MONUMENTS AND SHRINES: PERCEPTION OF THAI HISTORICAL TOURISM

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Abstract - The concept of monument and shrine was combined in Thai belief. Monuments are not represented memory of the dead but became a place to hold spirit of historical figure who transformed into guardian or deity. Since Thais believed in guardian spirit of historical figures, the monument or the shrine were built in order to pay respect to the King or hero, and also to gained attentions from public as a place to visit since it is a historical place and pilgrimage. The Monuments and Shrines of historical figures became famous tourist attractions that helped local economy. Government agencies such as Tourism Authority of Thailand and Cultural office of each province also supported the idea of festival or activities that involved h either to pay respect to the king or to use his name as a part of festival in order to promote tourism.

Keywords - Thai historical figure, Thai historical tourism, local hero, monument, religion tourism

I. INTRODUCTION

The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States defines heritage tourism as traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past, include cultural, historic and natural resources. Heritage or Historical tourism is one of the most popular theme to travel in Thailand especially, for Thais. The monument and shrines were erected to commemorate the event and also the historical figures. However, the purpose of them were quite different from western concept

II. MONUMENTS AND SHRINES

2.1Monuments

Monuments in Thailand originally build in the form of Chedi or stupa. Initially, a chedi contained relics of the Buddha, later on they were also used to enshrine the remains of Kings or a very important monk. Chedi became a monument to commemorate and honor the king (or queen) on special events such as the victory over enemies. For example, Chedi Yuddhahatthi (Elephants battle stupa) is the monument to honored the victory of King Naresuan in the Elephant battle between Naresuan and Mingyi Swa, prince of Burma. The concept of historical figure monuments and memorials in Thailand started when western culture pouring in. During the reign of King Rama V, the first memorial was erected at Bang Pa In Summer Palace to commemorated Queen Sunanda Kumariratna who died in a boating accident on the Chao Phraya River when she was five months pregnant together with princess Kanna Porn Petcharat, her daughter. Subsequently monuments and memorials became very popular in Thailand. The Sahachat Memorial or Pig monument was built in 1913 by three members of the Siamese royal family to honour Queen Sri Phatcharinthra's 50th birthday because the queen was born in the Year of the Pig as were the three people who sponsored the memorial. Later King Rama VI commanded that a copper statue of Ya-Lei, his dog be cast as a monument and placed on a pedestal in front of Phra Tamnak Chali Monkol-asna at Sanamchan Palace after it was killed mystery. The King also composed a poem for Ya-Lei that was inscribed below sculpture. The monument of Rama I erected during the reign of king Rama VII as well. After the revolution in 1932 which changed the system of government in Siam from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. Several monuments have been erected by government such as Democracy monument and victory monument included the monuments of commoner who were a historical figures or heroes such as Thao Suranari Monument, a memorial statue to Lady Mo, the wife of the assistant governor of Nakhon Ratchasima. In 1826, Chao Anuwong of Vientiane seized Khorat and lady Mo rallied villagers to fight against Chao Anuwong's troop. After the victorious battle, King Rama III promoted her to Thao Suranari (Lady Suranari). Another example is The Monument of Bang Rachan Heroes in SinghaBuri province. The statues refer to the villagers of Bang Rachan who bravely fought against the Burmese army in 1765 during the reign of King Ekkathat of Ayutthaya.

One example that can be signified the change of status of monuments in Thailand is the monument of king Rama V. The King Rama V Equestrian Monument was the first monument dedicated to a Thai king and is located in the Royal Plaza, Bangkok. The monument shows King Rama V astride a magnificent stallion riding high on a pedestal. Built to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the coronation of King Rama V or King Chulalongkorn. At the time of build, the monument was the symbol of love from Thai people to the king. The budget for the statue was estimated to be around 200,000 baht but the money donated from the public exceeded the expected

amount to around 1,200,000 baht. When king Chulalongkorn passed away, people came to mourning at the monument as it represented the king. However, The King Rama V Equestrian Monument have no longer just a place to reminisce the king anymore since status of king Chulalongkorn has changed. During his reign, King Chulalongkorn modernized Siam, governmental and social reforms, and territorial concessions to the British and French. As Siam was threatened by Western expansionism, King Chulalongkorn's policies and acts managed to save Siam from colonization. After his death, King Chulalongkorn's status was slowly changed from the great king who modernized Siam to the Guardian spirit or deity that protected and look after Thais. His portrait was always on the wall in houses, commercial places and restaurants because owners believed the king will help protect bad spirit or even help bring customers in. Each day they burn nine incenses (three for lord Buddha and nine to deity) and offer sacrifice like food, desert and cigarettes. Flowers are also on the list. However, there is a rumor (with no evidence) that King Chulalongkorn love pink roses. So Thais will never offer any other flowers rather than pink rose to his portrait. People also called him Sadet Por Ror har (Father Rama V) instead of Nai Luang or the king.

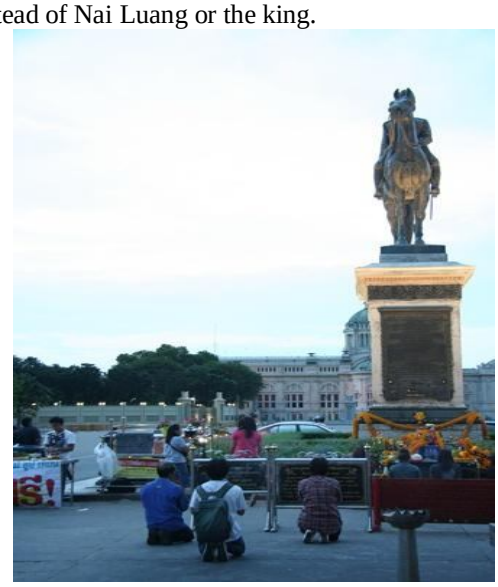


Fig.1. The Equestrian Monument of King Rama V

The same concept also adapted to his Equestrian Monument as a center of worship. People poured in to worship king Chulalongkorn with pink roses and cigarettes, asking for his bless and pledging a votive offering. For example, Whiskey especially Johnnie Walker Black label, cognac and wines which rumor claimed it was the drink King Chulalongkorn preferred (Again, no evidence). Worship sets, Pink roses together with incenses, candles, cigarettes and grass (for the king's horse) (Stengs, 1999, p. 45) were sale by merchants around the monument at 100 – 700 Baht. Around the monument, also can be found is mediums. They claimed to be incarcerated with spirit of king Chulalongkorn. People will come to mediums asking questions like they do with deity with fee. Thais come to worship the king everyday but Tuesday was claimed the best day to pay respect since it was King Chulalongkorn's birthday and also on 23rd October (Piya Maharat day) which was the day he passed away. Estimated income for each shop owner who sell worship set is approximately 35,000 – 50,000 (1000 – 1400 USD) per month and twice in October

2.2 Shrines

Animistic beliefs are nothing extraordinary in Southeast Asia. Thais always believe that spirits are matters to be taken into consideration. Shrine is a place regarded as holy because of its associations with a divinity or a sacred person or relic, marked by a building or other construction. Shrine became a place of deity and holy spirit and need to treat with respect. In the same time if worshiped right, the spirit will protect and bless those who respect. One of the most important shrines in Thailand is Shrine of Lak mueang in Bangkok which is believed to house Chao Pho Lak Mueang, the city spirit deity. They are held in high esteem by citizens. Nevertheless, city pillars that can be found in most cities of Thailand. According to Thai belief, a city pillar needs to be installed upon the establishment of a new city to symbolize the stability of power. Thai also believed in spirit of house. So, each house has to erected shrine of the household god and worship with gallant, incense and candle. Houses and businesses have a spirit house placed in an auspicious spot, most often in a corner of the property. And because Thais believed in spirit and deity. Spirit of historical figure or heroes such as kings or warriors were also invited to stay in the shrine, as Thais believe their spirits had turned into a holy spirit like deity, especially in the place that they had visited when alive. The concept of monument and shrine was combined in Thai belief. Monuments are not represented memory of the dead but became a place to hold spirit of historical figure who transformed into guardian or deity.

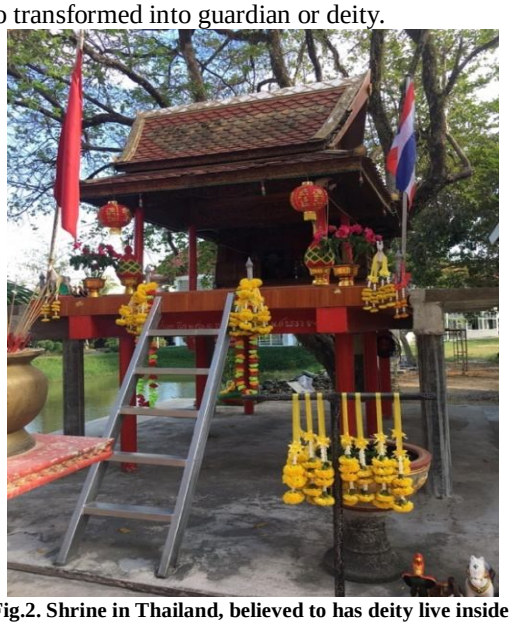


Fig.2. Shrine in Thailand, believed to has deity live inside

III. ONE TAMBON ONE HERO

One Tumbon One product or OTOP is a local entrepreneurship stimulus program designed by government since 2001. The main purpose was to support locally made and marketed products of each of Thailand's 7,255 tambons (sub-district). This movement is a self-help effort wherein rural communities participate in the creation of a product that can be sold locally and internationally. The government aims for sales of 200-300 billion baht every year and in 2017 OTOP product sales were 153 billion baht (Wancharoen:2018). OTOP is also part of a Community Development Department (CDD) campaign to draw tourists to provincial villages in order to boost local incomes. In the same year, The Tourism Authority of Thailand launched a campaign "Amazing Thailand" to promote Thai Tourism industry. Cities and Villages were encouraged to find their unique product for OTOP along with a local history to attracted tourists. Since Thai history textbook emphasized the nation history rather than local history. So, provinces and cities feel the need to be part of it by using myth or oral history. However, one of the most successful method to claimed part of mainstream Thai history is to build monument or shrine of the country hero. The appreciation of historical figure led many regions want to be a part of history. Local government agencies such as Provincial Culture Office or Provincial office for tourism and sport pay important roles to accentuated their region as a part of Thai history



Fig.3. OTOP campaign

IV. PERCEPTION OF THAI HISTORY FROM MONUMENTS AND SHRINES

Through the monument and shrines, the image of a historical figuresre presented a brave hero with their valor to save the nation. However, they were not depicted a history more than representeddeities who will protect Thais. Monuments and shrines became a representative of faith and spiritual belief rather than historical places that commemorate historical figures as it should be. The erection of monuments and shrines in each city also reflected the demand to be a part of mainstream nation history. Myths and oral history were created to link their city or town to Thai history and increase their significance as a historical place. The monument or the shrine are built in order to pay respect to the King or hero, and also to gained attentions from public as a place to visit since it is a historical place. It is interesting that Thai people, which are not academic, interested in history and attempted to assimilate local history into mainstream history. Other than that, they also created story that has nothing to do with the Royal Chronicle of Thailand or other sources but more like the legend or the local myth. The monument and shrines were used by locals and government agencies for the benefit of tourism. The festival and ceremony have held in each city based on oral history rather than academic history and no historian involved in the process. It reflected that Thai history is separated in Public history and Academic history

V. HERO:PRODUCT OF HISTORICAL TOURISM

Monuments and shrines became a representative of faith and spiritual belief rather than historical places that commemorate the historical figures as it should be. They also reflected the demand to be a part of mainstream nation history. Myths and oral history were created to link their city or town to Thai history and increase their significance as a historical place. For example, King Taksin the Great, who was one of the most popular heroes in Thai History, became a local hero of Eastern part of Thailand.

The Eastern part of Thailand was the region that Taksin travelled to when he first left Ayutthaya with 500-1,000 Thai and Chinese soldiers. Since East Coast in the Gulf of Siam was an area that free from war and full of Chinese immigrants who could support Taksin to be king. After attacked and pillaged several cities (small cities were surrendered and swear allegiance before been attacked) such as Chantaburi, Rayong and Trat which had not been plundered and depopulated by the Burmese, his army was rapidly increasing in numbers. He raised a small army and his supporters began to address him as Prince Tak. After having mastered 5,000 soldiers along with new junk ships that recently built at Chantaburi, Taksin sailed up the Chao Phraya River and seized Thonburi in November 1767. (พระราชพงศาวกรุงธนบุรี ฉบับพันทนุมาศ (เจิม), จดหมายเหตุรายวันทัพ อภินิหารบรรพบุรุษ และเอกสารอื่น, 2551)

It is interesting that King Taksin spent time in the eastern coast only months before the coronation and had never returned to any of these cities but people in eastern part of Thailand still considered him their hero and even founding father of some cities.

5.1 Chantaburi

Chantaburi was a flourish city in the east coast of Siam Gulf since Ayutthaya period with commerce, especially junk trade. At the time Taksin invaded the east coast, Governor of Chantaburi refused to

surrender his city. So, Taksin planned to attack and capture Chantaburi, According the royal chronicle, Taksin said "We are going to attack Chantaburi tonight. Destroy all the food and utensils we have, for we will have our food in Chantaburi tomorrow morning."
(พระราชพงศาวกรุงธนบุรี ฉบับพันทนุมาศ (เจิม), จดหมายเหตุรายวันทัพ อภินิหารบรรพบุรุษ และเอกสารอื่น, 2551, หน้า 50)This quote became a legendary statement and was used to stir up Thai's spirits until today. After defeated governor of Chantaburi, Taksin stayed at the city to gather men and ordered to build junk ships for his army at the shipyard. A few months later, he together with his men invade Thonburi and later won back Ayutthaya from the enemy within seven months of its destruction.

Chantaburi people considered King Taksin as their local hero. There are monument and shrines of King Taksin all around province. Park and streets were named after Taskin and his title. Residents here called King Taksin "Por Tak" (father Tak) and considered themselves Taksin's descendants. People visited the shrines of King Taksin, asking for blessing (illness, business, job) and offer things. The pride of being part of king Taksin which mean a part of mainstream Thai history could not have denied here. It is also interesting that locals believed that Governor of Chantaburi was corrupted and deserved to be defeated by Taksin , the Ayutthayan noble. Moreover, no one dies in that fight beside the evil governor who was a spy for Burmese. Three of the famous tourist attraction places in Chantaburi are the monument of King Taksin, The Shrine of King Taksin and the Taksin Great Shipyard. The case of the Taksin Great Shipyard is remarkable since the ship yard is an antiquity place with great historical significance. It stated that this area is a center of trade in the Gulf of Siam. There is a local museum with archeological digs that have uncovered dockyards and the remains of an old Chinese junk, a replica of which is housed in a building at the old shipyards. However, people come here to worship the Shrine of King Taksin instead of learning about history. Locals would love to give information about King Taksin and Chantaburi to tourists who paid attention but still limited to oral history and myth.

5.2 Rayong

Rayong is another province in the eastern region of Thailand that related to King Taksin the Great as a city that was once looted by Tak Sin's guerrillas when he left Ayutthaya. As though Chantaburi, Rayong considered King Taksin hero of the nation and also local. The Shrine of King Taksin in Rayong located at Wat Lum Mahachai Chumpon on Taksin Road (Again, the road was named after him), the shrine which is actually not a way of Buddhism is in the temple. The local myth tell story that King Taksin had stopped here in Rayong during his rally to liberate the Kingdom of Ayutthaya from the ancient Burmese army. King Taksin's elephant was stabled at a large Parkia tree , which later became the shrine . This is a well-regarded place locals and tourists, especially Chinese to pray for lucks, especially during Chinese New Year and on December 28th, which is King Taksin Day. Even though the Shrine of King Taksin at Wat Lum Mahachai Chumpon is a famous and popular place that showed the significance of King Taksin and the local history of Rayong, King Taksin's status in Rayong is hardly same as in Chantaburi. One of the main reason is King Taksin is not the only local historical figure or local hero. In order to be a part of mainstream history or the nation history, Rayong has Sunthorn Phu, the most famous and well-known poet in Thailand and was honored by UNESCO as a great world poet. Sunthorn Phu was born in Bangkok during the reign of king Rama I and never lived in Rayong which was the birthplace of his father but locals still considered Klaeng District in Rayong- city of Sunthorn Phu. A memorial to Suthorn Phu in Sunthorn Phu memorial park was erected in Klaeng District, Rayong Province, the birthplace of his father. Also monuments of two characters - Prince Aphai Mani, and the siren/mermaid character from his epic literature, Phra Aphai Mani have been erected on Ko Samet, Rayong province.

5.3 Chonburi

There are a few cities in present day Chonburi that was mentioned in the Royal Chronicle of Thonburi such as Sattahip, Ban Na Gluea and Pattaya. These cities were a few first cities that was ravaged by Taksin's guerrillas when he left Ayutthaya and headed to Chantaburi. Some were small communities that yielded to his force and later their leaders became Taksin's noblemen. The Shrine of King Taksin could be find in several places in Chonburi such as Sattahip which is the Royal Thai Navy operates out of Sattahip Naval Base in Sattahip Bay. It considered appropriate to have the Shrine of King Taksin in the Naval Base by the sea since King Taksin sailed from Chantaburi to take over Thonburi. Muang Chonburi district also have a shrine of King Taksin at Wat Yai Intaram. However, the city in Chonburi that took the legend of king Taksin seriously is Pattaya.

5.4.Pattaya

Pattaya is a self-governing municipal area located in Chonburi and very popular for tourists. The name "Pattaya" appeared the first time in the Royal Chronicle of Thonburi. It was in list of cities that Taksin passed during his journey to the east coast in 1767. (พระราชพงศาวกรุงธนบุรี ฉบับพันทนุมาศ (เจิม), จดหมายเหตุรายวันทัพ อภินิหารบรรพบุรุษ และเอกสารอื่น, 2551) Another version of The Royal Chronicle of Thonburi (British Museum) mentioned city name Thap Phraya instead of Pattaya and this name turned in to the legend or the local oral history. Locals believed when

the army of Taksin encountered the troops of a local leader named Klom, who tried to intercept him. Nai Klom was impressed by Phraya Tak's dignified manner and his army's strict discipline. He surrendered without a fight and joined his forces. The place the armies confronted each other was thereafter known as "Thap Phraya", which means the "army of the Phraya". This later became Pattaya. People of Pattaya took this story seriously and adopted King Taksin as Pattaya's founding father. The seal of city is a picture of him mounting the horse on the beach. The Shrine of King Taksin also erected on the beach of Pattaya.For example, the government agency in each province in the eastern region of Thailand held a week festival to commemorated King Taksin (28 Dec – 3 Jan) at the shrine and monument. Festivals are hardly anything about history (maybe small exhibition or drama about king Taksin) but full of food and local products.

5.5 Benefit from hero

It is not exaggerated to conclude that monuments and shrines in each city could earn millions yearly. As a center of faith and hotspot tourist attractions, product and activities were brought in to help find an income. Many monuments and shrines were promoted by local government agencies and residents as an attraction places that must visit as a historical place and to worship local hero (even though King Taksin was not actually local) It is important to highlight

Worship set – incenses, candle, gold leaf and flowers are standard worship set that was bought by most worshipers at the monument or shrine. Extra offerings are various in each shrines and location. The popular offering is sword which can be found in every shrine. The price can be different.

Amulet – amulets, statues of King Taksin and others are necessity products for a shrine (also main revenue beside donation money) Both amulets and statues of King Taksin are claimed to make sacred or potent by some incantations of famous monks or even members of the royal family. Worshiper will buy this kind of product not as souvenir from historical places but because they believed the spirit of King Taksin from amulets or statues will protect the owner. The price start from hundred to fifty thousand baht.

Book – books about the bravery of King Taksin are always sell at monuments and shrines for worshipper to buy. These books are not based on reliable historical evidences but mostly came from myth and legend.

Local products – local products such as fruits and handicrafts in the region often sell at the monuments or shrines since it was a part of local tourism. Sometime fair market where worshiper could buy food and local products is set to as a part of festival.

CONCLUSIONS

Provinces and cities feel the need to be part of country by using myth or oral history. However, one of the most successful method to claimed part of mainstream Thai history is to build monument or shrine of the country hero. The appreciation of historical figure led many regions want to be a part of history. The Monuments and Shrines of historical figures became famous tourist attractions that helped local economy. Government agencies such as Tourism Authority of Thailand and Cultural office of each province also supported the idea of festival or activities that involved hero either to pay respect to the historical figures or to use their names as a part of festival in order to promote tourism.

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