

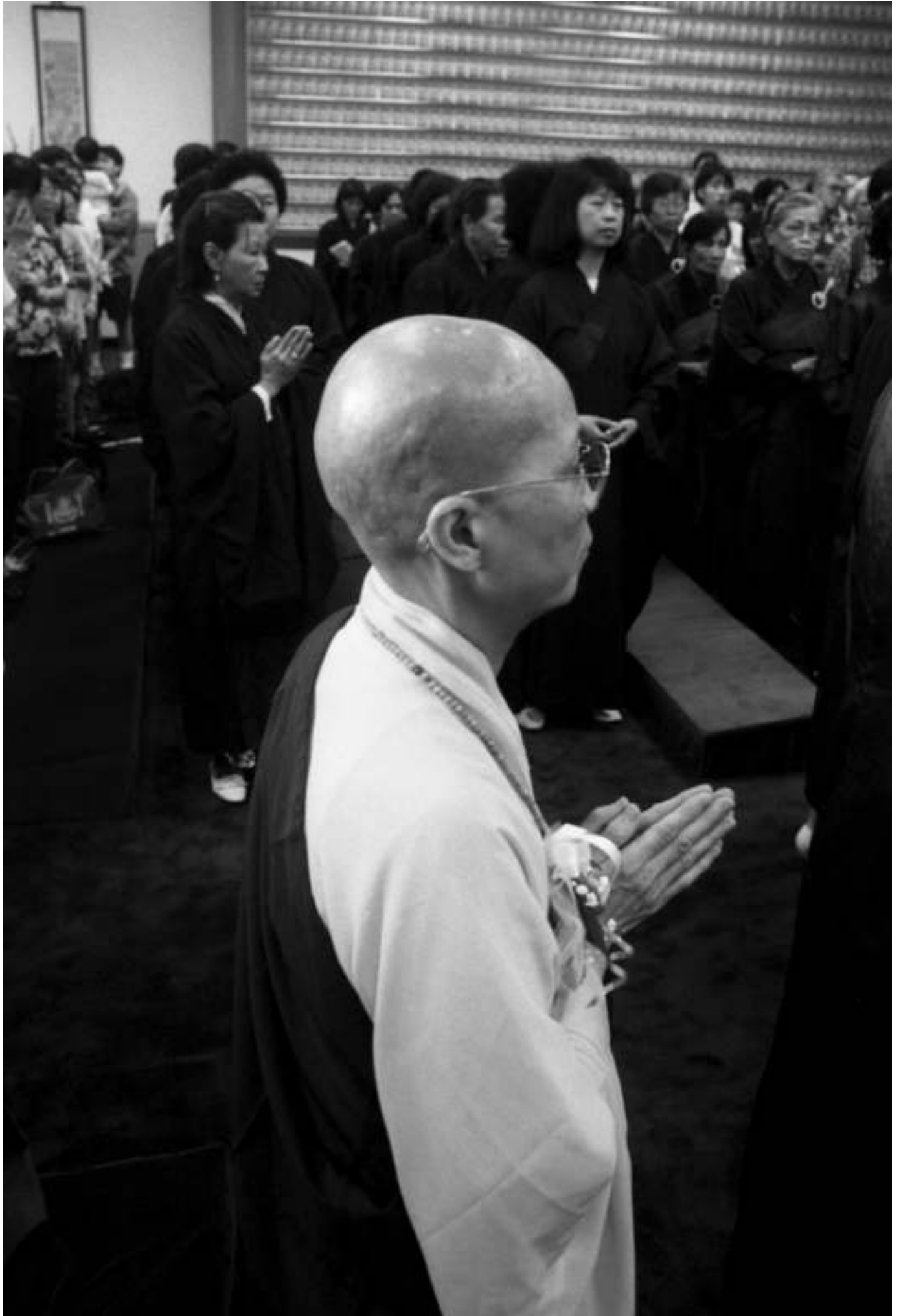
THE JEWEL IN THE LOTUS



R.E.O'Malley

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Four Buddhist Temples



JUST SOUTH OF BOSTON, in the city of Quincy, a group of mostly Chinese women chant Buddhist texts and make offerings of incense at the Thousand Buddha Temple.

Further north, at the Triratanaram Temple in Lowell, Buddhists from the U.S.'s second largest Cambodian community chant sutras and prepare food offerings for temple monks.

In the Roslindale section of Boston, families gather at the Vietnamese Pagoda to chant sutras, hear sermons, and eat lunch together.

With the exception of the Thousand Buddha Temple, these worship sites are not readily identifiable from the outside as Buddhist temples. In previous lives, they served as a day care center, the home of a fraternal organization, and a function hall. Now they have been transformed to serve the spiritual needs of the area's growing Asian immigrant communities.

There are now Chinese, Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese ethnic Buddhist temples, among others, in the Boston area. And while the core principles of Buddhism are shared by Buddhists from around the globe, the practice of each ethnic group is rooted in a specific form of Buddhism.

One of the world's major religions, Buddhism in America attracts Asians who were raised as Buddhists and



Americans who came to it as adults. Buddhists believe that human experience is rooted in suffering and that suffering is caused by desire.

To overcome suffering, a person must abolish desire by following the Buddhist path of self control through right thoughts and right actions.

The Buddhist temples around Boston are associated with either the Mahayana or Hinayana (Theravada) schools of Buddhism — the two primary forms of Buddhism found in Asia.

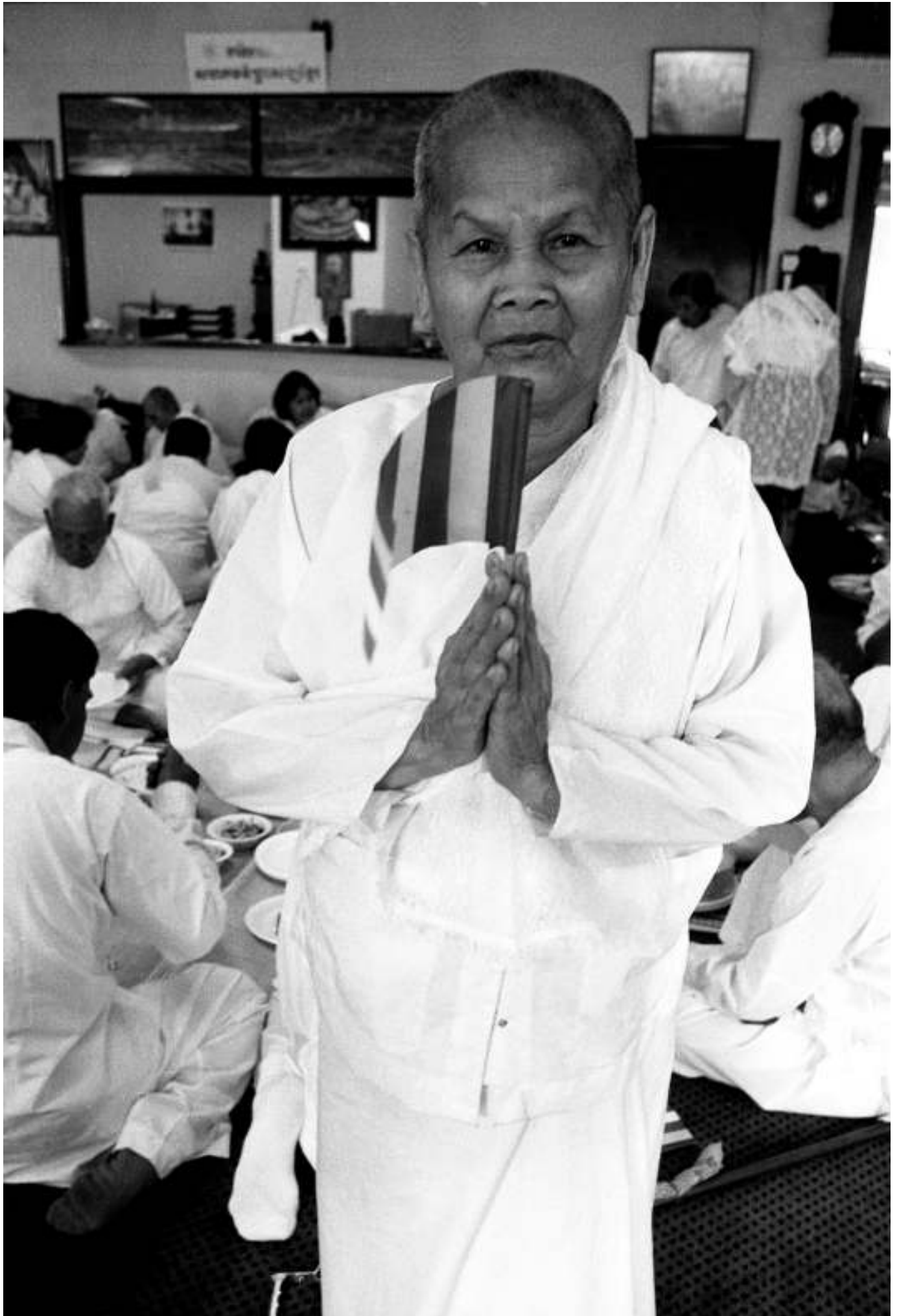
And while the area's Asian Buddhist temples are largely attended by members of the ethnic group that founded them — just as certain Roman Catholic churches in the early 20th century were founded by particular European ethnic groups — each temple also attracts a small number of non-Asian practitioners.

Cultural and language differences encourage immigrants to seek out temples organized by members of their own ethnic groups. In addition to serving as the site of spiritual practices, these temples allow Asian immigrants to come together to share the food, culture, and traditions of their native lands.

In contrast to immigrant Buddhists, native-born Buddhists tend to practice with more diverse groups or with groups emphasizing meditation practice.



The Cambodian Temple



The Tiratanaram Temple

Not far from the Laotian temple in Lowell, the Cambodian Buddhist community gathers at the Tiratanaram Temple.

The Cambodian community converted a former Knights of Columbus hall to build its temple.

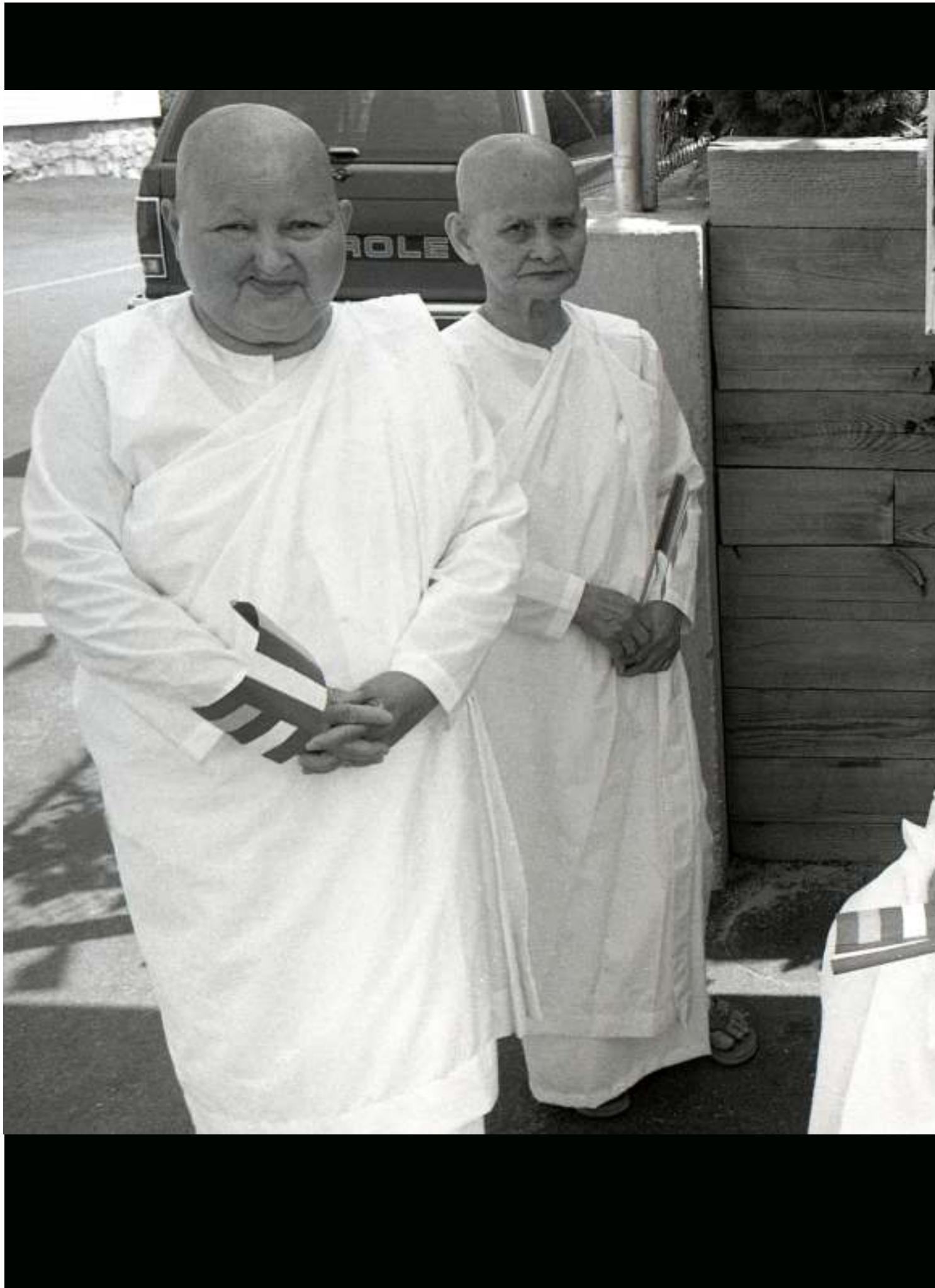
The Buddhism practiced at the Cambodian temple emphasizes the Three Refuges and Five Precepts.

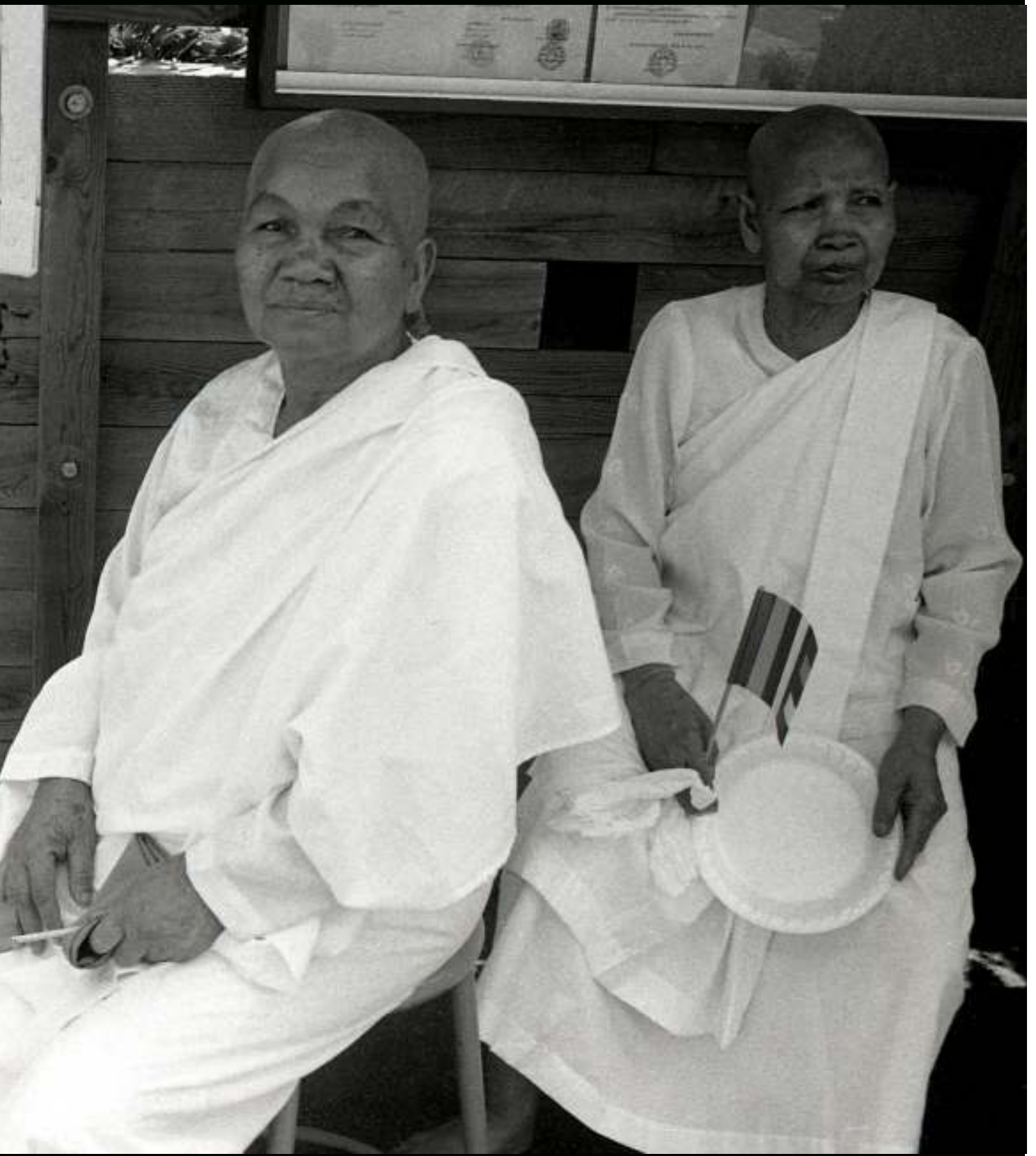
People who take the Three Refuges seek protection in the Buddha, the sangha (community of monks), and the Dharma (the Buddhist teachings).

People who follow the Five Precepts vow not to lie, steal, kill, use alcohol, or have unlawful sex.

Morality and the need for self-control are the basis of the Cambodian practice.

Before practicing meditation, says one practitioner, it's important for a person to have morality. "You cannot have a deep practice without that," he says.



































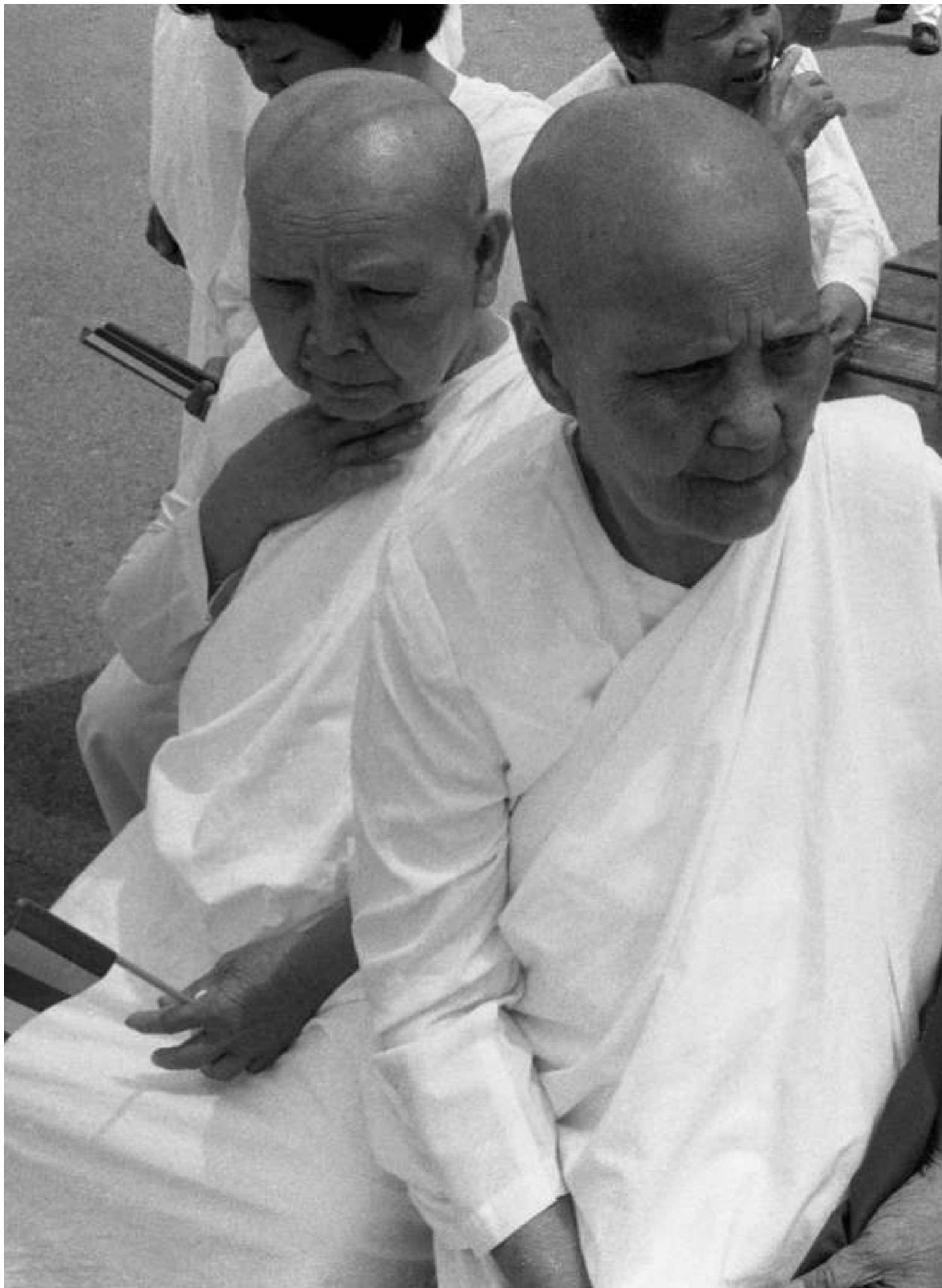


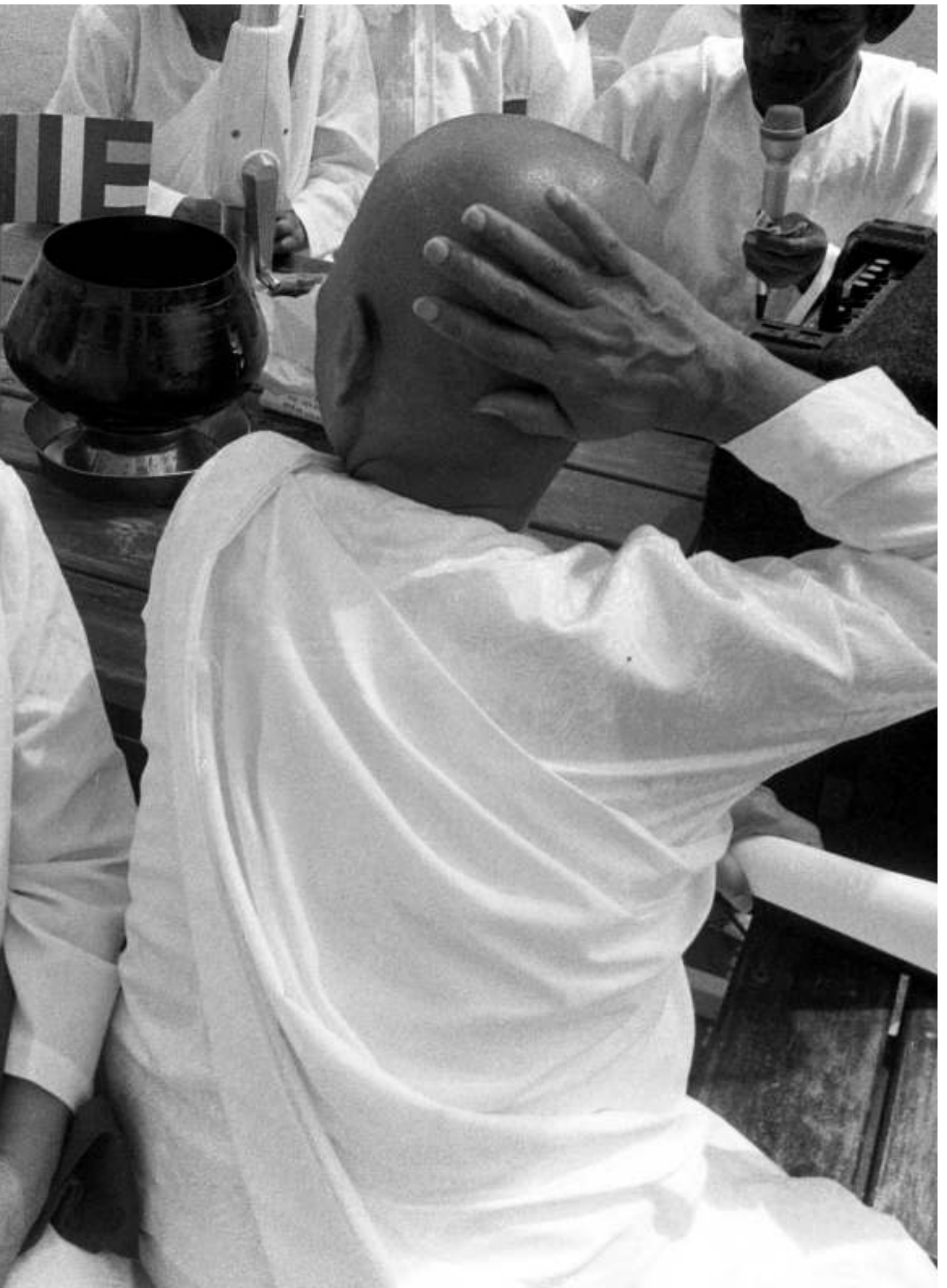










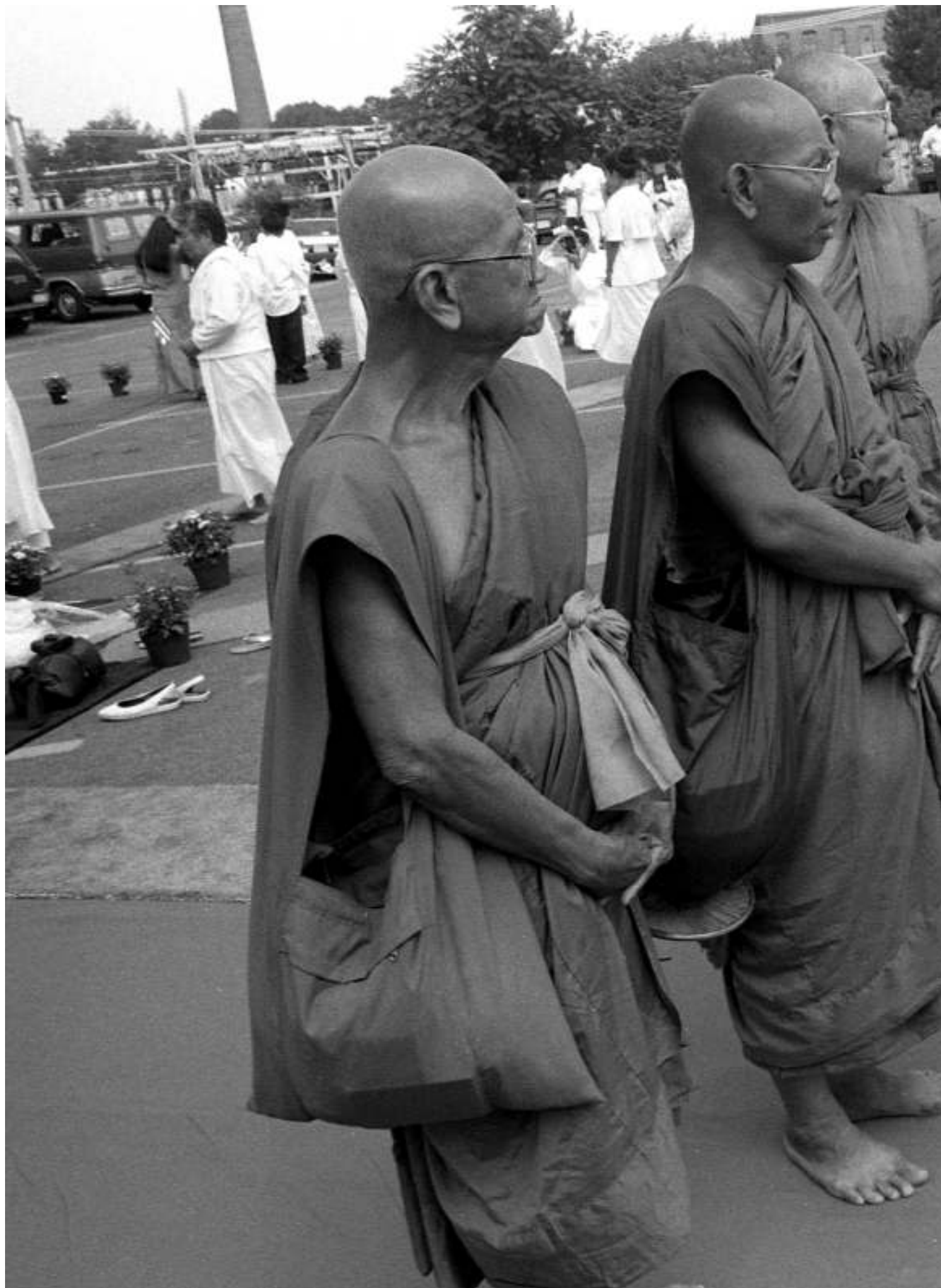


























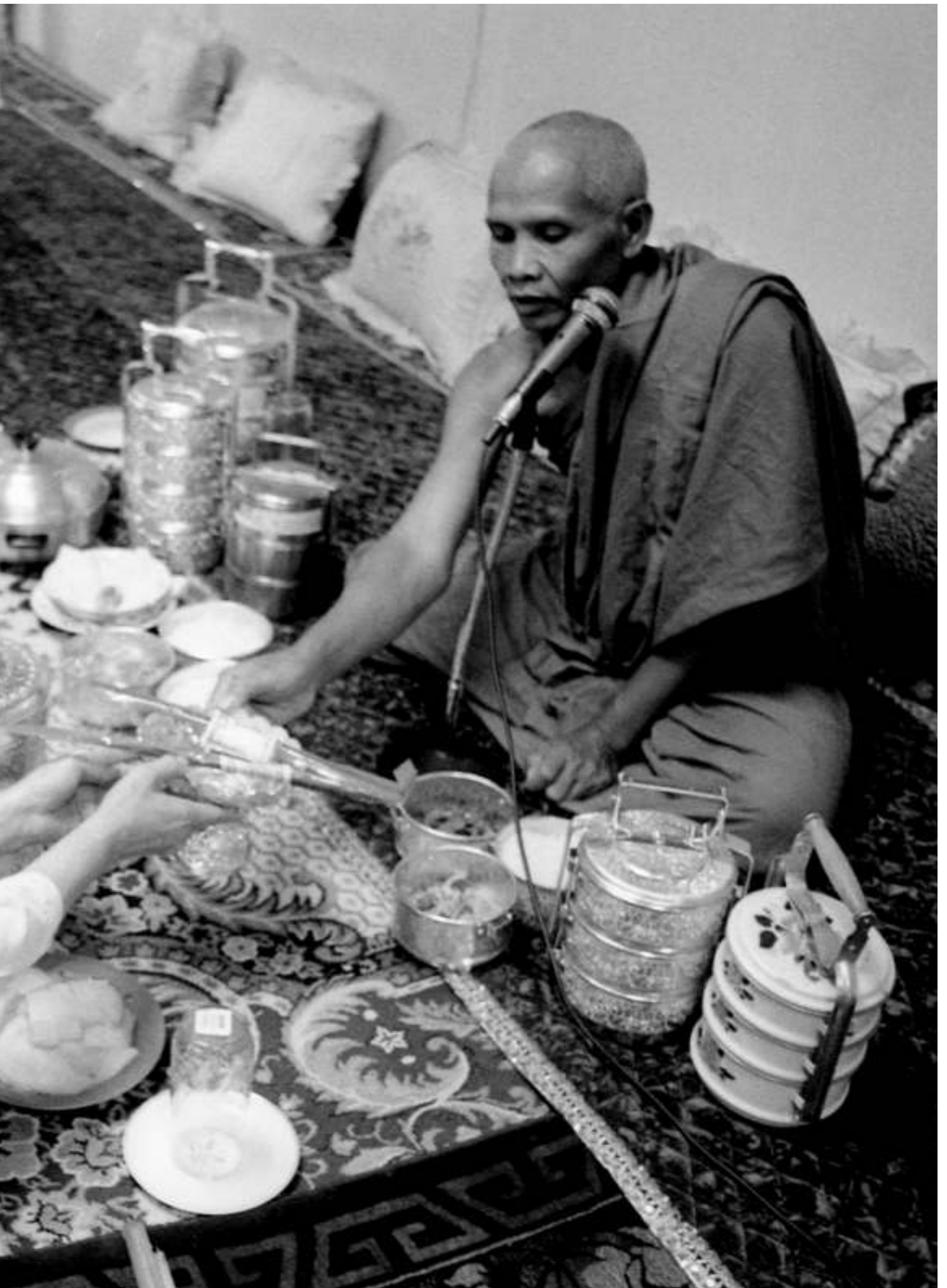




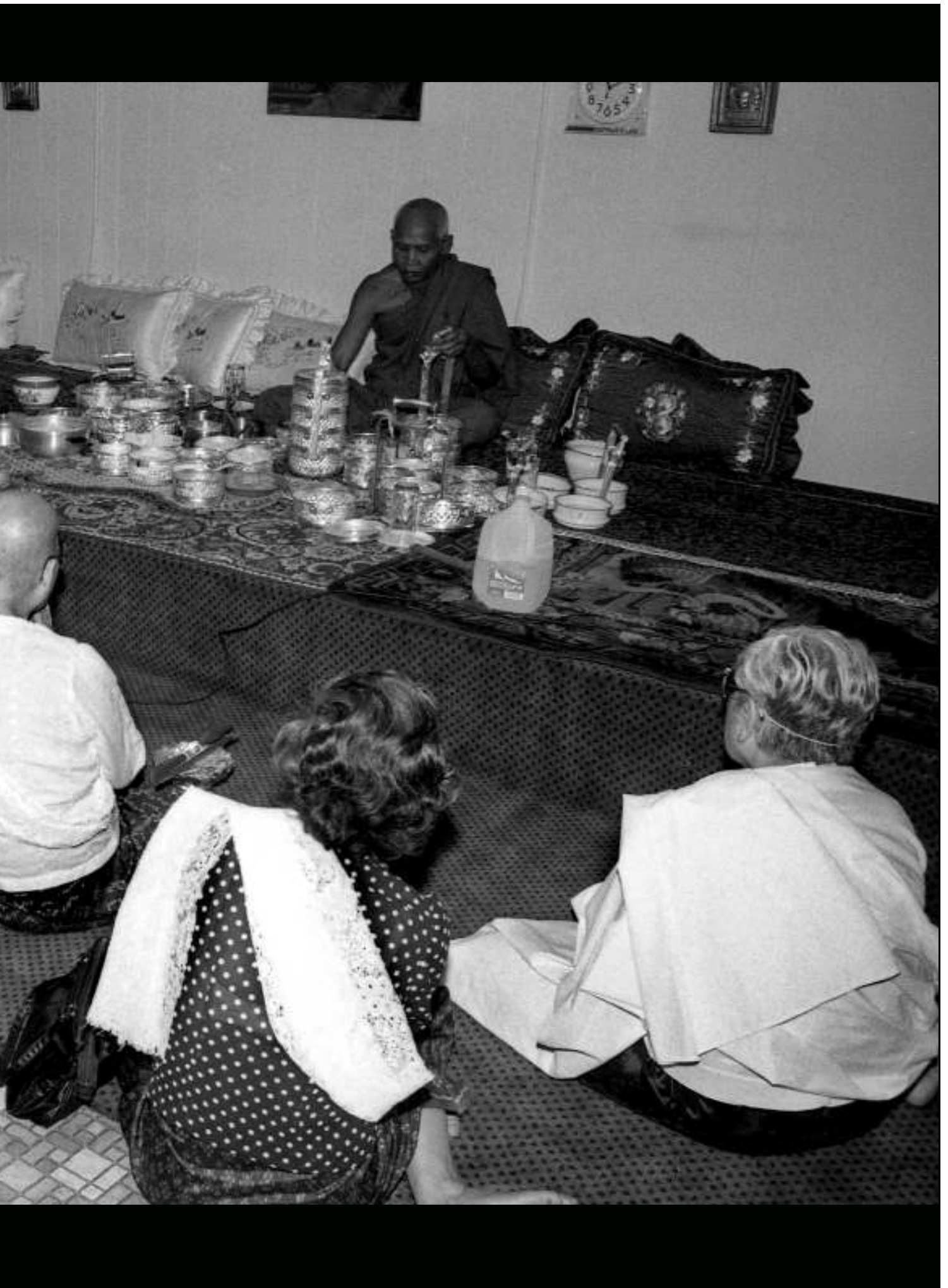


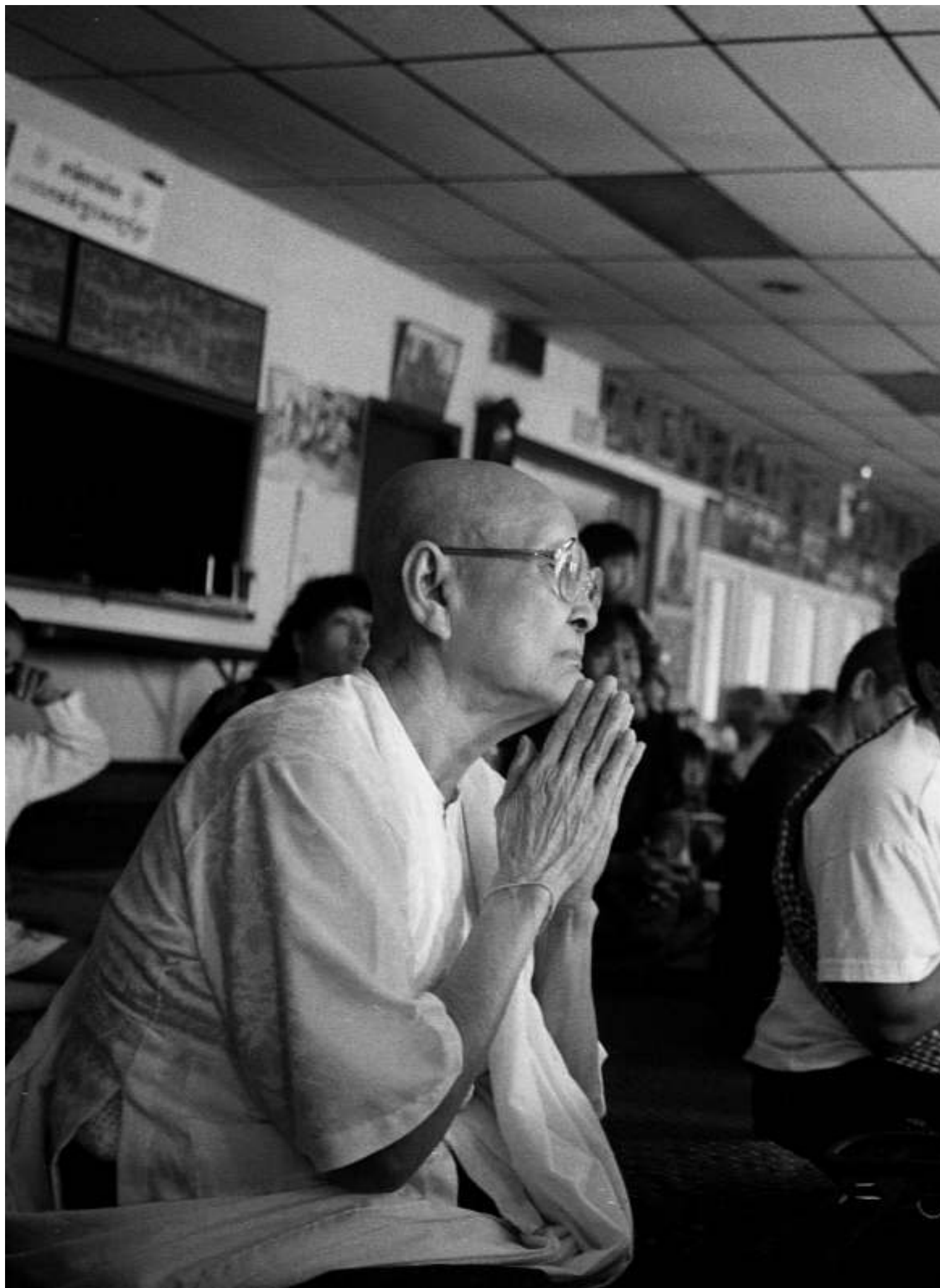














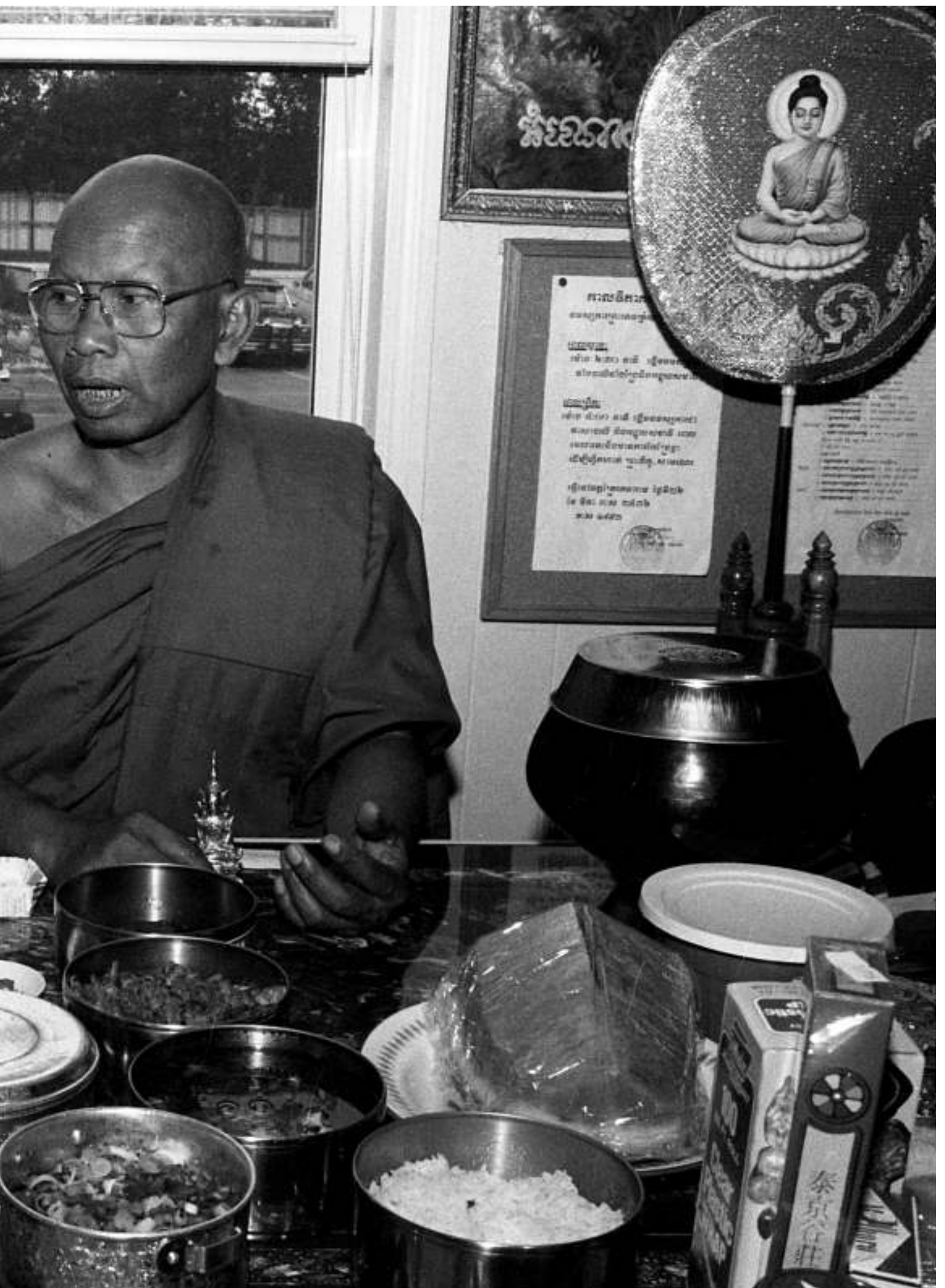






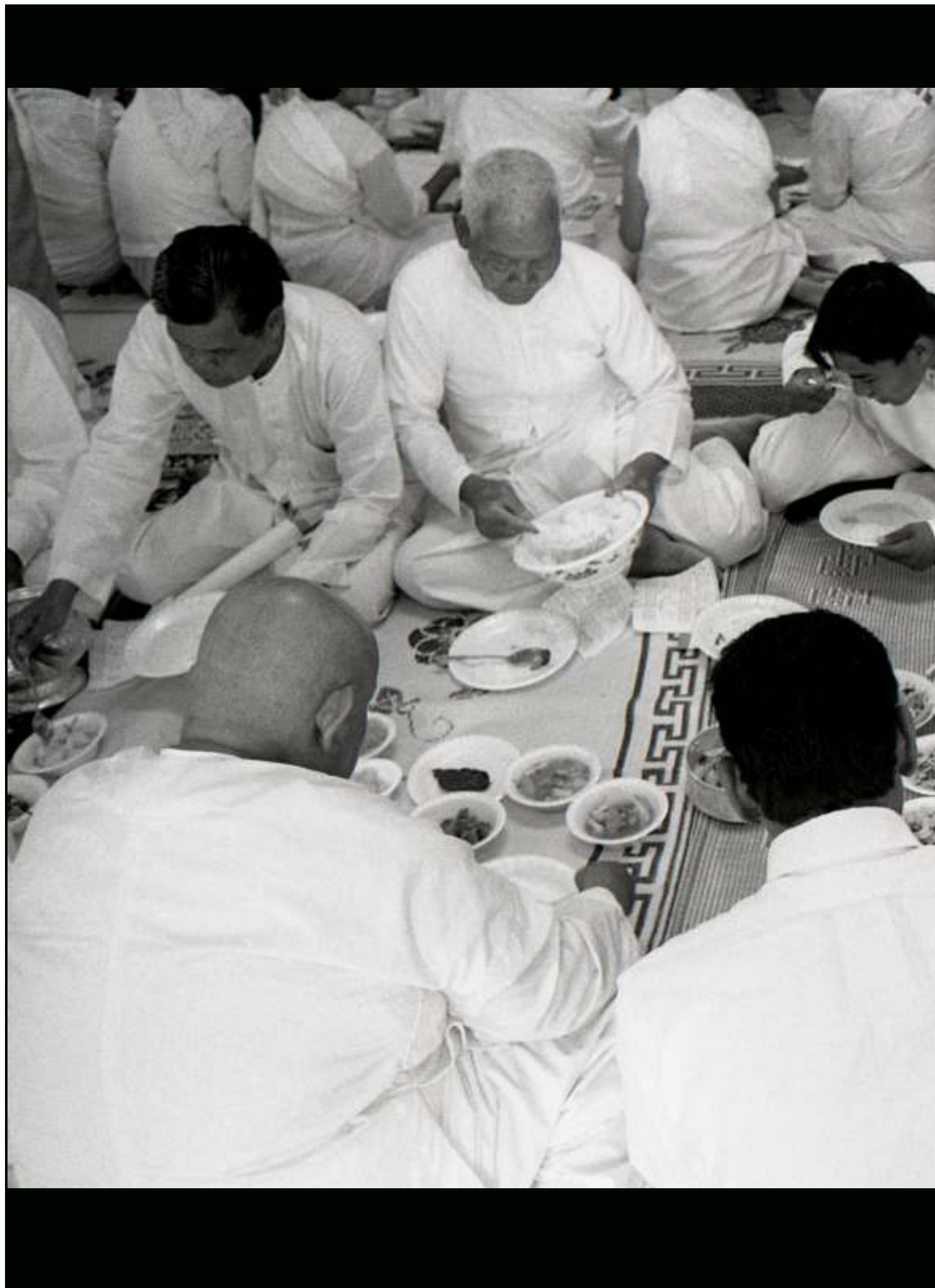




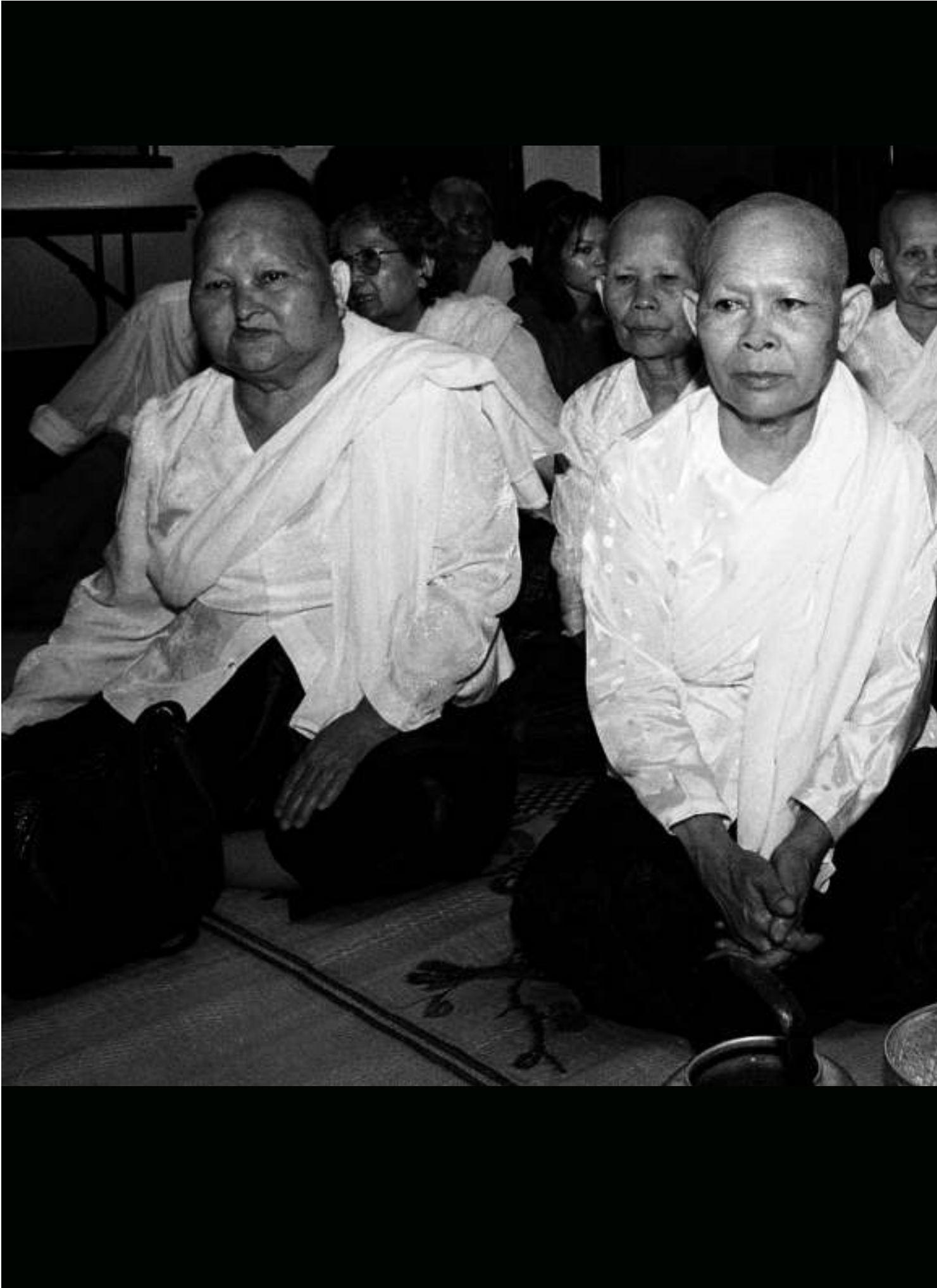


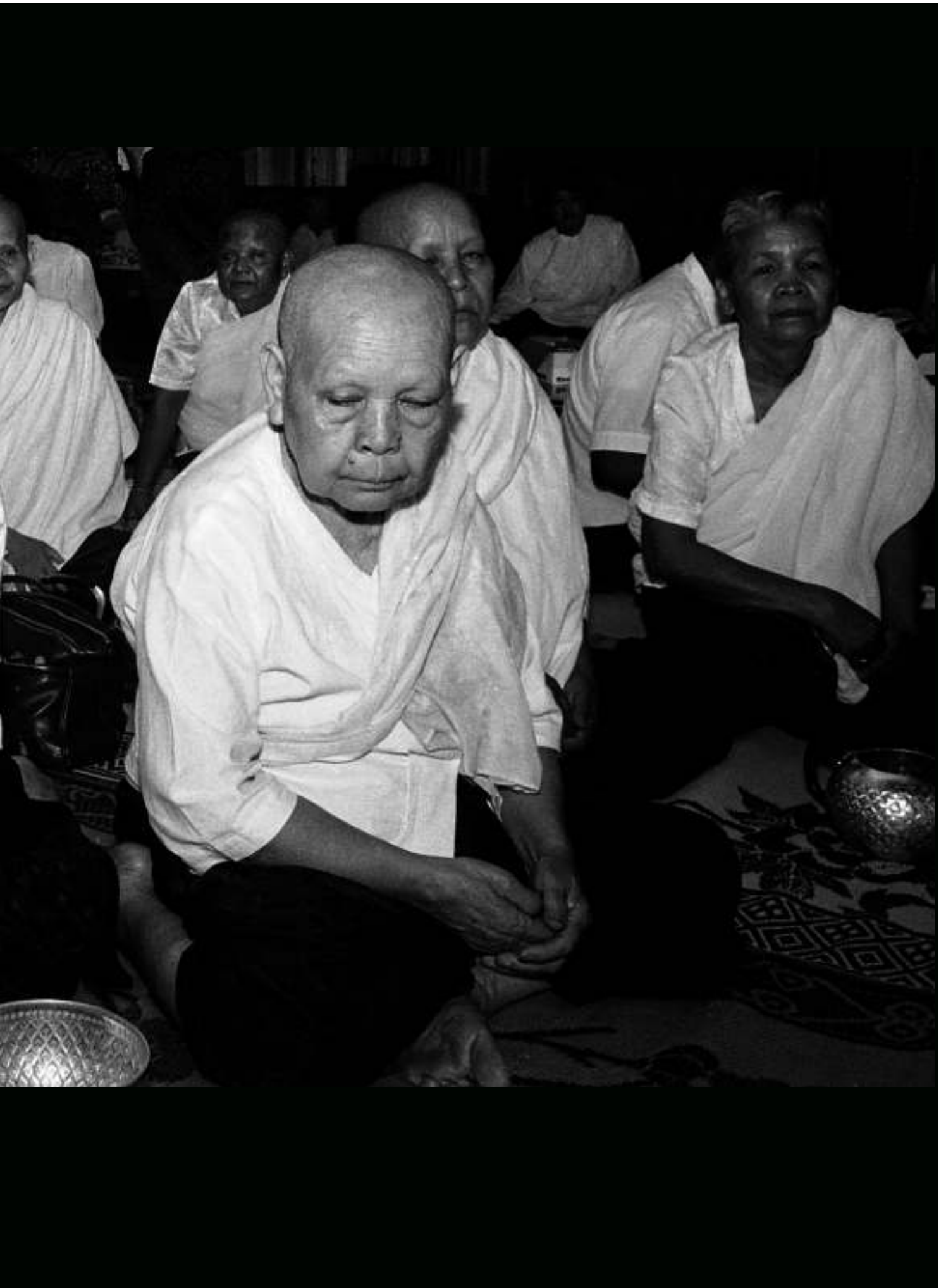












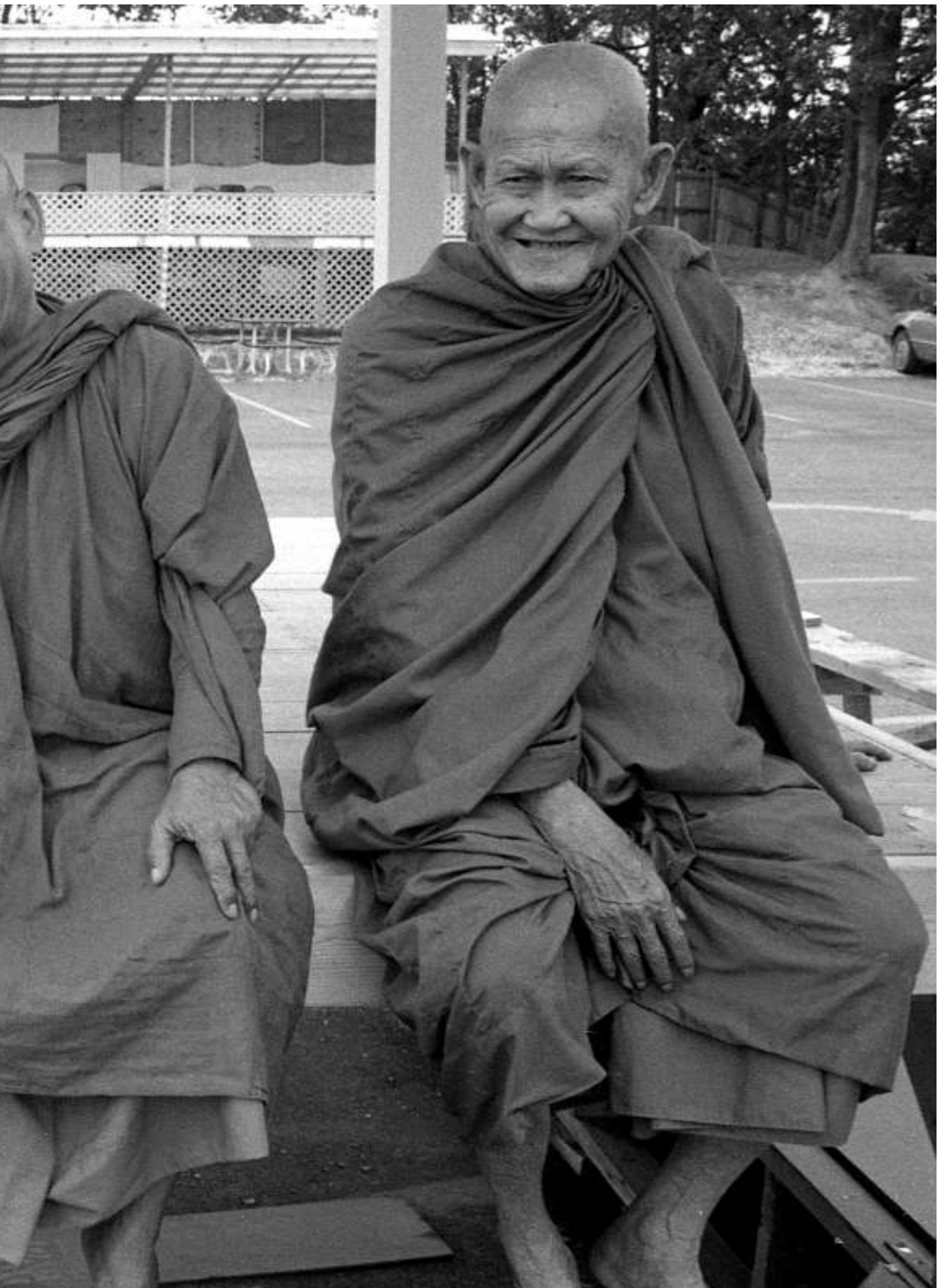














The Chinese Temple







Thousand Buddha Temple

The Thousand Buddha Temple in Quincy is a Pure Land temple founded to serve the Boston area's Chinese immigrant community.

Opened in 1996, the temple was built on the site of a former function hall near Quincy Center.

Practitioners meet there on Sundays for services that involve chanting to focus the mind and help transform the mental state.

Meditation is also practiced by some members, says Rev. Sik Kuan Yen, who oversaw creation of the temple and previously founded a smaller temple in a house on a residential street in Quincy.

"Meditation can make you more healthy," Rev. Yen says.







































































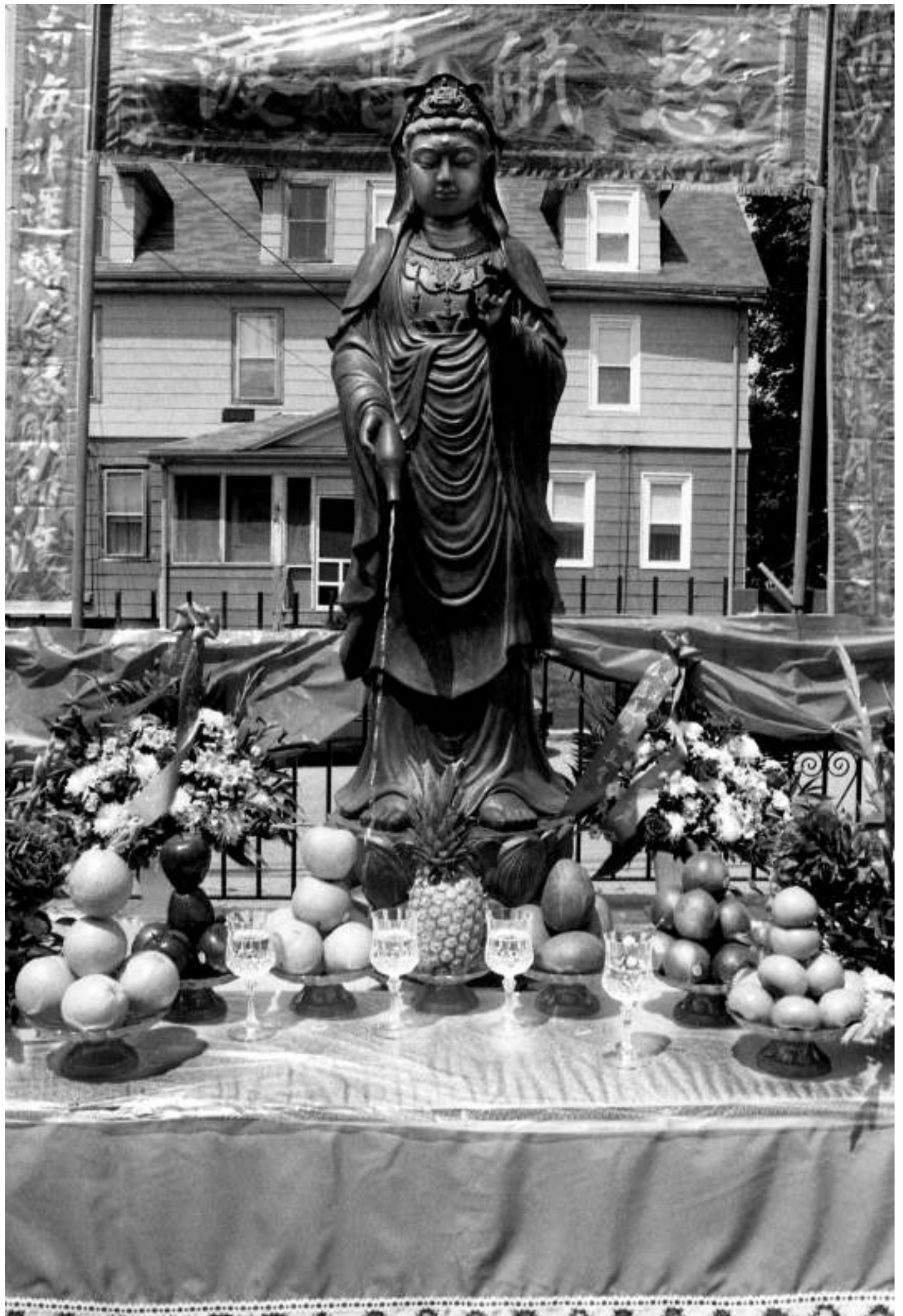




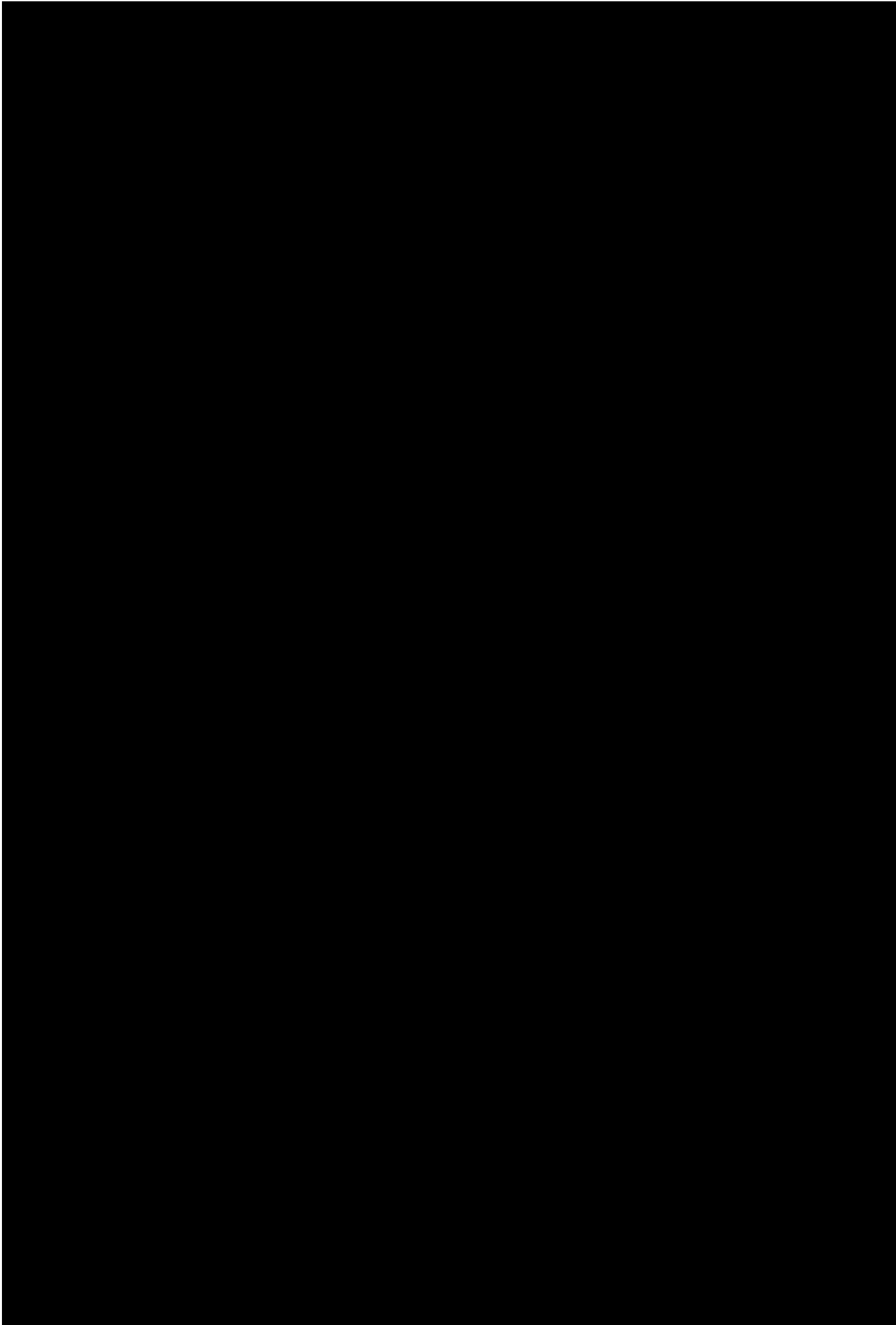




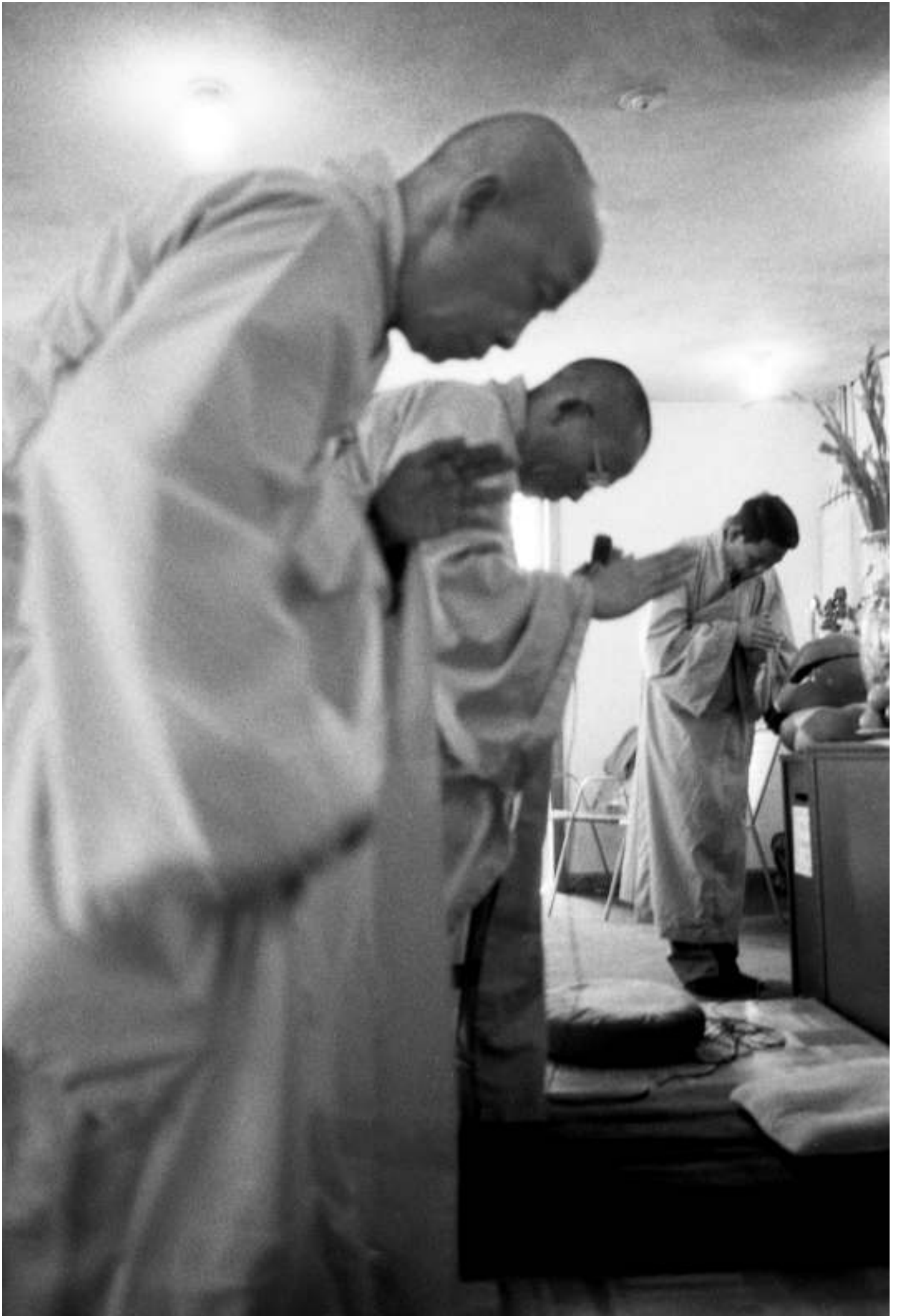








The Vietnamese Temple



The Pagoda Temple

THE VIETNAMESE BUDDHIST Association Pagoda Temple is located in a former day-care center in the Roslindale neighborhood of Boston.

Founded a decade ago by Bich Nguyen and her husband Dr. Chi Nguyen, the temple has a regular Sunday practice which includes the reading and chanting of sutras (Buddhist texts).

The temple also has programs for youths and celebrations on Buddhist holy days such as the Buddha's birthday.

The Roslindale temple is also associated with the teachings of the Vietnamese Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh.

Dr. Nguyen says the temple's practices for the most part belong to the Pure Land school of Buddhism, though he and his wife also practice Zen Buddhism, another Mahayana form.

Pure Land is a practice based on faith, emphasizing chanting Buddhist scriptures and the worship of Amitabha Buddha.

Zen practice, in contrast, focuses mostly on mediation, says Nguyen, who adds that Westerners are generally more drawn to Zen than Pure Land practice.

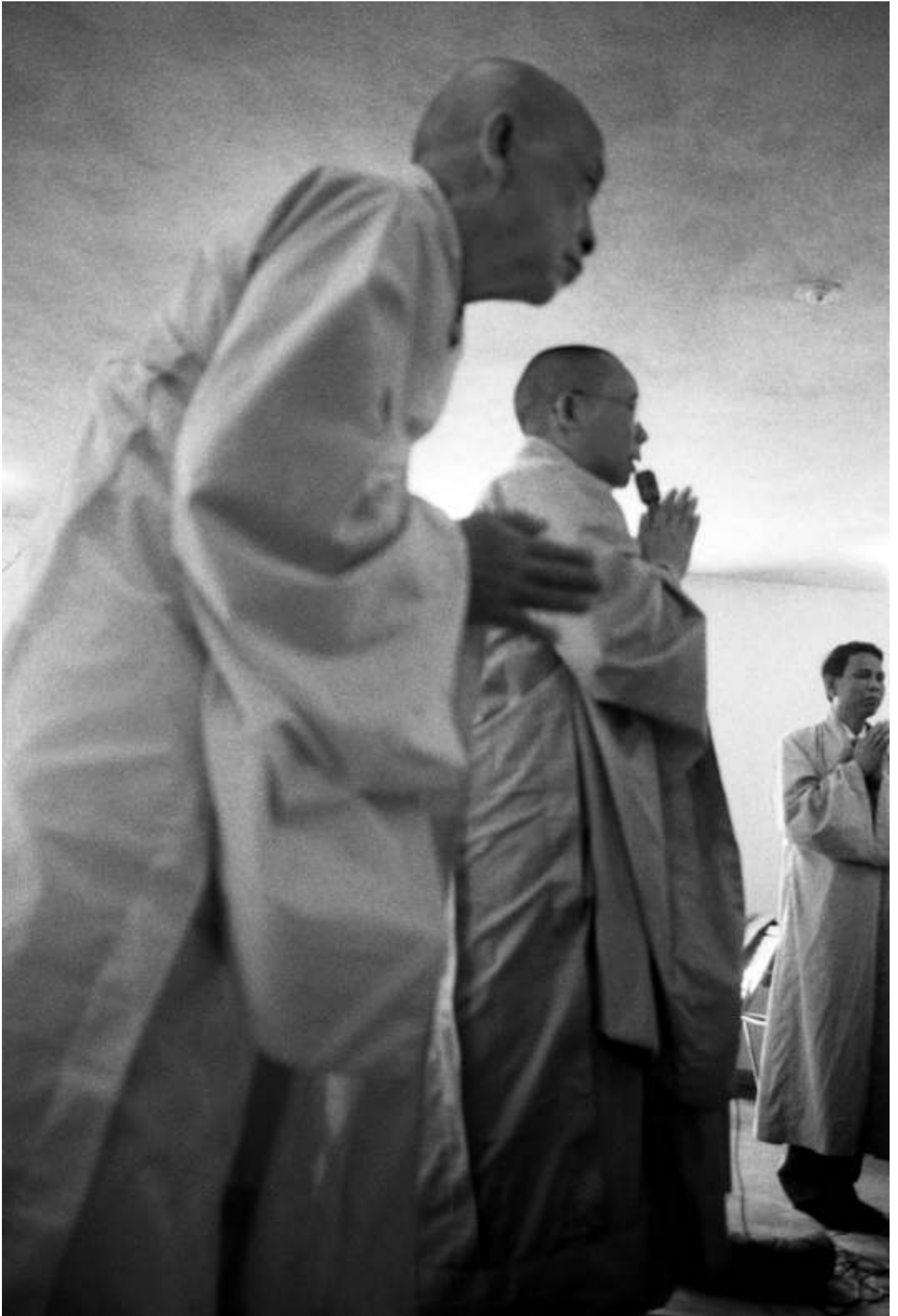
"Buddhism is old but it applies to modern life," says Luong Nguyen, a practitioner who attended the temple one Sunday to celebrate the Buddha's birthday.

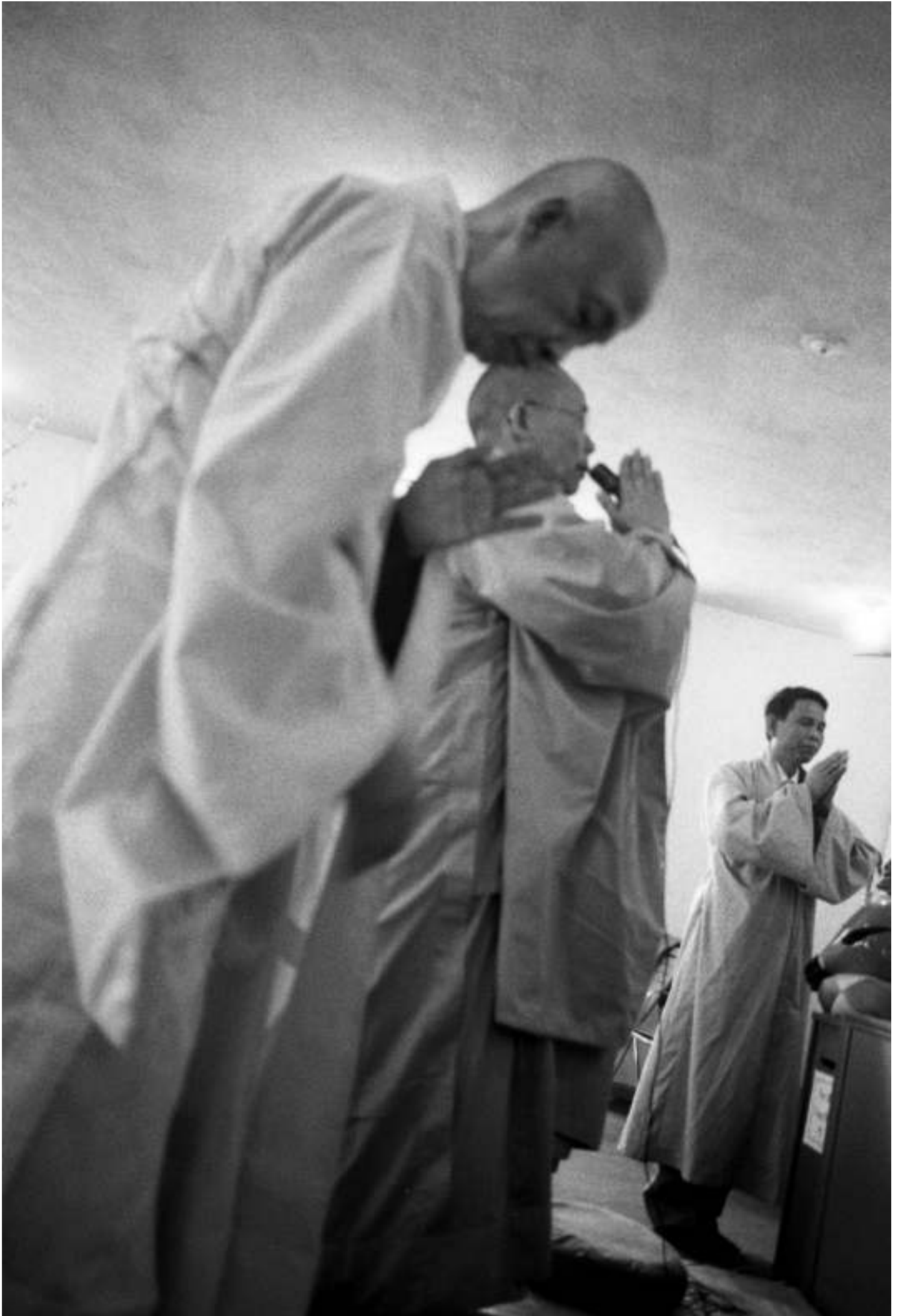
Nguyen points out that Buddhism prohibits the use of alcohol and drugs. Meditation, he says, "helps release stress" and teaches people to live in the "present moment."

"The life of the Buddha was very calm," he says. "This is helpful to modern life."















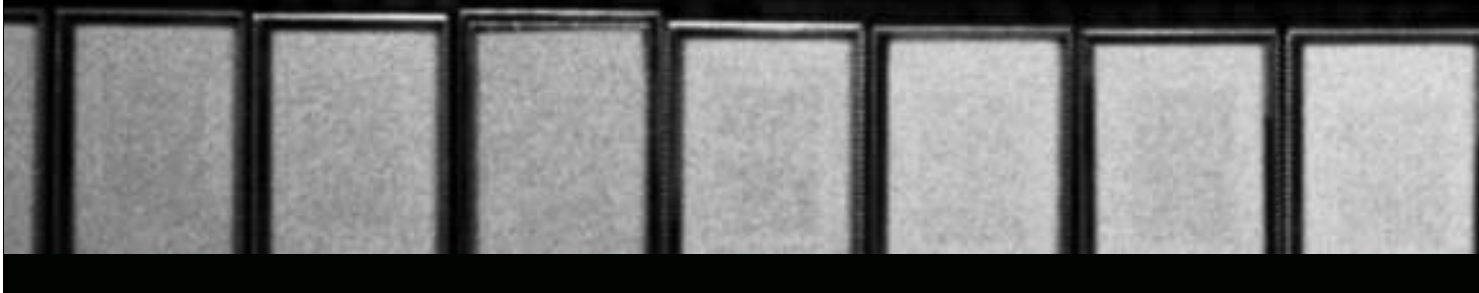
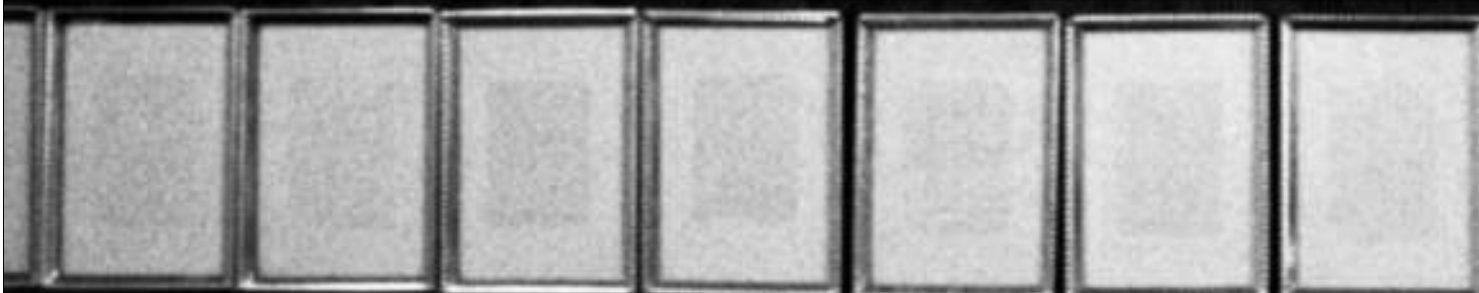
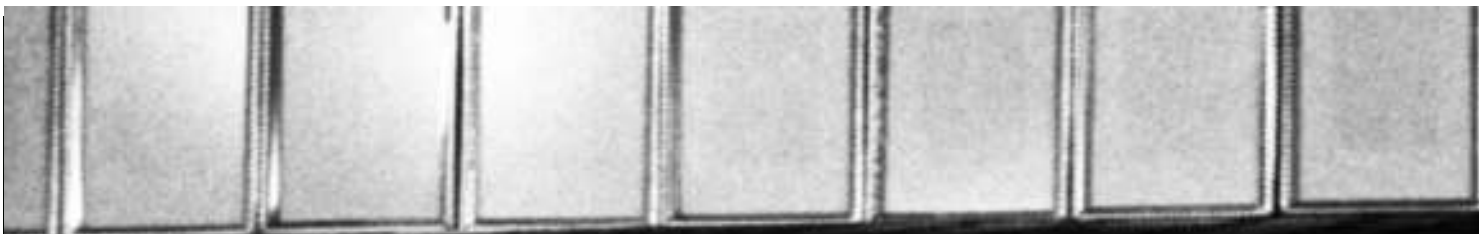


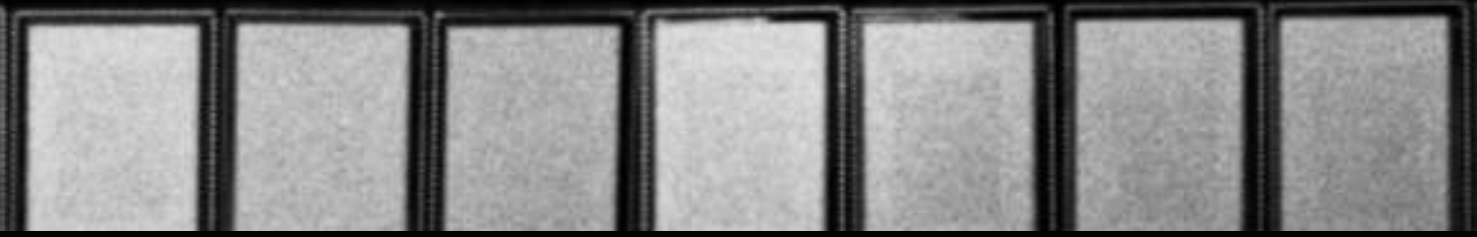
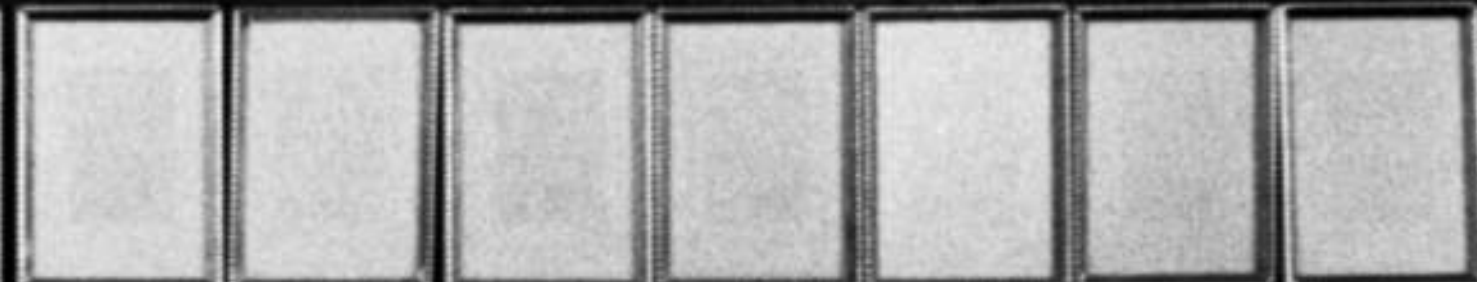
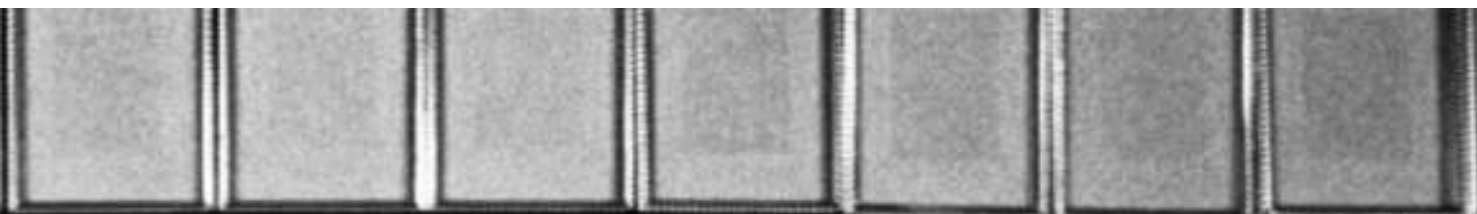




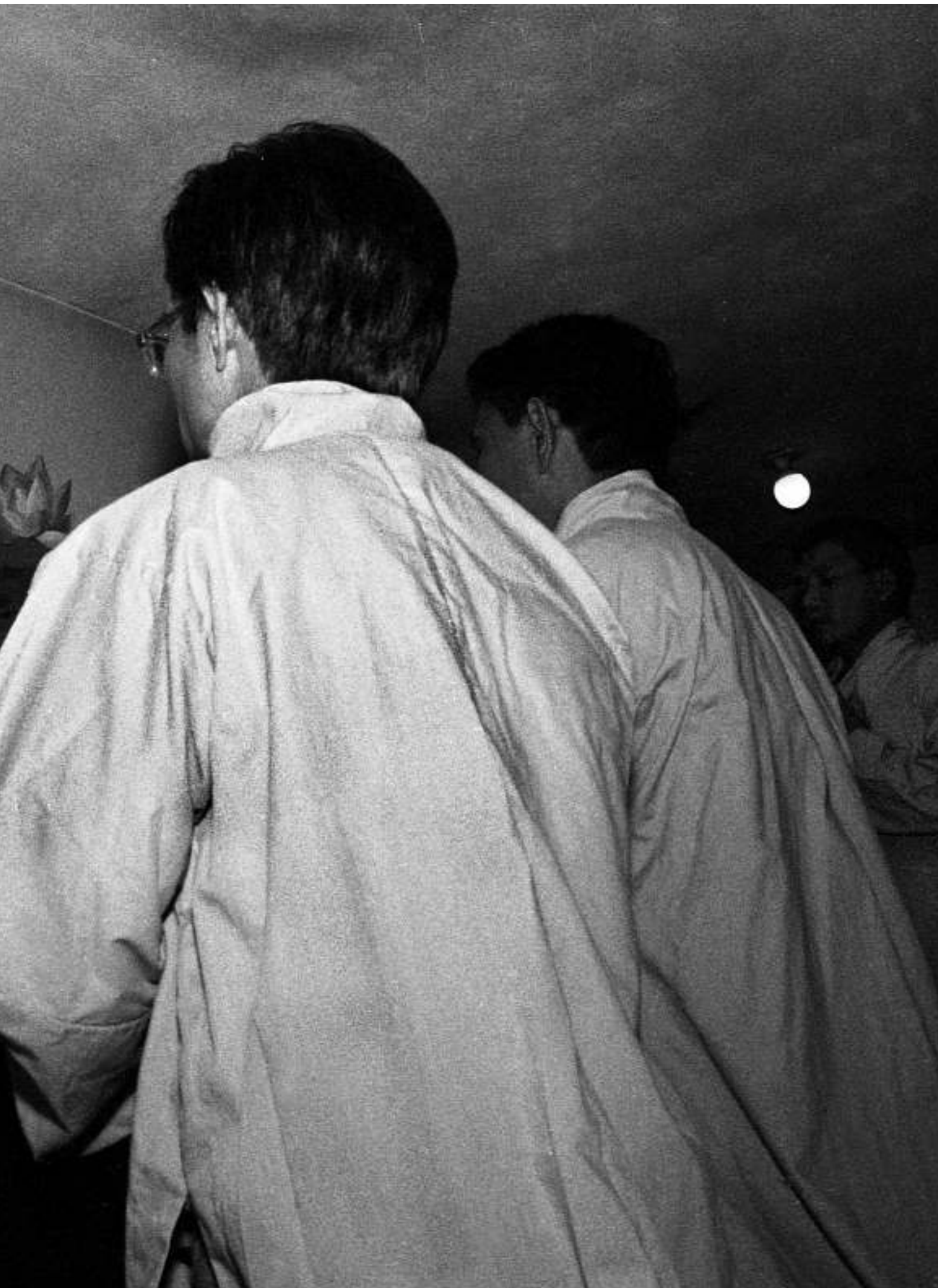




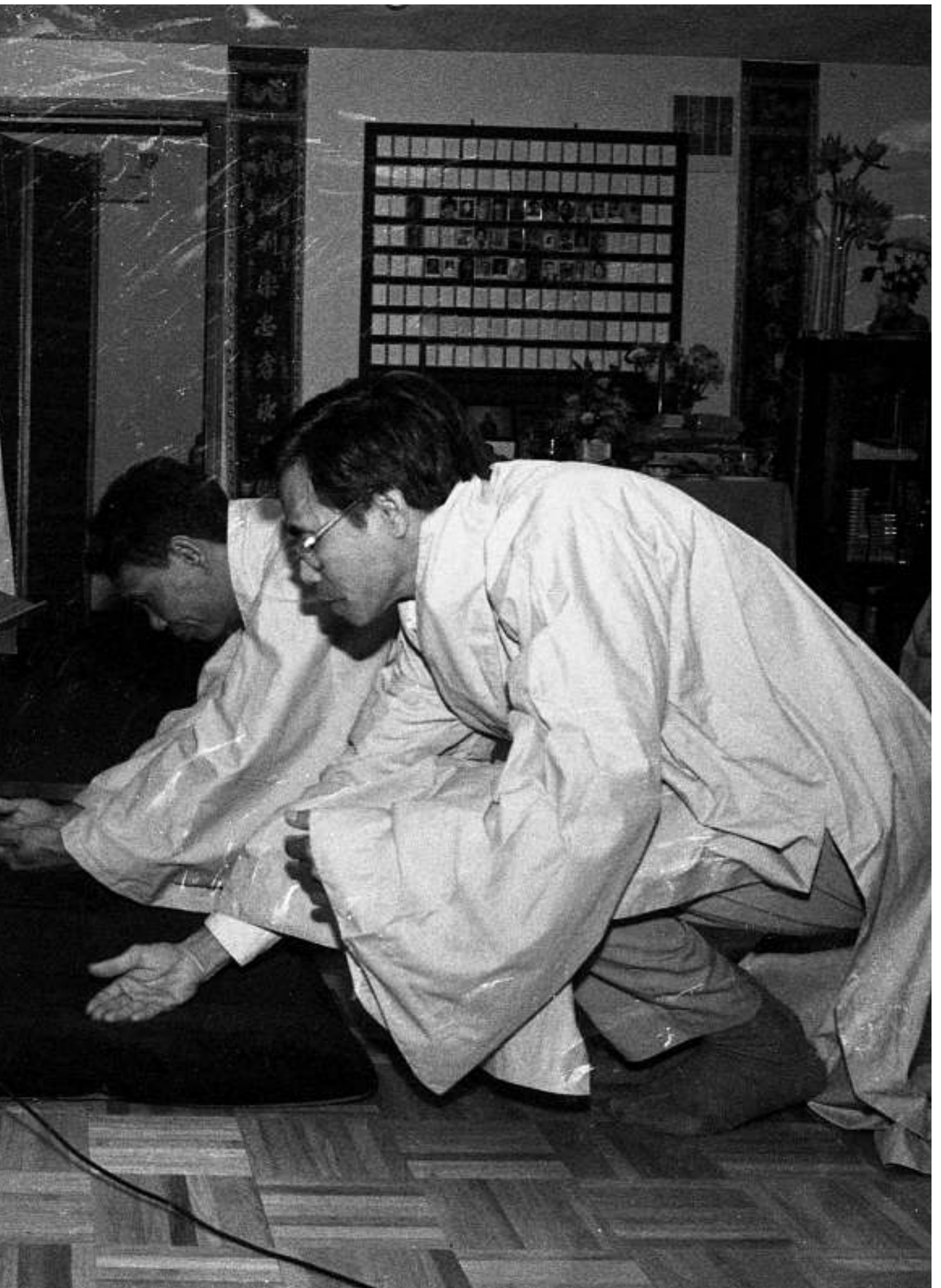


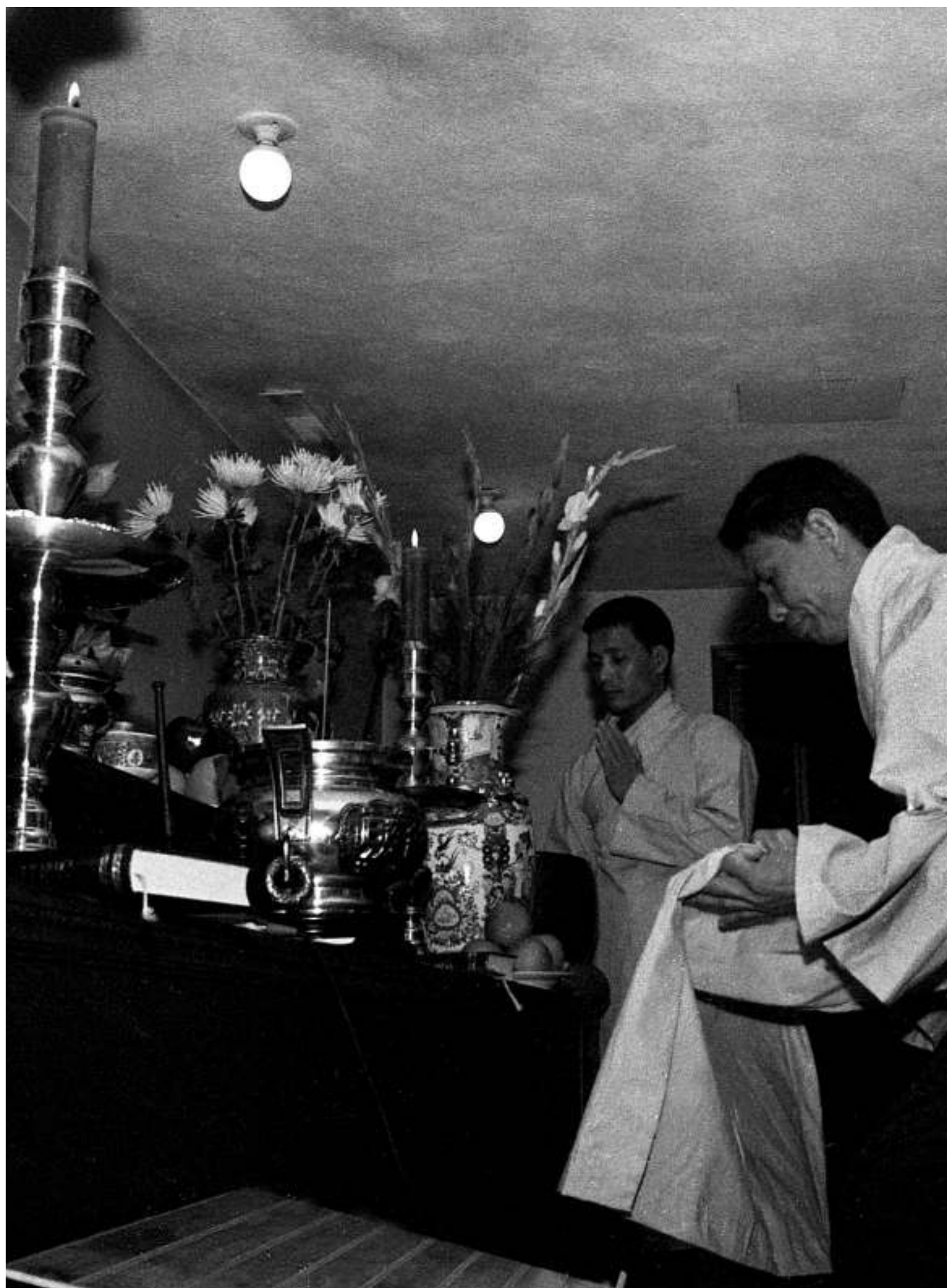




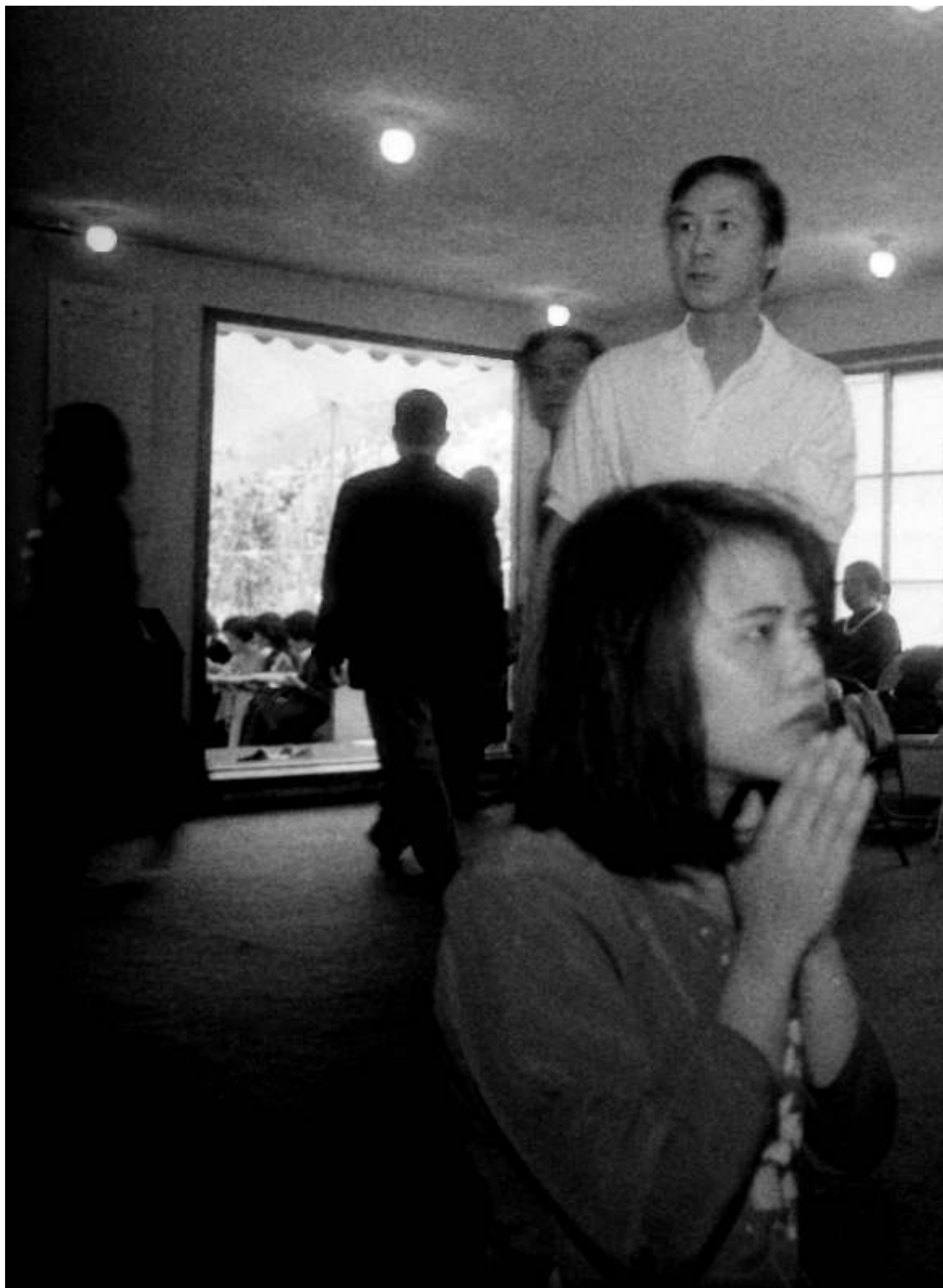


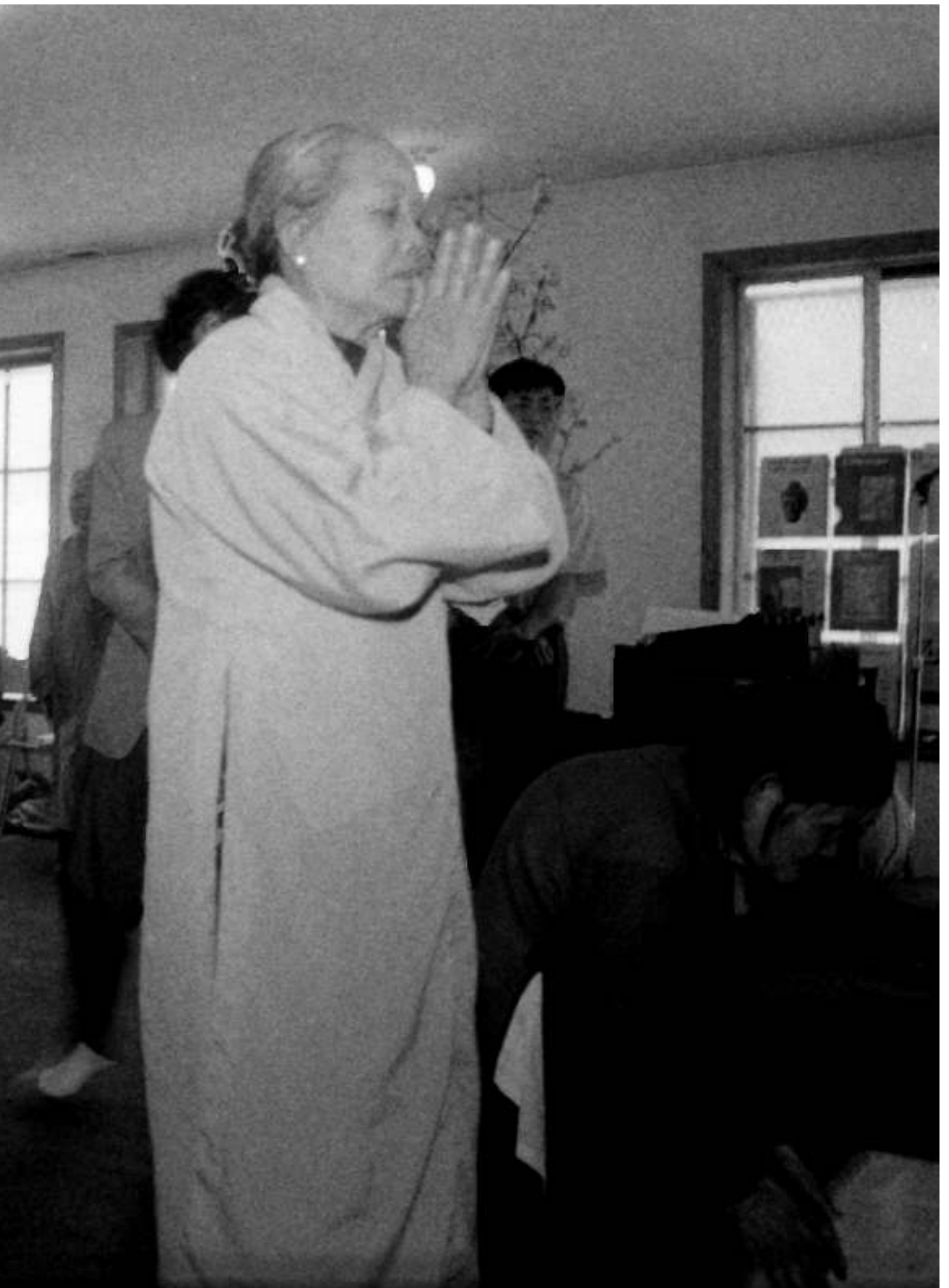


































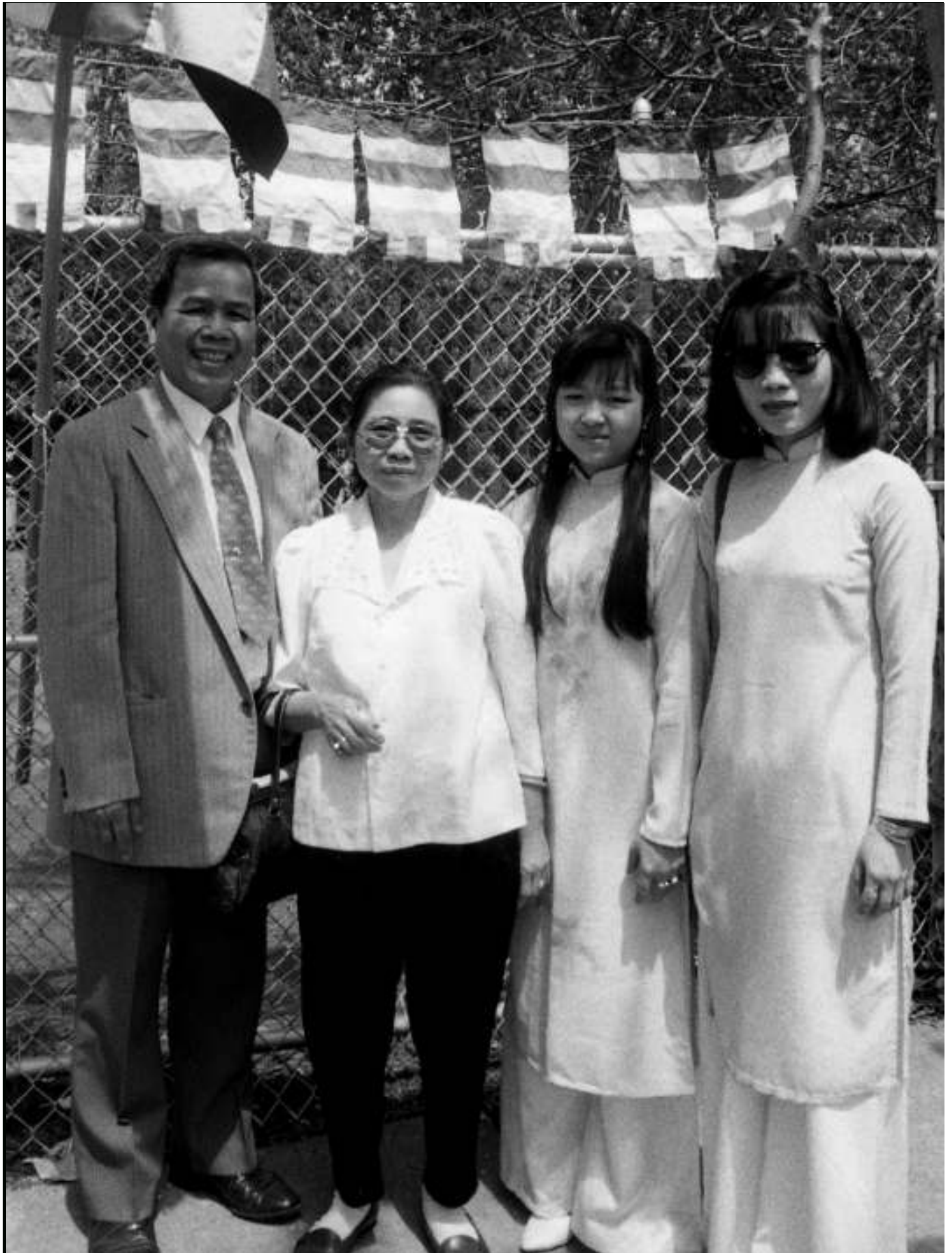




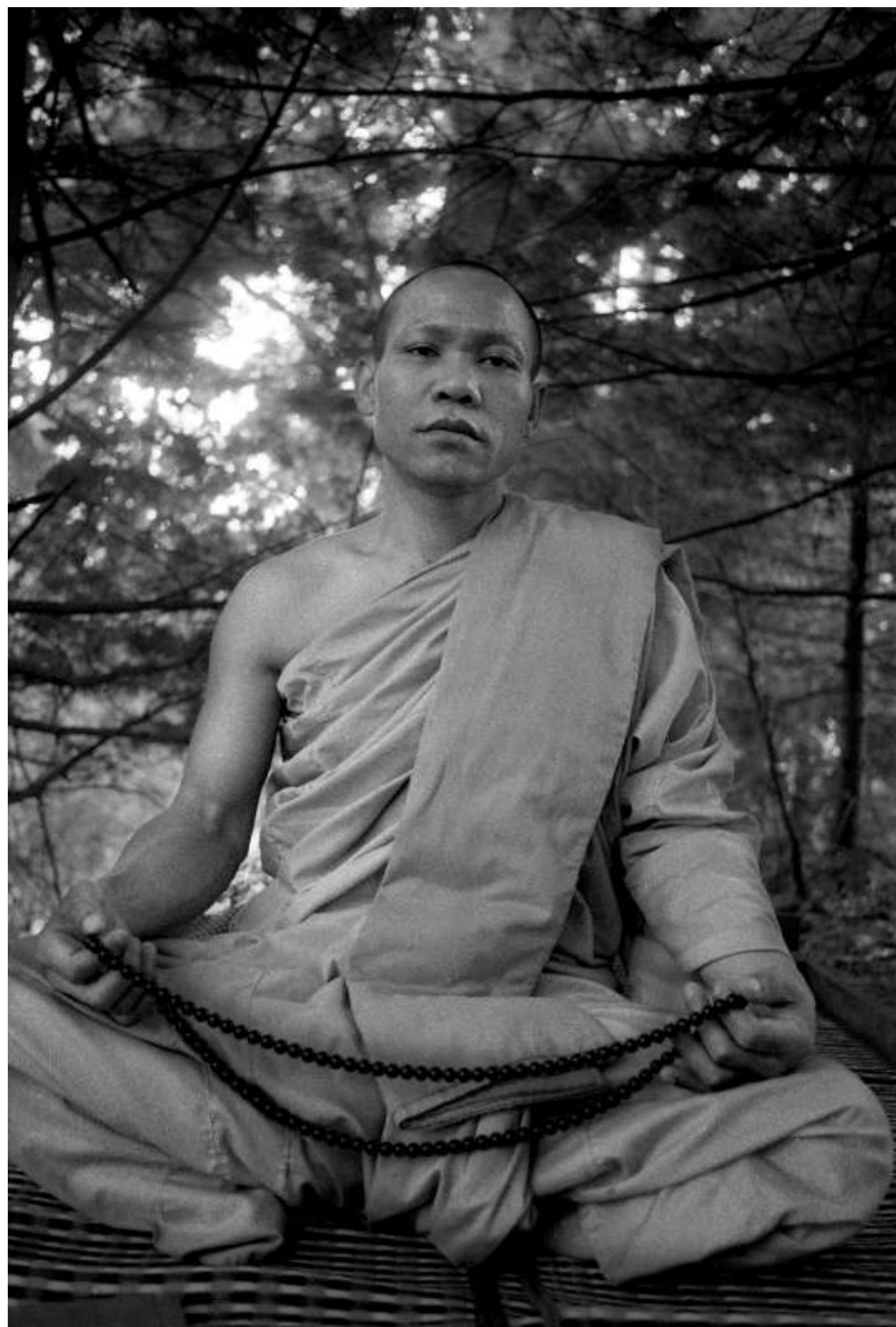








The Laotian Temple



Wat Lao Dhammayan Temple

Three monks guide the service in Lowell's Wat Lao Dhammayan Temple.

Rebbie Khampheng Phimmason says that the temple's Buddhist practice includes chanting sutras and making ceremonial offerings of food to the temple monks.

The temple's Theravada practice emphasizes giving and developing moral conduct through wholesome actions, words, and thoughts.

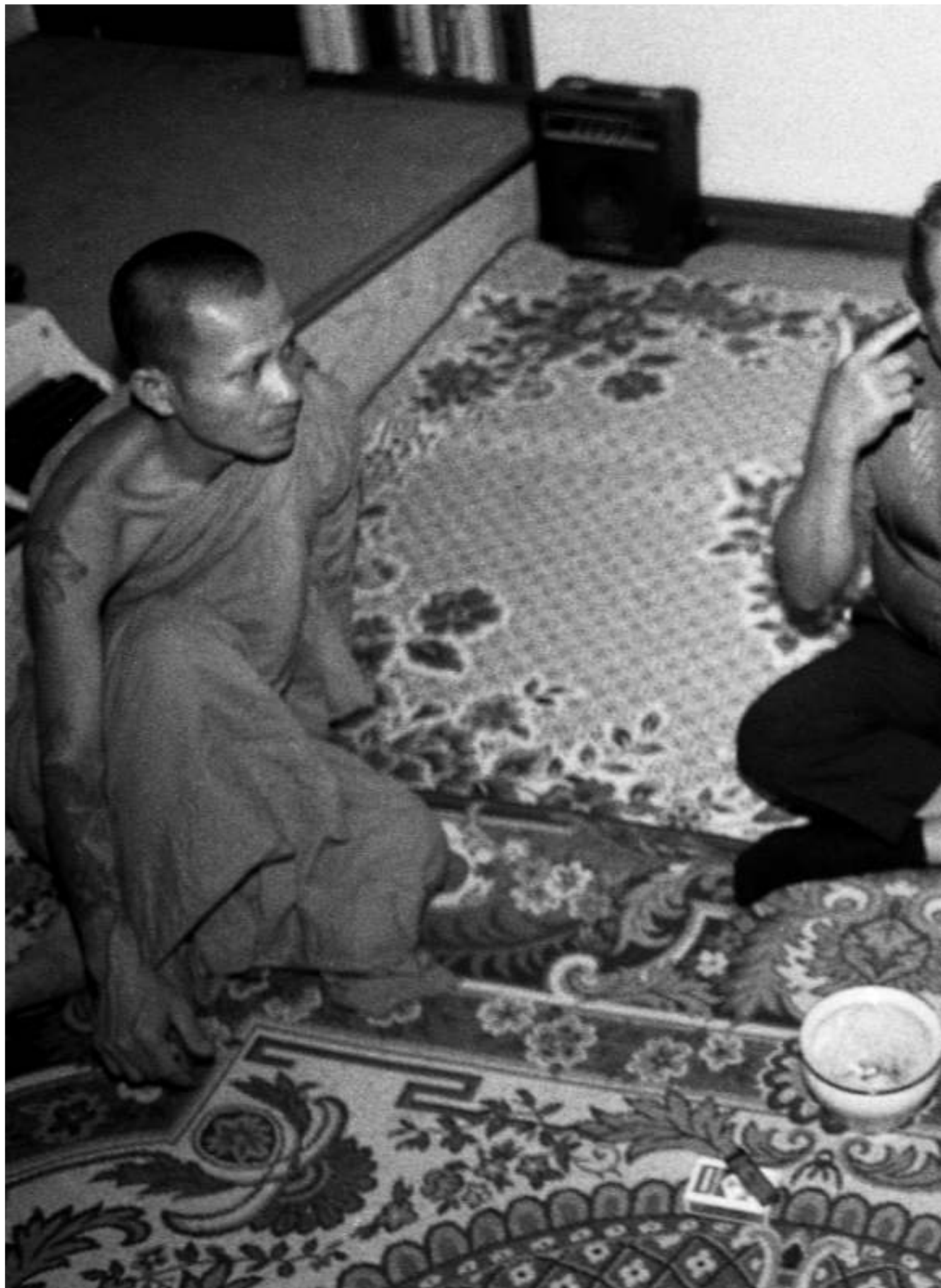
Meditation is also part of the practice. "The aim — the goal of meditation is mindfulness," he says. "The main goal of Buddhism is peace — the ultimate goal of people living in the world. Whatever you do, whatever you have is for peace."

Phimmason says that meditation practice helps guide the mind to nirvana, a blissful state in which "there is no love, no hate, no self, no you, no me."

Buddhists, he says, are on a quest for the truth. "An intelligent person tries to search for the truth about things — to know things as they are" rather than as he wants them to be, he says. An intelligent person is willing to be honest with himself.















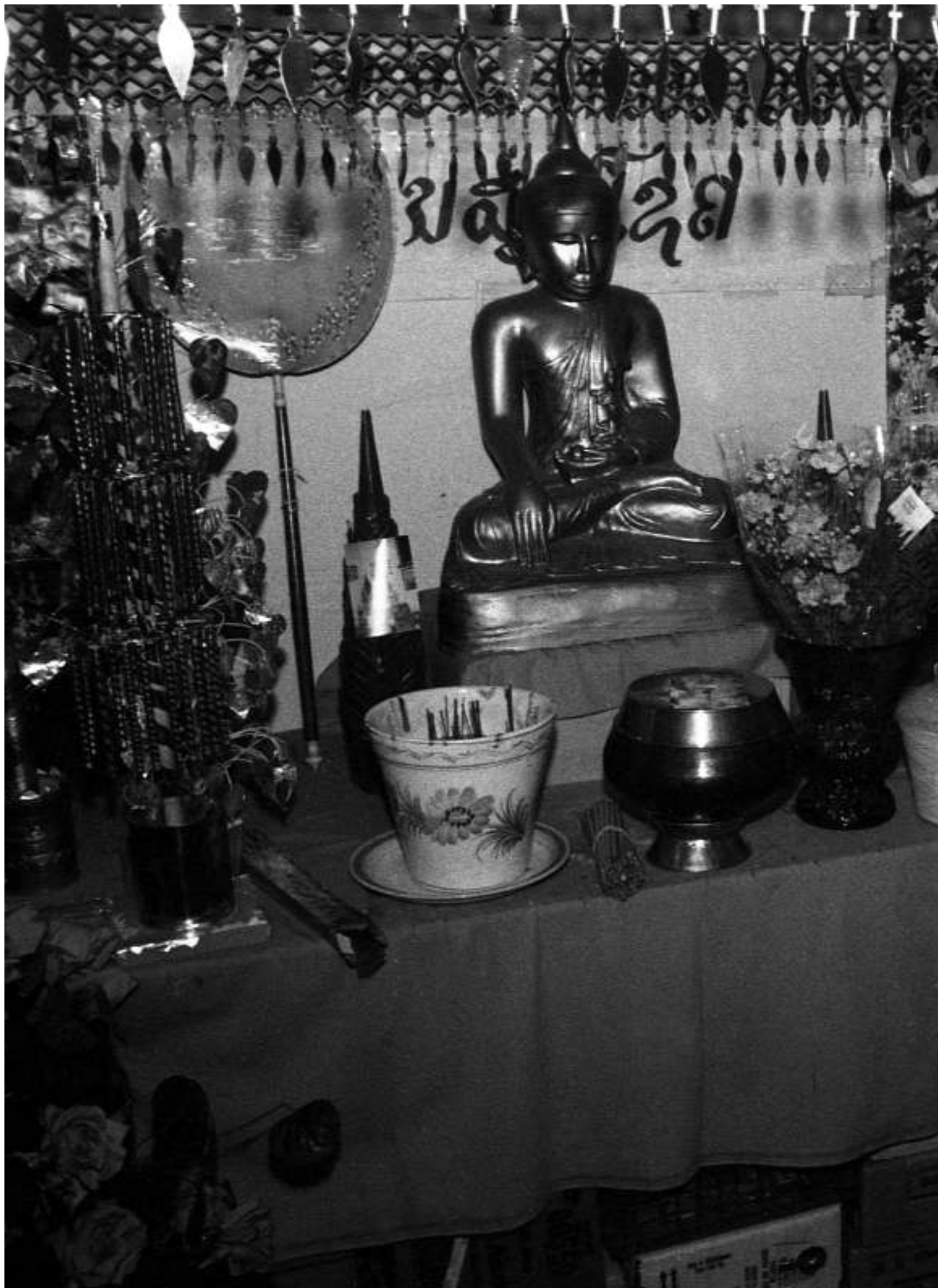


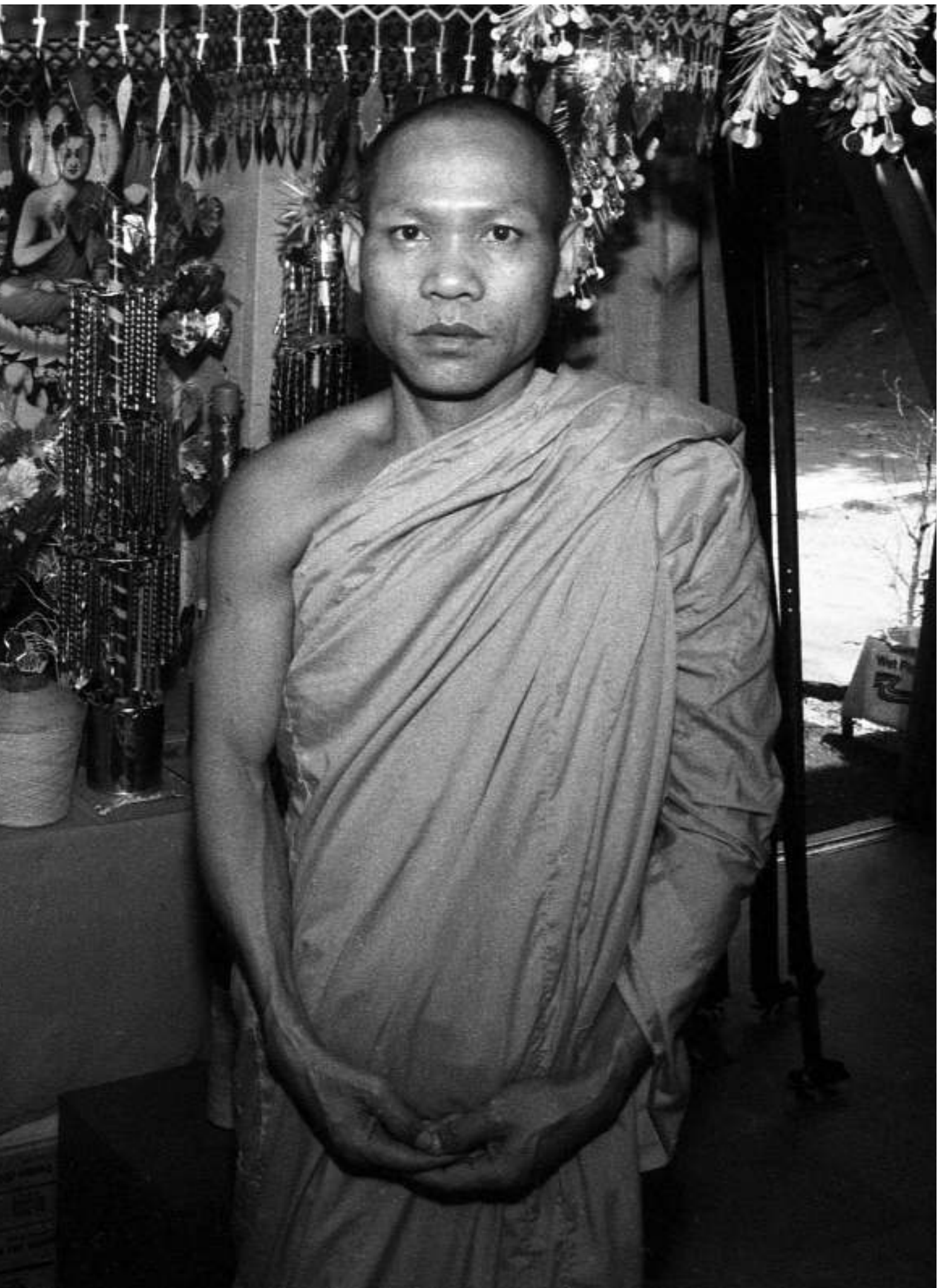






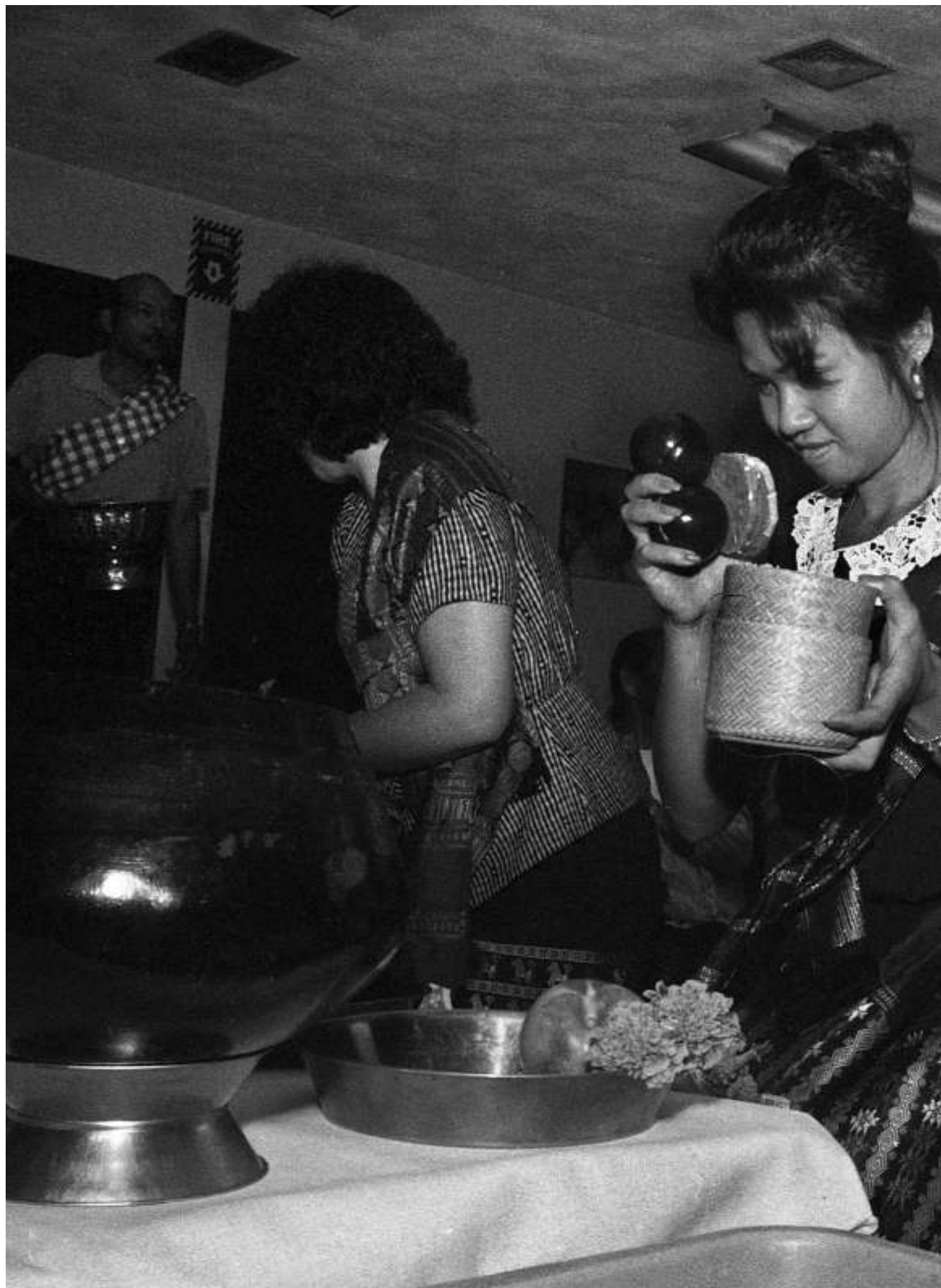






















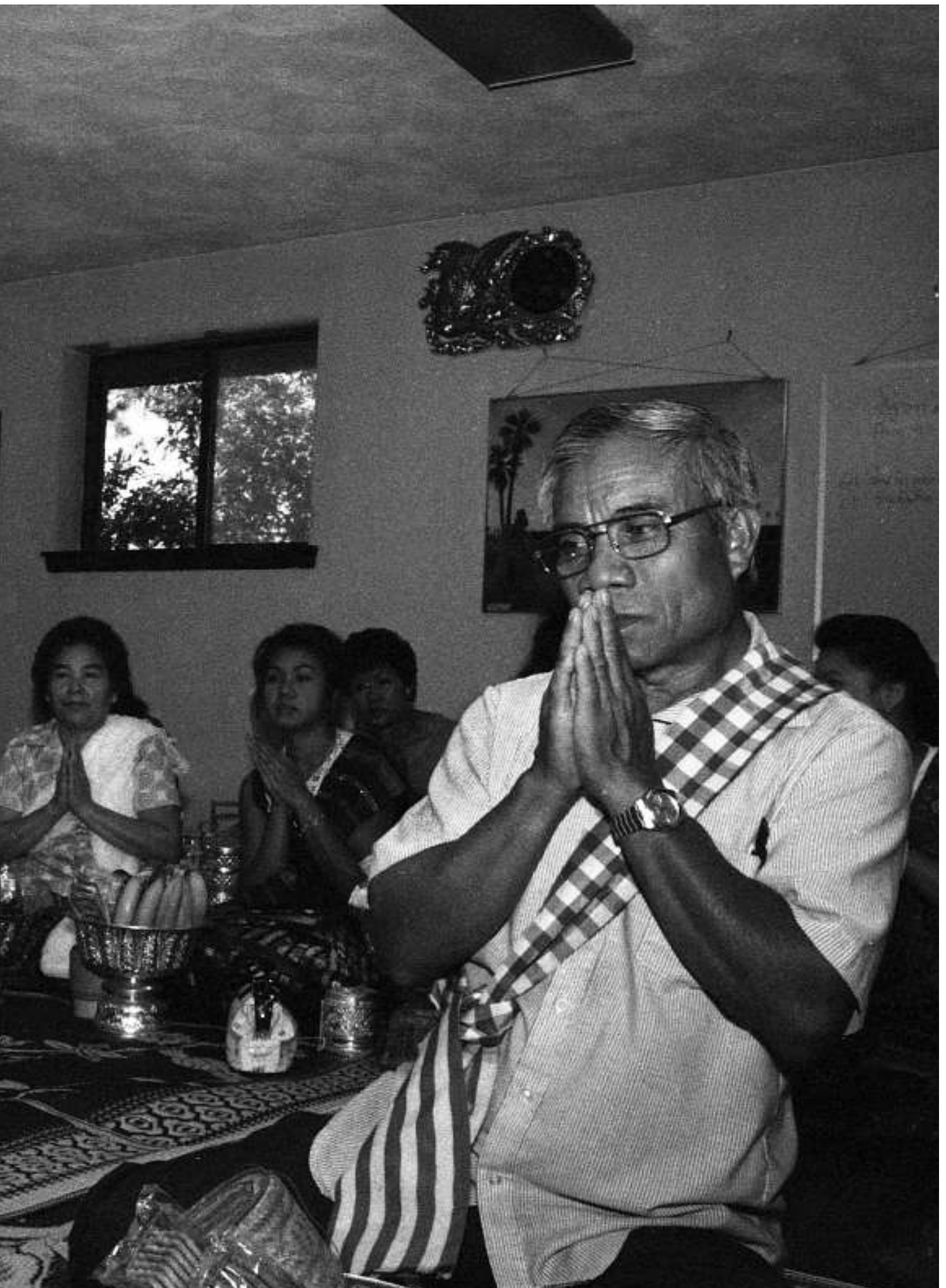




























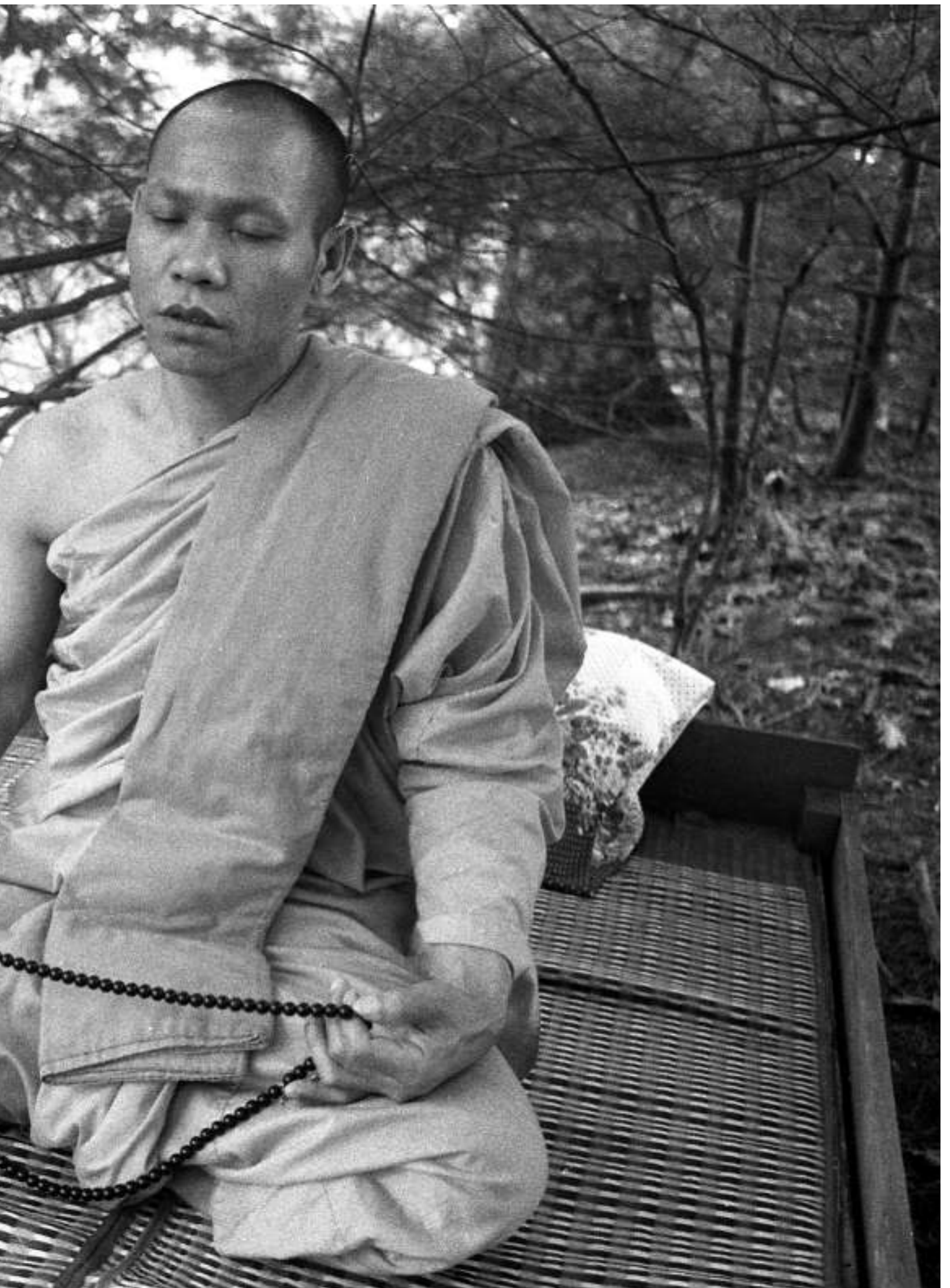


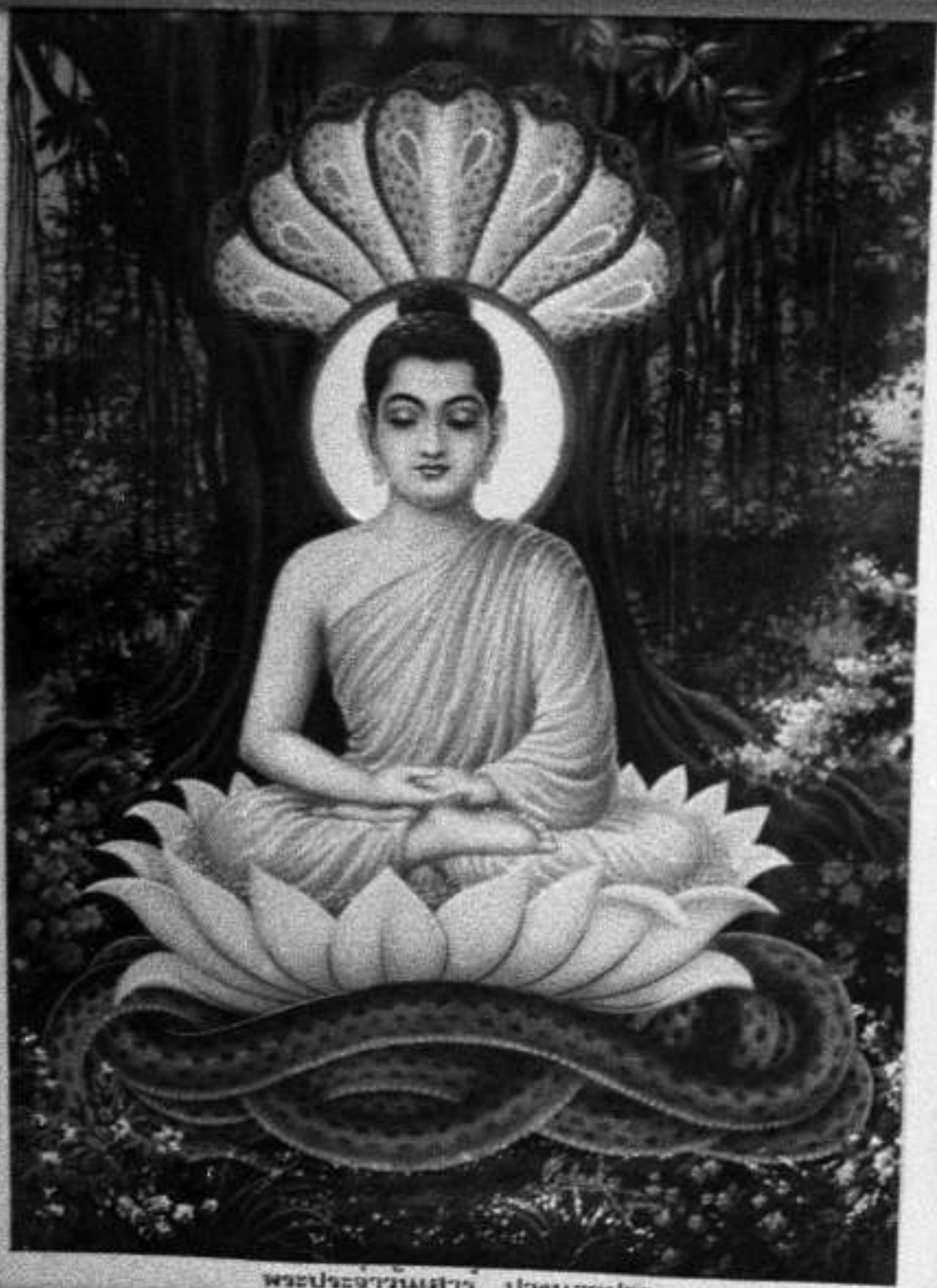




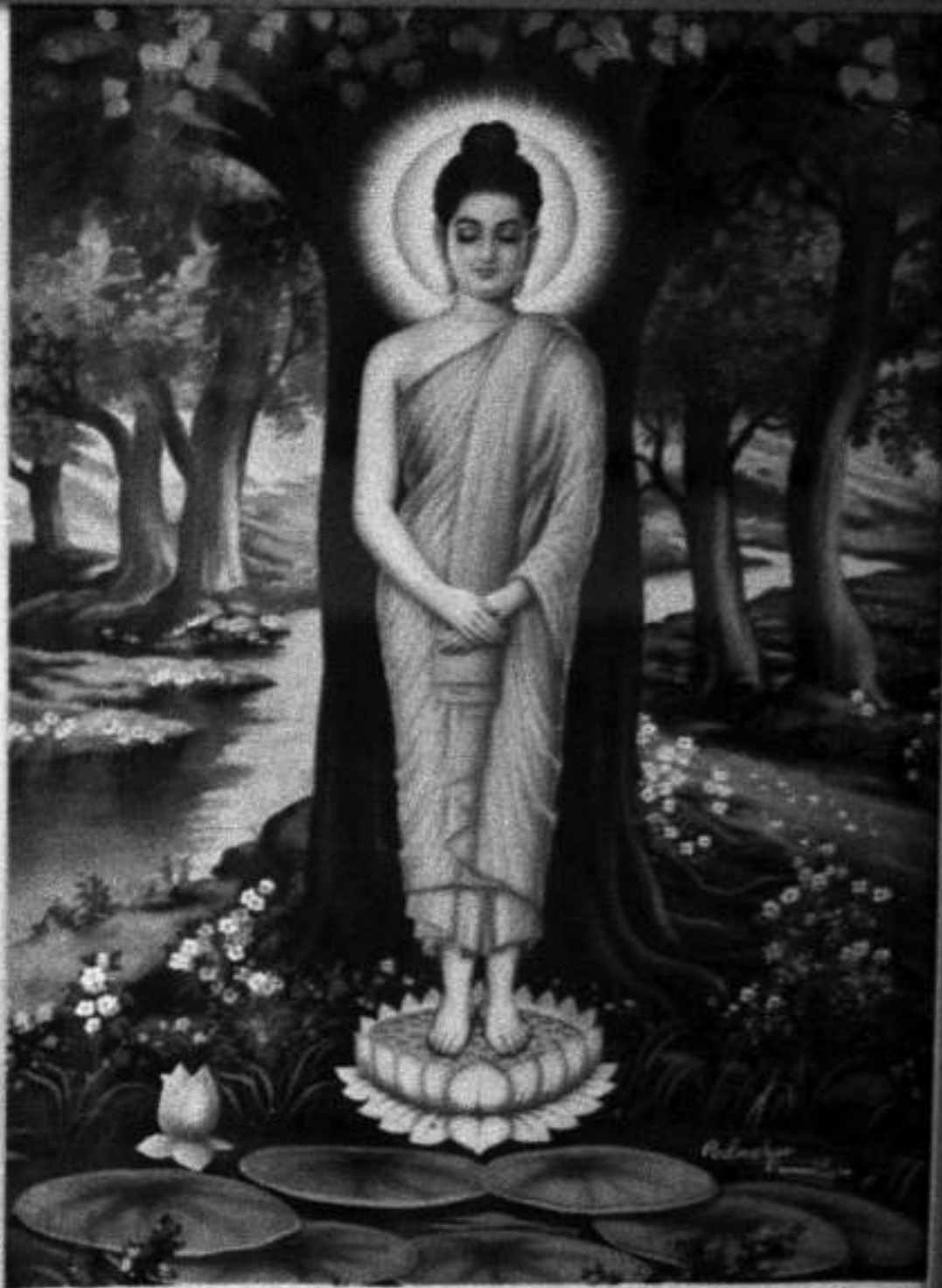




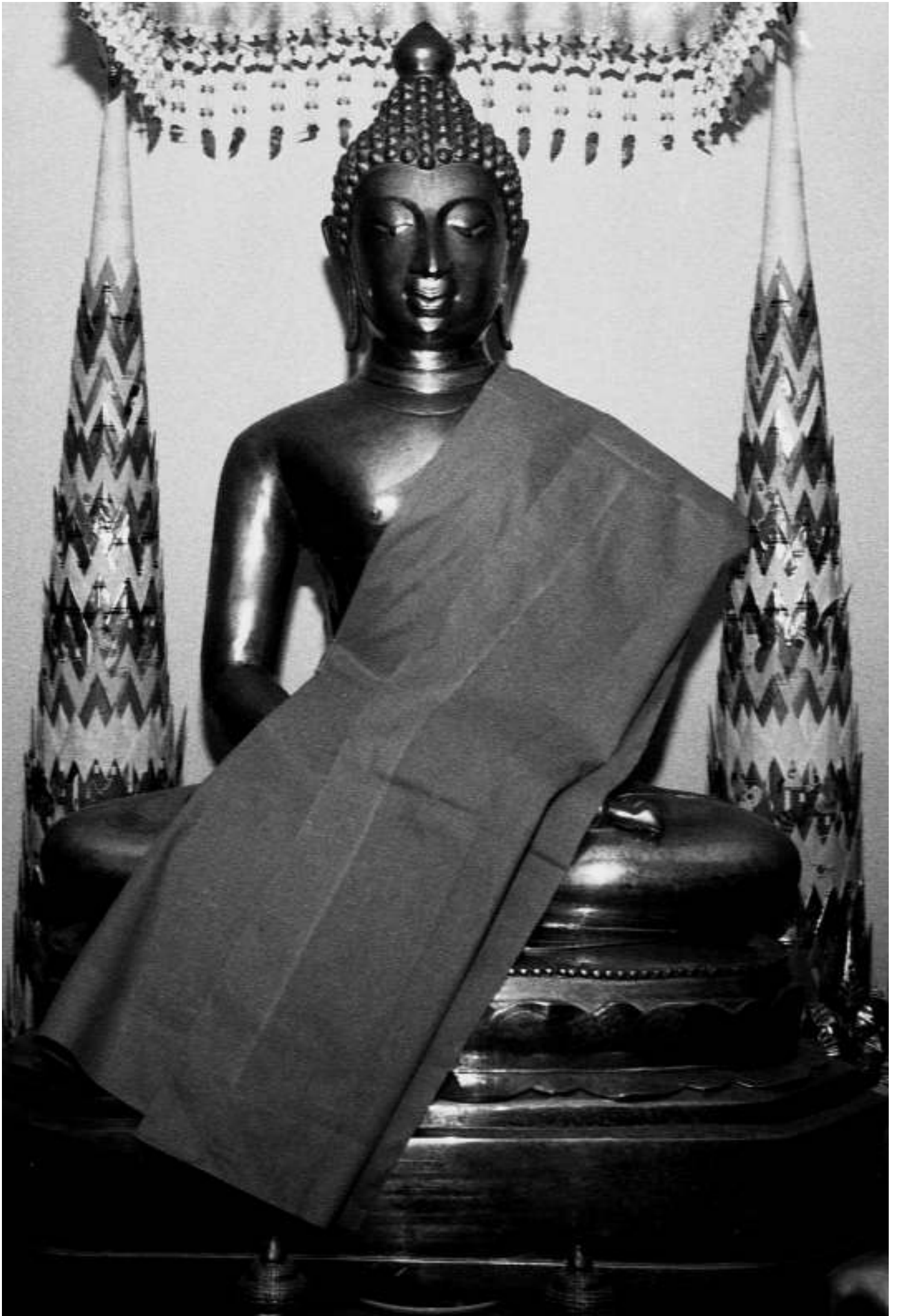


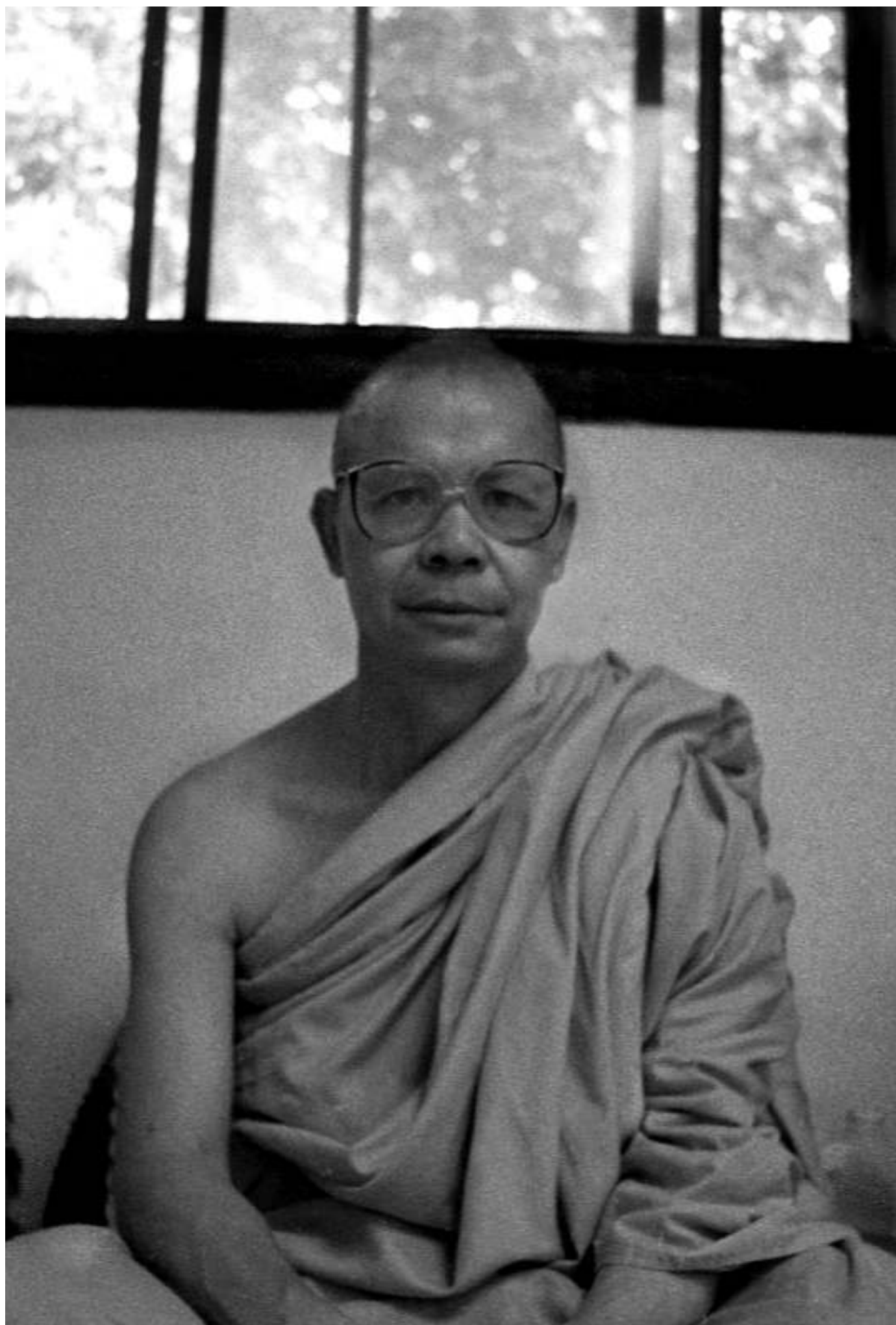


พุทธประวัติ ๑๖๖



ปางถวายเนตร วันอาทิตย์





In 1996 the Rev. Sik Kuan Yin converted a former banquet hall and restaurant to create the Thousand Buddha Temple in the Boston suburb of Quincy. Many people from Boston Chinatown and other Greater Boston communities worship at the temple now.

Inside the temple, 1,000 small golden Buddhas line the walls of the main hall. Outside, a large stone Kuan Yin – the Buddha of compassion – stands in the courtyard.

“In 1988, when I came to Boston for a visit I found that a lot of Chinese people wished they had a Buddhist temple here.

Even when I went to the Chinese supermarket (in Chinatown) people said, ‘Oh, I will donate money to help you. I will support you. We want to have a temple here.’

When people drove me around they saw that I was a nun and said hello to me. Once when I was in the Buddhist temple in New York City someone called the temple. I by chance picked up the phone and spoke to that woman.

She was from Boston and she was very sad. She said she wanted to have a place in Boston where she could go to release her trouble and pray but there wasn’t such a place here; she said she had to go to New York. I spoke to that woman for a half hour.

Always I heard the same story from people. When I traveled between New York and Hong Kong, people on the airplane often told me that they had to go to New York to visit a Buddhist temple. Why don’t we have one in Boston so we don’t have to go so far away?

There are a few Christians among the Chinese immigrants here, but the majority of the Chinese are Buddhists, especially the people from Vietnam, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The people from Mainland China also practice Buddhism.

More and more of the Chinese immigrants are Buddhists. Some may not formally join the temple or call themselves Buddhists, but they have a strong Buddhist influence from their Chinese culture.

This is especially true of the new wave of immigrants who came here after China opened its doors and changed its economy. Even if they don’t practice regularly, they still like to have a temple they can go to.

So I decided to open a temple here. There were already a group of Buddhists in this area, and they helped me buy a house in the Wollaston section of Quincy. I moved into that house and we started to practice Buddhism together.

Gradually more and more people were attracted to the temple — people who used to go to the New York temple.

After we opened the temple in Wollaston we realized we would have to find another place. The first temple was located on a residential street in Wollaston. The people coming and going to the temple created a lot of traffic. It was unsafe for the children who lived on the street.

The neighbors thought we should move to a commercial area where there would be more parking. So we started to work on it.

It took us almost three years to find this new location. We received a lot of support from the local Buddhists who helped us find this place and build the temple.

The formal Pure Land worship involves a ceremony. You have to be here to watch it — to understand what it is. I can't really describe it.

It's a ceremony and a formal practice. This temple has enough room to hold a formal ceremony. Some temples are more crowded — like a residential house.

There's a difference between chanting and the formal Pure Land ceremony. The chanting is actually a reading from a Buddhist text (the Lotus Sutra).

Chanting is like reading a book. After you read it many times, its meaning seeps into your mind and consciousness. Once its meaning gets inside you it can guide you through your daily life.

In the ceremony you kowtow before the Buddha. You put yourself in a lower position. In this way you can better control your ego because once you put your head down and lower your body you cannot have that kind of ego.

This is a way to help people control their sense of self-importance and their ego.

I'm confident about the future of Buddhism in this country. I believe that Buddhist teachings are good for individuals and for the society as a whole.

Many Americans have an understanding of Buddhism and practice Buddhism now. I can only reach out to them in a limited way because I don't speak English. I cannot really go into the society.

All I can do is make available more English books for those who don't know Chinese. Americans who are interested in Buddhism can take those books and

study on their own.

I know there are different Buddhist groups in this area; there are several Zen centers where Americans go to practice and study Buddhism.

There are also three or four other Asian Buddhist temples in the area, including a Chinese temple in Lexington and a Vietnamese temple in Boston.

Buddhism's teachings really help people purify their hearts and souls and bodies. When people are confronted by problems in their lives they need a place to go to purify their minds.

Once they become calm and purified they can find a solution to the problem. For this reason many people like to practice Buddhism.

Buddhist teachings are the same for all people, no matter what form of Buddhism they practice. The goal of the teachings is to purify your mind and your heart.

There are different ways to practice, and Pure Land — the form we practice here — is one of them. This is the way I prefer to practice, but there are other monks and nuns who come to this temple who teach other ways of practicing Buddhism.

People from other schools also come here to teach their way of practice. The Zen practice emphasizes meditation, but in Pure Land we do chanting.

All Buddhists have the same goals, the same theories. So it's just a question of preference. The Buddhist teachings are all the same.

In Buddhism there are a few basic rules to guide you. The rules are meant to lead you in the right direction, to help you purify your heart and soul.

If you follow these rules you're unlikely to get into trouble; if you have a problem and keep your heart quiet and pure, you will more easily find a solution to your problem.

First, you should abstain from evil acts; second, you should always be kind to others and promote the good of society; third, you should keep your mind pure and know your own intentions.

Sometimes people do things without thinking or being aware of why they are doing them.

In the basic Buddhist practice, there are also five prohibitions.

First, it's wrong to kill any living being because killing in any form shows a lack of compassion. If you have compassion for all the sentient beings, you should not kill any of them.

Second, it is wrong to commit adultery because adultery breaks up the family and leads to much suffering in society. Adultery causes pain for yourself and other families.

Third, you should not drink alcohol because alcohol can confuse your mind and make you lose control of yourself.

Fourth, it's wrong to be greedy. Greed can lead to much trouble in society. It can lead to stealing and other wrong actions. Even the thought of desiring too much isn't good for yourself or the society.

Fifth, it's wrong to lie or insult others. Lying and insulting others leads to more suffering.

If you follow these basic rules you will be following the Buddhist way.

As a Buddhist you should always have compassion. To live the Buddhist life you must have the capacity to tolerate and forgive others."



