

“Re-Centering and De-Centering Buddhism in Bangkok”
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In nineteenth and twentieth century Thailand, elite monks, scholars, wealthy patrons, and the royal family have worked to make Bangkok the center of South and Southeast Asian Buddhism. Various editions of the Pali canon, sermons, travel logs, library and museum collections, amulets, chronicles, reliquaries, and more recently, conferences, websites, and monastic universities have contributed to making Bangkok the new center of Theravada Buddhism effecting replacing Mandalay and Kandy. However, over the past ten years there has been a simultaneous “de-centering” of Buddhist practice within Bangkok itself. New technologies (CDs, DVDs, mantra therapy clinics, internet, films, meditation schools, etc.) have accelerated the move of Buddhist practice out from monasteries, reliquaries, palaces, and monastic universities into private homes, automobiles, and buses. This short paper will look at a few examples of these various re-centerings and de-centerings in order to open up a discussion of notions of space in modern Thai Buddhism.