings, the Buddhist monks from three southern provinces: Xedone, Siphandone, and Champasak, assembled together to have an intensive training course for twenty-one days at Vat Luang Pakse, to educate and analyze the formerly injustice regime which caused the conflicts among Buddhist monks, and to see the light of new governmental regime. The former political structure was absolutely dismantled and the new structure was established; the Buddhist sects of Dhammmayutta Nikâya and Maha Nikâya were dissolved and united into one: the “Lao Buddhist Sangha”, practicing only the Theravada tradition.

He was appointed as the Vice-President of the Lao Buddhist Fellowship Organization. In 1977, he leaded the team to work for social and rural development in three provinces: Khammuan, Saravan, and Savannakhet for five months. From 1976 to 1996, he was invited to Vientiane, appointed as standing committee of Lao Buddhist Fellowship Organization (LBFO), and was elected as the Vice-President, responsible for Political Affairs, the Head of Buddhist Philosophy Research, the head of the executive committee of That Luang Stupa restoration since 1979, and was responsible for the national sangha education and served as the director of the Sangha Teacher Training College (now Sangha College), Vat Ongtue, Vientiane. He was the vice-president of LBFO for four consecutive years.

1 https://www.facebook.com/%E0%BA%A7%E0%BA%B1%E0%BA%94%E0%B0%AD%E0%BA%BB%E0%BA%B7%E0%BA%95%E0%BA%B7%E0%BB%89%E0%BA%A1%E0%BA%B0%E0%BA%AB%E0%BA%B2%E0%BA%A3-160653184071832/photos/
sessions after the nation gained independence. In 1979, he attended the conference in Mongolia.


In 1997 until 2013, he has been continuously leading the renovation, restoration and construction of Wat Ongtue. He was an Ecclesiastical title “Aggamaḥāsaddhama Jotikadhaja” by the Government of Myanmar in 2001. In 2009, he factored into the Buddhism for Development Project.²

He was conferred an Honorary Doctorate Degree in Educational Administration by the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Bangkok, Thailand in 2010. In 2010, he was invited to participate the 6th International Tipitaka Chanting in Bodhgaya, India. In 17 January 2011, he was elected as the President of LBFO. In 2011, he was invited by Asoka Mission³ to participate the International Buddhist Conclave in Delhi, India and at the same time he was invited to participate the 7th International Tipitaka Chanting at Bodhgaya.

In 2011, participated the International Conference on Buddhist Culture, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.⁴ He was conferred the W.B.S.C for World Peace Medal by the President of Sri Lanka in 2012. In 2012, participated the World Buddhist Sangha Council, to celebrate the 2600th Anniversary of Buddha’s Enlightenment, Colombo, Sri Lanka. In 2013, participated the International Conference on Asian Zen: Seminar on Meditation and Zen, Hong Kong.

In 2013, he went to propagate the Sangha and political policy to the General Sangha Conference in Borkeo Province, northern Laos. In 2013, he was conferred an Honorary Doctorate Degree in Buddhist Studies by Mahamakut Buddhist University, Salaya Campus.

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² Source: screen-shot from http://www.laobdp.org
³ http://www.asokamission.com/app/global-buddhist-congregation
Thailand. Venerable Dr. Phramaha Phong attended the 260th Anniversary of the Siam-Nikäya, in Sri Lanka, during the SIBA General Convocation in August 2013, and photos of the event are preserved on the Wat Ongtue Mahavihara Facebook page:

In 2013, he also attended a Buddhist Conference in Vietnam, and was conferred an Honorary Doctorate Degree in Humane Letters from Vietnamese Buddhist University, 5 September 2013. In 2014, he was again invited to participate the 8th International Tipitaka Chanting in Bodhgaya, India. He was also invited to North Jakarta, Indonesia in 2014, where he was met and attended upon by the Director General for Buddhism, and during these activities at the Buddhist Vihara Dharma, Indonesians raised money for building a new kindergarten in Champasak.

Near the end of his life, during 2014-2015 he established a new forest temple, Wat Kao Lup, a forest temple and has a plan to construct the new building of Sangha Secondary School at Wat Sisavangvong, Phonthong district, Champasak Province. This project raised over $50,000 USD.

In January, 2015, participated the World Buddhist Summit in Tokyo, Japan. He was conferred an Honorary Doctorate Degree in Human Resource Management from Pathumthani University, on 7 July 2015. In September 2015, it was his last religious mission to participate the International Conference organized by the Bodhigaya 980 Club and Institute, on “Reuniting Suvarṇabhūmi through Buddhism” in Siam Reap, the Kingdom of Cambodia.

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6 Photo coverage, found here: http://www.giaodiemonline.com/noidung_detail.php?newsid=7831
7 Coverage can be found here: http://www.pusa123.com/pusa/news/dujia/201357529_2.html & here: http://buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=43,11606,0,0,1,0#Vhep1mqq9ke
8 Source: http://www.lotuscomm.net/events/past-events/978-indonesia-visit-of-charismatic-thai-monk
9 Source: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10204106250851105&set=a.3328984678009.108736.1670224505&type=3&theater
10 Photos are available on their Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/Bodhigayavijjalaya980 & news-coverage was also available here: http://www.springnews.co.th/program/news/scoop/238693 and http://m.naewna.com/view/lady/105691
His writings and publication


In his whole life, he worked tirelessly for the Lao nation and the Buddhist religion for the benefits and happiness of the people out of great compassion. After coming back from Cambodia, he was hospitalized at Mahosot Hospital for nearly three weeks with severe intestine cancer and finally he peacefully passed away – leaving grief and sadness upon the Sangha community, the monks and lay devotees. Now, his body has been for the dedication ceremony at Wat Ongtue, Vientiane capital and the cremation ceremony will be announced with three or six months.11, 12

11 Maha Parami Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/326947407496003/photos/pb.326947407496003.-2207520000.1444386433./360672590790151/?type=3&theater
12 Most Ven. Dr. Phramaha Phong, between the 14th Dalai Lama and Ven. Dr. Ashin Nyanissara Thera of Myanmar.