

Bringing Buddha Image to Bath in Stream: A Specific Festival in Central Northern Region of Thailand

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Abstract

Bathing is a normal activity of human beings. In Buddhism, the bathing of Buddha image is also done in Indochina. In Water Festival (April each year), the local people will bring water and bath the Buddha images in their houses. However, there is also an interesting a specific festival in central northern region of Thailand, bringing Buddha image to bath in stream.

Keywords: Buddha Image, Bath, Stream.

Introduction

Bathing is a normal activity of human beings. Bathing is aimed at cleansing the body. This is a way for sanitation practice. In Buddhism, the bathing of Buddha image is also done in Indochina. In Water Festival (April each year), the local people will bring water and bath the Buddha images in their houses. However, there is also an interesting a specific festival in central northern region of Thailand, bringing Buddha image to bath in stream.

Cases in Thailand

Thailand is a country in Indochina that Buddhism is mainly practiced by local people. The Buddhist Thais usually worship to Buddha image and perform many religious activities. Regarding, bringing Buddha image to bath in stream, it is a specific practice in local central northern region of Thailand. The specific area is Petchabun province.

Um Pra Dum Nam

This is a specific activities performed three times per day. The chief governor of the province will bring a local famous Buddha image, Praputthamahadhammaraja, to the river and performed the activity called “Um Pra Dum Nam”. The chief governor will take a boat into the mid of river. While carrying the Buddha image, the chief governor will dip himself into the liver and dive into the bottom of river. This is the way for bathing of the Buddha image.

This practice is according to the local legend that the Buddha image was found floating in the river before it was bought to a pagoda. Of interest, there were some specific periods that the Buddha image disappeared from the pagoda. When local people searched for the Buddha image, it was found swimming in the river at the site that it was found. Therefore, the local people who believe in holiness of the image set a festival to bring the Buddha image to bath at that specific site of river every year. That site is locally called “Wang Makhamfab”.



A. Um Pra Dum Num



B.HarmPra Long Nam

Figure 1. Bringing the Buddha image to bath in stream

Harm Pra Long Nam

“Harm Pra Long Nam” is another activity of bringing a Buddha image to bath at a stream. This is different from Um Pra Dum Nam. This festival has been done for years by local people. At mid of April, during Water festival, the local people in Par-Daeng village will bring the holy Buddha image in their village pagoda to bath at the stream. All local people set a ceremony during this festival. The local people will create a wooden seat carrier to hold the Buddha image and carried it around the village before going to the stream. At the stream, the local people who carry the wooden seat carrier will walk into the stream in order to bath the Buddha image. The local people believed that this activity will bring good luck to the village.

Discussion

Buddhist pagoda is usually a place that is a center of the local culture. In Thailand, many pagodas play role in cultural conservation such as displaying of museum [1]. The Buddha image is usually the holy thing in each pagoda. Worshiping to the Buddha image is commonly performed by local people. In this article, the authors present an extraordinary practice that is set as an annual festival for worshiping the Buddha image.

Believing the Buddha image is alive, the bathing activity is done by local people. The style of bathing might be various but the specific style in this article reflect the local culture that depends on local water reservoir system. In fact, water is the main requirement for settlement of people. The practice is also a way for gathering the collaboration among local people using Buddha image worshiping as tool. This is an actual valuable local wisdom.

Conflict of interest: None

Reference

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