



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Identity and Wisdom of the Wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung, Republic of the Union of Myanmar

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ABSTRACT

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This qualitative research aimed to investigate the identity and wisdom of the wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung, Republic. The data collection was drawn from the related literature and field studies—interviews with the key informants, casual informants, and general informants. The data were analyzed with a theoretical framework with descriptive analysis. The results were as follows. The identity of the wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung is influenced by Mandalay, in particular, chest cloth with the patterns of nature, including face and hair details has appeared in the Buddha statues in Burmese styles at Mandala, which has been influenced by Western ideology along with the inherited of art in each generation to the present. The wisdom of the wooden statues in Kengtung is embedded with a number of beliefs in Buddhism as the key main features. With the aim to create good deeds and merit to the people based on the beliefs of the past life with the Sri Arayamethaya and to worship Buddha as the belief in the best selection items for the great result of merit. The main selected were from the auspicious wood names related to Buddhist beliefs: Bothi, Koon, Yor, Chan (Kaen Chan), Payung, Jackfruit, Kradon, and Tamarind tree with the production process: covered with lacquer and gold, and carved. Most of the statues are covered with lacquer and gold, and carved with the original material as the frame, such as Samathi posture, Mas Vichai posture, Standing posture, and Nirvana posture.

1. INTRODUCTION

Myanmar, with its official name, the Union of Myanmar, the current capital is Naypyidaw which borders with Thailand to the west. It consisted of 135 ethnic groups, including Myanmar, Shan, Karen, Rakhine, Chinese, Indian, and Mon. The Burmese language was used as the official language which has the president as the head of the country (Office of ASEAN, 2008). The capital of Myanmar, Naypyidaw, was divided into 7 states: 1) Chin State 2) Kachin State 3) Karen State 4) Kayah State 5) Mon State 6) Rakhine State, and 7) Shan State or Tai Yai State (Prayoon Akaraworn, 2014). When throwback to the history of Myanmar, Myanmar began with the Pagan dynasty (Charnwit Kasetsiri, 1990), then the Taungoo dynasty, and the Kong Bong dynasty (Phet Sumit, 2008) until the reign of King Bayinnaung. Before colonized by the British and obtained independence later (Somchong Sawasdiruk, 1997). During the colonization, the British intervention under the rule of the prince in various cities entailed a number of problems, especially in political issues, where the military controlled power with dictatorship, including the impact on religion (Panngam Ngthammasarn, 2007). These incidents reflect that the Burmese society does not stop fighting and preserve their country's territory. The political factors caused impact the development of the country are not as smooth as they should be. Nevertheless, Myanmar has a number of cultural resources including ethnic diversity.

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar had cultural influences from China and India, then adjusted to their own culture. The Myanmar society respects the elders and emphasizes merit and religion (Prayoon Akaraworn, 2014). Although Myanmar was colonized by the British, the British assigned the governor to administrate Shan State directly under the king manage the 34 major states (Suphin Ritphen, 2011), and continue the tradition of Heet 12 (Prayoon Akaraworn, 2014). Heet 12 indicates the identity of Burmese as the unique culture of Kengtung. Although had previously been colonized.

Kengtung is an important city, in Shan State of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, surrounded by mountains and have two rivers, the Mekong and the Salween river, which serve villagers for a long time. In Kengtung has nine swamps, namely Nong Tung, Nong Tong, Nong Ye, Nong Leng, Nong Yang, Nong Pong, Nong Khe, Nong Khai and Nong Ta Chang. With the location is on the trade route resulted in the city overwhelmed with ethnic diversity, including Akha, Lahu Lawha, and Aien, and the most population were Tai yai and Tai Khuen and Burmese (Rawiwan Olanratmanee, 2013).

Kengtung covers four cities, namely Kengtung, Muang Sat, Muang Yang, and Muang Khang. Local government was divided into two administrative systems, namely central administration and peripheral administration. This city consists of 10 Hong Hoi (141 villages), each called "Eng", meaning the border of administration. The Kengtung has a long history of preserving its ethnicity and culture until nowadays (Chit Phumisak, 1981).

In Kengtung and around the city, there are temples at the top of the mountain similar to Xishuangbanna. Worship ceremonies are conducted every year and every month to show respect to Buddhism, as the local people are Tai Khoen, Tai Yai, and Burmese who believe in Buddhism. As a result, Kengtung city has a number of temples: 33 temples in Tai Kheun, Tai or Tai Yai, 8 Man (Myanmar) temples, and 3 temples, for a total of 44 temples (Piphatpong Nhowkhat, 2008). Muang Temples (Tai Khuen, Tai Nue) have 33 temples and Tai Yai has 8 temples (Temple Statistic, 2003), for a total of 313 temples with a total of 693 monks, 3,017 novices, and 45 nuns (Sarawut Rupin, 2008). This study reflects the religious beliefs, heritage of wisdom, arts, and crafts in Kengtung.

The arts are often related to ethnic diversity. Similarly, Burmese art reflects religious beliefs. Buddhism, in particular, has been divided into ten categories: 1. Steel, 2. Steel founding, 3. Sculpture, 4. Concrete founding, 5. Stone carving, 6. Stucco, 7. Drawing, 8. Silver and gold handcraft, 9. Lathe, and 10. Lacquer cover (Arts of Myanmar, 2013). These arts represent the wisdom, knowledge, beliefs, and abilities of local people inherited from their ancestors, the Burmese. Carving arts have been popular among the Burmese and royal palace since ancient times. It is believed that these arts originated during the prosperous Pyu period under King Anoratha, as evidenced by the discovery of ivory and wood carvings. However, the limited evidence may not fully reveal the historical connections due to the delicate nature of the arts, which may have deteriorated over time.

In the past, the carving arts were prevalent in religious sites, particularly in the construction of temples, stupas, and pagodas. Before stone carving emerged, the concept of wood carving arose during the Pagan period, beginning with the reign of Denglijongmeng (Oranut Niyomtham). Carving wisdom, inherited from the ancient people of Myanmar, has become an integral part of Burmese identity today. This identity is divided into two stages: personal and social. The personal identity is influenced by various social structures, including political, economic, social, and religious factors. These agents have significantly impacted identity construction (Varaluk Srikanta, 2012). Similarly, the artistic wisdom reflected in wooden Buddha statues from Kengtung possesses a unique identity closely linked to local culture.

These statues are crafted from softwoods like teak, mok, and chamchuri, with the choice of wood depending on the intended purpose and the craftsman's preferences. Tools such as chisels and hammers are used to create various relief styles, including round, high, and low relief, to serve religious beliefs and practical purposes. These artworks also showcase artistry in terms of natural patterns, cultural styles, and symbolic preferences (Nawarat Thitichanchaikul, 2012). In Kengtung, wooden Buddha statues require auspicious softwoods for delicate carving and the creation of beautiful shapes and patterns.

Wooden Buddha statues have appeared in many areas, including in the Northeast and North of Thailand along with in Tai Lue -Myanmar (Mandalay) and local areas. Each local has a unique identity depend on the socio-cultural beliefs and wisdoms: 1. in the Northeast reflected the simplicity and humility with variety of patterns (Tik Saenbun, 2009), 2. in the north also reflected the originality, there were four gestures of the Buddha statues: Standing, Sit with Khad Phet and Panaengcherng, Lay down, Walk (Wilak Sripasang, 2010), 3. In the Tai Lue styles, the statue has decorated with various patterns, such as rounded-face, slightly curved eyebrows, small nose and mouth with painted red color from cinnabar, including the aura background was equipped with special patterns, 4. In Myanmar (Mandalay) was set in sitting cross-legged as influenced from the Pagan period, in Mas Vichai posture- the fingers are equal with chest cloth from top to bottom and roll up the left shoulder, and 5. The local statues made by the local craftsmen and the palace craftsmen which each styles depend on each personal skills (Siriporn Saksit, 2011).

As aforementioned, the study of wooden Buddha statues was mostly conducted in the North, followed by the Northeast region. In Myanmar, the studies of Buddha statues were few, especially in Kengtung, which has 313 temples that have Buddha statues in every temples. With this reason, the research team interested in studying the identity and wisdom of the wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung, Republic of the Union of Myanmar which the main purpose to preserve the statues because the wooden Buddha statues made of wood and able to fragile over time. Therefore, this study aimed to accelerate the study of the identity of the wisdom of Burmese craftsmen through the wooden Buddha statues for sustainability.

Research objectives

To investigate the identity and wisdom of the Wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung, Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Research procedures

1. The target groups were the key informants and the casual informants a total of 20 people. The key informant 10 people, including 5 specialists, and 5 lecturers. The casual informants were the craftsmen who carved the wooden Buddha statues, including 10 people.
2. Research instruments were: 1) Participation Observation and Non-Participation Observation to study the process of the Buddha statues, and 2) Interviews with structured interviews to collect information on the identity and the wisdom of the wooden Buddha statues.
3. Data collection was collected from 1) Documents, Government, Educational institutions and the public sectors, the internet, textbooks, theses, and people, 2) Field studies to survey the society, culture, and lifestyles with participated data collection, i.e., observing the local wisdom with interviews.
4. Data analysis consisted of 1. Field studies analysis from an observation about events and activities in the area with interviews to verify more detailed information regarding the identity and wisdom of the wooden Buddha statues to study feasibility study, 2. Synthesized all data and presented the findings with descriptive analysis. After that presented to the public in the form of documentary and visual media.

STUDY RESULTS

From the study of identity and wisdom of the wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung, Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The study results can be summarized into two criteria: the results in terms of identity and wisdom in the wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung, Republic of the Union of Myanmar as were follows.

1. Identity of the wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung

First, the researcher states that this study clearly reflects the religious identity in Kengtung. The notion of identity is the relationship between personal identity and social structure: politics, economy, and religion (Wararak Srikantha, 2012). When united into the community, identity thus occurred in the society. Additionally, the results reveal that the temples in Kengtung were found with

a varying number of temples and were used primarily for religious ceremonies. Some temples also served as Tai Yai schools for teaching, while others focused solely on teaching the local language and characters. The number of monks and novices in the temples ranged from no more than 15 to around 200, with those temples that served as schools typically having a larger number of religious practitioners. The temples themselves varied in age, ranging from 15 years to over 1,300 years. The temples in Kengtung were located within communities. As a result, the Tai Lue temples were built with the support of hermits, villagers, and some Thai people. The roofs of these temples were often decorated with Hassadeeling birds. Wooden Buddha statues were found in each temple, ranging from 1 to 100, and these statues were typically around 200 years old. In the past, wooden statues were sometimes stolen, but the villagers occasionally caught the thieves. Furthermore, the lips of the statues were often painted red, a practice influenced by the Mon culture, making them more beautiful and lively than ordinary Buddha statues.



Figure 1. Chiang Saen Temple



Figure 2. Thang Lu Temple

In this study, the research team had visited temples to collect data about the wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung, Shan State, Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The study indicated that the twenty-nine wooden Buddha statues were found in the temple namely, Fei Hung, Nong Ngoen, Inbupharam, Yang Kwang, Pa Daeng, That Chom Kham, Chiang Yuen, Hua Khuang, Maha Muni, Phra Kaew, That Chom Doi, Ban Aen, That Pan Mueang, Phra That Wiang Sai (Peng Jai), Thang Lu, Tiger, Wooden Carving House, Ornament House, That Chom Si Jom Sak Museum, That Chom Mon, Mueang Nai, Chiang Tang, Chiang Saen, Aranyawasi, Nong Hong and Eng Kad Fa temple.

The studies of the twenty-seven temples and one-hundred and twenty-nine wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung, Shan State, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, found that the statues in Kengtung inherited by Chiang Mai Arts and Lanna culture as a fundamental basis for the development of Kengtung art turned into a unique style as follows.

The Myanmar arts were caused by the spread of Burmese culture on Kengtung between the 22nd century and the beginning of the 25th century since accepted political power in 1559. The latest Myanmar in post was in Mandalay, which remains influenced by the royal dynasty at that time. King Konkeaw Inthalaeng ordered the building of the Maha Muni from Mandalay and named it "Buddha Nimit" with a grand hall roof as the settlement for the statues. At that time, it was considered the massive revitalization of the Buddha statues in Kengtung under the Myanmar arts.

In addition, Chinese art was one of the arts that could be found in Kengtung. However, there was no definitive evidence of the cultural diffusion process. The consumption might have been influenced by the trade relations of merchants who brought various types of products into Kengtung from China, particularly in the 25th century. This could be seen from the decorations of religious places, elements of the buildings, and some types of furniture in the temple, which were not as extensive compared to Lanna and Myanmar arts.

Tai Lue art is related to the Tai Lue ethnic group, which settled in Yunnan province and centered in Kengtung, also known as Xishuangbanna. In Lue chronicles, it is mentioned that Phaya Zheng, the head of the Tai, defeated and united the Lue people and established the Kengtung grand hall. He acknowledged the power of the Dali empire and sent tributes to it annually during the Yuan dynasty. Tai Lue art would have been transmitted to Kengtung art, as evidenced by the building structures in the community, which are based on the skills and beliefs of the craftsmen.

The mindmap of the wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung

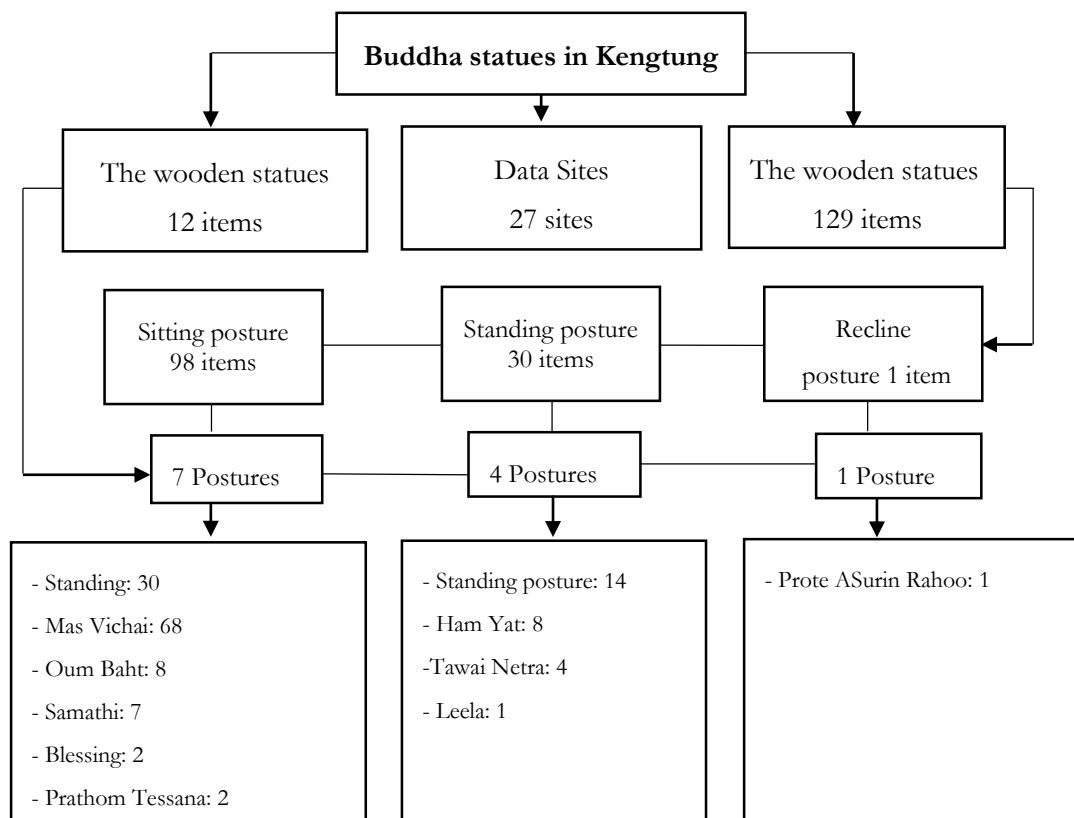


Figure 3. The mind map of the wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung

The Shan art is related to the Shan ethnic who immigrated in the Shan, Myanmar, and Te Hong in the Yunnan region of China. The Shan had established the Mao Luang kingdom before founding the Pagan kingdom, since they were recognized as being specialized in various types of arts, resulting in their often being hired. There was some evidence in chronicles that craftsmen of Shan from the west side of the Salween River built a temple in Kengtung, as was found in the temples and in the community structures. Since King Sam had ordered the building of the temples named Chiang Lae and Yang Kham to promote Buddhism, Chiang Lae has been renamed to Shao Paed temple as the center of the Tai Nue, and Yang Kham temple has gone and is surrounded by the Burmese community in later times.

The Lhuwa or Tai Doi were a group of people located in scattered communities in the high mountains around Kengtung. They lived together in Kengtung, which was built for the Chalua and the Tai Khun to learn and convey the culture to each other. This resulted in their understanding each other's language. Nowadays, the Lhuwa retain unique art styles in their temples, for example, Ban Saen, Ban Nkek, Ban Nong Luang, Ban Kier (Sam Thao), Nam Bai Nam Khlai, Ban Chai, Ban Koi, Ban Yang Ka, Ban Thang Lu, etc.



Figure 4. The wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung.

The Buddha statue is sitting in a posture with a thin physique and chest clothes. The long song is split apart, resembling centipede fangs. These reflect the influences from Mandalay art. In particular, the wrinkles of the sarong and face, as well as the hairstyle of the statue, are reminiscent of the Mandalay style, originating from the western countries and becoming an identity until now.

The statue's characteristics include a sitting posture on a large lotus base, a short body, a round neck, and chest clothes. The hands are held in the Mas Vichai posture, while the other is placed at the knees and pointed downward. The head is rounded with hair bowed and tied together, and the face shape is distinctive.



Figure 5. The wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung.

These Buddha statues may be regarded as a distinctive feature of Kengtung art, namely, Buddha characteristics, sitting in meditation with thin physical and have the chest cloth at the right shoulder, smooth without wrinkles, length to the navel. The face had long and flat hair, an open forehead, wide mouth, ribbed edge, eyes flickered low. The ear long to the chest and hand in the attitude of subduing his fingers are always long and aligned together.



Figure 6. The wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung.

These Buddha statues may be regarded as a distinctive feature of Kengtung art, namely, a squat position, with the right hand resting on the floor. The left arm rests on the front of the leg. The chest clothes are streaked and gathered on the left shoulder, folded together into a long stripe to the back. The wrinkles are placed into a pleated garment with a large sheet without hair, a wide forehead, and arched eyebrows. The shape of the face, eyes, ears, nose, and mouth is designed with a realistic touch.

2. The wisdom in the wooden Buddha in Kengtung, Republic of the Union of Myanmar

The wisdom of the wood is an ingenious way of solving human problems, especially how to look at the source of the problems and find solutions to problems in various ways with systematic analysis and synthesis until contained crystallization becomes a concrete practice from generation to generation. In this study, the wisdom in the wooden statues was presented in the framework as follows: a) Tangible wisdom, i.e. material wisdom in the production process, patterns, and beauty, b) abstract wisdom was believed, through tales, legends, chronicles, oral stories.

The tangible wisdom of the wooden Buddha statues

The tangible wisdom of the wooden Buddha statues were: patterns, production processes, materials, and beauty, as follows.

1. Patterns: were divided into three postures: sitting, standing, and reclining.

The sitting statues show that the base of type 1 is the most common pattern with a flat style and inscribed with Tai Khen characters. Type 2 is decorated with both carved and non-carved patterns along with the inverted lotus petals with crystal beads then turned into a lotus base. Type decorated with the falling fabric at the base with a triangle called Pha Thip base. Type 4 is a carved base. With an elephant image and had Prathom Thesana on above and surrounded with human images with Mas Vichai posture.



The Kengtung wooden Buddha statues: Mas Vichai, Blessings, Prasarn Baht, Meditation, Ordination, Umbat and Phatom Thesana postures. The study indicated the most common posture is the Mas Vicha with 72 Buddha statues with the right arm stretched forward and bending the Buddha's hand upside down. His hand pointed to the ground while the left arm landed beside him bent the palm supine and placed it on the shaft. His right foot over his left foot sees the two sides. The statues are equipped with chest clothes and open the right shoulder. The cheese clothes are long to the navel with two styles of sarong: like the centipede fangs and the straight ends. The head part was found in 5 patterns: Type 1 was a large and short conical radius which was considered the simplest style of radius making, Type 2 was a semicircular radius which was considered a simple style of making a radius similar to pattern 1. Type 3 had a conical radius and rounded like a bottleneck with a smooth shape without decoration. Type 4 has a radius with multiple layers of lotus petals or more. Type 5, the statues wear the flower with a radius of a long pointed cone.

The standing posture found that the base has a circular pattern decorated with both carved and non-carved patterns with lotus petals upside down that are made up of glass beads become a lotus base or a square base which consisted of Phra Sivalee, Standing, Leela, Seaside or Ham Yard posture, Thaway Net posture. The most common posture was standing in 15 Buddha statues with both hands hanging down to the body, two feet close together with the chest clothes with the high supreme edge wrapped around the body. The head part consists of the hair and is folded into a small round gland and smooth with lotus shape bund, semicircular, lotus-shaped cone, flame-shaped. The rounded face with eyes drooping, curved eyebrows, prominent nose, and smile lips.

The reclining posture found that the base part was an inverted lotus base with Kengtung style, the left hand was attached to the body, the right hand stood up to receive his head, and the feet always overlapped. The chest clothes lay across the arm and the head with a rounded face with eyes drooping, curved eyebrows, prominent nose, and smile lips.

2. Production process: The production techniques were found to be carved from a single piece of wood, which was mostly from small to large and found common in the Lanna in the Rattanakosin era. The wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung mostly were covered with lacquer and gold and then carved patterns. The results revealed that the statues were mostly covered with lacquer after completing the carving, then polished to smooth, and then covered with lacquer to prevent insects and durability. This method can be mixed with cinnabar and covered with gold again. In this study, three techniques were found as follows. 1) Cover with lacquer and gild the whole body, 2) Lacquer and gild the base part, 3. Cover with all lacquer.

3. Materials: knives, machetes, or wood chisels for carving.

The Abstract wisdom of the wooden Buddha statues

The wisdom of the wood is an ingenious way of solving human problems, especially how to look at the source of the problems and find solutions to problems in various ways with systematic analysis and synthesis until contained crystallization becomes a concrete practice from generation to generation. In this study, the wisdom in the wooden statues was presented in the framework as follows: a) Tangible wisdom, i.e. material wisdom in the production process, patterns, and beauty, b) abstract wisdom was believed, through tales, legends, chronicles, and oral stories.

The beliefs in the wooden statues occurred from various factors that are hidden in Buddhism as the important point. As the results of the craftsmen believed that merit affects the future and past life with Phra Sri Ariyamettra.

In addition, the beliefs in wood selection were raised in the auspicious wood name and related to the Buddhist beliefs: Bothi, Koon, Yor, Chan (Kaen Chan), Payung, Jackfruit, Kradon, and Tamarind tree. The wisdom in the production process is mostly related to the lacquer cover and glided carved pattern but most of them are popular with lacquer gilding. The wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung mostly were covered with lacquer and gold and then carved patterns. The results revealed that the statues were mostly covered with lacquer after completing the carving, then polished to smooth, and then covered with lacquer to prevent insects and durability. This method can be mixed with cinnabar and covered with gold again.

The artistry wisdom is a solution to the craftsmen because the material is wood. The carving was framed with a wooden structure as the main concern. This resulted in the challenge to the craftsmen's thinking and problem-solving. Therefore, this study found that the wooden Buddha statues were carved in postures framed by material, for example, Meditation, Mas Vichai, Standing, and Nirvana, and when there is a surplus part, they might need to join with other parts such as arms or other parts.

DISCUSSION

The identity and wisdom of the wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung, Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The results can be discussed as follows:

The results reveal that the temples in Kengtung were found in varying numbers and were used exclusively for religious ceremonies. Some temples also served as Tai Yai schools for teaching. While some temples taught only the local language and characters, others accommodated up to 200 monks and novices, significantly more than the temples that did not function as schools, which were limited to a maximum of 15 monks and novices. The ages of the temples ranged from 15 years to over 1,300 years. Located within communities, the temples in Kengtung were often built with the support of hermits, villagers, and even some Thai people. The roofs of these temples were adorned with Hassadeeling birds, and each temple contained between 1 and 100 wooden Buddha statues, some of which were estimated to be around 200 years old. In the past, wooden statues were sometimes stolen, but the villagers often caught the thieves. The lips of the statues were typically painted red, a practice influenced by the Mon culture, which aimed to make the Buddha statues more beautiful and vibrant compared to their ordinary counterparts. Similar to the findings of Sarawut Rupin (2008), the temple served as a symbol of Buddhism and the central core of the Tai Khoen ethnic social structure, comprising monks and people dedicated to the benefit of religion and society. The evolution of Buddhism in Kengtung was shaped by political, social, and cultural contexts and sects. The original traditions of Thai Buddhism, which emphasized religious and social ideals among monks and people, have continued to influence the development of Buddhism in Kengtung.

The temples play a crucial role in serving as centers of religious mindfulness. Moreover, the social and cultural changes that occurred in Myanmar following British colonization (1885) have impacted the principle of "Ethnological survey," leading to the formation of permanent social and cultural boundaries in Myanmar. Ethnic identity is a product of these cultural boundaries. However, the Tai Khoen group distinguishes itself from others by having developed and defined its own ethnic consciousness through the use of temple Buddhist arts. As Anuphong Daothong (2018) discovered in his study of Buddhist art in Chiang Rai, the diverse influences of Lanna and other arts have contributed to the unique identity of Chiang Rai's Buddhist art today.

From the studies of identity and wisdom of the wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung, Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The twenty-seven temples and one-hundred and twenty-nine wooden Buddha

statues in Kengtung, Shan State, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, found that the statues in Kengtung inherited by various cultures as a fundamental basis for the development of Kengtung art turned into a unique style, the study was found the wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung were influenced by Burmese, Chinese, Tai Lue, Tai Yai, and Lawha. According to the identity concept by Hall (Hall as cited in Cherngkwan Puchong, 2006) states that ethnic identity is derived from being a member of an ethnic group in any ethnicities and relationship with others in the community through the process of social interaction and participate in various ceremonies from the past to the present. As can be seen, the statues in Kengtung in the past were influenced by other ethnics from Mandalay with wrinkles in the chest clothes, including face, hair, and details from the western cultures, and inherited until the present according to the Symbolic Interaction (Gombrich as cited in Wannaporn Pattanasathienkul, 2009) who believes that art is a symbol or language which a painter may paint to imitate something into the 'symbol' to refer to something. Likewise the art of the wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung which imitated or influenced by the Western culture through the history politics and governance in the past and adapted into their identity to reflect the symbolism of Mandalay arts.

The wooden statues reflected the local handicraft in Mandalay consistent with the studies of Nawarat Thitichanchaikul (2012) found that the carving is the wisdom from the past through time and generation to generations with the accumulation of wisdom. The creative process of Lanna's wood carvings reflects the beauty and faith in Buddhism. This resulted in the arts and crafts being considered delicate and beautiful by turning the wisdom of the traditional creative process into arts and crafts in each specialist with the aim to express the lifestyles and relationship with the supernatural from the Lanna people's beliefs.

The beliefs in wooden statues occurred from various factors hidden in Buddhism as the important point. As a result, the craftsmen believed that merit affected the future and past-life with Phra Sri Ariyamettrai. Additionally, beliefs in wood selection were raised in auspicious wood from name and related to Buddhism beliefs: Bothi, Koon, Yor, Chan (Kaen Chan), Payung, Jackfruit, Kradon, and Tamarind tree. The wisdom in the production process was mostly related to the lacquer cover and gilded carved patterns, but most were popular with lacquer gilding. The wooden Buddha statues in Kengtung were mostly covered with lacquer and gold, then carved patterns. The results revealed that the statues were mostly covered with lacquer after completing the carving, then polished to smooth, and covered with lacquer to prevent insects and ensure durability. This method could be mixed with cinnabar and covered with gold again. Likewise, Siriporn Saksit's (2011) study found that beliefs in Buddha statues were linked to "merit," referring to the results of merit or benefits received from merits. The Lanna people believed that making merit with pure intent would receive a reward return, although small values. These beliefs originated since the Mangrai dynasty with the notion of the Phaya Muang Kaew, with the oldest evidence in 1704 when Nan continued to build statues and expel the Burmese from Lanna with the immigration of Tai ethnics such as Tai Lue, Tai Khen, and Tai Yong. This incident was considered a significant change in Buddha statues with local craftsmen having faith in religion.

Along with the study of Phra Mahapan Katsaro (2017), it was found that wooden Buddha statues were built for worship as symbols of the Buddha, intended to respect the grace bestowed by the Buddha. The creation of these statues transformed abstract perceptions into concrete ones. In Isan, wooden Buddha statues originated from the values of the local people and are present in temples to promote prosperity through their beliefs. The statues were crafted from auspicious wood and carved into various forms, including statues depicting the Buddha's birthday. These statues can be found in numerous temples, assuming both meditation and standing postures. However, the limitations of wood size resulted in the statues reflecting various aspects of Buddhism, such as beliefs, ceremonies, materials, equipment, and characteristics. This interconnectedness extends to almost every part of the Southeast Asia region.

Research Suggestions

From the study of identity and wisdom in the wooden Buddha statues. Kengtung, Republic of the Union of Myanmar has suggested as follows. The identity and wisdom of the wooden Buddha should be studied in other cities of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

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