

## **SEANET and RESOURCES for the BUDDHIST WORLD**

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Published in Global Missiology, Spiritual Dynamics, July 2005, [www.globalmissiology.net](http://www.globalmissiology.net)

**OMF and the Buddhist World:** From the early days of Hudson Taylor the CIM, now OMF, has been working primarily among peoples with predominantly Buddhist worldviews. Though some OMFers work with a few Muslim groups or animistic tribes, the majority of populations and peoples that most OMFers serve are either folk Buddhists or those significantly influenced by Buddhism, even among some tribes. Within OMF are some careful researchers and excellent scholars of mission. But most in OMF today are dedicated, hard working practitioners. This article will introduce some resources that may help to enhance vital church multiplying efforts among Buddhist populations in Asia. SEANET is one of those resources available especially to aid practitioners.

**Background of SEANET:** In November 1998 Steve Spaulding, Jim Morris and Alex Smith shared their joint vision for developing a network for reaching the broader spectrum of Buddhists. Plans began to gather national church leaders, missionaries, missiologists, pastors and theologians. With Alan Johnson (AOG Thailand) and others, an initial general gathering of like minds was organized. Sixty delegates from twenty nations were invited; half were indigenous leaders/workers. Thirty-five attended the initial conference.

**Annual Working Conferences:** At that first meeting in Bangkok February 15-18, 1999, this network adopted the name SEANET (South, East, South-East And North Asia Network). Yearly gatherings in Thailand have continued, the latest being SEANET VII held in Chiang Mai in early 2005, with about seventy participants from approximately twenty countries.

**Working Groups:** The three foci of Prayer Mobilization, Training and Research, and Strategy Development became the emphases for the annual participant work-groups (by nations or the major kinds of Buddhism). Each year all participants are required to sign security agreements. A simple loose organizational structure was ratified. A small Steering Group was elected to help organize the events. SEANET also highly encouraged national initiatives to be developed locally.

**Current Steering Group:** Steve Spaulding (USA/Manila - DAWN), David Lim (Philippines-CMI), Kang San Tan (Malaysia - OMF), Liz Adleta (USA - GCNI), Ramesh Sapkota (Nepal - GNCC), Paul DeNeui (Thailand/USA - Covenant Church), Rosalie Rivera (Philippines - DAWN), and Alex Smith (Australia/USA - OMF).

**Theological Forum:** Serious academic reflection on the issues of the Buddhist world led to the holding of an annual Forum where relevant papers could be presented. The Forum aimed to integrate theory, theology, socio-anthropology and grassroots practice. The first Forum, attended by 75 delegates, was held in March 2002 under the capable direction of Dr. David Lim. Each set

of annual Forum papers are published by SEANET. These books are vital since there is comparatively little serious missiological writing on Buddhism available. Key papers have included works by academicians like Johannes Aagaard, David Burnett, Terry Muck, and James Gustafson. Excellent contributions of Asian Christian scholars such as Nanthachai and Ubolwan Mejudhon (Thailand), Michal Vasanthokumar and G. Somaratne (Sri Lanka), Mitsuo Fukuda (Japan), and David Lim (Philippines) have added a crucial contextual flavor. OMFers Kang San Tan, John Davis, Alex Smith, Mark Dominey, Jim Morris, Marten De Visser, and Eunice Burden have presented papers at these fora. A similar Forum on Buddhism is to be held in the USA to stimulate seminaries to consider the urgent needs of the broader Buddhist World, and that of the growing trends of burgeoning Western Buddhism especially.

**Research and Writing:** SEANET encourages efforts to research the Buddhist world - its peoples, the progress of evangelization and case studies on strategy and church planting. If you have a serious contribution to such knowledge, please advise us.

**Regional Emphasis:** From 2005 three regional conferences were projected: 1) Theravada in Thailand, 2) Mahayana in North Asia, 3) Vajrayana (Tibetan) in North India. This will give a stronger focus for meeting specialized needs of workers from each major kind of Buddhism. Motivating, training and mobilizing are important elements for these areas.

**How to be Invited to SEANET Events:** Because of the sensitive peoples that some of the attendees work amongst, SEANET has been security conscious from its inception. Attendance at any of SEANET gatherings is by invitation only, usually by email notices. A number of OMFers from various countries as well as many from other agencies and denominations have attended past events. Practitioners among Buddhist peoples make up the majority of attendees, though some who attend the Forum are focused more on the academic aspects. Most of those attending each Forum stay on for the general gatherings. If you would like to be involved in any of these, please contact Alex Smith or Kang San Tan (for OMFers) or Steve Spaulding and David Lim (for other groups), advising us of your desire, information and email address. Your name will be passed on to the Steering Group for clearance. This also will give you access to the SEANET website.

**Buddhist Peoples Prayer Guides:** Considering the needs of the world's one billion Folk Buddhists, the SEANET prayer work-group launched a Prayer Movement called "Billion Hours" in 2001 (OMF-US already had "One Billion Wait" prayer focus). The year after our first conference, the IMB published *Days of Enlightenment: Prayer for Buddhists*. In 2001, SEANET's initial 15 day Buddhist Prayer Guide by countries, titled *A Billion Wait*, was available "on line", and a revised 36-page booklet was published in early 2002. Copies can still be ordered by e-mail at [mgfd@gmx.net](mailto:mgfd@gmx.net). Several translations of these SEANET prayer guide were made in various languages. SEANET also encouraged and stimulated Paul Hattaway in the production of *Peoples of the Buddhist World: A Christian Prayer Diary* (2004). Other groups have developed prayer guides for specific Buddhist peoples: Tibetans, Dai, and North Vietnam (2002), Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and North Korea (2004).

**Institute of Buddhist Studies:** The training work-groups highlighted the need for Institutes of Buddhist Studies. Lanka Bible School in Sri Lanka held several short courses, including one with

David Burnett. Cooperating with SEANET, Alan Johnson initiated the Asia Pacific Institute of Buddhist Studies in November 2002 in the Philippines. The recent third session of four two-week courses was scheduled for April/ May 2005 with Professors Terry Muck, Alex Smith and Dave Oleson. Each of the professors named above has taught “Buddhism and Christianity” in Seminary Courses in America. For information contact [ibs@apts.edu](mailto:ibs@apts.edu).

**Emphasis on Christward Movements:** At SEANET’s annual conferences training was given on Church Planting/Multiplying Movements (CPM), Saturation Church Planting, House Church Movements, and Family Group Evangelism, as well as Community Development and Micro-Business approaches. Case studies from various Buddhist countries and some “Models of Hope” were presented to stimulate cross-pollination of ideas on strategies. Several associated workers have conducted short-term training workshops in various parts of the Buddhist world. SEANET is willing to help with relevant training.

**Training Workshops for Asian Buddhist Contexts:** Contact direct for availability.

Dr. David Lim: House Church Movements, Tentmakers, Community Development, Micro Business, Strategy: [cmiphil@jmf.org.ph](mailto:cmiphil@jmf.org.ph)

Dr. Alex Smith: Understanding Buddhism (all branches), Folk Buddhism, Beliefs and Worldview, Church Multiplication, Contextualization, Buddhist/ Christian Encounter, Strategy: [asmith@omf.org](mailto:asmith@omf.org)

Stephen Spaulding: Strategy, Saturation Church Planting, Christward Movements : [SteveMSPaulding@cs.com](mailto:SteveMSPaulding@cs.com)

Liz Adleta: Prayer Mobilization and Development, Tibetan/Shamanistic Contexts, CPMs, Micro Business for Church Planters [asianrd@pactec.net](mailto:asianrd@pactec.net)

Dr. Kang San Tan: Christian/ Buddhist Encounter: [ihq-dmr@omf.net](mailto:ihq-dmr@omf.net)

Dr. Paul DeNeui: Indigenous Contextualization, Holistic Development, Theravada Contexts: [pgdeneui@loxinfo.co.th](mailto:pgdeneui@loxinfo.co.th)

Alan Johnson: Cultural Communication, Church Planting: [alan.johnson@agmd.org](mailto:alan.johnson@agmd.org)

**Related Websites:** SEANET has a website: <http://www.seanetwork.org/>. Because of security concerns visitors need to have clearance. A separate open website for registering prayer commitments is <http://www.billionhours.org/>. OMF’s websites also have good information on Buddhist work and opportunities: <http://www.us.omf.org/> and <http://www.onebillionwait.org/>. Jim Stephens’ Sonrise Center for Buddhist Studies in California also has interesting data at: <http://www.sonrisecenter.org/>.

**Audio-Visual Resources (OMF):**

1. Videos - highly recommended: a) Theravada Buddhism, b) Mahayana Buddhism, c) Tibetan Buddhism, d) One Billion Wait - Prayer Challenge.

2. Teacher’s Resource Packet: Buddhism: O/Heads or PPT, VBS Lesson Plans, etc ...

3. Brochure: *One Billion Wait: The Challenge of Buddhism*

4. Buddhism: Full Color Poster – 16” X 24”

5. Book: *Buddhism Through Christian Eyes* – Alex G. Smith

Order all above via OMF National Offices: or in USA 1-800-422-5330 <http://www.us.omf.org/>

### **Books on Specific Buddhist Peoples and Prayer Focus:**

- A Billion Wait...A Prayer Guide for the Buddhist World.* SEANET, Chiangmai, Thailand. 2002. (Available from OMF Mekong Office, Chiang Mai).
- A Prayer A Day for Myanmar.* Source Publishing, Hawthorn, Victoria, Australia. 2004.
- Harvesting Souls through Prayer: A 30-day prayer guide for Cambodia.* Lau Pak Soon, Goh Kailin, Editors, Singapore. 2004.
- Peoples of the Buddhist World: A Christian Prayer Guide,* Paul Hattaway, Editor, Piquant, Carlisle, UK. 2004 (Note: good articles are dispersed throughout)
- Strongholds of Central Tibetans: A 31-day Prayer Guide.* Edited David Plymire, from High Adventure in Tibet, Springfield, MO. Gospel Publishing House. (1959).
- Tearing Down Strongholds: Prayer for Buddhists.* Elizabeth Wagner, CLC, Hong Kong. 1988.
- The Dai of China.* Caleb Project, Littleton, CO. 2002.
- 30 Days of Prayer for Laos.* OMF Mekong, Chiang Mai, Thailand. 2004.
- 31 Days of Prayer North Korea: The Land of Juche.* OMF Int., Singapore. 2003.
- 31 Days Prayer Guide: Praying for North Vietnam's People Groups.* All4Him Ministries. 2002. (Orders email: [motivate@yahoo.com](mailto:motivate@yahoo.com))

### **Some Key General References on Buddhism:**

- Buddhism and The Spirit Cults in Northeast Thailand.* S.J. Tambiah, University Press, Cambridge (Eng). 1970.
- Buddhism in Chinese Culture.* Chew Hock-Tong, Pelanduk Publications, Selangor Daryl Ehsan, Malaysia. 2000.
- Buddhism Through Christian Eyes.* Alex G. Smith, OMF (USA), Littleton CO. 2001.
- Poles Apart? Contextualizing the Gospel.* John R. Davis, Theological Book Trust, Bangalore, India. 1993.
- Sharing Christ in the Tibetan Buddhist World.* Marku Tsering, Tibet Press.1993.
- Sharing Jesus in the Buddhist World.* David Lim and Steve Spaulding, editors, William Carey Library, Pasadena CA. 2003.
- Sharing Jesus Holistically with the Buddhist World.* David Lim and Steve Spaulding, editors, William Carey Library, Pasadena CA. 2005.
- Siamese Gold: The Church in Thailand.* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edit.) Alex G. Smith, Kanok Bannasan (OMF Publishers) Dindaeng, Bangkok, Thailand. 1999.
- Steppe By Step: Mongolia's Christians - from ancient roots to vibrant young church.* Hugh P. Kemp, Monarch Books, Great Britain. 2000.
- "The Christian Response to Buddhism," Alex G. Smith in *Christian Witness in Pluralistic Contexts in the 21st Century*, Enoch Wan, Editor, William Carey Library, Pasadena CA. 2004.
- The Spirit of Buddhism: A Christian Perspective on Buddhist Thought.* David Burnett, Monarch Publications, Crowborough, East Essex. 1996.

**Conclusion and Request:** If you have other resources that you have proved effective in reaching Buddhists, please feel free to write us. If you know of and/or have researched cases of family conversions or situations of community transformation, or dramatic stories of individual converts please write them up and send them to us. We'll share helpful information widely. Send to [asmith@omf.org](mailto:asmith@omf.org) or mail to Q-Plaza P.O. Box #311 (Cainta), 1900 Rizal, PHILIPPINES.

