

The Relationship between the Palaces and the Buddhist Temples in Rattanakosin Period: Study on Wat Rajadhivas Vihara

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Abstract—The aims of this research were to study the relationship between the Palaces (the Kings and the Royalty of the Chakri Dynasty) and the Buddhist temples including Wat Rajadhivas Vihara in Rattanakosin Period of Thailand with the purpose of creating knowledge for Thai lifelong learning, especially for Thai youth and children, and to create positive attitude on Nationalism, Buddhism and Monarchy of Thai people. The findings disclosed that the Palaces have had relationships with 33,902 temples, close relationship with 290 royal temples, and closer relationship with the 8 royal temples regarded as the “Temple of King Rama”. Moreover, there are only 16 Royal temples including Wat Rajadhivas Vihara where the Chakri Kings present the annual royal Kathin robes to the monks by themselves. Wat Rajadhivas Vihara has always been restored under royal patronage and served as royal shrine like the 8 Temples of King Rama.

Keywords—Palaces, Buddhists Temples, Wat Rajadhivas Vihara.

I. INTRODUCTION

AFTER King Rama I ascended to the throne in 1782, he founded Rattanakosin (now Bangkok) as the new capital of the kingdom. He wished to patronize Buddhism, protect the Kingdom and look after his people and nobilities. He realized the importance of the Palaces (the Kings and the Royalty of Chakri Dynasty) and the Buddhist temples, both of which cannot be separated and need to be dependable. In the past, the Buddhist temples were very important in Thai society because these temples were served as community halls, schools of Thai youths, the civil official schools, centers of Art works: Painting, Sculpture and Architecture; centers of Buddhist thought and places where everybody can participate in various kinds of activities. And monks were the leaders of the communities. He wished to purify Buddhism by sorting out the scriptures, regulating the ecclesiastical laws and building many Buddhist temples. The first significant Buddhist temple of his reign was Wat Prasri Rattana Sasadaram or the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, the most beautiful Buddhist temple situated within the Grand Palace and was built by King Rama I at the same time as the Grand Palace. After that, he built, rebuilt or restored many Buddhist temples. The Buddhist activities of King Rama I were followed respectively by the later Chakri Kings, especially by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great or King Rama IX in the

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present reign of Rattanakosin Period [1].



Fig. 1 Wat Prasirattana Sasadaram



Fig. 2 Chakri Kings

In the case of Wat Rajadhivas Vihara; with its former name Wat Samorai, and renamed by King Rama IV; is located on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River in Dusit District of Bangkok, about two kilometers from the Grand Palace. This very old Buddhist temple was regarded by the Chakri King as the royal temple and there's much historical evidence to show that it has always been closely related to the Palaces in Rattanakosin Period [2].



Fig. 3 Wat Rajadhipas Vihara

II. METHODOLOGY

This documentary research study had collected historical data from National Library of Thailand, National Archive of Thailand and Wat Rajadhipas Vihara; analyzed qualitative data and interpreted in qualitative research without variable control just as naturalistic research; and presents the analysis results and research results by descriptive writing with pictures.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Overview of the Respondent

It can be separated the relationship between the Palaces and the Buddhist temples into 9 reigns as follows [1], [3], [4]:

- 1) Reign of King Rama I: In terms of the maintenance of the Buddhist temples dated back to the year 1782, King Rama I (King Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke the Great) built Wat Prasirattana Sasadaram and Wat Suthatpwararam, restored many temples: such as Wat Phrachetuphon Wimonmangkhalaram (Temple of King Rama I). He collected and restored many ancient Images of Buddha and gave them to the Buddhist temples, allowed his son (later King Rama II) to enter the monkhood at Wat Prasirattana Sasadaram and to reside in Wat Samorai (later Wat Rajadhipas Vihara).



Fig. 4 Wat Phrachetuphon Wimonmangkhalaram

- 2) Reign of King Rama II: King Rama II (King Buddha Loetla Nabhalai) was crowned in 1809. He built Wat Songtham, Wat Chaiyaphruckmala and Wat

Suthatpwararam (continued); and restored Wat Arunrajawararam (Temple of King Rama II), Wat Rajorasaram (Temple of King Rama III) and many more temples; allowed his son (later King Rama III) to enter the monkhood at Wat Prasirattana Sasadaram and to reside in Wat Rajasittharam and also allowed his son (later King Rama IV) to enter the monkhood at Wat Prasirattana Sasadaram and to reside in Wat Samorai.



Wat Arunrajawararam

Wat Rajorasaram

Fig. 5 Important royal temples in the reign of King Rama II

- 3) Reign of King Rama III: King Rama III (King Nangklao) was crowned in 1824. The reign of King Rama III was the golden age of Buddhism in Thailand. He built Wat Thepthidaram, Wat Ratchanaddaram with the third metallic castle of the world, Wat Suthatpwararam (finished), the Golden Mountain of Wat Saket and many important Images of Buddha; restored Wat Phrachetuphon Wimonmang-khalaram to be the Temple University; rebuilt the Phra prang of Wat Arunrajawararam and restored many more temples. Most of them were built in Chinese style. King Rama III favored all persons who built Buddhist temples.



Wat Thepthidaram



Wat Ratchanaddaram



Wat Suthatpwararam



Golden Mountain

Fig. 6 Important royal temples in the reign of King Rama III

- 4) Reign of King Rama IV: King Rama IV (King Mongkut) was crowned in 1851. He built many Buddhist Temples: such as Wat Makut Kasattriyaram, Wat Rajapradit Sathitmahasimaram (Temple of King Rama IV), Phra Nakhon Khiri (consisted of the summer palace and Buddhist temple on the three peaks of the hill) in Phetchaburi province, Phra Pathom Chedi (the largest pagoda in Thailand) in Nakorn Pathom province, etc., restored and renamed Wat Samorai to Wat Rajadivivas Vihara, restored many more temples, and built many important Images of Buddha and gave them to Buddhist temples.



Fig. 7 Important royal temples in the reign of King Rama IV

- 5) Reign of King Rama V: King Rama V (King Chulalongkorn the Great) was crowned in 1868. Soon after that, he entered the monkhood at Wat Prasrirattana Sasadaram for 15 days. Thereafter, he allowed his son (later King Rama VI) to enter the monkhood at Wat Prasrirattana Sasadaram and to reside in Wat Bowornniwet Vihara (Temple of King Rama VI). He built a few royal Buddhist temples such as Wat Rajabopit Sathitmahasimaram (Temple of King Rama V), etc.; restored Wat Prasrirattana Sasadaram and some other temples, dismantled and rebuilt all buildings of Wat Rajadivivas Vihara, established the temple schools in Bangkok and other provinces, built some Images of Buddha and gave them to important royal temples.



Wat Bowornniwet

Wat Rajabopit

Fig. 8 Important royal temples in the reign of King Rama V

- 6) Reign of King Rama VI: King Rama VI (King Vajiravudh) was crowned in 1910. He thought that there were too many temples to take care and restore, so he didn't build any temples in his reign but restored the existing temples such as Wat Prasrirattana Sasadaram, Wat Bowornniwet Vihara, Wat Rajadivivas Vihara, etc.; and allowed his younger brother (later King Rama VII) to enter the monkhood at Wat Prasrirattana Sasadaram and to reside in Wat Bowornniwet Vihara.
- 7) Reign of King Rama VII: King Rama VII (King Prajadhipok) was crowned in 1925. He did not build a new temple but restored many temples such as Wat Rajabopit Sathitmahasimaram (Temple of King Rama V and King Rama VII), Wat Rajadivivas Vihara, etc.
- 8) Reign of King Rama VIII: King Rama VIII (King Ananda Mahidol) was crowned in 1934. His Prime Minister, Field Marshal Plaek Pibulsonggram, built Wat Phra Sri Mahathat in Laksi District of Bangkok for merging Dhammayuttika Nikaya monks and Maha Nikaya monks together. In this reign, Wat Suthatpwararam was regarded as Temple of King Rama VIII.
- 9) Reign of King Rama IX: King Rama IX (King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great) was crowned in 1946. Soon after that, he entered the monkhood at Wat Prasrirattana Sasadaram and resided in Wat Boworn-niwet Vihara. In this present reign, King Rama IX arranged the 25th Century Celebrations of Buddhist Era by holding the festivals at Sanamluang, published the 2,500 Books of Tripitaka in Thai version and distributed them to many institutions in Thailand and foreign countries and constructed a Buddhist park covering an area of 2500 Rai (about 400 hectares) and called Buddha Monthon. He has patronized Buddhists to be ordained every year, made merits in every holy day, always joined public Buddhist religious ceremonies and granted royal Kathin to royal temples in Bangkok and other provinces, has always donated his money to maintain Buddhist temples and sacred places, has built many Images of Buddha such as Phra Buddha Navarat Bopit and gave them to various places in every province, etc.. He regarded Wat Rama IX Kanchanapisek as the Temple of King Rama IX.



Buddha Monthon Wat Rama IX Kanchanapisek

Fig. 9 Important place and royal temples in the reign of King Rama IX

B. Case Study of Wat Rajadhivas Vihara

Wat Rajadhivas Vihara has had the close relationship with the Palaces because it was the monk residence of King Rama II and King Rama IV, was renamed by King Rama IV, has always been restored under royal patronage; and served as the royal shrine, where the royal remains and ashes of 2 Queens of King Rama V and some Royalty have been enshrined into the base of Buddha Images [2].



Fig. 10 Queen Savang Vadhana (left) and Queen Saovabha Bongsri (right) of King Rama V

In addition, this temple is one of 16 royal temples where the King presents the annual royal Kathin by himself or by his representative every year [4].



Fig. 11 King Rama IX presents the annual Royal Kathin

In the reign of King Rama V, he demolished and rebuilt almost all the buildings of this temple, such as the phra ubosot, the phra chedi, the sermon hall in the monastery, the red wooden cubicle, the chapel, the stone road, the stone courtyard, the stone hill, the stone pillar, the dam, the ditch, the road through the middle of the temple, the bridge and casting the principle Buddha image in the phra ubosot. These practices were great renovation [5].



Phra ubosot



Phra chedi



Sermon hall in the monastery



Red wooden cubicle

Fig. 12 Religious building in Wat Rajadhivas Vihara which were built by King Rama V

In the reign of King Rama VI, he ordered his men to paint the murals depicting Vessantara allegory in the phra ubosot, to build the phra vihara devoting for his royal grandmother, and much more [2].



Fig. 13 Mural painting in phra ubosot (left) and Phra vihara (right) In Wat Rajadhivas Vihara which were built by King Rama VI

In the reign of King Rama VII, he gave Phayathai royal residence to Wat Rajadhivas Vihara. His queen, Queen Rambhai Barni, built 3 row cubicles, and much more [2].



Fig. 14 Phayathai royal residence (left) and Queen right) in Wat Rajadhivas Vihara which were built by King Rama VI

In the present reign of King Rama IX, he restored the Phra Samput Wattanopat, the phra ubosot, the sermon hall in a monastery and the monk residence of King Rama IV [2].



Fig. 15 Phra Samput Wattanopat (left) and King Rama IV's monk residence (right) in Wat Rajadhiva Vihara which were restored by King Rama IX

Now there are 33,902 Buddhist temples, 290 royal temples, and 8 royal temples regarded as the "Temple of King Rama" and only 16 Royal temples including Wat Rajadhivas Vihara where the Chakri Kings present the annual royal Kathin robes to the monks in these temples [6].

The result from data analysis in qualitative research shows that the Palaces have had relationships with 33,902 temples, close relationship with 290 royal temples, and closer relationship with the 8 royal temples regarded as the "Temple of King Rama". Moreover, there are only 16 Royal temples including Wat Rajadhivas Vihara where the Chakri Kings present the annual royal Kathin robes to the monks by themselves. Wat Rajadhivas Vihara has always been restored under royal patronage and served as royal shrine like the 8 Temples of King Rama.

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