Bangkok as “the Center of Buddhism in Thailand and Southeast Asia”: The Representation of “Civilized Bangkok” in Official Tourist Guides

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Abstract

The study aims at analyzing the characteristics of Bangkok Buddhist attractions represented as “Civilized Bangkok” in official tourist guides promoted under “Amazing Thailand” campaign from the year 1998 up until 2013. The study employs document analysis approach and applies the Theory of Representation to analyze the representation of Bangkok Buddhist attractions. From the representation, the image of “Civilized Bangkok” as the center of Buddhism in Thailand and Southeast Asia is a prominent one. The outstanding characteristics of civilization are that of the status of Bangkok as Buddhism center in aspects of Buddhist knowledge and Buddhist faith, the Buddhism relation with Sri Lanka and Buddhist practices influenced from Buddha representatives. In this frame, there are two relevant images represented in data resources: Bangkok as “the largest Buddhist heritage museum” and “the destination of Buddhist pilgrims”. Bangkok functions as Buddhist museum of Thailand and Southeast Asia where prototype, and significance Buddha images are collected. Bangkok is also the destination of Buddhist pilgrims because there are the enshrinement of the actual ashes of the Lord Buddha and the Emerald Buddha. Further study could be focused on local Buddhist historic sites in Bangkok in aspects of the representation by state or private sectors, or maybe extendedly analyze or set Buddhist tourism policies based on the outstanding identities of Bangkok Buddhist attractions which is a strong point.

Keywords: Bangkok Buddhist attractions, civilization, representation, Official Tourist Guides, center of Buddhism

1 The article is a part of the author’s PhD dissertation entitled “Civilized Bangkok’ in Globalization: The Representation of Bangkok in official tourist guides, 1998-2013”, with support from The Royal Golden Jubilee Ph.D. Program.
Background

The image of Bangkok as the center of Buddhism in Thailand and Southeast Asia has continuously represented through the promotion of “Amazing Thailand” campaign. Before this period, there had been continuously representing the status of Bangkok as Buddhist city where old Buddhist historic sites in Rattanakosin Island was the center of Buddhist civilization of Rattanakosin period since the first phase of Bangkok touristization in 1960s. The “Amazing Thailand” campaign is successful plan that leads Bangkok cultural images branding attract foreign tourists to visit Bangkok and also cause Bangkok the world’s best city in years 2008, 2010, and 2011. From the period of 1960s to the present, the development of Buddhist touristic destination has prominently focused on the renovation and development of iconic attractions. Especially in the period of “Amazing Thailand”, the revitalization of “Buddhist City” image has launched by Bangkok Metropolis Administration and relevant official sectors to create tourist events, develop museums and openly welcome visitors to join temple festivals. In this frame of Buddhist tourism development, the image making has done respectively to portray the positive image of Bangkok city and the nation.

As a part of Buddhist city images which comprises four main images: “Exotic city”, the Land of Smiles, “Sacred City”, and the City of Pilgrim. Bangkok as “the center of Buddhism in Thailand and Southeast Asia” has constructed and represented through cultural significances that make the unique Bangkok Buddhist attractions identities. The representation reveals that there are large numbers of Buddha images and Buddha relics archived in Buddhist historic attractions: Grand Palace, Temple of the Emerald Buddha, Marble Temple and National Museum. In this process of representation, the image of Bangkok as the center of Buddhism had continuously constructed through times in order to portray the long firmly Thai Buddhist Kingdom where large numbers of Buddhist national heritage was archived. As tourist attraction, the iconic Buddhist attractions have characteristics of civilization that selected to attract visitors from the significances of Buddha representatives and the characteristics of collection and display.

The significance of this study could be divided into 2 aspects in that of the more understanding of the characteristics of Bangkok Buddhist city which constructed from the richness of Buddhist culture in Bangkok. Such knowledge could be applied to policy making in the future based on the strength points of Bangkok Buddhist culture in this context.
Objectives/Research Questions
This paper aims to analyze the outstanding characteristics of Bangkok Buddhist attractions that are selected to represent Bangkok image as the center of Buddhism in Thailand and Southeast Asia.

Research Methodology
This study employs document analysis approach and applies the theory of Representation to use as main concept to analyze the representation of Bangkok Buddhist attractions. The data resources are official tourist guides both publication and online data produced by Bangkok Tourism Division under the Division of Culture, Sports and Tourism Department, Tourism Authorities of Thailand, and Thai Airways International Public Company Limited as they are main official tourist guides of Thailand that have duty of producing and promoting Bangkok cultural images as well as these tourist guides have been widely used by visitors and continuing produced in large numbers. The theory of Representation in this study is adapted from Stuart Hall (2003), Micheal O'Shaughnessy and Jane Stadler (2005) in that the study employs the word 'representation' as the process images are 'making' to represent in tourist guides; and are continuously represented by the process of representation under tourism context. Besides, the term 'language' refers to the writings or the texts composed of language and picture. In the linkage between 'concepts' and 'language'. The language functions as a 'media' to be used for expressing ideas in 'content'. In one side, it portrays related historical background and other relevant details about attractions; in another side, it represents the identities of the objects on value-based concepts.

Findings
The study reveals that the status of Bangkok as Buddhism center are in aspects of Buddhist knowledge, Buddhist faith, Thailand -Sri Lanka Buddhism relation and Buddhist practices influenced from Buddha representatives. The image of Bangkok Buddhist city as the center of Buddhism in Thailand and Southeast Asia is constructed from the largest Buddha representative archive which variously enshrined and kept in dissimilar places. The collections of Buddha statues in National museum, the Marble temple, and Grand palace, numerous Buddha relics and the great relics enshrined in

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2 Stuart Hall, Page 17.
3 Micheal O'Shaughnessy and Jane Stadler, Page 90.
state Buddhist temples lead Bangkok Buddhist city has various facets. Prominently, it could be divided into 2 pictures based on the image of “the center of sacred Buddhist Kingdom”. The first one, “The city of faith” is the overall image of Bangkok constructed from large numbers of Buddha figures archive and Buddhist practices related to iconic ones: Wat Phrakaew, Marble temple, and National Museum. The second one, “The city of pilgrim” is constructed from the promotion of the most revered Buddha image of the country, Buddha relic homage, Bodhi tree in state temples, the memorial to the Lord Buddha’s enlightenment, particularly in these Buddhist historic sites: Wat Phrakaew and the Golden Mountain.

Discussions

From the finding in passing, there are three related topics that should be discussed; The representation of Bangkok Buddhist attractions background, the representation of Siam-Lanka Buddhism relation and the selling-point of Bangkok Buddhist attractions.

Firstly, the representation of Bangkok Buddhist attractions background shows the conventional concept of Buddhist centralization. Bangkok Buddhist attractions in this group are portrayed as the representative of “Kingdom prosperity” and power. The concept to create, collect and propagate Buddha representatives in Buddhist region has traditionally practicing through times, both for spiritual and social purposes. Generally in “Buddhist cities”, there are many collection of sacred Buddha images and relics archived in temples, museums, and palace. Bangkok shows the outstanding identities that is the largest center of Buddha collection and indicate to the great power of Siam over other Buddhist cities in this region, the strong faith of Thai people and the chain of Thai Buddhist kingdoms. Compared to other cities in this region, where in the meantime, Southeast Asia countries were under the control of colonizer. Thailand, or Siam at that time had been gathering, collecting and inventing large numbers of significance Buddha images of “Thai nation” which were compiled and archived in Grand Palace, Marble temple, and National Museum. Such cultivation was influenced

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4 See also in the Official webpage of National Museum, http://www.nationalmuseums.finearts.go.th/thaimuseum_eng/bangkok/history.htm, 27 November 2014; The history of the National Museum Bangkok dates back to 1874
from European traditional methods for archaeological research and in order to represent the long history of the nation.\textsuperscript{5} The “Political independence” and “Cultural independence” were important connotation that Royal court had asserted into the representation of Bangkok Buddhist city image at that time. From data resources, Bangkok boasts for the collection of Buddha representatives, Buddha images and Relics archived in National Museums, the Marble temple, temple of the Emerald Buddha, Golden Mountain and Grand Palace. To consider these set of Buddha representatives as Buddhist attractions, the study will pick up the highlighted ones which continuously promoted in data resources. The analysis will then consider the characteristics of such places and significances of the representatives of Buddha that have managed and represented as Buddhist attractions.

The largest collection of Buddha images from the oldest Buddhist Kingdom before Thai Buddhist Kingdoms had established to Buddha images of Bangkok period: There are the collection of Buddha images of ancient Buddhist kingdoms comprising of Srivijaya and peninsular, Khmer and Lopburi, and former old Buddhist kingdoms located in Thailand region that are Lanna Thai, Sukhothai, Uthong. There were also many Buddha images with dissimilar artistic styles, Lanna, Sukhothai, and Ayutthaya from old Buddhist cities in Thailand northern region. As for Rattanakosin Buddha images, in the early of the Reign of King Rama I to King Rama III, there was the replication of Ayutthaya model. For example, King Rama I brought bronzed Buddha images from old Buddhist cities of northern Siam to install in Bangkok\textsuperscript{6}. In next reigns when His Majesty, King Rama V opened the first public "museum" to exhibit the royal collection of King Rama IV, and other objects of general interest, at the Concordia Pavilion inside the Brand Palace. Later, the Museum was transferred to its present site, the "Wang Na", or " Palace to the Front" which had been the palace of the Prince Successor. In 1926, it was named the "Bangkok Museum" and subsequently developed into the National Museum Bangkok, when it came under the direction of the Department of Fine Arts in 1934.\textsuperscript{5} See also in Maurizio Peleggi, “From Buddhist Icons to National Antiquities: Cultural Nationalism and Colonial Knowledge in the Making of Thailand’s History of Art”, Modern Asian Studies 47,5 (2013), Page 1520-1548. The three-iconic Buddhist historic sites, Wat Phrakaew-Grand Palace, Marble temple, and National museum were initially established by royal court to be “museums” in Siam at that time.

\textsuperscript{6} Such as (พระอัฏฐารส) from Wat Phrasrisanphet enshrined at Wat Prachetuphon, (พระนาค) Ayutthaya artistic style enshrined on top of (วิหารยอด) in Wat Phrakaeo, and Phra
there were the “phenomenon” caused the imitation and invention the supreme Buddhist art of its kinds in royal court and also gathering Buddha images scattering and existing in each provinces to archive in Bangkok. In such various styles and ages of Buddha image collections, the promoted ones have the outstanding characteristics as follows;

The rare version and the only one survived; The most important Buddha image resided at Wat Suthat named Phra Srisakayamuni (พระศรีศักยมุนี) derived from Wat Phrasrimahatthat, Sukhothai. At the basement of statue is also one of the most important Buddhist art that is the sculpture of the Buddha Attitude of his first sermon (ปางปฐมเทศนา) and the sermon of Lord Buddha to his mother in heaven (ปางโปรดพระมารดาในสวรรค์), the rare Dhavaravati Buddhist art remaining in the region. The Buddha image is the biggest bronze-made material that is still surviving in the world. Phra Srisakayamuni (พระศรีศักยมูกิ) the old and most revered Buddha image of Sukhothai period.

The most significant Buddha image of the nation; The Emerald Buddha (พระแก้วมรกต) and Phra Phuttha Sihing (พระพุทธสิหิงส์) the well-known and most revered Buddha images in Lanna region which Thai Kingdom had derived to enshrined in the most significant state temples, the Emerald Buddha at Wat Phrakaew and Phra Phuttha Sihing in the Buddhaisawan Chapel (พระทีนั่งพุทธิสวรรย์) at National museum. The only one invented styles; Apart from this, King Rama I had molded many important Buddha images such as The first decorated Buddha image (พระพุทธรูปทรงเครื่อง) in Rattanakosin style named Phra Buddhachulachak (พระพุทธจุลจักร) and Phra Buddhachakrapongsa (พระพุทธจักรพงศ์) installed at Phra Suralai Phimahan Chapel (พระสุราลัยพิมาน), Phra Buddhapatimachaiwat (พระพุทธปฏิมาชัยวัฒน์) the Subduing Mara (ปางมารวิชัย) Buddha image of King Rama I enshrined in Grand Palace.

The Deva statue of King Uthong derived from Wat Phutthaisawan (วัดพุทธิสวรรย์) decorating with silver and was named Phra Thepbidon (พระเทพบิดร), the first stucco Buddha image of Rattanakosin installed in Wat Mahathayuwaratrungsarit (วัดมหาธาตยุวราชรังสฤษฎ์).

Bhuddhadhevapatimakorn (พระพุทธราชปฏิมากร) from Wat Sarasina or Wat Kuhasawan enshrined at Wat Phrachetuphon.

7 See also in “พระพุทธรูปสำคัญและพุทธศิลป์ในดินแดนไทย” ศักดิ์ชัย สายสิงห์ has cited that “พระพุทธรูปสำคัญที่สมบูรณ์ที่สุดและมีขนาดใหญ่ที่สุดเท่าที่เหลือหลักฐานอยู่” (หน้า ๒๔๐)

8 พระพุทธรูปสำคัญและพุทธศิลป์ในดินแดนไทย, หน้า ๒๔๒
Next in the reign of King Rama III, the king had supported art work, there were many Buddha images installing in temples such as the traditional decorated Buddha images wearing King Rama I and King Rama II’s dresses installed at Wat Phrakaeo. The statues were finely enameled bases (ลงยาราชาวดี) and filled inside Buddha relics in their topknots. It was the king’s intention to highly furnish such style dissimilar from gigantic model of former periods. Additionally, the king also informed royal staff to ‘research’ Buddha stories from old scripture, and ‘select’ various styles of Buddha images to use as models installing at Phra Paritta Hall (หอพระปริรัตน์) in Royal Palace. In the reign of King Rama IV, the king had dedicated golden Buddha images to the Kings of Ayutthaya, Thonburi period and former kings. He also created new style of Buddha images by applying realistic art to form the model and use Lanna-Chiang Sean Buddha model such as (พระนิรันดร) enshrined in (พระที่นั่งไพศาลทักษิณ) Grand Palace. The king also had created Phra Siam Devadhira (พระสยามเทวธิราศ) to protect the kingdom enshrined in (พระที่นั่งไพศาลทักษิณ) Grand Palace. The imitation of old masterpiece ones; King Rama I had molded Phra Phutthalalai (พระพุทธเลไลยก์) filling inside with Buddha relics at Wat Phrachetuphon, Phra Khanchararat (พระคันธารราษฎร์) the significant Buddha image used in Royal Ploughing Ceremony (พระราชพิธีพืชมงคลจรดพระนังคัลแรกนาขวัญ) and national rain praying ceremony (พิธีพิรุณศาสตร์) archived in the hall of Phra Khanchararat (หอพระคันธารราษฎร์). In the reign of King Rama V, the king was interested in Buddhist art. The artistic style followed King Mongkut’s creation. He also imitated Buddha images in Lanna-Chiangsean style, such as Phra Buddha Chinnarat (พระพุทธชินราช) and Phra Buddha Norasri (พระพุทธนรสีห์), and enshrined them at Wat Benchamabophit. King Rama the sixth followed former convention. He had built and renovated large numbers of Buddha images such as Phra Mahanakchina (พระมหาแก้วชินะ) at Wat Bawornniwetwihara, Phra Buddhaisiya (พระพุทธไสยา) at Wat Rachathiwat, and Phra Kaewmorakotnoi (พระแก้วมรกตน้อย) engraved from Russian jade at Grand Palace. King Rama VII had followed the Buddha image of King Rama IV such as Phra Buddhamanusanak (พระพุทธมนุสสนาค) at Wat Bawornniwet.

From the representation, Buddha images collection have cultural significance in Thailand and in old Buddhist kingdoms located in Thailand. They are the symbol of Thai nation and the great Buddhist kingdom. The supreme characteristics and values of
Buddha representatives are from the narration of historical background and characteristics of religious art which combine the “Sacredness” and “Beauty” into Buddha statues. A must visited sites are that of enshrined revered Buddha image of the country; the emerald Buddha (พระแก้วมรกต) and Phra Phuttha Sihing (พระพุทธสิหิงส์) as they are praised as National Buddha images (พระพุทธรูปคู่บ้านคู่เมือง) and the beautiful and most revered Buddha image named Phra Buddha Chinnarat (พระพุทธชินราช) which King Rama V had imitated from Wat Phrasrirattanamahathat, Phitsanuloke. These set of iconic Buddha images are the representative of the long root of Sri Lanka – Thai Buddhist kingdoms.

Secondly, the representation of Siam-Lanka Buddhism relation is prominently portrayed through Buddhist attractions background. In data resources referred to details that could draw up long line of Buddhist chain between Bangkok and Sri Lanka through Buddhist history in this region. Not only the trace of Buddhist attractions as mentioned, the representation shows that in religious practices, iconic Buddha images as mentioned functioned as the center of faith and ritual; the emerald Buddha (พระแก้วมรกต) and Phra Phuttha Sihing (พระพุทธสิหิงส์) in National Buddhist ceremonies and festival. They also the destination for Buddhist pilgrimage as in the emerald Buddha (พระแก้วมรกต) enshrined and the great relic at Golden Mountain. Not only the chain and conventional concept of Buddhist creation of Rattanakosin period, Ayutthaya and Sukhothai period represented through their historical background, such iconic Buddha images above also show the picture of Bangkok as the only one and continuously Buddhist city among Theravada Buddhist cities in the region that could preserve original function of Buddha images and their divinity through times. More significant is that of its direct and long-rooted relationship to Sri Lanka the origination of Theravada Buddhism in the world. Apart from this, the great relic at Golden mountain is also the popular one as it is the important sign of the great Buddhist Kingdom and the chain of Sri Lanka and Bangkok had closely linked for the reason, at that time King Chulalongkorn of Siam was the only one Buddhist king in Southeast Asia who could maintain Buddhism, the national religious in the time of European colonization. Lastly, the selling-point of Bangkok Buddhist attractions is based on the representation of the high decorated and rare founded Buddha images, Buddhist historic sites decoration, and the most significant
National Buddha image and the genuine Buddha relics. As Buddhist attractions, the attractiveness of Buddhist historic sites where iconic Buddha images and large numbers of Buddha representatives enshrined and archived are from following characteristics: Numbers and types of collection and the relevant factors to such iconic Buddha representatives comprising of the characteristics of places, location, and display. Such components indicate to the state of civilization of Bangkok as will be elaborated;

**Numbers and types of Buddha Representatives collection archived in Buddhist historic sites and National museum;**

the early “national museums” of Thai nation comprising of Marble temple, Grand Palace and National museum. AS they were established to “the propagation of Siam’s international reputation as a progressive nation-state with a distinctive civilizational lineage, or cultural heritage (to use the contemporary phrase), as well as the knowledge to conserve, study and present it”\(^9\). According to such purposes, “Wat and Wang” where conventionally function as sacred places had transformed to the center of “wealthy and knowledge” of the nation. Next is the gathering and collecting of precious, rare, and beautiful cultural heritage. In this process, Buddha representatives both in the country region and nearby Buddhist cities were largely founded or changed to national presents. In other words, their symbolic meaning were constructed through the characteristics of beauty and divinity. Bangkok is respectively constructed as “the center of Southeast Asian Buddhism knowledge”.

**The Marble Temple;**

In the cloister sit 52 bronze Buddha images in total. Some original and others are modelled on ancient Buddha images. At King Rama V’s command, they have been brought here by HRH Prince Damrong from all over the kingdom and other Asian countries such as India, Japan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.\(^10\)

**National museum;**

It is the largest Buddhist art collection in Southeast Asia fame for its completed Buddhist art founded in Suvarnabhumi region. The collection of Buddha statues help extending the linear of Buddhist historic picture through iconic one comprising of Mon Dvaravati, Srivijaya and Peninsular, Khmer and Lopburi, Lan Na Thai, Sukhothai, U-Thong, Ayutthaya, and Rattanakosin collection. The “Of interest” promoted in “Bangkok Style 2010”\(^11\) are such as, The Torso of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara is an exemplar of Srivijaya art and dates back to the 9\(^{th}\) century, Head of

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\(^9\)Maurizio Peleggi, Page 1522-1523.
Bodhisattva representing the head of Bodhisattva in the Khmer style dating back to the early 9th century, etc. **Wat Phra Keo Museum**; This museum exhibits the seasonal costumes of the Emerald Buddha, various offerings presented to that sacred image, and samples of architectural temple fragments that have been replaced by new ones. The stone seat from the Sukhothai period was removed from the Wiharn Yod to be installed as a throne under a White Nine-tiered Umbrella of State in this museum so that the public can pay respect to and remember the beneficence of King Ram Khamhaeng the Great. Apart from official museum, numerous collections of Buddha images (already cited in passing) in the main Hall also worst to visit as they are the complexes of highest faith of Buddhist. From such picture, Buddhist historic sites as mentioned also have the uniqueness of places and main Buddha representatives. As explained in passing, weather many statues and sculptures are displayed for symbolic purpose, the center of such places is also highlighted on Thai national Buddha images; the emerald Buddha (พระแก้วมรกต), the iconic of Wat Phrakaew and Grand Palace, Phra Phuttha Sihing (พระพุทธสิหิงส์), the iconic of The Buddhaisawan Chapel (พระที่นั่งพุทไธสวรรย์) at National museum and Phra Buddha Chinnarat (พระพุทธชินราช), the iconic of Wat Benchamabophit.

**Collection and display:** In aspect of visual consumption, the iconic national museums have distinct characteristics. The exhibit of the epitome of “thainess” in this context is from Thai Buddhist architecture which have dissimilar styles as elaborated in passing topic. The highest beauty of Grand Palace-Temple of the Emerald Buddha where conventional concept to pay respect for Buddha images is practiced. Differently from “the Buddhist gallery” displays in two places: the prototype of conventional Rattanakosin art and the Marble temple, the model of classic one, and National museum was also originally the palace of the Prince Successor called "Wang Na" (วังหน้า) where masterpiece conventional pavilion, chapel, and hall managed to keep Buddhist art conjoined in one area. **National Museum as the Buddhist gallery in royal palace;** Each construction in National Museum has special architectural characteristics which cannot founded in other Buddhist historic sites. The elaborated details are as cited in

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12 Retrieved from official webpage of “Palaces of the King”, [http://www.palaces.thai.net/day/index_gp.htm](http://www.palaces.thai.net/day/index_gp.htm), 27 November 2014
the official webpage of National Museum and official tourist guides. Here are some exemplars;

The Buddhaisawan Chapel (พระที่นั่งพุทไธสวรรย์), housing the Phra Buddhhasihing, an important sacred Buddha image. The paintings inside this chapel are the oldest murals in Bangkok. Issares Rajanusorn (พระที่นั่งอิศเรศราชานุสรณ์), a restored private residence of King Pinklao, King Rama IV’s brother. The Red House (พระตำหนักแดง), originally one of the private living quarters of Queen Sri Suriyen, wife of King Rama II. In addition, there are several minor pavilions which were once used for ceremonial occasions. Each one is an example of Thai architecture of the Bangkok period including the Sala Longsong Pavilion, the Samranmukhamat Pavilion, the Mangkhalaphisek Pavilion and the Patihantasana Pavilion.13

The Marble temple: “The Buddhist art gallery” in the temple; The display at Wat Benchamabophit shares conventional concept of Buddhist temple construction that will arrange Buddha images around the viharn (วิหาร), or surrounded the central Buddha image such as in Wat Suthat, the large corridor (ระเบียงคต) around the viharn feature Buddha images in meditation pose. However, the set of Buddha images at Wat Benchamabophit, “representing famous images and styles from all over Asia, Thailand and other Buddhist countries”.14 The great decoration of columns, ceiling, and the beauty and finest of bronze Buddha images are components that lead the representation of Buddhist gallery has uniquely space. The masterpieces are the Buddha in the posture of walking (พระพุทธรูปปางลีลา) and self-mortification (ปางบําเพ็ญทุกรกิริยา) derived and imitated from India (now in Pakistan area). The first one also praised as the most beauty Buddha image of its kind which also can beat European masterpieces.

Wat Phra Kaew and the Golden Mountain: the destination of Buddhist pilgrimage


14 Bangkok Bangkok, Page 118.
Similarly to conventional concept of pilgrimage originated in India and Nepal where four places directly related to Buddha’s life “the four holy places of Buddhism” (สังเวชนียสถาน) and significant temples in Buddha’s lifetime are the destination. In Southeast Asia, Myanmar, Yunnan of China, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand as Buddhist cities also have sacred temples and old historic sites for pilgrimage. In tourism context, Bangkok has promoted significant places to attract Buddhist visitors to visit temples where relics, Bodhi tree, and important Buddha image had enshrined. The two other popular Buddhist historic sites for pilgrimage are Wat Phrakaew housing the emerald Buddha and the great relic at Golden Mountain. The image of Bangkok as the destination for Buddhist pilgrimage is constructed from highest sacred motifs. The first one, “The Emerald Buddha” is the representative of the zenith of sacred Buddha image of Rattanakosin Buddhist Kingdom. In such picture, as elaborated in passing, Temple of the Emerald Buddha, the Emerald Buddha’s beauty and historical background, and relevant national Buddhist practices, the highest beauty of Buddhist art and architecture are significant components that centralize the faith of Thai nation to this iconic Buddhist attraction. Such characteristics of place, practice, and iconic Buddha image made by rare material “green stone” [its feature alike emerald] decorated by glorious seasonal dresses the conventional practice of Rattanakosin court showing finest Thai handicraft, are represented to showcase the epitome of thainess, the attractiveness based on the “beauty” and “faith”. The second one, the great relics of Buddha of Golden Mountain and the Bodhi Tree from Sri Lanka, are the imitation of original sacred Buddhist historic site in India. The attractiveness is its location, the “mountain” located the Golden Mountain to see Bangkok Old Town panoramic view as promoted, “To visit the chedi at the top of the mountain-like structure, visitors climb the stairs on one side to the top, from where they can enjoy a clear panoramic view of inner Bangkok. After which they are steered down via the stairs on the

15 See also in Ronyoot Chitrdon, Tour of Southeast Asian temples (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2011).
16 Also for local tourism, there has recently “pilgrimage trip” 2011 to Bangkok temples that have relics enshrined. See also from วิธีสร้าง "บุญเหนือบุญ" การสร้างวัดพระศิริโสภาพิรุทธิศิริสุนันทกษัตริย์. Retrieved from http://www.manager.co.th/mgrWeekly/ViewNews.aspx?NewsID=9510000137592, 20 November 2014.
In such representation, Wat Saket and Golden Mountain are constructed and represented as the sacred space as well as the representative of Buddhist city in Asia and Southeast Asia that firstly and directly received genuine Buddha relics from Sri Lanka. In official tourist guides such as “Bangkok Style 2010” has promoted that,

The relics enshrined in the Golden Mount Chedi are considered genuine. The discovery was made in 1898 when William Claxton Peppe, a Briton living in India, found an urn containing the relics in an ancient stupa in Piprahwa village near Lumbini, believed to be Lord Buddha’s birthplace. It could thus be surmised that the relics were one-eighth of the actual ashes allotted to the Sakya royals after Buddha’s cremation.

Similarly to the Bodhi tree, “to the east of the Golden Mount Chedi is one of the Bodhi trees that monks brought back from Sri Lanka to present to King Rama III. The Bodhi tree is very meaningful to Buddhists as it is believed that the Lord Buddha became enlightened whilst sitting underneath one.” Apart from such motifs, there has also the temple fair popularly promoted for people to pay homage to the great relics since the reign of King Rama V. The practice, the sacred Buddha representatives, and the characteristics of location as mentioned above are the attractiveness of this Buddhist iconic site which also handed down since the start of enshrinement in year 1898 for the reason, “Upon the discovery, Lord Curzon, the then viceroy of India had the relics redistributed to Rama V, the then King of Thailand, revered by his subject as “the upholder of Buddhism in the Buddhist world”.

Recommendations

17 BMA, Page 55.
18 BMA, Page 55.
19 BMA, Page 55. Although there are other Bodhi trees brought back since that time planted at Wat Suthat and Wat Mahathat, the iconic one is at Wat Saket as there has the genuine great Buddha relics enshrined there.
20 Historically explained in “ความหมายของพระบรมธาตุในอารยธรรมสยามประเทศ”, ศรีศักดิ์ วัลลิโภดม กล่าวว่า “พอถึงสมัยรัชกาลที่ ๕ ได้พระบรมธาตุในพระมหาสถูปเจดีย์ที่บรรจุพระบรมธาตุครั้งพระเจ้าอโศกมหาราช จึงอาจนับได้ว่าเป็นพระบรมธาตุที่แท้นั้นจริงแต่ครั้งทุกการที่เดียว จึงได้โปรดฯให้ประดิษฐานไว้ที่พระเจดีย์ภูเขาทอง ให้เป็นสถานที่สักการะของพระนคร เพื่อให้คนได้มาสักการะ และมีงานเทศกาลไหว้กันเป็นประจำทุกปี”, หน้า ๑๑๔.
21 BMA, Page 55.
Since the representation of Bangkok cultural images in this term is based on the production of state tourism organization, the main images of Bangkok are selected to promote according with the cultural significances of Grand palace, Temple of the Emerald Buddha, Marble Temple, the Golden Mountain, and National museum. Such Buddhist historic sites are portrayed as the important part of Thai Buddhist kingdom heritage based on the narration of attraction historical background and their outstanding characteristics that in overall image the representation shows the outcomes of "Independent Buddhist Kingdom" throughout the establishment of Rattanakosin dynasty.

For further study, there are more angles of Buddhist city image analysis in tourism context. For instances, the topics could be focused on local Buddhist historic sites in Bangkok in aspects of the representation by state or private sectors, or maybe extendedly analyze or set Buddhist tourism policies based on the outstanding identities of Bangkok Buddhist attractions which is the strength point.

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