

# Science and Development in Thai and South Asian Buddhism

Becoming a Buddhist monk in Thailand has for a long time provided the opportunity for access to a good education and to social advancement, both to bright, poor rural youths and to members of the urban elite whose youth often become monks for a few months as a rite of passage into adulthood. Moreover, although women are not allowed to become fully fledged monks, recent developments have encouraged a special status akin to nuns for many devout Thai Buddhist women. All this has resulted in large numbers of well-educated, well-motivated Buddhist religious people, keen both to engage in religious contemplation and also determined to contribute to this-worldly social, economic, educational and medical development goals. This book, by a leading authority on the subject, considers the role of Thai Buddhist religious people in development within Thailand. It discusses how Thai Buddhism has evolved philosophically and in its organisation to allow this, examines various examples of Buddhist people's engagement in development projects, and assesses how the situation is likely to unfold going forward. In addition, the book considers the relationship between science and religion in Thai Buddhism and also some aspects of the parallel situation in Sri Lanka.

**David L. Gosling** is a Life Member and former Spalding Fellow of Clare Hall, University of Cambridge. A Chartered Physicist, he was Director of Church and Society at the World Council of Churches in Geneva, and has published extensively on the interface between science and religion in Asia. He is the author of *Religion and Ecology in India and Southeast Asia* and *Science and the Indian Tradition: When Einstein met Tagore* (both Routledge).