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Cultural Geography: History, Propagation Routes of Buddhism, and Principles of Buddhadhamma in Thailand

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were to study the history, propagation routes of Buddhism, and principles of Buddhadhamma appeared in archaeological evidences in Dvaravati, Srivichai, Lop Buri, Sukhothai, Lan Na, and Ayuttaya periods. It was a qualitative research. The data collection consisted of studying related documents, observation, interview, and group discussion. The results were found that:

Theravada Buddhism from India was propagated from India to Suvannabhumi by sea. It was presumed that the land was either Satherm in Myanmar or NakhonPathom in Thailand, then continued to Funan, Thawarawadee, and Lop Buri. And Mahayana Buddhism was spread to Suvannabhumi by sea and landed at Malayu Peninsula and continued spreading to the kingdoms of Srivijaya, Khmer, and Thailand in Lop Buri period. Therefore, Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism had continued to prosper till Sukhothai Period. When Mahayana Buddhism had declined its influence, Pagan Buddhism and Lankan Buddhism came to prosper and spread to Lanna Kingdom. And when the Pagan Buddhism had degenerated, the Lankan Buddhism got its influence in Ayutthaya period and had continued to the present time.

The principles of Buddhadhamma appeared in the archaeological evidences in Thailand in the periods of Thawarawadee, Srivijaya, Lop Buri, Sukhothai, Lanna, and Ayutthaya were Ariyasacca 4 (the Four Noble Truths), Punnakiriyavatthu 10 (the ten Bases of Meritorious Action), Rattanattaya (the Triple Gem), Sacca (the Truth), Caga (Liberality), Saddhama-antaradhan 5, Rajadhamma 10 (ten virtues of a ruler), Tilakkhana (the Three Characteristics), Niraya (Hell), Sagga (Heaven), Mangala 38 (thirty-eight blessings), Nibbana (the supreme goal of Buddhism), Dullabha-puggala 2 (two rare persons), Disa 6 (six directions), Rajadhamma (ten virtues of a ruler), Iddhipada (four paths of accomplishment), Saddha 4 (four faith), Tilakkhana (the



Three Characteristics), Puja 2 (two acts of worship), Garava 6 (six reverence), Parami 10 (ten perfections), Kusalamula 3 (the three Wholesome Roots), and Akusalamula 3 (the three unwholesome Roots).

Keywords: history, principles of Buddhhadhamma, propagation routes of Buddhism

1. Introduction

The geography and culture of Buddhism that appear in different parts of Thailand today reflect the importance of Buddhism to the way of life of the people living in this area. From the study of historical traces and the propagation of Buddhism in the reign of various kingdoms such as Dvaravati, Srivijaya, Lop Buri, Sukhothai, Lanna and Ayutthaya, Buddhism has been propagated to this area since the 3rd Buddhist century. There were two main Buddhist sects existed in Thailand i.e. Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. This is divided into 4 periods (Athaikon, Kanchan, 2002, pp. 51-54) as follows:

1) The period of Ashoka Theravada Buddhism (BC 308); After Ashoka the Great had sponsored the 3rd Buddhist Council in India, Phra Moggalliputtatissa Thera sent the Buddhist missionary monks, Phra Sona and Phra Uttara, to disseminate Buddhism in Suvarnabhumi

2) The period of Mahayana Buddhism (AD 459-675); Khmer kingdom accepted Mahayana Buddhism from Srivijaya in the reign of the first Suriyavoraman and enlarged to the ranges of Chao Phaya River and Khong River. But the main Buddhism in this period was Theravada Buddhism of the Mon people.

3) The period of Pagan Buddhism (AD 1057); Due to the prosperity of Pagan Kingdom, Thai people were influenced by Pagan Buddhism from the North to Sukhothai.

4) The period of Lankan Theravada Buddhism (AD 1257); There were both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism in the time of Pho Khun Si Inthrahit of Sukhothai. When King Ramkhamhaeng the Great governed Sukhothai from AD 1279-1299, he invited the Buddhist monks from Nakhon Si Thammarat to spread Lankan Theravada Buddhism in Sukhothai. Then Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism gradually dissolved. It can be said that various traditions and cultures of Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos have been derived from Lankan Theravada Buddhism.

Therefore, the researchers are interested in studying Cultural Geography on History, Propagation Routes of Buddhism, and Principles of Buddhhadhamma in Thailand which derived from Dvaravati, Srivijaya, Lop Buri, Sukhothai, Lan Na, and Ayutthaya Kingdoms. The results of this research will bring benefits to the people in society in terms of values of Buddhism, including the identity of the nation. It helps to encourage Thai people to more learn, preserve, and practice according to the principles of Buddhism.

2. Research Objectives

This research consisted of three objectives:

- 2.1 To study the history, Propagation Routes, and Principles of Buddhadhamma in Dvaravati and Srivichai periods
- 2.2 To study the history, Propagation Routes, and Principles of Buddhadhamma in Lop Buri period
- 2.3 To study the history, Propagation Routes, and Principles of Buddhadhamma in Sukhothai and Lan Na periods
- 2.4 To study the history, Propagation Routes, and Principles of Buddhadhamma in Ayutthaya period

3. Research Methodology

This research was a qualitative research. Data collection was done by studying from the Buddhist scripture. The field study was done by collecting from archaeological evidences which appeared in the propagation routes of Buddhism in Thailand, Dvaravati, Srivijaya, Lop Buri, Sukhothai, Lan Na, and Ayutthaya.

3.1 The research instruments consisted of observation, interview, and focus group discussion. The observation form was consisted of two parts; part one carried eight issues of observation i.e. series number, founded archaeology, type of archaeology, age, place, keeping, and summary detail; part two carried the other remarks. The interview form was consisted with three parts; part one concerned with the informants' general information; part two carried three main contents of questions on history, propagation routes, and archaeological evidence; part three carried the additional information. The focus group discussion form consisted of three parts; part one concerned with the general information of the participants; part two concerned with views and comments of the participants; part three carried the additional view.

3.2 Data Collection

The following were the stages of data collection:

3.2.1 Documentary studies were collected from different sources such as books, research works, and websites, etc.

3.2.2 The observation stage was done by the researchers at the archeological places in Thailand, Dvaravati, Srivijaya, Lop Buri, Sukhothai, Lan Na, and Ayutthaya.

3.2.3 In the stage of interview, the researchers interviewed scholars of Buddhist history, on three main questions i.e. the history, the propagation routes, and the archeological evidences in Thailand, Dvaravati, Srivijaya, Lop Buri, Sukhothai, Lan Na, and Ayutthaya.

3.2.4 For focus group discussion, all informants were invited to participate in a discussion forum in order to obtain the data of their views and comments on three main questions i.e. the history, the propagation routes, and the archeological evidences in Thailand, Dvaravati, Srivijaya, Lop Buri, Sukhothai, Lan Na, and Ayutthaya.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis was done by content analysis through descriptive presentation obtained from the documentary studies, observation, interview, and focus group discussion. It was presented according to the research objectives.

4. Research Results

The results were presented according to the research objectives as follows:

4.1) History, propagation routes, and principles of Buddhhadhmma in the period of Dvaravati were found that;

4.1.1) Buddhism in Dvaravati period was formerly known as Funan Kingdom which covered the ranges of Chao Phraya River in the central Thailand and the Mekong River including the Khmer Rouge, Laos, and Vietnam.

4.1.2) The propagation routes of Buddhism in Dvaravati period had been traced by archaeological evidences in various places in Thailand such as the Pallava inscription of Pali language on the Buddha amulet 1 (Mettayako) in the 11th - 12th Buddhist centuries, discovered at the U-Thong National Museum, Pallava inscription of Pali language on the Buddha amulet 2 (Sariputto) in the 11th - 12th Buddhist centuries, discovered at the eleventh pagoda in U-Thong Ancient museum, and Pallava inscription of Pali language on the Buddha amulet 6 (Punnosunaparanto) in the 11th-12th Buddhist century in Suphan Buri Province.

4.1.3) The Buddhist principles that appeared in the archaeological evidence of the Dvaravati period during the 12th-16th centuries were as follows; 1) the Four Noble Truth (Ariyasacca 4) found in the inscription Dhammacakka in Nakhon Pathom province, 2) the Bases of Meritorious Action (Punnakiriyavatthu 10), found in the inscription of Ruesi Khao Ngu Cave in Ratchaburi Province, 3) the Triple Gem, found in the inscription of the baked clay Buddha amulet at Wat Khok Mai Den in Nakhon Sawan Province, 4) the Bases of Meritorious Action (Punnakiriyavatthu 10), found in the inscription of Wat Chan Thuk in 12th century in Nakhon Ratchasima, 5) the inscription on the baked clay Buddha amulet of Muang Fa Dad Soong Yang 1 at Kamalasai District, Kalasin province, 6) the Triple Gem, found in the inscription of Nern Sa Bua in Srimahosot District, Prachin Buri, 7) The Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca 4), found in the inscription of Ye Dhamma at Srithep District, SuratThani province, aging in the 12th Buddhist century, and 8) the inscription of Ye Dhamma on the clay Stupa at Yarang, Pattani province, aging in the 12th Buddhist century.

4.2) History, propagation routes, and principles of Buddhhadhmma in the period of Srivijaya were found that;

4.2.1) Buddhism in Srivijaya period was in the 13th Buddhist century. This area was once inhabited by ancient Malayu people, set up by the Sailen dynasty. It covered the areas from Malayu Cape, Sumatra Island, Java Island, Malacca Strait, Sunda Strait, and the most Southern Thailand up to present Surat Thani.

4.2.2) The evidences of propagation routes of Buddhism in Srivijaya period was found in Phra Borommathat Chaiya, Chaiya District, Surat Thani province aging around the 13th -14th Buddhist centuries, Wat Phra Boromthat, Muang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Wat Khian Bang Kaew, Khao Chaison District, Phattalung Province, built in 940 C.E., the raw clay amulet in Stupa at Khao Nui cave in Trang province around the 13th-14th centuries, the raw clay amulet in Pattani Province

around the 12th century, the reclining Buddha of Wat Koohapimuk (Wat Tham) in Yala province, built in 757 C.E.

4.2.3) The Buddhist principles that appeared in the archaeological evidences of the Srivijaya period were as follows; 1) the Bases of Meritorious Action (Punnakiriyavatthu 10), found in the inscription of Wat Semamiang, Wiengsak sub-district, Mueang district, Nakhon Si Thammarat province, aging in 775 C.E., the Four Noble Truth (Ariyasacca 4) found in the inscription of the raw clay amulet in Stupa at Khao Nui in Trang province, aging around 13th – 14th Buddhist centuries.

4.3) History, propagation routes, and principles of Buddhhadhamma in the period of Lop Buri were found that;

4.3.1) Buddhism in Lop Buri Period was Theravada Buddhism, derived from Dvaravati and Mahayana Buddhism from Khmer. Thus, the two sects of Buddhism flourished along with Brahmanism which had been existed. In 18th Buddhist century, King Jayavarman VII built many Buddhist temples, castles, and Buddha statues in Mahayana Buddhism. He also built Prasat Ta Prohm as a monastic university. There were 18 head teachers of the Buddhist monks and 2,740 deputy teachers. The prince was sent to study Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka and was ordained at the Wat Mahavihara in Sri Lanka. At the last part of the century, Brahmanism - Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism were declined, But Theravada Buddhism had been continued prospering to the present time.

4.3.2) The evidences of propagation routes of Buddhism in Lop Buri period were as follows; 1) Phra Chai Buddhahanat and Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, found at Prasat Muang Sing in Kanchanaburi province, built in the time of King Jayavarman VII in the 8th Buddhist century, 2) the statues of the radiant Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara with four hands, Phra Chai Buddhahanat and Phra Nang Pratchayaparamita at Prasat Kamphaenglaeng in Wat Kamphaeng Lang or Wat Thep Prasat Silalaeng, Tha Lab sub-district, Muang District, Phetchaburi province, 3) nine Aggisala along the Rajamagga from Prasat Ta Muen Tot to Prasat Hin Pimai, 4) Arogayasala in Mahayana Buddhism, found in Surin, Buri Ram, and Nakhon Ratchasima, 5) Si Mahosot Ancient Town, found at Si Mahosot District, Prachinburi Province.

4.3.3) The Buddhist principles that appeared in the archaeological evidences of the Lop Buri period were as follows; 1) the Bases of Meritorious Action (Punnakiriyavatthu 10), found in the inscription of Wat Khoi, Banmi sub-district, Lop Buri province, the Octagonal pillar-Inscription in Lop Buri province, the inscription on the base of Standing Buddha statue at Wat Mahathat in Lop Buri province, the inscription of Wat Don Kaow in Lamphun province, 2) the Triple Gem, found in the inscription of Nern Sa Bua in Prachinburi province, 3) the Recollection of the Buddha (Buddhanussati), found in the inscription of the second Prasat Hin Pimai in Nakhon Ratchasima Province.

4.4) History, propagation routes, and principles of Buddhhadhamma in the period of Sukhothai were found that;

4.4.1) Buddhism in the earlier Sukhothai period was Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism, including Brahmanism due to the influence of Khmer empire.

By the beginning of 18th Buddhist century, the traditional Theravada Buddhism had been flourished in the reign of Pho Khun Si Inthrahit, then Lankan Theravada Buddhism came into Thailand by the invitation of Por Khun

Ramkhamhaeng to stay in Wat Pa, called Aranyavasi Section (Santi Leksukhum: 2555, p 10-12)

4.4.2) The propagation routes of Buddhism in Sukhothai were divided into 2 phases as follows:

Phase 1; In the reigns of Pho Khun Si Inthathit and Pho Khun Ramkhamhaeng around the late 18th Buddhist century, Buddhism was disseminated to Sri Lanka, Nakhon Srithammarat, and Sukhothai as shown in the route diagram

Sri Lanka --> Nakhon Srithammarat -->

Phase 2; In the reigns of Phaya Loethai and Phaya Lithai in the late 19th Buddhist century, Buddhist monks from Sukhothai went to Muang Pan via India to study in Sri Lanka and came back to Sukhothai as shown in the route diagram

Sukhothai --> Muang Pan --> India --> Sri Lanka --> Sukhothai

4.4.3) The Buddhist principles that appeared in the archaeological evidences of the Lop Buri period were as follows; 1) the Vanish 5 (Antaradhan 5) and the Ten Virtues of a Ruler (Rajadhamma 10), found in the inscription of Nakhon Chum, 2) the Haven (Sagga), found in the inscription of Poo Khun Chit Khun Chod, 3) the Three Characteristics (Tilakkhana), found in the inscription of Chao Thamma Rangsi, 4) the Three Existence (Bhumi 3), found in the book of Tebhumikatha.

4.5) History, propagation routes, and principles of Buddhaddhamma in the period of Lan Na were found that;

4.5.1) Buddhism in Lan Na period had inherited Theravada Buddhism from Haripunchai. When Phraya Mang Rai had created a new city, named "Nop Buri Srinakhon Chiang Mai", he also built Wat Chiang Mun for keeping Phra Kaow Khau, Wat Ku Kham, and Wat Kard Tom in Wiang Kumkarm.

4.5.2) The propagation routes of Buddhism in Lan Na were divided into 2 phases as follows:

Phase 1; By the beginning of 20th Buddhist century, Lanka Wong Buddhism was spread to Lan Na kingdom in the reign of Phra Chao Kue Na through Muang Pan, Sukhothai, Lamphum, and Chiang Mai as shown in the route diagram

Lanka --> Muang Pan --> Sukhothai --> Lamphum --> Chiang

Phase 2; In the last 20th Buddhist century, 25 monks in Chiang Mai, 8 monks in Lop Buri and 6 Mon monks went to renew their ordination in Sri Lanka and came back to disseminate Buddhism in Ayutthaya, Srisatchanalai, Sukhothai, and Chiang Mai as shown in the route diagram

Sri Lanka --> Ayutthaya --> Srisatchanalai --> Sukhothai --> Chiang

4.5.3) The Buddhist principles that appeared in the archaeological evidences of the Lan Na period were the Bases of Meritorious Action (Punnakiriyavatthu 10) and various principles found in different books.

4.6) Buddhism in Ayutthaya was the Lankan Theravada Buddhism. In 1209 C.E. Somdet Phra Chao Yu Hua Borommakot sent Thai Buddhist monks to revive Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The principles of Buddhaddhamma found in the archeological evidences were as follows; the principles of Buddhaddhamma reflected in the purposes of construction and establishment temples by kings were Dullabha-puggala 2 (rare persons), Disa 6 (six directions), Rajadhamma 10 (ten virtues of a ruler); the principles of Buddhaddhamma reflected in the architectures were Iddhipada 4 (four paths of accomplishment), Saddha 4 (faith); the principles of Buddhaddhamma reflected in the sculptures were Buddhaguna 3 (qualities of attributes of the Buddha), Puja 2 (acts of worship), Garava 6 (reverence); and the principles of Buddhaddhamma reflected in the paintings and in the literatures were Parami (perfections).

5. Discussion

The history of Buddhism had been found in the third century spreading from India to Suvarnabhumi by sea, then to the kingdoms of Funan, Dvaravati, and Lop Buri. It is assumed that the land is located in the city of Satherm in Myanmar or Nakhon Pathom in Thailand. When analyzed from a geographic perspective, it is evident that navigating from India ashored in Myanmar's Satherm Province is more possibility than Nakhon Pathom in Thailand. The reason is that the land at Satherm is near and convenient way to bring Buddhism into Suvarnabhumi. If it comes to Nakhon Pathom, it must make a tour to travel far through the Malacca Strait, then back to shore at Nakhon Pathom. Therefore, it would be more possible to land at Satherm than Nakhon Pathom. This is agreed to the statements in the scripture of Samantapasadika, Vinayapitaka Atthakatha (p. 83) that;

*“Suvannabhummim Gantava Sonuttara Mahitthika
Pisace Niddhamittavana Brammajalam Adesisunti”*

“Phra Sona and Phra Uttara who have much power had gone to Suvarnabhumi to kill the demons and then preached the Brammajala Sutta”

Mahayana Buddhism was enlarged from India to Suvarnabhumi by sea and landed at the Malayu Peninsula. Then it was spread to the kingdoms of Srivijaya, Khmer, and Lop Buri, evidenced by various archeologies such as ancient sites, antiques, arts and inscriptions of both Theravada and Mahayana sects. This is agreed to the view of Supattharadit Dissakun that Java Island in 782 C.E., a teacher from Bengal, India, created a statue of Phra Manchusi Bodhisattava at Kelurak. This was occurred in the 6th Buddhist century. In the Mahayana Buddhist scriptures, the name of Phra Manchusi Bodhisattava appeared in Saddhampuntharika Sutta. It was a time when Mahayana ideas had completely developed in India. When Mahayana Buddhism was propagated into Srivijaya Kingdom, the people who had believed in Mahayana created a statue of Phra Manchusi Bodhisattava for being a symbol of wisdom to worship. The Bodhisattava had a duty to protect the philosophers. For the general Buddhist arts, Phra Manchusi Bodhisattava usually appeared in the same time



with Phra Smantbhaddhara Bodhisattava. Phra Manchusi Bodhisattava sit on the green lion, but Phra Smantbhaddhara Bodhisattava sit on the white elephant. (Supattharadit Dissakun : 1992 : 44)

6. Conclusion

The finding of the research reveals the influence of Buddhism in Thailand on the aspects of the Buddhist history, the Buddhist propagation routes, and the principles of Buddhathamma appeared in the archeological evidences in the periods of Davaravati, Srivijaya, Lop Buri, Sukhothai, Lan Na, and Ayutthaya.

7. Recommendations

The history, dissemination, and principles of apparent Buddhadhamma in the archeological evidences in Thailand which were found by the researchers can be implemented to design the plan of learning Buddhism by Government agencies, archeology and history.

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