CHAPTER THREE
THREE ROYAL WATS AND THE RECOVERY OF COSMOLOGICAL CENTER IN THE REIGNS OF RAMA I-III (1782-1851)

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the present conditions, contradictions and conflicts of three royal wats involved in urban preservation and planning schemes were elucidated. To understand the various forces that gave rise to the current architectural conditions and social contexts of these specific royal wats, it is necessary to delve deeper into the history and role of the royal monastery in Bangkok. This chapter aims to illustrate how royal wats in the pre-modern period functioned within Siamese semi-feudal structures and to discuss how their roles began to change in the modern period. Moreover, this chapter will also demonstrate how these changes affected each of the three royal wats specifically.

It has often been stated by historians of Thailand that the construction of Bangkok beginning in 1782 was based on an Ayutthayan prototype. Drawing on archival resources, scholars such as Wyatt66 and Aasen67 have shown that one of the main goals of early Chakri kings was to reconstruct the glory of Ayutthaya before its defeat by the Burmese in 1767. Indeed, as we shall see in this chapter, monarchs of the Chakri dynasty did look to Ayutthaya in constructing the new city. For instance, they used the major place names from Ayutthaya for royal monastic complexes and palaces. Nevertheless, the discourse of Bangkok’s continuity with Ayutthaya tends to obscure a much more complex reality of discontinuities. Here we must consider that the Chakri dynasty faced a

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range of new political and economic challenges not only from without but also from within.

In term of exogenous forces, the Chakri dynasts of this period faced transformations in their trade relations with China and the increasing influence of colonial powers. Synchronously, in terms of indigenous pressures, the rulers had to reconsolidate manpower to rebuild the city while at the same time negotiating intra-court tensions and rivalries with those who sought the throne. Most of these transformations and conflicts manifested themselves in the spatial and symbolic arrangement of the new urban landscape of Bangkok. During the first three reigns, Bangkok’s Chakri rulers used both monastic complexes and urban spaces as a means to shore up their political legitimacy among the populace, and as a tool in intra-court competition and rivalries for the throne. Behind the trope of continuity with Ayutthaya, therefore, is a complex history of how religious symbolism and the urban built landscape reflect the changing contours of political power.

During the reigns of King Rama I and II, the discourse of continuity with the glory of Ayutthaya obscures the underlying fact that what was being reconstructed was a manpower system. Royal wats were not only sites of religious legitimation via continuity with the glory of the previous empire, but also a means of consolidating manpower and resettlement. Secondly, the idea of continuity also obscures extent to which ideas of Buddhist enlightenment and rationalization were affecting the Chakri dynasty’s self-perception, leading eventually to reforms and the marginalization of “animist” and Brahmin elements. Scholars such as Wyatt, Reynolds and Tambiah have discussed these transformations, but this chapter focuses on how these changes manifested in royal

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monastic complexes and the built environment. As we shall see, elements considered Hindu or animist were in some cases eliminated or downplayed.

Thirdly, the Sinified architectural motifs of King Rama III reflected his alliance with the Chinese in the lucrative tributary trade. This pattern changed in the King Rama IV (Mongkut) period. The reign of Rama III demonstrates how monastic architecture became an arena of contestation among rival political groups. In particular, the definition of holy space or sima was manipulated and became a significant apparatus for the future of the reform movement that established Prince Mongkut’s strong political base. The concept of kingship in the Bangkok period also reflected discontinuities. In contrast to the Ayutthaya period, when monarchs embodied the figure of a remote god-king or devaraja, during the Bangkok period monarchs shifted to embodying the ideal of a dharmaraja, or righteous Buddhist king. They achieved this transformation in part by concentrating more on Buddhist religious affairs, and also in part by increasing their external relations. For instance, in the King Rama III period, the monarch offered support for Buddhist education and monastic complex renovation to compensate for his lack of legitimacy, and in the process he brought Chinese craftsmanship to Bangkok monastic architecture. Synchronously, Buddhist purification was conducted by a prominent monk Prince Mongkut, and Sri Lankan and Mon practices were implemented in his royal wats.

The Political Context of State & Religion from the Reign of Rama I to Rama III (r.1782-1851)

Reconstructing the Buddhist Cosmological Center (Rama I-II, r.1782-1824)

Army general Somdet Chao Phraya Mahakasatsuek was crowned in 1782 as King Borommaracha Ramathibodi (Rama I) after he subdued the riot in Thonburi and executed the former ruler, King Taksin, on the grounds of his insanity. The new king then moved capital city from Thonburi to the east bank of the Chao Phraya River, which was called Bangkok (the Village of Water Olives). Unlike his predecessor, King Rama I and his
supporters joined forces to revive the glory of Ayutthaya, the former capital city which was sacked by the Burmese in 1767.

In the traditional practice of constructing cities in mainland Southeast Asia, building a new city signified the establishment of a Buddhist cosmological center. Rather than building an entirely new city, however, urban architecture sought to create the continuity with the great Buddhist kingdoms of the past. In the case of capital city of Bangkok, its full name is comprised of several auspicious names such as Rattanakosin, meaning Lord Indra’s gems; and Ayutthaya, the heavenly city of Lord Rama⁶⁹, while its founder was proclaimed as the king of Ayutthaya⁷⁰. In a similar pattern, Ayutthaya’s full name includes Dvaravati, a reference to the ancient Mon Buddhist Kingdom. By inheriting the legacy of Ayutthaya, Bangkok sought to reconnect to other Buddhist ancient kingdoms.

Most royal constructions in the early stage of Bangkok’s establishment bore the trace of important places in Ayutthaya. Thirty-two wats existed in the vicinity before the foundation of Bangkok⁷¹. With its establishment, fifteen of them were renovated, including four existing monastic complexes inside the city wall, six outside the wall, and five in the Thonburi area across the river⁷². Of these, four of the newly renovated monastic complexes, the three inside the city wall and one outside the wall, were given place names associated with Ayutthaya. These include Wat Mahathat (the monastic complex of the Lord Buddha Relics), Wat Phrasisanphet (the royal Buddhist shrine complex inside the Grand Palace which later on was renamed Wat

⁶⁹ Bangkok’s full name is “Krungthep Mahanakhon Amonrattanakosin Mahinthara Ayutthaya Mahadilok Phopnoppharat Ratchathani Buriram Udomniwet Mahasathan Amonphiman Avatansathit Sakkayawitsanukramprasit.”
⁷¹ Nængnoi Saksi, Ongprakop thang kaiyaphap Krong Rattanakosin (Physical composition of Rattanakosin City) (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1991), 54.
⁷² Ibid., 58.
Phrasirattanasatsadaram), Wat Sraket with Khlong Mahanak (the name of canal near Golden Mountain Pagodas outside the city wall of Ayutthaya) and Wat Suthat (the grand monastic complex at the central point of the city similar to those at Sukhothai and Ayutthaya). In fact, the discourse about the revival of Ayutthaya was still evident during King Rama III’s reign, as that king lamented the loss of Ayutthaya, the great heavenly city, and declared his intention to embellish Bangkok by emulating the glory of the previous capital city\(^\text{73}\) (see Map 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3).

Moreover, after the establishment of Bangkok, the salvage of Lord Buddha statues from the ruined monastic complexes all over Siam’s principalities was one of the earliest orders of King Rama I. He is credited with transporting nearly 1,250 Buddha statues to Bangkok, restoring them, and redistributing them to several newly renovated monastic complexes within the new capital city\(^\text{74}\). In addition, the Lord Buddha relics were also transported to Bangkok from several principalities such as Nan\(^\text{75}\). This endeavor of the massive transportation of Buddha images could be seen as the king’s desire to assert Bangkok’s status as a new Buddhist center and re-affirm the role of its ruler as a great and righteous king who upholds the Buddhist religion as other great monarchs had in the past\(^\text{76}\). Monastic complexes housing these images connected Bangkok symbolically to other cities in Buddhist legend.

\(^{76}\) The king and the viceroy also worked along side with other labors to transport the Lord Buddha statue. See more detail in Narinthrathewi, Princess, *Chotmai khwamsongcham khong Phrachao Paiyikathoe Krommaluang Narinthrathewi* (Chao Khrok Wat Pho): tangtæ Cho. So. 1129-1182 phen welda 53 pi (Chronicle from Memoir of Princess Narinthrathewi from 1782-1815 or 53 years) (Bangkok: Samnakphim Ton Chabap, 2003), 391-392.
Map 3.1. City of Thonburi with 32 existing wats.

Map 3.2. City of Ayutthaya with major Buddhist urban landmarks

Map 3.3. City of Bangkok and major Buddhist urban landmarks following those in Ayutthaya

Based on Naengnoi saksi, *Ongprakob thung kaiyaphap Krung Rattanakosin* (Physical composition of Rattanakosin City), 55.
The constructions of these major monastic complexes were the first priority. Near the palace wall the shrine of the Emerald Buddha was also constructed with brick and mortar while other major structures of the grand palace were still of timber\textsuperscript{77}. The royal monastic complexes and the shrine of Lord Buddha relics were the symbolic centers articulating the core values of Buddhist morality while the fortresses and city wall symbolized the stability of the city.

However, several shifts in the establishment of Bangkok subtly broke away from the past of Ayutthaya. The Brahmin cult of Siva Linga worship was prohibited from popular practice and condemned as an animistic belief, which had contributed to the downfall of the Ayutthaya kingdom\textsuperscript{78}. Similarly, the city pillar, which was regarded as both animist and Hindu in origin, was constructed next to the precinct of the Emerald Buddha and the Grand Palace, but in a very insignificant structure. The pillar signifies the Lord Indra’s residence at the central core of the universe\textsuperscript{79}. It was installed in order to fulfill the requirement of a traditional urban center; nevertheless it never played a prominent public role in Bangkok’s state ceremony and royal construction program. In addition, in the most important state ritual, the Oath of Allegiance, King Rama I also shifted the Buddhist chanting to be performed before the worship of King Uthong, the godfather of the Ayutthaya kingdom, which was considered to be an ancestral animistic practice\textsuperscript{80}. During this period, most state sponsored rituals were Buddhist in their orientation, such as the Kathin ceremony before the lent retreat, the celebration of Lord Buddha’s Relics, and the commemoration of Buddhist holy days (which started in Rama II’s reign) and festivals celebrating the renovation of monastic complexes. In contrast,

\textsuperscript{77} Ratchabandittayasathan (Royal Institute), *Tamnan Reung Wathusathan Tang Tang* (Legend about Several Places) (Bangkok: Sophonpiphanthanakon, 1930).


\textsuperscript{79} Marc Askew, *Bangkok, Place, Practice and Representation*, 17.

\textsuperscript{80} R. Langat, *Pramuan kotmai ratchakan thi 1 Chunlasakkarat 1166: phim tam chabap luang Tra Sam Duang Lem thi 3* (Compilation of King Rama I Law following Three Seals Law, Vol 3) (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1986), 445.
only two Hindu rituals of Royal Plough (Raknakwan) and the Royal Swing (Tri Yampawai) were performed as state ceremonies\textsuperscript{81}.

In 1782, King Rama I issued the first religious regulation (\textit{kot phrasong}) and another six regulations followed in the next year\textsuperscript{82}. He also appointed the positions of patriarchs and the supreme patriarch to govern monastic order. There were eighty patriarchs to govern eighty parishes consistent with the auspicious number of eighty enlightened saints or arahants in Lord Buddha’s life story\textsuperscript{83}. Among these, he appointed two important senior patriarchs to supervise the monastic complexes of the northern and the southern regions (\textit{khana}). In each region, the monks were comprised of two disciplines: the Buddhist canonical study focusing on the Pali language and urban dwelling monks called Khammawasi, and the meditation study and forest dwelling monks called Aranyavasi\textsuperscript{84}. The king also reestablished the traditional bureaucratic system that appointed two chief ministers to control the northern principalities and army commanders (Kalahom), and the southern principalities and civil officials (Mahatthai) with the four lower ministers: finance with foreign affairs and port cities (Khlang), capital city (Wiang), palace affairs (Wang), and agriculture (Na). The bureaucracy was comprised of various minor units or departments (\textit{krom}) working independently of feudal labor. The most important \textit{krom} or department involving the monastic order was Krom Thammakan Sangkari. This department was assigned to take care of royal monastic complexes and high ranking monks who performed royal ceremonies.

\textsuperscript{81} The ritual of Royal Plough is the ceremony to forecast the rain for the new cultivating season. The ritual Tri Yampawai is the ceremony for New Year in Hindu.
\textsuperscript{84} There are different and confusing details for meditation group. In some sources, the Aranyavasi or the group of meditation monks and monasteries was considered another important group with high ranking patriarch. However, there is no detail of the monasteries and region that the patriarch of meditation practice ruled in Bangkok period. See more detail in Siriwat Khamwansa, \textit{Song Thai 200 Pi} (Thai Buddhism in 200 years) (Bangkok: Sri Anan Printing-Mahachulabannakan, 1981).
In addition, the king issued thirty-eight royal questions regarding Buddhist affairs and merit making to the senior monks in order to establish a clear standard of practice among the monks. By 1788, the king also conducted the compilation and revision of the Tripitaka, the three Buddhist canons written in Khmer language. It is important to note that the compilation of the Tripitaka and the Buddhist affairs regulations were conducted before the king ordered the draft of the Three Seals Law. In the preface of the Three Seals Law, the king referred to his revision of the Tripitaka as his first act to establish the stability of Bangkok as lak lok or the center of the cosmos and implied that the Three Seals Law signified the completion and realization of this goal.

During his reign, the threat of a Burmese invasion remained and the task of recovering control over manpower was still important. During the reign of King Rama I and Rama II, Bangkok had experienced eight Burmese invasions. However, all of them failed to reach the border region of Bangkok. Manpower control was still the key to the survival of the Chakri kings, and building monastic complexes in the city became a part of the strategy to strengthen the system. The construction of royal wats played not only a symbolic role in legitimizing the rulers but also a demographic and political role in drawing new settlers in to the city. This was because the rulers not only constructed the monastic complex for monks but also used conscripted labor to guard and maintain its structures. In the context of Southeast Asia’s semi-feudal system, these kingdoms’ administrations measured wealth in term of numbers of the labor force, which was different from the feudal system in Europe that imposed tax on the cultivated land and

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85 Ibid., 33.
86 Ibid., 23-28.
87 Tripitaka was compiled and revised in 1788 and Three Seals Law was drafted in 1805.
88 R. Langat, Pramuan kotmai ratchakan thi1 Chunlasakkarat 1166; phim tam chabap luang Tra Sam Duang Lem thi 1 (Compilation of King Rama I Law following Three Seals Law Vol. 1) (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1986), 3.
territory. In Southeast Asia, when a ruler of one kingdom conquered another kingdom, he emptied the defeated cities, swept most of population into his capital city, and left the ruined town in decay. By this general practice of warfare, the capital city of the wealthiest kingdom became a primate city at the expense of its lesser cities within its sphere and neighboring kingdoms. Bangkok was founded after the fall of Ayutthaya, and most of population had either fled or was swept to the Burmese kingdom of Ava. The task of reviving the manpower structure became the most significant task of King Rama I, if he wished to rebuild the glory of kingdom of Ayutthaya, fight against Burmese invasion, and collect tax-in-kind for trade with China.

With the establishment of Bangkok, one of the goals of constructing Buddhist wats was to persuade populaces who escaped from the war to resettle in the new capital city. In the history of a city’s establishment, building Buddhist royal wats was a crucial part of traditional urbanization. The founder of a city invited venerable monks to reside in the new city by building monastic complexes for them. In return, the monks persuaded local commoners to relocate to the new city with the promise of the ruler that they would not be conscribed for heavy labor. The early settlers would be listed as the monastic complex’s guards and laborers, and they would thus bear a lighter workload and looser obligations. Thus, the establishment of a monastic compound provided the ruler with a transition for labor conscription needed to mobilize his defensive forces and conduct economic activities for the town  

For example, during the military campaign against Burmese occupation in 1796-1804, Chao Kawila repopulated the abandoned town of Chiang Mai so as to consolidate his forces to drive the Burmese out of the Lanna Kingdom (the northern Thai kingdom). One of his campaigns was to rebuild several wats within Chiang Mai city to gain settlers

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90 See more detail in Somboon Suksamran, “Chapter 2: Political Patronage and Control over the Sangha” in Buddhism and Politics in Thailand: a study of socio-political change and political activism of Thai Sangha, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1982).
and thereby establish his military stronghold. With support from Bangkok, he later was crowned King of Chiang Mai. A similar case can be found in the Ayutthaya period, during the reign of King Phetracha (ca. 1688-1703), when the southern seaport town was plundered by Malay pirates and left vacant. The venerable monks rebuilt a monastic complex inside the city and persuaded runaway communities to resettle there. The monks were rewarded by the king with conscribed laborers for maintaining the wat, while the town became populated with returning urban settlers.  

Monastic complexes facilitated not only the establishment of the new city in the recovery period, but also assisted with the process assimilating war-captured prisoners into existing communities. In the Southeast Asian mainland region, Buddhism was the belief system that major ethnic groups had in common, and it became a mean of uniting people from different cultural backgrounds. During the King Rama III era, the war captive slaves from neighboring Buddhist kingdoms were also relocated to serve as monastic complex laborers at several royal wats. Occasionally, monastic complexes were the place to mitigate tension between feudal masters and their conscribed laborers through the merit making of ordination processes. Monks reduced the tensions between feudal masters and laborers because one who dedicated himself completely to religious life was highly respected.

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91 See more details from Khana kammakan chatphim aekkasang thang prawatsat wattanatham lae borankhadi (Committee on the publication of historical, Cultural, and Archaeological document, Prime Minister Office), Prachum Pratamra Baromrachuthit phua kanlapana Samai Ayutthaya Phak 1 (Compilation of royal document of monastery’s assess in Ayutthaya Period) (Bangkok: Prime Minister Office Press, 1967) and the Department of Fine Arts, “Phongsawadan Mueang Pattalung (History of Pattalung),” in Prachum Phongsawadan Phak 15, lem thi 12 (Compilation of Royal Chronicle region 15 vol. 12) (Bangkok: Khurusapha Press, 1964)

92 From Wachirayanwarorot, Prince, Tamnan Wat Bowonniwet (history of Viceroy House Monastery) (Bangkok: Sophonphiphatthanakon Print, 1912), 15; There are several document indicate that parts of war-captive slaves from Vientiane were transferred to be the asset of Royal Buddhist monasteries of Wat Sraket (Monastic Complex of Royal Head Bath) and Wat Bowonniwet (Monastic Complex of the Viceroy Residence).

Moreover, on several occasions in Thai history, monastic laborers in the royal wats and the monks assisted a warring ruler, although several documents and inscriptions prohibited such activities. Royal monastic complexes were the source of power in reserve for the rulers in critical condition. It lent the rulers not only legitimacy, but also an extra labor force. The bigger and more important a royal wat was, the more laborers were assigned to maintain the monastic structures and this meant a greater reserve power. For instance, in the Ayutthaya period, Phra Mahanak of Wat Phukao-thong (Golden Mountain Monastic complex) located outside Ayutthaya could mobilize the forces against the Burmese army during the reign of King Mahachakraphat (ca. 1548-1569). King Akathosarot (ca. 1605-1611) donated laborers to Wat Pako of Phattalung in Southern Thailand and asked the abbot in return to lend the force to help him if he was at war\(^4\). During the war with the Burmese army, when King Taksin (ca. 1767-1782) ordered the governor of the Southern province, Phattalung, to produce a large number of boats to help in his battle with the Burmese, the two major monastic complexes of the town, Wat Palelai and Wat Khien Bangkaew, were turned into boatyards mobilizing the boat construction with the supervision of skillful monks\(^5\).

In contrast, the practice of donating royal monastic workers could weaken the state’s labor system and contribute to the collapse of a reign. Although the monastic laborers had less freedom when compared to corveé laborers, it was known that monastic work was light and the laborers were exempted from various taxes\(^6\). In addition, monks could not impose hardship or serious punishment on their laborers or capture the runaway laborers. Thus, there was an incentive for royal laborers to try to change their status and


\(^6\) National Archive, M 14/11 14 February 1895 Letter from Prince Krommamuen Damrong Rachanuphap to King Chulalongkorn.
their family members’ registry to monastic laborers during critical political crises or in wartime.

On the other hand, during periods of peace, the monastic laborers would try to run away or change their status to be royal or feudal laborers because there was more work on the renovation of wats and less opportunity for social mobility. When the political situation became unstable and the bureaucracy was corrupted, the royal laborers could bribe the state officials to be registered as monastic laborers. If the government failed to detect this leak, it lost revenue from tax and could not mobilize enough central royal laborers for the army to defend the kingdom during wartime. Indeed, it is telling that the Thai word for census is “Samanokhrua”, which means the family of a monastic complex’s conscript laborers. The word “samana” derives from the Sanskrit word meaning monks and “koruna” is the Thai word meaning kitchen or family. It was crucial for the ruler to investigate the royal listing or census of monastic laborers in order to prevent the illegal transfer of central royal laborers to monastic workers.97

Because the king forfeited his powers over the land consecrated as a holy space in wats, the Buddhist property was a sacred ground outside the kingdom. As such, the monastic complex’s holy space became a sanctuary for political asylum, a stronghold for resisting state authority, and finally, a base for accumulating subversive factions in the case of an abusive regime. For instance, King Narai (ca. 1611-1628) of Ayutthaya ordered monks to consecrate his palace precinct at Lopburi to be a monastic complex in order to ordain his servants and thus avoid the massacre by the usurpers.98 Prince Thienracha, the viceroy of King Chairacha (ca. 1534-1546), was ordained at Wat Ratchapradit (the Monastic complex of Royal Invention) to avoid prosecution by the

97 Khana kammakan chatphim aekkasan thang prawatsat wattanatham lae borankhadi (Committee on the publication of historical, Cultural, and Archeological document, Prime Minister Office), Prachum Pratamra Baromrachbutit phua kalapana Samai Ayuthaya Phak 1 (Compilation of royal document of monastery’s assess in Ayuthaya Period) (Bangkok: Prime Minister Office Press, 1967), II.
98 Nor Na Paknam, Simakata Samut Koi Wat Suthat Dhepvararam (Manuscript of Sima of Wat Suthat Dhepvararam) (Bangkok: Kled Thai, 1997), 20.
usurper after the death of the king. After the loyal bureaucrats overthrew the usurper, he was invited to the throne as King Mahachakraphat (ca. 1548-1569) of Ayutthaya. A monk in a position of high respect, Phra Phimoltham of Wat Raghan had gained enough reputation, legitimacy and labor forces to seize the throne and install himself as King Songtham of Ayutthaya (ca. 1611-1628)\textsuperscript{99}. King Barommakot (ca. 1733-1757), as the viceroy of the previous king, received extra monastic laborers from Wat Phraphutthabat (The Monastic complex of Lord Buddha’s Foot Print) to subdue his rival, Prince Aphai, for the throne of Ayutthaya \textsuperscript{100}.

The last case of this kind occurred in the early Bangkok period during the reign of King Rama I, when laborers of Wat Phraphutthabat (The Lord Buddha’s Foot Print Monastic complex), a major royal monastic complex at Saraburi, committed a crime. The senior monks of this royal wat resisted the governor’s orders to deliver the criminals and to register officials of the court. Because of such cases, in the new Three Seals Law, King Rama I prohibited monks and royal wats from involvement in registering their laborers. The laborers of royal monastic complexes were listed only by the monastic registry officials and these lists were sent to the royal labor control department or Krom Phrasuratsawadi\textsuperscript{101}.

Therefore, the process of donating laborers to the monastic complex came under the direct surveillance of the state in order to prevent royal laborers from leaving their positions. In a similar way, monks who did not study enough of the Buddhist canon or who violated Vinaya rules could be considered a loss of royal labor. The state authority usually managed the quality of monks in two major ways.

\textsuperscript{100} Somsamai Srisuphan, 	extit{Chomna Sakdina Thai} (Real Face of Thai Feudalism) (Bangkok: ChomromSanctawan, 1975).
\textsuperscript{101} R. Langat, 	extit{Pramuan kotmai ratchakan thi 1 Chunlasakkarat 1166: phim tam chabap luang Tra Sam Duang Lem thi 3} (Compilation of King Rama I Law following Three Seals Law, Vol 3) (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1986), 119-121.
First, the king usually conducted purifications of the monastic order to disrobe “impure” monks and register them on the list of the royal conscribed labor. Normally, if a monk had a high rank, his relatives were also exempted from labor duties. If a high ranking monk committed violations, however, his relatives were also stripped of privileges and listed as laborers. The records of La Loubère indicated that several thousand monks were disrobed because they failed an examination during the King Narai period of Ayutthaya\textsuperscript{102}. In the Bangkok period, King Rama I ordered the punishment of any monks who ignored the recitation of \textit{Patimok} or the 227 precepts, or who committed Buddhist violations\textsuperscript{103}. Then he disrobed 128 monks who violated the core Buddhist precepts and listed them as conscripted labors for heavy works\textsuperscript{104}. In 1816, King Rama II also similarly disrobed several senior monks who were indicted of committing adultery\textsuperscript{105}.

The second way that the state coped with the quality of monks was by creating more rigorous academic standards for the instruction of the Buddhist Tripitaka and the Pali language. The Three Seals Law shows that King Rama I urged senior monks to take care of the education in the monastic order\textsuperscript{106}. King Rama II further strengthened these academic standards by developing a nine-level examination process for Buddhist Pali study and an elaborate curriculum, but this was still not conducted on a regular annual schedule\textsuperscript{107}. The examination occasionally took place in front of the king at the Grand Palace, or was conducted before the Supreme Patriarch’s audience at Wat Mahathat (Monastic complex of Lord Buddha Relics). Monks who passed the Pali examination

\textsuperscript{102} Simon de La Loubère, \textit{The kingdom of Siam} (Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1969).
\textsuperscript{103} R. Langat, \textit{Pramuan kotmai ratchakan thi 1 Chunlasakkarat 1166: phim tam chabap luang Tra Sam Duang Len thi 3} (Compilation of King Rama I Law following Three Seals Law, Vol 3) (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1986), 6-7.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{105} Siriwat Khamwansa, \textit{Song Thai 200 Pi} (Thai Buddhism in 200 years) (Bangkok: Sri Anan Printing Mahachulabannakan, 1981), 47.
\textsuperscript{106} R. Langat, \textit{Pramuan kotmai ratchakan thi 1 Chunlasakkarat 1166: phim tam chabap luang Tra Sam Duang Len thi 3} (Compilation of King Rama I Law following Three Seals Law, Vol 3) (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1986), 55.
\textsuperscript{107} Siriwat Khamwansa, \textit{Song Thai 200 Pi} (Thai Buddhism in 200 years) (Bangkok: Sri Anan Printing Mahachulabannakan, 1981), 51.
received a royal stipend and honorary title\textsuperscript{108}. Moreover, their relatives were exempted from conscripted labor and listed as Yomasong (monks’ family)\textsuperscript{109}.

By serving as the “pilot monastic complexes” to promote the new state measures of Buddhist purification and by spearheading the monetary and administrative support of Buddhist ordination, education and Pali examinations, the royal monastic complexes became the centers of wealth and knowledge in Thai society. They also became an archive of traditional knowledge, since elites and noblemen tended to donate their predecessors’ valuable collections and houses posthumously in order to make merit for their deceased ancestors in their next life. Legal manuscripts\textsuperscript{110}, as well as paintings of traditional medical treatments\textsuperscript{111} and martial arts\textsuperscript{112} were found in various monastic complexes throughout Siam. The lay populace could acquire education and service through these social networks of learned monks and their relatives. A big royal monastic complex in Bangkok housed around 400 to 500 monks and thousands of monastic students\textsuperscript{113}. As such, royal monastic complexes were also the centers for royal rulers and nobles to redistribute wealth.

Another important point related to the idea of monasteries as sites of redistribution has to do with the issue of “ownership” of holy space. As mentioned above, it was traditional practice for the king to yield his power over the holy space to the

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\item \textsuperscript{108} Damrong Rachanuphap, \textit{Prachum Phraniphon keaw kap Tamnan tang Phraphutthasassana} (Compilation of Chronicles of Buddhist Religion) (Bangkok: Rungruengtham, 1971), 240.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Thipphakorawong, \textit{Praratchapongsawadan Krung Rattanakosin Ratchakan thi 3} (Royal Chronicle of Bangkok in the Reign of King Rama III) (Bangkok: Srihong Printing, 1934), 455.
\item \textsuperscript{110} From research by Pitinai Chaisaengsukkul, more than 30,000 pages of legal manuscripts were found in 1,000 monastic complexes, 30 provincial cultural centers, 7 branches of the National Museum, 2 branches of National Library and 25 private owners. See more detail in Pitinai Chaisaengsukkul, “Newly Discovered Source Material from 34 Provinces and 14 Provinces of Siamese Kingdom,” in Andrew Huxley, ed., \textit{Thai Law: Buddhist Law; Essays on the Legal History of Thailand, Laos and Burma} (Bangkok: White Orchid Press, 1996), 45-46.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Sir John Crawford found a mural painting displaying a traditional massage instruction at Wat Pho, the biggest royal wat. See more detail in Sir John Crawford, \textit{Journal of an Embassy to the Court of Siam and Cochin China} (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967), 111-112.
\item \textsuperscript{112} Kamala Tiyavanich, \textit{The Buddha in the Jungle} (Chiang Mai: Silkworm, 2003), 141-155.
\item \textsuperscript{113} Jean-Baptiste Pallegrin, \textit{Lao Ruang Mueang Thai} (Description of Siam), translated by Sant Komolabut (Bangkok: Kaona Print, 1963), 60.
\end{itemize}
Buddhist realm. At the same time, according to Buddhist principles, abbots or residential monks could not possess monastic complexes since they were supposed to renounce all materials possessions and desires. Because of this, the royal monastic complexes, especially those in the precinct of “holy space,” were maintained by the state or royal elites, and used daily by the monks for their holy congregation (sanghakram), but neither of these groups could use the monastery properties entirely for their own individual purposes. Therefore, although the royal monastic complexes were constructed, maintained by, and named after royal rulers and the families of nobles who had priority to use these spaces on special occasions, royal monastic complexes were not solely owned by them but rather were a space designated for monks and for common people.

During his visit to Bangkok in 1821, Sir John Crawfurd, the British Ambassador, called Wat Phrachetuphon (Wat Pho) “the temple for people” because it was accessible to everyone114. Major festivities (alms offerings, entertainment, plays and charity for the poor) were also held by the king or royal elites for celebrating the completion of the new structures and the renovations of old buildings at royal monastic complexes115. In 1817, King Rama II also revived the commemoration of the Lord Buddha’s enlightenment day or Wisaka Bucha Day116. The king ordered all monks and commoners in the entire kingdom to participate in this event, and public charity and chanting in royal monastic complexes was sponsored by the court117. From the beginning of Bangkok to the reign of King Rama II, the reestablishment of Buddhist Religion was one of the keys to survival of the new regime. Thus, the construction of royal wats or monastic complexes was not

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117 Ibid., 73.
only a symbol of the revival of Ayutthaya but also a crucial state apparatus for the control of the man power system. Finally, by shifting from Hindu practice to a more orthodox Buddhist doctrine in state ideology, Bangkok began to break from the continuity with Ayutthaya.

**Rising Chinese Mercantilism and Wat Patronage (Rama III, r. 1825-1851)**

During the reigns of King Rama I and King Rama II, Prince Thab or Krommamuen Chetsadabordin was an influential prince. He was the son of King Rama II and a concubine of commoner origins. In the second reign, his royal service in warfare was successful, and his personal trading fleets with China were burgeoning. Wat Arun, whose construction he supervised, became the highest structure in Bangkok until 1870s. When King Rama II passed away, the council of princes and noblemen elected him as King Rama III instead of the young Prince Mongkut, who was born from the chief queen. Consequently, lacking strong political affiliations\(^{118}\), Prince Mongkut decided to stay in the monkshood pursuing Buddhist study vigorously.

In this reign, the royal support for Buddhist education and examination increased significantly. The king arranged the space in his palace and throne hall for teaching Pali and offered daily alms to monks and novices who attended the class at the Grand Palace. Elites and noblemen followed the king’s example by hiring teachers to prepare monks in monastic complexes throughout Bangkok for Pali examination\(^{119}\). He also offered support to the monks who passed their examination by raising the status of monks’ relatives and eliminating royal obligations and private debt. Moreover, the king supported ex-monks with Pali knowledge to enter the bureaucracy\(^{120}\). In this reign, Buddhist and Pali

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\(^{120}\) Ibid., 105.
examinations were standardized on several levels and a schedule for examination was fixed at every 3 years\textsuperscript{121}. This stimulated more lay commoners and noblemen to enter the monkshood and to continue studying to higher levels in order to receive royal titles of Phrakhru (master teacher) and Phra Rachakhana (patriarch). According to Wyatt (1999), the number of monks entering examination rose steadily during the third reign, resulting in a large number of highly educated monks disrobing to entering the bureaucracy in the fourth reign\textsuperscript{122}. Study of the Buddhist canon and Pali was a means of mobility in Thai society, while the social role of royal \textit{wats} was strengthened they became as educational centers and point of entry into the bureaucracy.

Moreover, the king also initiated several procedures for investigating the efficiency of Buddhist activities. He supported Buddhist missionaries to make pilgrimages to Ceylon for exchanging and improving the Buddhist canon (Tripitaka) and to evaluate the quality of Siam’s Buddhist education. Furthermore, he ordered the reproduction of the Tripitaka for the royal library and for distribution to royal monastic complexes, and the translation of the Tripitaka from Khmer to Thai language\textsuperscript{123}. In 1843, a purification was conducted and approximately 500 monks were disrobed\textsuperscript{124}. He also readjusted the monastic order and system of command by regrouping monastic complexes in the central region around Bangkok as another unit of the command region (Khana) under Prince Patriarch Chinorot at Wat Pho\textsuperscript{125}. The gigantic construction schemes for monastic complexes and energetic support for Buddhist study confirmed the status of King Rama III as a great and righteous king or \textit{maha dharmaraja}, thereby compensating for his lack of legitimacy to the throne.

\textsuperscript{121} Phra Thammathatmuni, \textit{Putthasasanaprawat Samai Rattanakosin lae Ratchawong Chakri} (History of Buddhist in Bangkok period and Chakri Dynasty) (Bangkok: Mahamakut Ratchawittayalai, 1982), 127.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 102-103.
\textsuperscript{124} Siriwat Khamwansa, \textit{Song Thai 200 Pi} (Thai Buddhism 200 years) (Bangkok: Sri Anan Print Mahachulabannakan, 1981).
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid, 81-82. Note that the full name of the prince is Krommamuen Nuchitchinorot.
His success in supporting Buddhist activities also derived from several other factors. First, during this period, the external warfare was reduced. By 1821, the Anglo-Burmese conflict broke out, ending the threat of Burmese invasion from the western frontier. The task of the king to strengthen the system of manpower in order to mobilize conscript armies to fight against the Burmese was not the first priority, as in the previous reign. The outpost armies which had constructed bastions and monitored the Burmese military activities were ordered instead to collect forest products for trade and find stones and rocks for decorating King Rama II’s new royal garden. The labor for royal work was substituted by Chinese paid laborers who were more efficient than indigenous conscript laborers. Royal conscripted laborers were allowed to pay tax in products or cash instead of labor. These products became the basis of the royal monopoly for foreign trade. The government also conducted a census in 1825 and land surveys in 1829 and 1832 which reflected the government’s intention to gain revenue in cash and products. The tax in the form of cash payment from conscribed laborers also increased and became the major source of revenue for the king and noblemen.

Second, the king was able to support Buddhist activity because he successfully developed the tax and monopoly trade farming system. This system bypassed the overlords of local towns and principalities who had traditionally taken a portion of the tribute tax before it was carried from rural areas to the center. Although the flow of tax in forest produce increased, the regional economy also changed and the forest produce

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127 At the beginning of King Rama III’s reign, Henry Burney estimated Chinese immigrants for 2000-3000 a year but by the latter part of the 1920s, it rose to 12,000 and 15,000 a year in the 1940s from Veerapol Sarasin, *Sino-Siamese Tribute trade* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 210.
which had been the principle source of revenue for trade during Rama I and II’s reigns was no longer a lucrative source of profit by the reign of Rama III. In the mid-1820s and 1830s, King Rama III shifted his revenue base from tax in forest goods to agricultural produce such as sugar-cane, garden goods and tobacco. These tax collection duties were auctioned to Chinese merchants, noblemen and royal members. This system had three important consequences: [a] it deprived the overlords and local princes from sources of wealth accumulation which could be a threat to the throne; [b] it gave rise to a class of Chinese merchants and middlemen who paid the highest auction for the tax farming system; and [c] it guaranteed more stable and higher revenue to the royal treasury. Moreover, the royal monopoly over the export and import of goods, which the king had previously controlled, was also farmed out to the Chinese in this reign. The abolishment of the monopoly trade also suited the demands of British colonial traders who increasingly demanded freer trade with local rulers from the Indian subcontinent to the coastal region of China. The king’s success in developing the farming system for tax collection and monopoly trade contributed financially to his ability to support the grand scheme of building Buddhist monastic structures.

The renovation and construction of royal monastic complexes were still a main means of legitimizing the ruler’s authority. The strategy for resettling populations by constructing new royal monastic complexes was still functioning. For instance, Wat Thepthida (Monastic Complex of Angelic Daughter) and Wat Ratchanatda (Monastic Complex of Royal Niece) were constructed at the eastern edge of Bangkok city wall partly because the king aimed to extend the urban area to the edge of the city. The state

133 Ibid.
rituals, public festivities, and ceremonies increased significantly due to the growing number of renovation projects.

During this period several meanings and functions of monastic complexes were also transformed. The fundamental purpose for building the royal monastic complex changed from being a means to control of manpower in traditional society to a means of acquiring prestige for new Chinese merchants who wished to assimilate with the class of Thai ruling elites. The Chinese merchants and noblemen competed to support the constructions and activities of royal monastic complexes in order to gain favor in the eyes of the king and princes.

**Prince Mongkut’s Development of Royal-led Reform Buddhist Practice**

While King Rama III was a strong supporter of the grand scheme of Buddhist construction and Pali study, he was rivaled by Prince Mongkut, a more legitimate heir of the throne who had stayed in monkshood to pursue Buddhist education (Vinaya) during this period. During his rigorous study of Pali language and Vinaya, he found several ambiguities in the Siamese monastic practice of ordination and the consecration of holy space, and thus launched a royal-led reform movement by following the practice of Mon monks in Kalyani Sima Nikaya. One of the major consequences of these reforms was the introduction of a new method for the clear demarcation of sima holy space for consecrating the ordination hall. A further consequence was that his monastic complex was constructed following Sri Lankan-Sukhothai architectural symbols and spatial arrangements.

The mapping of holy space had long been a political tool in the struggle for power in the Siamese court, but in the reign of King Rama III, Prince Mongkut manipulated the delineation of boundaries to his own political ends so successfully that it had major consequences for the entire kingdom in the next reign. His royal reform movement gained momentum at the end of King Rama III’s reign. When the western colonial traders
became more influential, Prince Mongkut and his fellows in the reform movement were the Siamese elites who supported the arrival of westerners and embraced western knowledge. As we shall see, he regarded his reform movement as compatible with western knowledge and his practice of clear sima holy space found many parallels in western cartography and geography.

Bangkok’s Urban Structure in the Reigns of Rama I-III (r. 1825-1851): From Cosmological Center to Mercantile City

Bangkok’s Urban Structure from Rama I to Rama II (r. 1782-1824)

Turning now to the urban scene of the city, the early framework of Bangkok was a conglomeration of villages135 surrounding a center comprised of the royal palaces and monastic complexes housing the Buddhist palladium and the Lord Buddha’s great relics. Unlike the major cities of the Ava Kingdom, Angkor and Pagan Empires, the city of Bangkok did not adhere to a strong cardinal order within a large-scale cosmological framework focusing on the royal palace or main religious edifices. As O’Connor has argued, Bangkok could be described as a large constellation of “micro-cosmos” haphazardly oriented around the macro-cosmos of the royal palace. The smaller palace of a prince or house of a nobleman was recognized as the political, religious, symbolic center of each community. The monastic complexes near their palaces and houses were patronized by them and became common ground for local communities who were bonded to their feudal masters. The larger scale cosmological order of the royal palace’s edifice and the Buddha’s great relics monastic complexes dominated only in the royal precinct. This precinct was connected to other districts through the canal networks, which followed

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the natural topography of Bangkok rather than a geometric pattern of cosmological order as in Angkor or Pagan.

Westerners who visited Bangkok in the early period (during the reign of King Rama I-Rama II, 1782-1826) described the unique landscape of pagoda spires and ceramic roof tiles of ordination halls rising above a densely tropical forest and floating houses along the riverfront. John Crawfurd recorded that Bangkok’s houses were mostly constructed of bamboo and wood. There were no permanent structures for public convenience or utilities. The only permanent structures were the lavish buildings of Buddhist wats. Instead of counting the number of public squares, church domes, bell towers and elaborate storefronts, Western visitors determined the urbanization of Bangkok by counting the density of pagoda spires and the white washed structures with bright roofs of monastic buildings that stood out against the greenery when their ships approached the city. Jacob Tomlin and Karl Gutzlaff, early American missionaries who had arrived Bangkok in 1828, estimated that there were no less than 300-400 pagodas glittering with gold. King Rama I constructed only nine major streets and four other minor lanes were constructed privately. It was clear that the main thoroughfares of Bangkok were the canal network and the Chao Phraya River, which were also the city’s most efficient defensive strategy. There were approximately thirteen river ports and twenty markets. Most of these markets were located near the canal or junction between canals and roads.

**Bangkok’s Urban Structure in Rama III (r. 1825-1851)**

In this period, the urban development of the city continued to emphasize the image of the _dharmaraja_ and the Lord Indra with more new element of Chinese craftsmanship. In the area of Bangkok and its vicinity, the number of renovations and constructions of royal monastic complexes rose from fifteen in the first reign to forty in the third reign (see Map 3.4 and 3.5). Among these monastic complexes, the royal _wats_ inside the city wall rose from seven to twelve\(^{140}\). Four major royal monastic complexes (Wat Pho, Wat Arun, Wat Sraket and Wat Mahathat) were renovated and another three (Wat Ratchanatda, Wat Kalayanamit and Wat Suthat) were constructed on a monumental scale. As for Wat Pho, the ordination hall was expanded, the gigantic reclining Buddha shrine was constructed, and Ayutthaya style square-based pagodas were added. At the center of the city, the construction of Wat Suthat, which was built to be as impressive as the large structure of the shrine of Wat Mongkholbophit at Ayutthaya, was completed. As for Wat Kalayanamit and Wat Suthat, the ordination halls were constructed on a monumental scale. Wat Sraket and Wat Arun were marked for their two giant Khmer-style pagodas and their ordination halls were expanded. These monastic structures were constructed in a traditional Thai architectural style with embellishments that blended the Hindu symbolism of Lord Indra with Chinese craftsmanship and materials. In addition, the major timber construction of the royal residences in the Grand Palace, subsidiary buildings and major royal monastic residential quarters were also replaced by brick and mortar\(^{141}\), conveying the message that monastic complexes and palaces were the permanent core of the universe.

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\(^{140}\) Ibid., 62-72.

\(^{141}\) Ratchabandittayasapha, _Tamnan rueang Watthusatan tang tang sueng Phrabat Somdet Phranangklao Chao Uhaosong satapana_ (Legendary of buildings and objects that King Rama III established) cremation volume of Phra Wimadathoe krom Phra Suthasininart Piyamaharatchapadiwarada (Bangkok: Sophonphiphatthanakon, 1932), 15, 17, 25, 52-57.
Bangkok in this period reached its apex of being a cosmological city embellished with Buddhist monumental structures of shrines and pagodas. Bishop Pallegoix, who had arrived Bangkok on February 27, 1830, described the distinctive scene of Bangkok as a city in the middle of greenery busy with the activities of trade junks along the river in contrast with the glittering gold of pagoda spires and colorful roofs of the monastic complexes. The new palaces for adult princes were constructed and became the new

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142 Jean-Baptiste Pallegoix, *Lao Ruang Mueang Thai* (Description of Siam), translated by Sant Komolabut, (Bangkok: Kaona Print, 1963), 54-55.
centers of communities. There were twenty five new palaces constructed in this reign and fifteen of them were in the southeastern area of Bangkok within the city wall\textsuperscript{143}. The growing number of palaces in the south indicated the increasing activities of Chinatown.

During this period, Bangkok began to show the signs of transformation from being a city based on a network of villages loosely linked to the religious and political centers to a market place and trade center. The number of river ports increased from thirteen to nineteen ports, signifying the growing activities of trade. The increasing number of Chinese immigrants rose steadily from the 1920s to 1940s, contributing to the growing density in Chinatown. D.B. Bradley described the scene of the riverfront of Bangkok as having about seventy junkas along the riverfront and all of them were filled up with traders\textsuperscript{144}. Along the river, smaller boats lined the coast for four miles conducting business all year long, and most of these were both houses and shops where Chinese both lived and traded\textsuperscript{145}. Chinatown or Sampheng was the only inland market, but it was enormous, with one street line with Chinese one-storey shop houses\textsuperscript{146}. The waterfront area of Chinatown called Talad Noi was also occupied with Chinese manors where several Chinese nobles and wealthy men resided\textsuperscript{147}.

**Monastic Structures in the Reigns of Rama I-III: From Buddhist Cosmic Center to Symbol of Chinese Trade Prosperity**

**Rebuilding the Buddhist Cosmological Center**

At the beginning of the Bangkok period, the spatial arrangement of the royal monastic complexes also symbolized a syncretistic negotiation between Buddhist and

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 32-41.
\textsuperscript{144} D. B. Bradley, Bangkok Recorder, 1871, 90, 115 citing D.B. Bradley’s diary of 1836.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 111.
\textsuperscript{147} Naengnoi Saksi, *Ongprakop thang Kaiyaphap Krung Rattanakosin* (Physical composition of Rattanakosin City) (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1991), 88.
Hindu cosmology. This syncretism could be seen in the placement of the ordination hall at the center of the precinct, surrounded by a rectangular gallery and a strong axis from the entrance gateways. The large scale Lord Buddha images were placed inside the central building of the ordination hall, but smaller architectural embellishments featuring Hindu mythical figures were also used extensively. As mentioned previously, the monastic complex in this reign was built to be the center of a new urban settlement and to ensure the stability of a new kingdom. The royal wats employed a Hindu cosmic order to create a strong atmosphere and to emphasize the centrality of the Lord Buddha image inside the ordination hall or shrine. The symmetrical rectangular corridor encircling the ordination hall or both the shrine and ordination hall was a major distinguishing characteristic of the Buddhist monastic complex of this period (see Map 3.6). This planning arrangement was different from the Ayutthaya plan, which had a gigantic pagoda built in a Khmer style (Prang) at the center with a rectangular corridor embracing all four sides. During the Bangkok period, this monumental Prang was rarely constructed, and when it was, was reduced and placed behind the ordination hall outside the corridor (Wat Ratchaburana and Wat Prathumkhongkha), at the corner of an inside corridor, or at the monastic complex precinct (Wat Pho, Wat Chanasongkhram and Wat Mahathat). Only one large scale Khmer-style pagoda was constructed at Wat Arun.

**Monastic structures of Rama III (1825-1851): The Rise of Sino-Thai Buddhists**

Although King Rama III still continued restoring and renovating the large old royal monastic complexes in a traditional Thai style, King Rama III displayed his preference for architectural innovation. For instance, he strongly favored Chinese craftsmanship. The monastic planning arrangement of the sacred precinct was unique in its linear pattern of three major monastic buildings: the shrine (wihan), the ordination hall (ubosot) and the learning hall (sala kan parien) on a rectangular platform. This pattern is
Map 3.6. Map of Bangkok with detail maps of 8 major royal wats renovated in the period of Bangkok, 5 of them, from bottom left to top right, showing the ordination halls within the rectangular corridors or wall and 3 of them showing the wall or corridors embracing both shrines and ordination hall.

Based on unpublished Survey Map of Bangkok in 1921-1922 from the archive of the Department of Military Map.
different from the past arrangement. In the traditional plan for royal monastic complexes in Bangkok, the ordination hall was at the center with a rectangular corridor embracing the main hall. For example, in several monastic complexes renovated in Rama I’s reign, both the ordination hall and shrine were placed together at the center and embraced by a corridor.

Normally, the learning hall was not a major building but rather a subsidiary structure often located in the residential quarter or behind the main structure of the shrine, ordination hall, or pagoda. If the royal monastic complex was an old one, King Rama III expanded the ordination hall or constructed a new shrine and ordered the construction of a corridor embracing the central structure in a similar fashion to his predecessors. If it was his new monastic complex, planning arrangement was different from the traditional pattern and the architectural details reflected Chinese craftsmanship (see Plate 3.1-3.4). The learning hall was enlarged and placed alongside the major structures of the shrine and ordination hall without a rectangular encompassing corridor (see Figure 3.1, Map 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9).

A short wall was constructed to embrace the platform of these three major structures instead. The gigantic structure of the learning hall located in the sacred precinct was a reflection of King Rama III’s strong support for education, particularly the study of the Buddhist canon and Pali language study with the aim of instituting standardization and a fixed schedule of examination. Education in the Buddhist canon and Pali language became a major source of competition and prestige for each royal wat, as the number of monks who passed a high level of examination became a reflection of the quality of education in royal monastic complexes and attracted more lay supporters.

The interior space of the ordination hall was not different from those of the previous reigns that created large open windows for a bright and clear atmosphere. However, the exterior architectural details were different. Instead of stacking several layers of elaborated Thai rooftops, the Rama III’s monastic buildings have a simple one
stacking layer of roof structure. The capitals of the columns were also kept simple without decoration in traditional ornament. The detail of architectural embellishment was heavily endowed with bright and colorful Chinese ceramic materials instead of glittering colored glass of a more traditional Thai style.

**Political Contestation in Monastic Architecture**

**Dharmaraja vs. Devaraja**

According to Somkhit\(^{148}\) in the Bangkok period, the interior space of Buddhist monastic buildings was designed differently from the Ayutthaya era. The interior space of a Buddhist monastic building in the Ayutthaya period was dark, massive and heavy because only a limited amount of natural light could pass through the narrow windows. The small, compressed, dark and heavy space was employed to enhance sanctity as well

\(^{148}\) Somkhit Chirathatsanakul, *Kati Sanyalak lae Khwammai khong Soom Pratoo Nathang Thai* (Ideology, Symbol and Meaning of Thai Door and Window) (Bangkok: Silpakorn University, 2004), 286-287.
Plate 3.1. Wat Theptidaram.

Plate 3.2. Wat Ratchanatda

Plate 3.3. Lohaprasat
Wat Ratchanatda

Plate 3.4. Wat Kalayanamit

Detail maps based on Survey Map of Bangkok 1932 from the archive of the Department of Military Map. Plate 3.11 and Plate 3.12 Based on Nangnoi Saksi, Ongprakop thang kaiyaphap Krung Rattanakosin (Physical composition of Rattanakosin City), 68. Plate 3.13 from Saimai Chopkonsuek, Lohaprasat, Wat Ratchanatdaramworavihan (Bangkok: Krom Silpakorn, 1995), 58.
as to emphasize the sense of magical potency of the Hindu-Khmer elements in Buddhist rituals. By contrast, Buddhist monastic and royal architecture in the Bangkok period sought to create a light, airy, large and bright interior atmosphere, reflecting the king’s policy of abolishing animistic elements. The architecture of Bangkok in the early period marked a revolutionary shift from the Ayutthaya by enlarging the fenestration and numerous voids, and eliminating interior colonnades. The brighter atmosphere reflected the core values of Buddhist religion to foster peace, tranquility and wisdom. As such, the architecture of the Buddhist monastic complex in the Bangkok period clearly reflects the victory of the dharmaraja (righteous king) discourse over devaraja (god king) discourse. Nevertheless, this victory did not result in the total elimination of Hindu-Brahmin architectural elements. On the contrary, both royal monastic complexes and palace precincts conveyed the concept of a hierarchical cosmological order with the Buddha at the apex. Bangkok symbolized the center of the universe within a cosmological order where the palace represented the abode of the king as Lord Indra, and the royal monastic complex represented the highest holy place of nirvana above the Mount Meru, where Lord Buddha reached enlightenment.

In fact, the practice of dharmaraja and devaraja began overlap since the middle of the Ayutthaya period when King Barommatrailokkanat donated his palace to be a Buddhist monastic complex, the major precinct in the grand palace was comprised of the Palladium, pagodas and shrines called Wat Phrasisanphet which was the former palace at the south side. Following this tradition, the major precinct of the Grand Palace in Bangkok included the complex precinct of the Emerald Buddha’s ordination hall, Buddhist library, pagodas and shrine. However, the planning arrangement is different from the palace at Ayutthaya. The Emerald Buddha Complex is at the northern main gateway to the palace. The monarch’s throne halls behind the Emerald Buddha precinct

149 Ibid., 286.
were given the auspicious names relating to the heavenly abode of Lord Indra, with a building plan strongly reflecting the cosmological order. The plan, with its Hindu mythical embellishments for the throne halls, connoted the heavenly city of Lord Indra. Therefore, the overall spatial arrangement of the palace precinct signified the king as the protector of Buddhism (\textit{dharmaraja}) while, beyond the Emerald Buddha Complex, the architectural preference of the throne halls reflected the aura of the divine ruler (\textit{devaraja}). This spatial arrangement confirms several scholars’ opinion that analyzed the state policies and the court’s perspectives as the superiority of the Buddhist \textit{dharmaraja} over the Hindu \textit{devaraja}.\textsuperscript{150}

\textbf{Lord Indra vs. Lord Vishnu}

In terms of Hindu mythical symbolism, royal architecture in the Bangkok period featured the symbol of Lord Indra on the Erawan Elephant at the front gable far more prominently, while the symbol of Lord Vishnu on his vehicle, Garuda, which was used widely for the royal architecture in the Ayutthaya period, was still utilized but in lesser scale (see Plate 3.5 and 3.6). Lord Vishnu (Narai) was the protector god in Hindu myth, while Lord Indra (Sakka) was a god of war and storms who had been integrated into the Buddha’s life story. Because of Lord Indra’s association with Buddhism, this Hindu god gained preference in the Bangkok period but was more directly subordinated to the Buddhist features (see Plate 3.7 and 3.8).

According to Somkhit\textsuperscript{151}, Lord Indra and his vehicle, the Erawan elephant, were heavily elaborated in this period. In Hindu mythology, Lord Indra was a local god who


\textsuperscript{151} Somkhit Chirathassanakul, \textit{Kati Sanyalak lae Khwammai khong Sum Pratoo Nathang Thai} (Ideology, Symbol and Meaning of Thai Door and Window) (Bangkok: Silpakorn University, 2004), 284-285
Plate 3.5. The icons of Lord Indra on top of Erawan Elephant at the Great Pagoda of Wat Arun.

Plate 3.6. The icon of Lord Indra and Erawan Elephant above the icon of Lord Vishnu and Garuda at the main shrine of Wat Suthat.

From Chanya Manawit, *Wat Luang Samai Rattanakosin* (Royal Monastic Complexes of Bangkok Era) (Bangkok: Krom Silpakorn, 1997), 53,117.

Plate 3.7. The icon of Lord Vishnu on Garuda Birds at the Ordination Hall of Wat Sraket.

Plate 3.8. The Garudas carrying the base of the wall of the Emerald Buddha Ordination Hall

From the Division of Public Relation, The Department of Fine Arts, *91 Pi hang Kan Sathapana Krom Silpakorn* (91 years anniversary of Department of Fine Arts) (Bangkok: Rungsin Kanphim, 2002), 88.
had less power than Lord Vishnu and Siva. In Bangkok, however, Lord Indra was portrayed as the head of warrior gods and the god of rainstorms as well as the protector god of the Lord Buddha. Lord Indra was placed at the center of the cosmology and Lord Buddha was at the apex above him. The mural paintings inside the major royal monastic complexes often depict the story of Lord Buddha’s past lives (Jataka), representations of the Three Worlds Buddhist cosmology (Triphum), and scenes from the Thai version of the Hindu Ramayana epic (Ramakien). Except for the Ramayana, these paintings represent the stories amalgamating Buddhist concepts of good deeds with Hindu divine power, albeit placing the Buddha in a superior position vis-à-vis the Hindu pantheon (see Plate 3.9).

In addition, the image of Triphum cosmology represented the amalgamation between the Buddhist concept of karma and the Hindu hierarchical and cosmological structure. A core tenet of Triphum or “three-world” cosmology is that wealth, status and social hierarchy are produced by the accumulation of merit and good karma from a past life. By reinforcing this ideology of karma through teaching and visual and spatial imaging, these royal wats served to generate the legitimacy of the king inasmuch as he was believed to hold a great merit from the past which determined his right to rule. Herein, the royal monastic complexes served to maintain order and social consensus, as the populace was taught to believe that their position in society was the cumulative effect of their deeds in the past lives. This propaganda also implied that social mobility in society could be pursued through the field of merit making rather than staging any aggressive violence against the regime.

**Royal Palace Craftsmanship vs. Front Palace Craftsmanship**

The space and structure of royal monastic complexes also became sites of contestation and competition between several royal princes who sought to claim accession to the throne, especially the viceroy or the second king. The position of viceroy
Plate 3.9. The mural paintings showing Three Worlds Cosmology (Traiphum) in four major royal wats in early Bangkok period; Wat Sraket, left; Wat Suwannaram right; Wat Rakhang, center right; Wat Suthat lower right.

Plate at the right and lower right from Chanya Manawit, Wat Luang Samai Rattanakosin (Royal Monastic Complexes of Bangkok Era) (Bangkok: Krom Silpakorn, 1997). Plate at the center right from Rita Ringis, Thai Temples and Temple Murals (Oxford University Press, 1990).
in the Siamese kingdom was the court’s highest commander, someone who was the head of the army responsible for protecting the king. His army was called the front army because it was the first regiment to fight at the front line in a battle. The viceroy was the successor in the line for the next reign if the king passed away. In the Bangkok period, the king appointed his brother, his uncle, or his royal son to be the viceroy. In order to curtail the symbolic power of the viceroy, the king established prohibitions against the uses of certain forms and architectural details that represented the symbol of the king. For instance, the throne hall, palace and monastic complex of the viceroy and his royal princes could not be embellished with an elaborated front gable of the rolling Naga (Nak Sadung) or the spire top roof that represented the Mount Meru as the center of Buddhist cosmology\(^\text{152}\) (see Plate 3.10). Nor could the Front Palace structure use shiny reflective roof tiles\(^\text{153}\). A rule that the stacking roof structure could not be more than three layers was applied so that the royal monastic complexes renovated by the viceroy would not be bigger, higher or more elaborate than the ones constructed by the king (see Plate 3.11). These sumptuary codes of construction were developed to distinguish the architectural style between the Grand Palace Craftsmanship (Sakun Chang Wang Luang) and the Front Palace (Sakun Chang Wang Na).

During King Rama I’s reign, the viceroy was his younger brother who was a great warrior general in the previous reign and who had gained a significant reputation from several consecutive victories over the Burmese. At the beginning of the Bangkok period, the viceroy renovated the most significant royal monastic complex in Thai urban history, Wat Phrasisanphet, which was the name of the royal temple within the royal grand palace

\(^{152}\) An exception occurred during the reign of King Mongkut, when he appointed his full brother as a viceroy and entitled him a second king. King Mongkut then constructed a throne hall with full features of the royal palace architectural details to his brother. His brother was the only viceroy who had full royal dignitary as the king.

\(^{153}\) Division of Public Relation, The Department of Fine Arts, 91 Pi hang Kan Sathapana Krom Silpakorn (91 years anniversary of Department of Fine Arts) (Bangkok: Rungsin Kanphim, 2002), 120-129.
Plate 3.10. The detail top roof of the Emerald Buddha Ordination Hall, left and the Learning Hall at Wat Pho, center, showing the rolling Naga gable and triple stacked roof and the Dusitmahaprasat Throne Hall, right, showing the roof with the spire.

Plate 3.11. The detail top roof of the Buddha Shrine, left; and Siwamokkhawiman Throne Hall, right, in the Front Palace.

From the Division of Public Relation, The Department of Fine Arts, 91 Pi hang Kan Sathapan Krom Silpakorn (91 years anniversary of Department of Fine Arts),

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of Ayutthaya. The name and its vicinity that was next to the viceroy’s palace might have suggested his desire for the throne. After the death of viceroy, King Rama I renamed it Wat Mahathat or the Great Relics Monastic complex. Historically, Wat Mahathat had been considered the symbolic center of the city in several Thai cities and gave the meaning that Buddhist religion had been firmly established in the new capital. However, since it was renovated by the viceroy, Wat Mahathat of Bangkok posses a very small pagoda that houses Lord Buddha’s relics and its main structures of ordination hall is not elaborated as Wat Mahathat in other major Siamese cities (see Plate 3.12). In a similar act, the king renovated Wat Pho (Bodhi Tree Monastic complex) and renamed it Phrachetuphon Monastic complex (Monastic complex of Prince Cheta’s garden), which referred to the first urban monastic complex in Buddhist history. In contrast to Wat Mahathat, Wat Phrachetuphon possesses a tall pagoda inside and King Rama I named it Sisanphetdayan, which was the same name given to the monastic complex of the viceroy (see Plate 3.13). This conveyed a similar meaning to the construction of Wat Mahathat, as it implied that the Buddhist religion had been firmly established in the capital.
The Traditional vs. Royal Sinified Visual Discourses

The space and architectural embellishment of royal monastic complexes constructed in the third reign depicted a new contestation between two important visual discourses, which I will call the traditional visual discourse (prapheniniyom) vs. a new Sinified visual discourse (phraratchaniyom). For the traditional visual discourse, the king continued to renovate and expand the old monastic complexes in a grand scale by employing traditional Thai architectural preferences. For instance, major monastic complexes which were renovated or constructed by King Rama I and Rama II such as Wat Pho, Wat Sraket and Wat Arun, were enlarged under Rama III’s reign. Their major structures of the ordination hall, shrine and pagodas were reconstructed on a grand scale using the traditional symbols of Lord Indra on the Garuda bird and the structure of the

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154 During Rama III reign, the term phrarachaniyom was used to indicate monastery architectural embellishments constructed in a Chinese style.
Plate 3.13. Chinese style decoration at Wat Chaloemphrakiat, Nonthaburi, left and center; and Wat Ratcha-Orot, right.

From Chanya Manawit, *Wat Luang Samai Rattanakosin* (Royal Monastic Complexes of Bangkok Era) (Bangkok: Krom Silpakorn, 1997).

Plate 3.14. Chinese style craftsmanship and Thai traditional architectures at Wat Arun, left; Wat Suthat, center; and Wat Pho, right.

Plates at the left and center from Chanya Manawit, *Wat Luang Samai Rattanakosin* (Royal Monastic Complexes of Bangkok Era) (Bangkok: Krom Silpakorn, 1997), 54, 121. Plate at the right from Niyada Laosunthon, Prachum Jaruek Wat Phrachetuphon (Compilation of Inscription of Wat Phrachetuphon), 37.
rectangular corridor. These monumental structures such as the great Pagoda of Wat Arun, gigantic shrine of Wat Suthat, Wat Sraket’s ordination hall and Wat Pho’s reclining Buddha shrine emphasized the king’s image as Lord Indra, the god of war who protected the Buddha. Moreover, the spatial arrangements of these monuments simulated the cosmological order by replicating Dusita, the heavenly city of Lord Indra.

By contrast, for the new monastic complexes constructed on a smaller scale and further from Bangkok, King Rama III employed largely Chinese elaboration. These included the patterns of various Chinese auspicious objects including the bat (for long life), the phoenix (Hong) for immortal life, the 8-leaf flower (Poiy-Sien), the Chinese flower (Bo-tan), ivy and Chinese gold coins (E-Paeh) in colorful ceramic materials. These auspicious objects in Chinese culture signified prosperity and material wealth, not Hindu-Khmer mythical icons. The planning arrangement of these smaller royal wats of Chinese was a linear organization and did not relate to Hindu-Khmer cosmological order. Here it is important to note that the Chinese merchants had been closely tied to the king and his royal members through successful tributary trade business since the second reign. Chinese merchants became the major group who won the monopoly farming contracts when the king initiated the new trade and tax collection system which undermined benefit of members in the old feudal structure.

Therefore, the Sinified visual discourse reflected the high level of business collaboration and patron-client relationships between the Chinese merchants and the king and his royal members. The emerging Sinified embellishment among the Thai traditional architecture represented the contestation between the rising Chinese wealthy merchant-bureaucrats and the old groups of feudal lords. Although it is possible that Thai workers followed Chinese examples, the prevalence of these details may also suggest that Chinese craftsmen were employed in executing at least some elements of these new projects.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ While no evidence has come to light to confirm or deny these assertions, the sudden imposition of Chinese detail on such a massive scale suggests that more than one mind and one set of hands became
Several royal bureaucrats renovated monastic complexes in honor of the king and employed a largely Chinese style of decoration. The king, in return, patronized the monastic complexes by supporting the construction on a grand scale. For example, Wat Kalayanamit (Monastic complex of Great Friendship) was renovated by Chao Phraya Nikonbodin in honor of the king. He purchased land from several tax farming merchants and constructed the monastic complex’s shrine and learning hall using Chinese decoration. In return, the king supported the construction of a large scale shrine and Lord Buddha statue in a Thai traditional style (see Plate 3.14).

There were three royal monastic complexes constructed solely by the king in Chinese style. All of them were constructed for honoring his personal relatives. Wat Thepthida (Monastic complex of the Angelic Daughter) was dedicated to his favorite daughter, Wat Chaloemphrakiat (Monastic complex of Honor) was built in honor of his mother in Nonthaburi province, and Wat Ratcha-Orot (Monastic complex of Royal Son) was for his victory in the war (see Plate 3.13). The only exception was Wat Ratchanatda, which he constructed newly to honor his niece (see Plate 3.2). This wat was constructed completely in a Thai style with gigantic Loha Prasat structure156 (see Plate 3.3). Several small monastic complexes further from Bangkok’s city wall such as Wat Kor (renamed Samphanthawong in the forth reign) in the south of Chinatown and Wat Samorai (renamed Rachathiwat in the forth reign) at the north were also renovated by the king following his royal preference. Several royal members and bureaucrats also constructed their monastic complexes in Chinese style. For instance, Wat Bowoniwet (Monastic complex of Viceroy Residence) was constructed by Viceroy Mahasakphonlasep. Phraya Shodukratchasetthi, a well-known Chinese nobleman, renovated Wat Norranat at the

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156 Loha Prasat historically was a multi-storey building housing monks and the first two Loha Prasat were constructed in India and Sri Lanka but they were destroyed. This Loha Prasat was considered the last one in Buddhist history but it was not a residential building. It was constructed as one form of Pagoda or Chedi to remember the Lord Buddha.
north outside Bangkok city wall. Some monastic complexes depicted a mixed style such as the Bunnak family’s Wat Phichaiyattikaram (Monastic complex of Lord Phichai’s family) whose ordination hall and shrine were renovated in full Chinese style in contrast to the main Khmer style pagoda. In contrast, another monastic complex of this family, Wat Prayurawongsawat (Monastic complex of Lord Prayun’s family) was constructed fully in a Thai style. Wat Mahannapharam (1850) was constructed in Chinese style by Prince Annop, King Rama III’s son, but the subsidiary buildings were constructed in a Thai style later. In addition, several subsidiary buildings in major royal wats were also constructed with either Chinese materials and ornaments or local replicas of Chinese crafts in contrast with the main monumental structures.

These include the inner gateways of Wat Pho and the embellishment of the great pagoda and the river pavilions of Wat Arun (see Plate 3.14). The coexistence of Thai-Chinese architectural features in major royal wats could be interpreted as the king’s unique success and ability to gain benefits from emerging Chinese wealthy groups.

The Subversive Discourse of Prince Mongkut: One King but Two Dharmarajas

During his reign, King Rama III’s claim to being a dharmaraja was contested by his half-brother, Prince Mongkut, who stayed in the monkshood to avoid future political conflict with the supporters of the new king. Prince Mongkut significantly developed his strategies in the reform Buddhist movement, and it is worth discussing these policies and discourses in a broader context here, since he eventually was elected as King Rama IV (r. 1851-1868). However let me note at the outset that the details of the history, concept and architecture of sima holy space of the ordination hall will be discussed in the next chapter, which deals particularly with King Mongkut’s unique religious policies.

Many scholars and Thai historians have pointed out that King Mongkut marked the transition from a pre-colonial mode of statecraft that depended on the manipulation of
manpower, to a modern and rationalized control of space which demanded clear demarcations of territory. During King Rama III’s reign, he developed a deep concern about the importance of delineating borders of sima holy space and he seems to have reinforced his ideas with acquisition of western knowledge, particularly the tools and concepts associated with modern geography\textsuperscript{157}.

By undertaking a critical study of Pali texts and the Lord Buddha’s discipline (Vinaya), Prince Mongkut found two major inconsistencies in Siamese Buddhist practice. First, he found that the Siamese Buddhist practice of his time had several ambiguous usages of Pali language in chanting; and secondly, he found that there was an unclear demarcation of sima holy space. These two factors were crucial since the Vinaya indicated that important rituals, such as ordination rites, that were conducted with incorrect Pali chants or within unbounded holy space were to be considered invalid. By pinpointing these possible errors, Prince Mongkut was able to challenge the validity of the entire monastic order. On these grounds, he launched a Buddhist purification and the accompanying policy of delineating clear boundaries to mark the holy space of ordination hall.

By designating clear sima boundaries according to the Vinaya code and re-ordaining within these boundaries, Prince Mongkut also protected himself from the threat of his political rival groups – Prince Rakronnaret’s and King Rama III’s supporters. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the holy space and monkshood had long been a political tool in the struggle for power in the Siamese court, but in the reign of King Rama III, Prince Mongkut manipulated the delineation of boundaries to his own political ends so successfully that it had major consequences for the entire kingdom in the next reign. Drawing on the Mon Kalyani Sima practice, which Prince Mongkut believed to

offer a better understanding of the Pali language\textsuperscript{158} and a stricter following of Vinaya disciplines, he challenged the traditional discourse of Siamese monastic practice and ordination process which was heavily supported by King Rama III. Prince Mongkut took the leading role in the purification of the Buddhist monastic order—a practice which was traditionally initiated by the king. This purification of the Buddhist monastic order also signified the act of a \textit{dharmaraja} who upheld the Buddhist religion by preventing its decline. Herein, King Rama III’s efforts to emulate the \textit{dharmaraja} were contested by Prince Mongkut who initiated the purification movement instead of the king.

In response to Prince Mongkut’s movement, King Rama III supported Prince Mongkut’s Buddhist education, appointed him to oversee Pali examinations, and sponsored a Buddhist mission to Sri Lanka. Finally, the king conferred him status as Patriarch and appointed him to be the abbot of a newly built \textit{wat} in 1836. Interestingly, the king also renamed the monastic complex to Wat Bowonniwet (Monastic Complex of the Viceroy Residence). By supporting Prince Mongkut’s movement, the king portrayed himself as a benevolent ruler who shored up his brother and shared Prince Mongkut’s reputation of \textit{dharmaraja}.

Even though Rama III endeavored to portray himself as a benevolent ruler, this did not stop Prince Mongkut from developing and asserting his authority in the domain of Buddhism. Moreover, by questioning the validity of the \textit{sima} as they were constructed in the traditional practice of his forerunners and demarcating a clearer \textit{sima} space for his smaller royal \textit{wats}, he offered an implicit challenge to King Rama III’s efforts to build royal \textit{wats} on a grand scale. It was as though Prince Mongkut were saying that in spite of their grandeur, the King Rama III’s gigantic ordination halls could be meaningless if the holy space was not properly constructed, creating ambiguity for the monkshood.

\textsuperscript{158} Ophat Sewikul, \textit{Phraratchabida haeng Kan Patirup} (Royal Father of Reform) (Bangkok: Phraephitthaya, 1970), 25.
Another interesting and important point is that Prince Mongkut was surprisingly open to American Protestant missionaries—a fact that we can attribute to his own subversive propensity for critiquing traditional, establishment Buddhism. While King Rama III supported the traditional education of Pali translation and Buddhist canonical study both at the Grand Palace and at his royal monastic complexes, Prince Mongkut lent support to Protestant missionaries to establish centers for acquiring modern knowledge at his monastic complex, Wat Bowonniwet (Monastic complex of Viceroy Residence). King Rama III and Chao Phraya Phra Khlang (Minister of Treasury and Port) were also interested in the arrival of American missionaries, but chiefly for economic purposes. So, while the king and his old ministers distrusted Westerners and kept a distance from them, Prince Mongkut allowed American missionaries to distribute Christian tracts and open a printing house at his royal wat, and he also gave American missionary groups a place at Wat Bowonniwet for their work.

With the British victory over the Burmese in 1826 and triumph over the Chinese Imperial Army in the 1842 Opium War, the king feared that Western knowledge would herald the end of Thai traditional wisdom. For this reason, he expanded Wat Pho (Monastic complex of Bodhi Tree) to serve as an archive of Thai traditional wisdom, and he sponsored the writing of new inscriptions to be housed there. In contrast, Prince Mongkut accepted these new forms of knowledge and technology. For instance, he studied English language with Dr. Jesse Caswell and learned Western sciences with Dr.

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159 Somkhit Chirathatsanakul, “Phra Ubosot lae Phra Wihan nai samai Phrabatsomdet Phrachomklao Chao Uhao (Ordination halls and Shrines in King Mongkut Period)” (Master Thesis, Silpakorn University, 1990), 23.

160 Manich Jumsai, King Mongkut and Sir John Bowring (From Sir John Bowring’s personal files, kept at the Royal Thai Embassy in London) (Bangkok: Chaloemnit, 1970), 17.

161 Wilailakha Thawonthanasan, “Phoonam Thai Samai Ratchakan thi 3 kab kan Rub Wattanatham Tawantok (Thai leader in the third reign and Western knowledge)” in Silpawattanatham (Art and Culture), year 8, vol 11 (September 1987), 123.

He began to rationalize his Buddhist chanting and eliminate animistic beliefs from Buddhist teaching. Prince Mongkut and several of his young royal relatives, including a young generation of noblemen from the Bunnak family, became well known by Westerners in Bangkok as a group of young elites who were more open to modern knowledge. His monastic complex became a space to produce his Reform discourse and to distribute Christian tracts working against the traditional Buddhist practice.

Although several senior monks had already eliminated animistic narratives from their Buddhist teachings, Prince Mongkut’s discussion with American Protestant missionaries about the contradictions in both Christian and Buddhist religious beliefs contributed significantly to his rational explanation of Buddhist chanting. His teaching eliminated magical stories of Lord Buddha from his teaching. This act was in keeping with his original movement to purify Buddhist religion, and it became a strength of his new Thammayuttika sect, which sought to distinguish itself from the traditional Buddhist practices that incorporated worship of Hindu gods and animistic beliefs. By promoting the fact that Lord Buddha was a human and the doctrine of Buddhist teaching was self-development not belief in god, he also criticized irrational narratives in the Bible, such as the creation of the Earth in seven days, the story of Noah and the worship of idolatry.

The American missionaries also used Prince Mongkut’s critique to condemn the practices of the Catholic Church. On one hand, Prince Mongkut adopted the critical approach of American Protestant missionaries as his own tool for fighting against traditional Buddhist beliefs and practices that were sponsored by the king and old

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165 From Somkhit (1990), the new explanation of the birth of Lord Buddha by Prince-patriarch Poramanuchit Chinorot already indicated the new humanistic idea.
Siamese bureaucrats. Conversely, the American missionaries adopted Prince Mongkut’s comments to highlight the irrationality of the Catholic Church and thus gain local support from the emerging elite Siamese groups.

**Wat Pho in Pre-Modern Context**

Wat Pho is the best example of Bangkok’s royal *wats* built in this period, since it was renovated by King Rama I and Rama III. The spatial arrangement of Wat Pho was altered significantly in this period, thus manifesting most of the pre-modern aspects of the royal *wat* described at the beginning of this chapter. Its grandeur and heavily elaborated structures symbolize the Buddhist cosmological order. Its library collection of manuscripts, sculptures and inscriptions meant that it was considered the center of Thai wisdom.

Wat Pho became a royal *wat* prior to Bangkok’s establishment. Wat Pho’s transformation started when King Taksin established Thonburi as the new capital city. He also built a new city wall embracing the east bank of the Chao Phraya River on the Bangkok side. According to King Chulalongkorn’s comments in the new compilation of the chronicle of Princess Narinthronthewi, Wat Pho’s precinct was in a rectangular shape, stretching in an east-west direction, and King Taksin’s city wall cut through the cemetery area of Wat Pho, rendering it outside the city limits but embraced the rest of Wat Pho inside\(^1\).  

In this way, the original space of Wat Pho was altered by royal command at the time of the Thonburi period, but it also gained the status of a royal monastic complex

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(Wat Luang) and was supported by the king\textsuperscript{168}. During this period, the area east of Wat Pho was still swampland. However, this swampland acquired critical significance when the capital was moved to Bangkok.

**Wat Pho’s Vicinity: from Wetland to Royal Residence and Trade Center**

In the reign of King Taksin, the waterfront area around Wat Pho was the port and navy shipyard for his warships\textsuperscript{169}. The area north of Wat Pho, which is today the Grand Palace, was Chinatown. The area on the east side of today’s Wat Pho was comprised of marshland, swamps, ponds and canals. When King Rama I decided to move the capital across the Chao Phraya River, he designated his grand palace would be located in the Chinatown area north of Wat Pho. Wat Pho became the closest monastic complex to the Grand Palace. As mentioned previously, the swampland nearby was filled up by laborers to create the compact ground for the expansion of Wat Pho. When King Rama I bought sixty six strong men from slavery and assigned them to be register laborers of Wat Pho, these laborers established their houses around Wat Pho’s vicinity\textsuperscript{170}. As such, Wat Pho’s area was the first urban settlement in Bangkok.

When the palace was established, the south side of the Grand Palace north of Wat Pho (about 10.4 acres) was assigned for the king’s closest noblemen to build their houses. For instance, the Minister of War, Chao Phraya Mahasena, the founder of the Bunnak family was assigned to live here\textsuperscript{171}. This area was taken over later by King Rama II for

\textsuperscript{168} Phrakhru Palat Samphiphatthanaphrommchariyachan (Bun), *Prawat Wat Phrachetuphon Wimonmongkhlaram* (History of Wat Phrachetuphonwimonmongkhlaram), cremation vol. Phra Ratchaprasitthiwimon (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkon Ratchawittayalai, 1993), 7.

\textsuperscript{169} Department of Fine Arts, *Chotmaihet kan anurak Krung Rattanakosin* (Chronicle of Preservation of Rattanakosin City) (Bangkok: Sahaprabaphanit, 1982), 626-628; 555-556.

\textsuperscript{170} Phra Khru Palat Samphiphatthanaphrommchariyachan (Bun), *Prawat Wat Phrachetuphon Wimonmongkhlaram* (History of Wat Phrachetuphonwimonmongkhlaram) cremation vol. Phra Ratchaprasitthiwimon, (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkon Ratchawittayalai, 1993), 68.

\textsuperscript{171} Nængnoi Saksi, *Ongprakop thang kaiyaphap Krung Rattanakosin* (Physical composition of Rattanakosin City) (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1991), 83.
the expansion of the inner palace\textsuperscript{172}. The northwest corner of Wat Pho (today the shrine of Reclining Buddha) was the palace of Princess Narinthonthewi, the younger sister of King Rama I. The area further northwest of Wat Pho at the waterfront in King Rama I’s reign was the royal warehouse and canteen\textsuperscript{173}. This area was also an important port for transporting goods of royal trade and later on, part of it became a small factory to produce rocks for construction\textsuperscript{174}.

Since Bangkok was a city on a swampland of canal networks, the riverfront areas along the northwest to the southwest of Wat Pho were the most important hubs for distributing food and goods from orchard in Thonburi. The city wall was the boundary between the monastery and the waterfront area. There was one fortress “Pom Mahayak” next to the waterfront area, which belonged to Wat Pho. There were three markets near Wat Pho: Tha Tien port market in the west, Pak Khlong market in the south, and Thai Sanom market\textsuperscript{175} at the northern corner of Wat Pho, next to the southern section of the Grand Palace where the concubines and female workers of the Grand Palace lived. A part of Tha Tien waterfront area was the palace of Prince Issaranurak, the nephew of King Rama I, son of Princess Srisudarak, the elder sister of the king. This palace was outside the city wall. The eastern area of Wat Pho became the area of three palaces of the king’s sons\textsuperscript{176}. The Municipal office and prison were on the east of Wat Pho in the area of Suan Chaochet\textsuperscript{177}. The area north of them was an ammunition warehouse.

Part of the Tha Tien waterfront and port was also designated for Wat Pho. The king ordered to construct a brick barrier along the river port. Stone pavement and ceramic roof tiles were used for the pavilions. The base for monks to sit was a brick construction.

\textsuperscript{173} Nængnoi Saksi, \textit{Ongprakop thang kaiyaphap Krung Rattanakosin} (Physical composition of Rattanakosin City) (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1991), 74.
\textsuperscript{174} It was called Tha Klang Sinkha and Rong Mo in Thai, ibid., 112.
\textsuperscript{175} Thai in this case means rear and Sanom means concubine in Thai, ibid., 104.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 74.
and the walls were built with ceramic design allowing in light. The roof top at the entrance near the northern gate was adorned with Phra Kiew symbol and the other end had in three gables. At both ends of the Chanuan Nam waterfront were the pavilions (sala) for distributing Krak (paste for coloring the saffron robe) and charcoal. There was another pavilion for distributing curry to monks\(^{178}\). Next to the pavilion for curry distribution was the boat house storing boats that monks paddled to collect alms offerings. Two toilets were constructed with bushes around\(^{179}\).

King Rama I also enforced the law that his officials had to hold the ten Lord Buddha’s precepts and attend Buddhist chanting every full moon and half moon day. Moreover, it was an obligation for officials to attend Buddhist chanting before entering the king’s audience hall\(^{180}\). Because it was the closest royal wat near the Grand Palace Wat Pho could have served the communities of close royal princes and noblemen who served the king. At the beginning of the Bangkok period, the vicinity of Wat Pho was a cluster of the residences of noblemen and the palaces of the close royal relatives. The waterfront area of Wat Pho also economically served the city as the center to distribute products for both royal households and commoner communities throughout the area inside Bangkok’s city wall.

From the end of King Rama I’s reign to the beginning of King Mongkut’s reign, the urban vicinity of Wat Pho also gradually changed along with economic transformations. At the end of the first reign, the palace’s population increased, and King Rama II ordered to expand the palace down south. The residences of the noblemen were replaced with the expansion of the inner palace where the princess, concubines and female servants resided. Several key bureaucrats such as the Bunnag family who


\(^{179}\) Ibid., 70.

originally lived in this area moved out to the west bank of Chao Phraya River. The south of Wat Pho was occupied by the new palaces of the young princes. (See Image: from Nangnoi)

There were around seventeen palaces surrounding Wat Pho at the south, east and west of Wat Pho\textsuperscript{181}. Some of the palaces at the south of Wat Pho were also constructed outside the city wall. The number of palaces also increased during the third reign. Ten more palaces were constructed at the east and south of Wat Pho and moved further to the eastern gateway facing Chinatown and the Wat Sraket area\textsuperscript{182}. From the chart of Nangnoi, we can see that most of the new palaces were clustered around the south and the east of Wat Pho, gradually changing the community which was originally a village of bureaucrats and servants of the palace into a community of royal princes and inner palace communities (see Figure 3.2).

**Wat Pho’s History: Royal Rivalry over the Buddhist Axis Mundi**

When King Rama I took the throne in 1782, he appointed his younger brother, Krom Phraratchawangbowon Mahasurasinghanat (Bunma), to be the viceroy. His brother was a prominent figure and successful army commander who had served under King Taksin. As a viceroy who had established his legitimacy through his victories in battle with the Burmese armies. Bunma became a potential rival and successor to the throne. He expressed his ambition in part by renovating Wat Salak, which was renamed Wat Phrasisanphet after the Buddhist convocation of the Tripitaka in 1788\textsuperscript{183}. This is significant because Phra Sisanphet was the name of the standing Buddha statue which was the palladium of Ayutthaya which had been housed in the grand palace of the former

\textsuperscript{181} Nangnoi Saksi, *Ongprakop thang kaiyaphap Krung Rattanakosin* (Physical composition of Rattanakosin City) (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1991), 35.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 39.
\textsuperscript{183} Craig J. Reynolds, “The Buddhist Monkshood in the nineteen Century Thailand” (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1972), 52.
Figure 3.2. Wat Pho and Bangkok in transition from Thonburi to King Rama III’s reign

capital. As such, using this name for the viceroy’s major monastery could be seen as a means of claiming continuity with Ayutthaya and therefore increasing the viceroy’s legitimacy to the throne. Indeed, historical evidence shows that the viceroy was preparing for the possibility of succeeding the throne by preparing the yot mondop—an architectural embellishment of spire rooftop that is preserved solely for the royal palace of the king. If the viceroy had outlived King Rama I, his monastic complex could have housed the royal palladium because it was located next to the viceroy’s palace.

In response to the viceroy’s symbolic assertion of political legitimacy, Rama I began to renovate Wat Pho. In 1789, one year after his co-sponsorship of a Buddhist Convocation of the Tripitaka at Wat Phrasisanphet, the monastic complex underwent a grand expansion. First, the king ordered 20,000 laborers to work on packing the foundation, which also sank down two years later causing him to invest more financial resources to stabilize the ground. The city wall of King Taksin that had cut the cemetery out of the monastery precinct was removed, and the sacred precinct of Wat Pho was reshaped following a cosmological order. There is no doubt that Rama I undertook these renovations in order to establish Wat Pho as the new Buddhist axis mundi of Bangkok and greater Siam.

Along with the strong cosmological order, the king also ordered to transport 1,248 Buddha statues to Wat Pho, offering further evidence of his intention to make Wat Pho the new center of the Siamese Buddhist world. After they were repaired, 872 of the statues were installed along the corridor while the rest were transported to other monasteries. Moreover, he ordered to recast the remains of Phra Sisanphet, a 16-meter tall standing Buddha statue from the ruined palace of Ayutthaya. However, after consulting with the ecclesiastical council, he agreed with the senior monastic orders that

185 Ibid., 52-53.
rather than recasting it, they should keep the remaining structure of the statue and install it in the new pagoda called Chedi Sisanphetdayan\(^{186}\). The reason for this was not the British preservationist concept of preserving artifacts “in situ,” but rather the traditional idea that he should not disturb the merit (\textit{bun}) of the ancestors’ faith (\textit{sattha}) and their donation (\textit{kalapana}). However, repairing or making a shelter to cover it could be considered protecting and thus continuing their merit\(^{187}\).

The building of the grand pagoda using the name Sisanphetdayan inside the Wat Pho complex connoted not only King Rama I’s claim to the past glory of Ayutthaya but also his competition with the increasing reputation of his brother, who endeavored to assert his legitimacy by transforming Wat Salak into Wat Phrasisanphet as another Buddhist center. It is significant that King Rama I changed the name of Wat Phrasisanphet to Wat Mahathat, or the Monastery of the Great Relics, as soon as the viceroy passed away\(^{188}\).

During his reign, the king also constructed a large number of pagodas in Wat Pho housing various relics, including seventy one minor pagodas along the corridor of the ordination hall, four groups of five pagodas on one base, Khmer-style prang pagodas at the corner of the corridor, and the grand pagoda, Sisanphetdayan. As discussed at the


\(^{187}\) Ibid., 24-26. The king requested a formal answer from the ecclesiastical order which was the group of senior monks about the proper procedure to support the Buddhist monastic order. The senior monks stated that the use of material or revenue from the donated monastic lands which were once the deserted monasteries for other purposes or other monastic establishments was considered improper. If the king revived the kingdom and restored the revenue system, the profit from monastic lands should be spent for making shelter or repairing the old Buddhist statues or deserted monastic structures first and the rest could be used for the new Buddhist structures. Accordingly, the remolding of the dilapidated Phra Sisanphet statue could disturb the ancestors’ spirit because it could be interpreted as using the old materials of ancestors donated to Buddhist religion for the new purposes. By contrast, making the pagoda to house it connoted the protecting the ancestors’ merit.

\(^{188}\) Thiphakorawong, \textit{Phraratchaphongsawadan ratchakan thi 1} (Chronicle of King Rama I’s Reign) (Bangkok: Ongkan Kha khong Khurusapha, 1960), 304. The Mahathat or Relic pagoda is still considered the center of the city in Thai urban tradition. Nevertheless, because its first major patron was a viceroy who posed a threat to the throne of Rama I, Wat Mahathat does not have the grand pagodas of the Wat Mahathat of other cities.
beginning of this Chapter, since the pagoda housing the Buddha’s relics has been considered by Thai scholars as the powerful image of legitimacy and the center of worship for Buddhists\(^{189}\) in mainland Southeast Asia, the construction of ninety nine pagodas in Wat Pho reflected the king’s inspiration and intention to create the center of the Buddhist world\(^{190}\). Moreover, its new name, Wat Phra Chetuphonwimonmongkharam, was taken from the first urban monastery in the Lord Buddha’s life history, Wat Chetawon Mahawihara at Sawitthi in India. As King Rama I stated in the Three Seals Law, the act of recompiling and scrutinizing the Tripitaka was undertaken in order to establish the axis mundi (lak lok), and the construction of Wat Pho, which started a year after the completion of Tripitaka, was the physical manifestation confirming the king’s intention to create the new pillar of the Theravada Buddhist world.

However, Wat Pho’s design and construction was not based only on the Buddhist faith, but also represented the amalgamation of Hindu mythical icons which also supported the ruler’s divine aura. The front gable panels of every building in the sacred precinct of Wat Pho were carved and portrayed various battlefields from the Ramayana epic. The selected battles between Lord Rama, who is the human reincarnation of Lord Vishnu, and demons were installed on the front panel of the entrance gates, on the gables of the corridor. In addition, Wat Pho’s interior space was adorned not only with the mural paintings recounting Lord Buddha’s stories but also with the Hindu Ramayana epic. The Ramayana story was used to compare to King Rama I’s victory over his enemies and restoration of order. Wat Pho was thus the place to commemorate his success as the Lord Rama, the avatar of Lord Vishnu who restored law and order in the kingdom.


Upon the completion of Wat Pho’s construction which took seven years, five months and twenty-eight days\textsuperscript{191}, King Rama I ordered the grand celebration. The festivities lasted seven days with several stages and theaters ranging from Thai traditional Ramayana masked plays, Chinese opera and Vietnamese acrobatic shows. This grand scale event included six hundred and twenty four monks making fireworks for the celebration, and alms offerings for one thousand monks from both the meditation study and Buddhist canon study lineages. Moreover, the festival was adorned with candlelight decorations at night, and there were nine theatres of leather puppet shows, two hundred firework displays, and eight special large firework units each night with Vietnamese candle dances\textsuperscript{192}.

In this event, the king also distributed money to his princesses, princes and concubines for donating to the masses. Also at the time of this festivity, the king ordered to buy sixty six strong men with their families from slavery, costing a total of 7,672 baht\textsuperscript{193}, to serve as conscript laborers in the monastery. From an economic view point, the celebration, construction and renovation of Wat Pho was one of the biggest forms of wealth redistribution. The wealth surplus spent for donations in the ceremony totaled 154,416 baht\textsuperscript{194} while the total cost of construction was 302,824 baht\textsuperscript{195}. As these figures indicate, a large amount of wealth surplus was spent for the activities in this grand festival, amounting to more than half of construction cost. At the end of the inscription describing the event, King Rama I declared that the throne was not what his aspired for but rather for the abolition of suffering for all of his people\textsuperscript{196}.

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., 51-53.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., In the Thai currency unit of 95 chang 18 tamling.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., In the Thai currency unit of 1,930 chang and 4 tamling.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., In the Thai currency unit of 3,785 chang 6 tamling.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 54.
In 1808, around ten months before the end of the reign, the lord of Nan, one of the major northern Tai chiefdoms, found two hundred and thirty five pieces of Lord Buddha relics and transported them to Bangkok with a grand procession. King Rama I ordered to investigate these relics from Nan. After reaching a consensus that forty nine pieces were the Lord Buddha relics and the rest were the relics of enlightened monks, he installed them in the monastic precinct of the Emerald Buddha. The king also installed some of these Lord Buddha Relics in the main Buddha statues at the southern and western gate shrines of Wat Pho while none of the relics went to the viceroy’s Wat Mahathat where the Supreme Patriarch resided. Rama I also purchased one family of six slaves to serve as the monastic laborers to take care of the relics. Beside the palladium in the Grand Palace, this act also confirmed Wat Pho as the center of the Siamese Buddhist cosmos. Once again, here we see an illustration of the king’s intention to downplay the symbolic importance of Wat Mahathat, even though the viceroy had already died at this time.

In 1814, the fifth year of King Rama II’s reign (r. 1809-1824), Somdet Phra Wannarat, the abbot of Wat Pho died. The king asked his half brother, Prince Wasukree, who was in the third year of monkshood at Wat Pho, to take the abbotship and receive his annual Kathin donation at the ceremony. Prince Wasukree later on was conferred to the rank of Prince Krommamuen Nuchitchinorot. He was the first royal family member who received both a monastic and feudal title, and Wat Pho was thus the first monastery governed by a high ranking royal member.

In 1831, King Rama III (r. 1824-1851) visited Wat Pho for the annual Kathin ceremony and found that it had become dilapidated. He was reportedly depressed by this, and declared the major renovation and expansion would be undertaken to honor his

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198 Ibid., 56.
grandfather’s acts of merit and to maintain the monastery for all eternity. His summon for the renovation of Wat Pho was carried out by two major ministers, Phraya Phetpichai and Phraya Sripiphat (later, Somdet Chao Phraya Barommahaphichaiyat, the chief Minister serving various duties mainly trade), and thirteen senior princes while seventeen lower ranking officials of various departments serving in both the Grand Palace and the Front Palace were also assigned to supervise the minor structures such as the pavilions, minor pagodas, corridor and Tripitaka library. Monks from various monastic complexes in Bangkok were recruited to paint the Jataka on the wall of the satellite pavilions.

In addition to the grand scale renovation, the king also wished to preserve various forms of Thai traditional knowledge and install them in Wat Pho. He ordered Phraya Bamroeratchaphat to compile the medicinal texts which were then installed in the stone plates at the columns of the satellite pavilions. These medicinal recipes inscribed on the columns of the satellite pavilions historically marked Wat Pho as the first university in Thailand. The interior and mural paintings in the newly-built ordination hall (the keystone was laid in 1835), also continued and enhanced the concept of being an “axis mundi” or the pillar of the Siamese Buddhist world. For instance, the ordination hall was inscribed with the list of the symbols used for the patriarchs’ honorary fans, and the mural paintings narrated the story of Mahosattha Jataka—a story of the Lord Buddha’s past life when he was a righteous minister who promoted justice. Mahosattha Jataka

200 See more detail of the names and titles of the princes in Ibid., 88.
201 Ibid., 91-93.
202 Ibid., 94-96.
203 Ibid., 96.
symbolized the core values of Buddhist legal preferences in Siam. Moreover, the list of four hundred and fifty four principalities under the suzerainty of the Siamese monarch was also inscribed in the ordination hall, depicting Wat Pho as the center of the Siamese hierarchical order and mandala polity.

In 1832, a new group of sixty-one buildings, including residential units for meditation lineage monks, a pavilion, and a chanting hall were constructed at the southern area of the monastic complex. The new buildings were constructed in brick and mortar. Thus, the one hundred and seventy six old residential buildings, the pavilion, the chanting hall, the Tripitaka library and the bell tower were also reconstructed in brick and mortar. Following these constructions, the king donated all necessities to four hundred and thirty monks and fifteen novices to celebrate the grand opening of this new residential quarter.

Aside from the expansion of the ordination hall, the king ordered the construction of the new gigantic shrine housing the reclining Buddha statue on the grounds of the former palace of Princess Aunt Ku (later named Princess Narinthonthewi), which was at the northwest corner of Wat Pho’s precinct. He also extended another two grand pagodas beside the Sisanphetdayan pagoda of King Rama I to honor his father, King Rama II, and commemorate his reign. In 1839, Prince Chumsai206 reported to the king that the spires of the three pagodas were not straight because they had not been erected perpendicular to the base. The king was upset from this and became ill. He called on the general commissioner, Phraya Sriphiphat who was away leading the troops to suppress the southern rebellion, and complained that without him, no one could manage the renovation. The king also cried out loud that the lopsided pagoda spires at Wat Pho disgraced the king and degraded his reputation207.

206 His feudal title was Krommamuen Ratchasihawikrom. See more in Kanchananakphan (So Phlaynoi), Phummisat Wat Pho (Wat Pho’s Geography) (Bangkok: Bamrunsan, 1973), 32-33.
207 Ibid.
In the process of renovation, the construction of monastic complexes was mostly commissioned to senior bureaucrats, ministers or princes as supervisors. For instance, King Rama III appointed his chief ministers, Phraya Sriphiphat and Phraya Phetphichai as chief commissioners for the overall construction of Wat Pho while the construction management of large scale structures such as shrines, ordination halls, corridors, pagodas and the Tripitaka library hall were assigned to thirteen senior princes. The details of design were usually undertaken by the bureaucratic titles of Phraya Ratchasongkham (Lord of Royal Warfare) Phraya Samphophai (Lord of Three Worlds Defeat), and Phraya Phetphichai (Lord of Diamond Victory). For Wat Pho, these mid-ranking bureaucrats were the heads of various feudal units that mostly worked closely within the palace, such as the inner palace army guild department, palace guard regiments, and royal guard regiment of both the Grand Palace and the Viceroy Palace.

This grand scale renovation also took another sixteen years to complete. The renovation of Wat Pho was in fact an expansion. The ordination hall was expanded, its three cardinal shrines had more space added at the back, the Shrine of the Reclining Buddha was added, the Tripitaka library was reconstructed in brick structure, two gigantic pagodas were erected, and minor structures were elaborated with Chinese ceramic embellishments. Upon the completion, King Rama III maintained the list of one thousand monastic laborers (lek wat) of Wat Pho. He assigned his relative, Prince

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208 Main cardinal shrines, Reclining Buddha Shrine, ordination hall, cloister corridors, pagodas and Tripitaka library hall.
209 These two positions were founded in several archival documents for the task of renovating several royal monastic complexes.
Laddawan to control the conscript laborers of Wat Pho\textsuperscript{212}. In 1848, the king celebrated the completion of renovations of Wat Pho by giving five thousand pieces of robes, alms bowls, fans and other necessities to the monks. The king offered alms to monks for three days by paying his officials to cook rice. Khon theater and other plays were performed with fireworks. At the end of the celebrations, he distributed small bags with coins and necessities to people. He donated money in the amount of 1,000 chang (80,000 baht) for inscribing the names of his relatives on these bags. He stepped into the Sutthaisawan throne hall to throw the bags to his people\textsuperscript{213}.

King Rama III also revised the ecclesiastical administrative structure, giving Wat Pho the title of new administrative center of monasteries within the limit of Bangkok. The Siamese monastic order was previously comprised of three major regional patriarchs: the north, the south, and the forest monasteries. The Supreme Patriarch was usually the senior somdet patriarch of the northern region and was seated at Wat Mahathat (Formerly Wat Salak and Wat Phrasisanphet). The king revised this structure to four major regional groups; the north, the south, the forest and the central monasteries. He put the control over all monasteries of Bangkok and its vicinity under the central region and turned the command of this region to his uncle, Prince Wasukree the abbot of Wat Pho. Now, Wat Pho was placed within the new administrative structure and became the center of the administration of local Bangkok monasteries, while Wat Mahathat was still the larger center encompassing the entire monastic order. The monastic complexes of the new Royal Order or Thammayuttika of Prince Mongkut were under the central control of Wat Pho. Rama III’s appointment could be seen as the shift to situate Wat Pho as the real center of monastic order.

\textsuperscript{212} His feudal title was Krommamuen Phuminphakdi. See more in Phra Khru Palat Samphihatthanaphrommachariyachan (Bun), \textit{Prawat Wat Phrachetuphon Wimonmongkhllaram} (History of Wat Phrachetuphonwimonmongkhllaram) cremation vol. Phra Ratchaprasitthiwimon, (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkon Ratchawittayalai, 1993), 68-69.
\textsuperscript{213} Ibid., 27.
Wat Sraket in Pre-Modern Context

While Wat Pho was located at the heart of historic Bangkok next to the Grand Palace, Wat Sraket was located just right outside parameter of the city wall to the east. Because the area used to be a lush, thick tropical forest, Wat Sraket was well-known as the center of the meditation lineage, or forest wat (Aranyawasi), while Wat Pho by its new name, Chetuphon, was regarded as the first urban monastic complex. Unlike Wat Pho, there are no documents about Wat Sraket prior to the establishment of Bangkok and the documents about Wat Sraket for this period are also limited.

Wat Sraket’s Vicinity: from Canal Junction to Suburban Communities

When King Rama I established Bangkok, the vicinity of Wat Sraket was altered by the construction of the new city wall, city ring moat and the expansion of Mahanak canal. It was the local monastic complex named Wat Sakae. The name Sakae refers to the local mangrove plant, reflecting the geographical character of Bangkok as a marshy area. As stated above, the documentation about Wat Sraket is very limited, and thus does not provide a clear vision of how it was from the reign of Rama I to Rama III. According to Naengnoi214, the area of Wat Sraket at this time could have been a major water transportation junction and market, since the city moat could transport goods from the Chao Phraya River and the Mahanak Canal drew local produce from the eastern frontier. Therefore, the royal construction of the city wall and ring moat could have enhanced the flow of water transportation from the Chao Phraya River toward the eastern region. The communities around Wat Sraket clustered along the city moat and canal, and became

214 Naengnoi Saksi, Ongprakop thang kaiyaphap Krung Rattanakosin (Physical composition of Rattanakosin City) (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1991), 92-103.
famous for their local products, such as Baan Dokmai for firework, Baan Baat for alms bowls and Baan Phanthom for silverware.\textsuperscript{215}

In the period of King Rama III, Wat Sraket’s vicinity changed again when the king ordered to build the new royal wats opposite from Wat Sraket across the city moat. Building these new royal monastic complexes could be seen as a strategy to decongest the population around the palace to the eastern area, since the communities of monastic conscript laborers associated with the new royal wats and their families would be relocated around the wat precinct. There were also three new palaces along the road to the Samranrat gateway next to Wat Sraket and the new communities of servants and conscript laborers would be established around these palaces’ precincts to serve the princes. Moreover, the construction of new royal wats and the renovation of Wat Sraket could contribute to a population increase around the area, since the construction workers would also establish communities around the sites and continue to live in the area. Wat Sraket’s vicinity now became more populated with these new communities (see Figure 3.3).

\textbf{Wat Sraket’s History: from Forest Monastery to the Royal Wat, State Funeral Ground and Symbol of Rama III’s Failure}

As with Wat Pho, no one knows exactly when Wat Sraket was founded, but when Bangkok was created as a capital city, this wat was already established. Its historical association with Bangkok started at about the same time as Wat Pho. It was the place where Army Commander Somdet Chao Phraya Mahakasatsuek\textsuperscript{216} stopped before entering Thonburi, the capital city in 1782, to suppress the riots that had erupted due to the insanity of his predecessor, King Taksin\textsuperscript{217}. From Wat Sraket, Somdet Chao Phraya

\textsuperscript{215} Ibid., 97-101.
\textsuperscript{216} Commonly known as Chao Phraya Chakri.
\textsuperscript{217} King Taksin reigned from 1767 to 1782 after the fall of Ayutthaya. He expelled the Burmese army and reunited the kingdom from several political factions. The riots mentioned here broke out because King
stopped at Wat Pho which is located opposite to Thonburi across the Chao Phraya River. Once he had suppressed the riots in Thonburi and proclaimed himself King Borommaracha Ramathibodi of Ayutthaya (Rama I), Wat Sraket and Wat Pho were among the first royal monastic complexes he ordered to renovate. As with Wat Pho, that was renamed to Wat Phrachetuphon, he changed the name of Wat Sakae to Wat Sraket. The name was interpreted by Prince Damrong as meaning “to wash the royal head” because King Rama I once used the water from the monastic well to wash his hair but Prince Damrong also noticed that most of the towns in the northeast region (Isaan) also used the name Wat Sisaket.

When Wat Pho was renovated and expanded significantly in the first reign, Wat Sraket was also reconstructed in a similar manner. The king ordered ten thousand Khmer laborers to construct the foundation and the renovations were completed in 1801 with the grand celebration. The canal (Khlong Mahanak) in front of the monastic complex was expanded, and the pavilions along the waterfront were built for the first poetry festival in November. Similar to Wat Pho, the celebration for completing the renovation became a big fundraising event where the king and noblemen also redistributed wealth by throwing money and necessities to the crowd. The ordination hall of Wat Sraket and Wat Pho were recognized by Sir John Crawford, the British Ambassador who came to

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218 Somdet Phra Phutthachan (Kiaw Uppaseno), Prawat Wat Sraket Ratchaworramahawihan (History of Wat Sraket Ratchaworramahawihan) (Bangkok: Chuanphim, 2000), 3, citing the letter from Prince Krom Phraya Damrong Rachanuphap to Prince Krom Phraya Naritsaranuwattiwong in San Somdet, on June 10, 1942.
219 Ibid., 22.
220 Wichian Bamrungphon, Prawat Wat Sraket Ratchaworramahawihan Lae Chotmaihet Rueang PhraSaririkathat Muang Kabilaphat (History of Wat Sraket), cremation volume of Somdet Phra Ariyawongsakhatayan (Yoo Yanothayo) Somdet Phra Sangkharat (Bangkok: Department of Religious Affairs, 1965), 20.
Figure 3.3. Wat Sraket and Bangkok in transition from Thonburi to King Rama III’s reign

Bangkok in the second reign,221 as bearing the same architectural craftsmanship. While Wat Pho was awarded a large number of conscript laborers at the end of renovation, there was no documentation about conscript laborers of Wat Sraket in the same period. However, some documents indicated that war captive slaves from the kingdom of Laos were conscribed to serve Wat Sraket during the third reign, when Siamese troops captured Vientiane. The feudal title of the labor registry officer was found from an archival document for scheduling the royal Kathin visits, but there was no further detail about Wat Sraket’s conscript laborers.

In the third reign, while Wat Pho’s ordination hall was expanded significantly, that of Wat Sraket remained the same and no Chinese embellishments were added. During the reign of King Rama III, the king ordered Phraya Sriphiphat (That Bunnak who was also the commissioner for the renovation of Wat Pho) to construct a new shrine, the ordination hall’s cloister corridor, and the gigantic pagoda at Wat Sraket. The construction of this pagoda echoed the ideology of recovering the kingdom of Ayutthaya because it was named the Golden Mountain Pagoda to replicate Wat Phukaothong (the monastic complex of Golden Mountain) outside Ayutthaya. The canal and the grand pagoda recalled the story of the festivals at Wat Phukhaothong, where popular festivals were historically conducted. It is also of note that the name Mahanak Canal refers to venerable Mahanak, a monk who successfully mobilized forces against Burmese Army for protecting Ayutthaya. So while Wat Pho was renovated to concretize the axis mundi of Buddhist cosmology in grand scale, Wat Sraket was renovated to symbolize the Buddhist protection of the city. Unfortunately, the king’s wish could not be realized because the foundation sank down and the project was abandoned after the attempt to

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reconsolidate the ground had failed. Wat Sraket was the only place connoting the failure of King Rama III.

Besides the grand structures in the sacred precinct, King Rama III also reconstructed the residential quarters using a masonry structure and constructed the state funeral facilities at the south of Wat Sraket. Unlike Wat Pho and other royal wats inside the city wall that could not have an incinerator (Meru) or any funeral rituals, Wat Sraket became known for its funerary services for most of the noblemen and minor royal members. The funeral incinerator which was constructed during the reign of King Rama I was renovated by King Rama III in a more permanent structure. He also built more structures and facilities such as four pavilions in an L-shape at the corner of the precinct for monks to perform funeral chanting. As we shall see, this place also became important for Wat Sraket in the modern period as it became dilapidated and was demolished to make the space for shop-houses.

**Wat Kor in Pre-Modern Context**

While Wat Pho was renovated in a grand manner according to the traditional ideology of reestablishing the axis mundi of Buddhist kingdom and Wat Sraket was rebuilt as a symbol recalling the Buddhist protection of Ayutthaya, Wat Kor did not convey a symbolic meaning as did these two royal wats. However, Wat Kor was significant for a very different reason, since it was located in Chinatown, which was the heart of the city’s economy. Unlike Wat Pho and Wat Sraket that still have historical records of their constructions, Wat Kor has hardly any records of this period.

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222Thiphakorawong (Kham Bunnak), *Phraratchaphongsawadan Krung Rattanakosin Chabab Hor Samut Haeng Chat Ratchakan thi 3Phrabat Somdet Phranangklaos Chao Yoohao Ratchakan thi 4 Phrabat Somdet Phrachomklao Chao Yoohao* (Chronicle of Bangkok Rama III Reign and Rama IV Reign) (Bangkok: Khlang Witthaya, 1963), 346.
Wat Kor’s Vicinity: The Robust Chinatown

Wat Kor was located in the southern area of Chinatown and the sacred precinct faced the main street of Chinatown, Sampheng Road, which was a narrow alley busy with activities all day long. According to the documentation of American missionaries, the vicinity of Wat Kor in the pre-modern period had only one muddy road connecting to Chinatown, and otherwise was comprised of floating houses, junks and shops made of bamboo. Several missionaries also rented shop-houses that belong to Wat Kor. There were huts around the area which was dirty, muddy and occasionally flooded.

Wat Kor’s History: The Monastic Complex of Sino-Thai Royal Prince

Once again, the origin of Wat Kor is similar to Wat Pho and Wat Sraket in that it is unknown. However, while Wat Pho has a lengthy historical record of its major renovations both in the reign of King Rama I and Rama III, changes to Wat Kor have rarely been recorded in the royal chronicles. At the time of the major renovation in King Rama I’s reign, Wat Kor was also renovated in 1796 by Prince Phithakmontri (Chui), the son of the king’s elder sister, Princess Sisudarak and a wealthy Chinese merchant from the Tan family. From the chronicle, we know that the ordination hall and shrine were constructed with a cloister corridor embracing them. However, there was no record about whether the king donated conscript laborers to this royal wat, and the archival documents did not indicate the feudal title and rank of the official of Wat Kor. Upon its completion, the king conferred the name of Wat Korkaewlangkaram signifying

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224 Naengnoi Saksi, *Ong Prakob thang Kayaphap Krung Rattanakosin* (physical configuration of Rattanakosin City) (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1991), 86.
225 Ibid.
226 His feudal title was Prince Krommaluang Phithakmontri.
227 *Prawat Wat Samphanthawongsaram Worawihan* (History of Wat Samphanthawongsaram) (Bangkok: Graphic Art Printing, 2000), 7.
its location as a royal monastic complex on an island embraced by canals. The renovation of Wat Kor signified the unique relationship between the ruling dynasty and Chinese community since Prince Phithakmontri was a half-Chinese with high-ranking royal title. He became a prominent figure in the second reign since his sister was the chief queen of King Rama II. In the third reign, King Rama III also ordered to renovate Wat Kor and constructed residential quarters\textsuperscript{228}. However, there was no record for the architecture of Wat Kor.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have seen that with the establishment of Bangkok during the early Chakri dynasty, the construction of monastic complexes was a critical political tool to gain power and legitimacy. Building a *wat* was a crucial strategy for repopulating urban centers, and once constructed, it became a center of community and source of manpower and legitimacy for the new regime. During the reigns of King Rama I and Rama II, these monarchs emphasized the idea of Bangkok’s continuity with the glory of Ayutthaya, even though they also began to emphasize a more purified Buddhist over Brahminist symbols and practices. While the planning arrangement of royal *wats* during this early period still followed the Hindu-Khmer cosmological order, the architecture of the *wat* was beginning to reflect ideals of the king as *dharmaraja* in contrast to *devaraja*. This shift can be seen in the brighter ambiance created by large windows in Bangkok’s royal monasteries as opposed to the darker, more mystical space found at monasteries in Ayutthaya. Furthermore, during this period, the contestation between the King and the Viceroy in using the place name of Phrasisanphet, the royal palladium of Ayutthaya, for the royal *wats* they restored also confirmed that these early Chakri kings sought to claim

\textsuperscript{228} Thiphakorawong, Chaophraya, *Phraratchaphongsawadan Kung Rattanakosin Chabab Hor Samut Haeng Chat Ratchakan thi 3Phrabat Somdet Phranangklaow Chao Yoothao Ratchakan thi 4 Phrabat Somdet Phrachomklaow Chao Yoothao* (Chronicle of Bangkok Rama III Reign and Rama IV Reign) (Bangkok: Khlang Witthaya, 1963), 344.
continuity with Ayutthaya, and that the *wat* containing relics, palladium and the sacred place name were still considered a crucial part of rebuilding the kingdom’s new center.

In spite of these levels of continuity in the reigns of King Rama I and II, by the time of Rama III, discontinuities arose with the legacy of Ayutthaya. Rama III continued to build and renovate royal monasteries in order to compensate for his lack of legitimacy, as he was not from a direct royal lineage. At the same time, he also sought to enhance his relationship with Chinese merchants and noblemen by involving them in the practice of merit-making via the construction of less important royal *wats*. The spatial arrangements and architectural motifs of royal *wats* became a site of contestation among three competing visual discourses. First, within the gigantic royal monastic complexes, the spatial arrangement still followed the cosmological order with the symbols connoting the concepts of the *dharmaraja* and the Hindu Lord Indra. Secondly, more Chinese crafts and materials were employed in several subsidiary structures in contrast to the main structure. In the larger landscape of Buddhist Bangkok, traditional Buddhist landmarks and palaces in Ayutthaya -Khmer style were integrated with mixed Chinese style *wats*, manors and shops. This new Sinified visual discourse signified a shift from a manpower-based political system to a new economic system based largely on trade and a growing class of Chinese tax and monopoly trade collectors. Thirdly, in the circulation of young Siamese elites, a reformist visual discourse was formulated by Prince Mongkut who rejected both the traditional and Sinified influence. In stead, he promoted Sukhothai-Sri Lankan style of architecture as a symbol of a purer and more authentic Buddhist practice. He also explored in both the concept of clear Buddhist *simha* holy space from Vinaya and western knowledge from missionaries.

The character of urban Bangkok was clearly different from the basic character of cities under Western European influence. In terms of describing the “image” of the city, which Kevin Lynch has defined as those distinctive urban features which provide orientation to observers and city dwellers, the urban district in Bangkok was not
characterized by the clarity and visibility of the urban street pattern or the order of permanent structures. On the contrary, the “image” of Bangkok at the time was defined by the relationship between the fluid, transitory, natural landscape made up of tropical vegetations, boats and stilt houses, and vital activities of floating markets, and the built landscape comprised primarily of Buddhist monastic landmarks.

With the success in the Chinese tributary trade, the growth of sugar plantations resulting from the increasing demand of sugar in the world market, and the influx of Chinese immigrants, the urban forms of Bangkok gradually changed toward mercantile city. While monasteries reflected more Sinified visual elements, a unique fluid landscape of waterways and canals began to give way to more permanent brick and mortar of shop-houses, royal residences and Chinese manors.

As we have seen, conceptions of Buddhist space in the pre-modern period were reflected very differently in each of these three royal wats. Wat Pho, which was located near the Grand Palace, was designated to reflect most of the state’s ideology and symbolism of being a Buddhist axis mundi, and as such, it possessed numerous Buddha relics, and inscriptions of Thai legal and traditional wisdoms. When Chinese influences became prominent, Chinese materials and craftsmanship were added to Wat Pho’s landscape and architectural embellishment. In contrast, Wat Sraket was adorned on a lesser degree and had no Chinese influence in its architecture. At this time, it symbolized a more austere and independent Buddhist space in the forest and provided a range of services, from meditation practice to funeral service. While Wat Kor’s structure showed no symbolism of the Buddhist axis mundi cosmology, it did demonstrate more of an economic alliance between the rulers and Chinese communities. With more trade

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229 In *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960), planner Kevin Lynch characterized the clarity of city visual legibility by their paths, nodes, landmarks, districts, and edges. To derive the evidence for these views, the author interviewed a select number of residents in a few eastern American cities.
activities, Bangkok during this period became more urbanized, but these changes still didn’t impact these three royal wats to a significant degree.
CHAPTER FOUR
THREE ROYAL WATS AND THE OPENING MARKET ECONOMY IN THE REIGN OF RAMA IV (r.1851-1867)

Introduction

As we saw in the previous chapter, the construction of Bangkok began with an ambition to establish continuity with Ayutthaya, but by the reign of Rama III, with more Chinese influences, the capital city gradually began to show more discontinuities rather than continuities with this illustrious past. When the Prince Mongkut took the throne as King Rama IV in 1851, he initiated the reform movement and the abandonment of Traiphum cosmology, making these discontinuities with Ayutthaya even more apparent. He rejected the Chinese and Ayutthaya-era architectural influences of his forerunner, and instead returned to Sukhothai-era architectural motifs and Sri Lankan pagodas to represent his reforms and principles of a purified Buddhism. The forth monarch of the Chakri dynasty also faced many external changes, such as the decline of Sino-Siamese tributary trade, the growing power of Chinese tax collectors and monopoly trade farmers, and the increasing demand of western colonial traders. He signed the Bowring Treaty with a British envoy at the beginning of his reign, and subsequently Siam became more responsive to the demands of the world market and a new market economy.

The urban space of Bangkok and monastic architecture also reflected these transformations. Road networks and shop-houses were constructed to support the new trade activities resulting in the steady increase of land value. Although the crown still continued to renovate and build more royal wats, architectural preferences changed. Large scale royal wats were no longer a sign of prosperity but rather represented a burden on the state. Although the king was a famous ex-monk who had founded a new reform sect, during his reign, the interrelationship between the state and the Buddhist monastic order was reduced. As his clear and bounded sima holy space became the dominant architectural motif, the space of the king’s new royal monastic complexes became more
exclusive and removed from secular activities. All of the transformations gearing the
country toward a new market economy continued to have a significant impact into the
next reign, when a modernization campaign was implemented by Mongkut’s sons; King
Chulalongkorn and his princely cabinet ministers.

The Political Context of State & Religion during the Reign of Rama IV (r.1851-1867)

In 1851, King Rama III passed away and left the council of princes and nobles to
decide who would be his successor. The support of the wealthiest noble family,
Bunnak\(^{230}\), determined the result of the elections. The abbot of Wat Bowonniiwet was
elected as King Mongkut. This was the third time in Thai history that a monastic leader
had become the king. His twenty-seven years of experience in political asylum in the
monkshood made him understand that in reality he was not a divine ruler\(^{231}\). Moreover, he
realized that his position as a king did not constitute the real power to control his
bureaucracy. Most of his power was in two important factions. The power to conduct
government and trade was in the hands of the noble families, especially the Bunnak
family, while military power was in the hand of his younger brother, Prince Chuthamani,
the chief commander of the Royal Navy who was also well-known and popular among
commoners and Westerners.

The reason he was elected was partly due to the well-established military power
of his younger brother. If his younger brother became the new king, the noblemen of the
Bunnak family would have faced a serious threat of military might from Prince

\(^{230}\) Minister of Finance invited Prince Mongkut after King Rama III was pronounced dead and sent troops
to guard Wat Bowonniiwet. See more details from Thiphakorawong, *Phraratchaphongsawadan Krungratanakosin Chabab Hor Samuthangchat Ratchakan thi 3 Ratchakan thi 4* (History of Bangkok National Library Version, King Rama III and Rama IV’s periods) (Bangkok: Khlang Phittaya, 1963), 369.

\(^{231}\) Somkhit Chirathatsanakul, "Phra Ubosot lae Phra Wihan Nai Samai Phrabat Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yuhao (The ordination hall and shrine in the Reign of King Mongkut)" (Master Thesis, Silpakorn University, 1990), 279.
Chuthamani in a case of conflict, since the royal navy fleets and several steam battle ships were already under his control. However, if they voted for other less legitimate princes, such as one of the several sons of King Rama III, they might have created resentment among many royal members and still had a high risk of threat from Prince Chuthamani\(^{232}\). To elect Prince Mongkut as a new king was the safest choice since he was an intelligent monk with no political power and a full-blood brother of Prince Chao Fah Chuthamani. With King Mongkut on their side, the Bunnak family would not have to face Prince Chutamani. Knowing that he was a political buffer, King Mongkut needed to balance the power of these two factions and gave favor to his younger brother. Upon his coronation, King Mongkut appointed his younger brother as the viceroy and elevated his title to the second king.

From his letters, we know that the king understood that he was only a mortal who had become the king because Chao Phraya Phra Khlang Wathi Kalahom (Minister of Treasury and Acting Minister of War and the South), Phraya Sriphiphat and Phraya Ratchasuphawadi Wathi Samuhanayok (Acting Prime Minister) had elected him\(^{233}\). At the most important state ceremony, the royal ritual of the Oath of Allegiance, he also reciprocally took an oath that he would be honest to the noblemen and princes and strive to serve as a fair counterpart\(^{234}\). Moreover, he revoked the traditional practice that prohibited commoners to witness the royal barge ceremony. He also encouraged commoners to petition directly to him. As Eric Hobsbawm (1983) argues in the European case, those rituals which were previously symbolic confirmations of the king’s status as a

\(^{232}\) King Rama III did not appoint any of his concubines to be the queen. Therefore, none of his sons became prince in rank of Chao Fa (Heavenly Lord) and had less legitimacy comparing to Prince-monk Mongkut and his younger brother, Prince Chutamani.

\(^{233}\) Somkrit Chirathatsanakul, “Phra Ubosot lae Phra Wihan Nai Samai Phrabat Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yuhao (The ordination hall and shrine in the Reign of King Mongkut)” (Master Thesis, Silpakorn University, 1990), 280, citing King Mongkut, Phraratchachatthalekha, 412-413.

\(^{234}\) Alexander Brown Griswold, Phrabat Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Krung Sayam (Mongkut, King of Siam) translated by Suphasadit Dissakul, (Bangkok: Mahamakut Ratchawithayalai Press, 1964), 56.
divinity now became the symbolic affirmation of relations between the royal ruler and his subjects 235.

**King Mongkut’s Monkshood**

In order to understand King Mongkut’s policies towards the Buddhist religion and his royal wats and his strategies for dealing with colonial power, his 27-year life in the monkshood should be studied in detail. Prince Maha Mongkut Sommut Thewawongs was born in 1804. He was the eldest son from the chief queen of King Rama II. In 1824, he was ordained at Wat Phrasirattanasatsadaram or the ordination hall complex of the Emerald Buddha in the Grand Palace by the Supreme Patriarch of Wat Mahathat. After spending three days at Wat Mahathat, Prince Monk Mongkut departed to Wat Samorai to study meditation 236. It was a tradition that most of the princes who ordained would remain in the monkshood for a short period as it was believed that one of the best educations was meditation. About fifteen days after his ordination, King Rama II died and the Council of princes and nobles elected Prince Tab or Krommamuen Chetsadabodin, his elder half brother, to be the successor to the throne.

Prince Mongkut decided to stay in the monkshood at Wat Samorai through the first lent period. He then moved back to Wat Mahathat to study Pali and the Vinaya or Buddhist Precepts. After deciding that he would stay longer, Prince Mongkut moved back to study the Vinaya at Wat Mahathat again on the ground that the meditation practice at Wat Samorai as very confusing, as his teachers could not explain it clearly. Instead of offering insights, the meditation teachers would merely state that this was how it was practiced by the former generation of venerable teachers 237. He studied and entered his first Pali Examination in 1827.

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237 Pawaret Wariyalongkon, Prince Supreme Patriarch, “Rueang Ratchaprawat nai Ratchakan thi 4 tang tae rak panuat talot sawankalai (history of King Rama IV since his monkshood)” in,
Although he received an honorary fan delivered by King Rama III and became famous for his deep understanding of Pali and Vinaya, he found that most of his teachers at Wat Mahathat could not understand or translate Pali clearly either. Mongkut felt that the Buddhist lineage in Siam had degenerated nearly to the point of extinction since the sack of Ayutthaya in 1767, and that the teachers and preceptors in Siam as inadequate mentors for their disciples. He announced that Siamese Buddhism was a tree with a rotten root and thus could not continue to prosper. The prince went to sleep during the day in the ordination hall of Wat Mahathat and swore that if he did not see any miracle within three days, he would disrobe. On the second day, he met a Mon monk who was able to explain the Lord Buddha’s doctrine to him clearly. This auspicious event was the origin of his reform movement that followed Mon’s Kalyani Sima sect\textsuperscript{238}.

**Prince Mongkut’s Politics of Purification in Reform**

Was it true that Buddhist religion in Siam was in decline? While Prince Mongkut may, indeed, have believed the Buddhist religion to be in decline, we must look closely at his strategic decision to stay in monkshood and launch the reform movement. We must remember that at the time that he initiated the reforms, he was considered a legitimate candidate for the throne. This fact was a threat to his life because he was actually a more legitimate heir than the named successor, Prince Tab\textsuperscript{239}. Nevertheless, because he did not have enough support from either the powerful Bunnak noble family or any senior princes, he had no choice but to stay in the monkshood to save his life. There were many times in Thai history that the candidates for the throne were indicted for instigating a coup against the king, allegations that were used as a pretext for their execution. In Prince Mongkut’s

\textsuperscript{238} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{239} His feudal title was Prince Krommamuen Chetsadabodin.
case, he saw that his saffron robe was the only way to save himself. In order to secure his monkshood, he had to consider the major threats to his religious status.

The most crucial threat to the Prince at that time was the purification of the Buddhist Sangha that the king traditionally conducted at the beginning of his reign. Apart from the ideological function of these purifications, they benefited the king because he would gain more of a labor force by disrobing the impure monks and confiscating their assets. If monks had some royal title, his relatives were exempted from conscripted labor. So if the king disrobed high ranking monks, he also received more labor from the monks’ relatives. And finally, he would gain more legitimacy in the eyes of his subjects. For these reasons, Prince Mongkut feared the threat of a purification that might force him to disrobe.

There were many potential reasons to disrobe a monk. First was the serious violation of Vinaya. Second was the inability to understand Vinaya, or the Buddhist canon. If monks did not learn enough to understand the Buddhist canon, it meant that they were not different from laymen and thus they were usurping laymen’s contributions to the Buddhist religion. Fear of being accused of this second violation might have been the reason why Prince Mongkut returned to study Vinaya as soon as he could at the end of lent season. The third reason was the validity of a monk’s ordination. By studying more of the Vinaya, Mongkut learned about the ambiguities of Pali spelling, and he realized that if the spelling and pronunciation of Pali words for the ordination process were inaccurate, the ordination was considered null and invalid. The ambiguous spelling in this own ordination process meant that his ordination was questionable. By claiming that the study of Buddhist canon in Siam was in state of decline, he was able to launch new reform movement to adhere to a strict Vinaya code that he re-ordained and followed the Mon Kalyani Sima Nikaya. His movement actually killed two birds with one stone.

240 Wachirayanwarorot, Prince-Supreme Patriarch, Tamnan Wat Bowonniwet (Legendary of Wat Bowonniwet) (Bangkok: Sophonphiphatanakon, 1922), 19.
First, he corrected the problem of the validity of his monkshood by his second ordination and secondly, he gained popularity in the eyes of commoners because he conducted a Buddhist purification that was regarded an act of the righteous leader to restore order and morality.

Moreover, during the Pali examination, there was an incident that was not explained in his biography. The Pali examination was interrupted by Prince Rakronnaret, the senior prince who oversaw all religious affairs. Upon finishing the third level which was the highest level or Parien Ek of this Pali examination, Prince Mongkut’s advancement was rejected by Prince Krommaluang Rakronnaret\(^{241}\), the director of Religious Affairs. Prince Mongkut refused to continue the examination. In response to the conflict, King Rama III delivered an honorary fan of Parien Ek to Prince Mongkut on the next day\(^{242}\). Nevertheless, this incident showed clearly the hostility from Prince Rakronnaret to Prince Mongkut and put him in a state of alarm because Prince Rakronnaret, who also controlled the monastic affairs of the entire kingdom and was the most senior candidate to the throne,\(^{243}\) could go after him.

\(^{241}\) He was also the 33\(^{rd}\) son of King Rama I and was appointed to a high position and worked with King Rama III at the time, who was Prince Chetsadabordin. Prince Rakronnaret was appointed to supervise monastic problems with Prince Chetsadabordin. During the second reign, as a result of purification of monastic order and disrobing of immoral monks, they both were indicted anonymously for misjudging one senior monk. They both were acquitted from the case and the prince who wrote the indictment letter was jailed instead. This incident made a close alliance. It was claimed in a book published by Mahamakut Ratchawithhayalai that Prince Rakronnaret secretly ordered to detain Prince-monk Mongkut at the temple of Emerald Buddha Precinct when King Rama II was about to pass away in order to prevent Prince Mongkut to attend the council of royal princes and noblemen and might have been elected as a new king. See more in Ophat Sewikul, *Phra Bida hang kan patirup* (Father of Reform) (Bangkok: Phrae Phitthaya, 1970), 252. According to the record of Prince Damrongrachanuphap, the Mon preceptor of Prince Mongkut, Phra Sumetmuni was also disrobed by Prince Rakronnaret. See more detail in Damrongrachanuphap, Prince, *Khwam Song Cham* (Memoir).

\(^{242}\) Ophat Sewikul, *Phra Bida hang kan patirup* (Father of Reform) (Phrae Phitthaya, 1970), 254.

\(^{243}\) Prince Rakronnaret was executed later by King Rama III in 1848 after being indicted on three major charges. The first one was the corruption in the justice system where he was the supreme judge. The second charge was sodomy or sexual misconduct. The third charge was the serious charge that he accumulated more manpower than his feudal status allowed and portrayed his wealth in competition with the king. He was asked by the king why he did this and the answer was striking to the king he said that he was prepared and would not serve any one if the king passed away. So, for all the period of King Rama III reign, Prince Rakronnaret was considered as a prime candidate for the throne.
After the Pali Examination, Prince Mongkut could see the threat from Prince Rakronnaret. Therefore, he declared the new reform movement by adopting the Mon Kalyani Sima Nikaya and undertook a second ordination to shield himself from any accusations of the invalidity of his ordination at Wat Samorai. One year after his second ordination, Prince Mongkut also conducted a third ordination on a raft on the Chao Phraya River in front of Wat Samorai, after he found out that the nimits or the underground holy markers designating the sima holy space of Wat Samorai were too small according to Vinaya. Instead of being a target of purification that might have been implemented against him by the king or Prince Rakronnaret, he turned purification around and made it his own political weapon.

After learning from Vinaya and Kalyani Sima Inscription about the code for sima holy space, the prince learned that the size of luk nimit, the stone marker buried underground which demarcated holy space, had to be around one cubit in size or one arm’s length. According to the Vinaya, the clearly bounded Sima holy space is a symbolic expression of the deliberate thought and careful intention to uphold Buddhist religion. In contrast, if a Sima holy space is not clear and does not follow the description in the Vinaya about the bounded territory, the ordination is invalid. After he found out that the nimits of Wat Samorai were too small, Prince Mongkut then made the forceful comment that the ignorance of proper construction of holy space for ordinations in Siam was a sign of decline. If the holy space was not properly constructed or boundaries were marked vaguely, the ordination and monkshood were also invalid. The validity of Thai or Siamese monks now became a critical concern because Thai monks in the entire history

244 The sima refers to the holy space designated for monks to congregate and perform Buddhist rituals as it was defined by the Lord Buddha. According to the Lord Buddha’s code expressed in the Vinaya, any ritual (Sanghakam) requiring more than four monks needed to take place within the holy space of the sima. For a clearer idea of what sima is, see the image of palm leaf manuscript of Simakatha about detail of sima.

245 Nimit means the object to designate the boundary of sima. In Thai Buddhist practice of building an ordination hall, the nimit usually has 2 parts. The underground stone in form of a ball is called luk nimit and the upper part is usually in form of lotus leaf plate called bai sema.
of Siam had never seriously followed the strict rules of Vinaya about establishing proper sima.

**Prince Mongkut’s Politics of Using Sima**

Was it true that Buddhist religion in Siam was in decline? While Prince Mongkut may, indeed, have believed the Buddhist religion to be in decline, we must look closely at his strategic decision to stay in the monkshood and launch the reform movement. We must remember that at the time that he initiated the reforms, he was considered a legitimate candidate for the throne. This fact was a threat to his life because he was actually a more legitimate heir than the named successor, Prince Tab. Nevertheless, because he did not have enough support from either the powerful Bunnak noble family or any senior princes, he had no choice but to stay in the monkshood to save his life. There were many times in Thai history that the candidates for the throne were indicted for instigating a coup against the king, allegations that were used as a pretext for their execution. In Prince Mongkut’s case, he saw that his saffron robe was the only way to save himself. In order to secure his monkshood, he had to consider the major threats to his religious status.

The most crucial threat to the Prince at that time was the purification of the Buddhist Sangha that the king traditionally conducted at the beginning of his reign. Apart from the ideological function of these purifications, they benefited the king because he would gain more of a labor force by disrobing the impure monks and confiscating their assets. If monks had some royal title, his relatives were exempted from conscripted labor. So if the king disrobed high ranking monks, he also received more labor from the monks’ relatives. And finally, he would gain more legitimacy in the eyes of his subjects. For these reasons, Prince Mongkut feared the threat of a purification that might force him to disrobe.
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Moreover, during the Pali examination, there was an incident that was not explained in his biography. The Pali examination was interrupted by Prince Rakronnaret, the senior prince who oversaw all religious affairs. Upon finishing the third level which was the highest level or Parien Ek of this Pali examination, Prince Mongkut’s advancement was rejected by Prince Rakronnaret, the director of Religious Affairs.

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246 Wachirayanwarorot, Prince-Supreme Patriarch, Tamnan Wat Bowonniwet (Legendary of Wat Bowonniwet) (Bangkok: Sophonphiphatanakon, 1922), 19.
247 He was also the 33rd son of King Rama I and was appointed to a high position and worked with King Rama III at the time, who was Prince Chetsadabodin. Prince Rakronnaret was appointed to supervise monastic problems with Prince Chetsadabodin. During the second reign, as a result of purification of monastic order and disrobing of immoral monks, they both were indicted anonymously for misjudging one
Prince Mongkut refused to continue the examination. In response to the conflict, King Rama III delivered an honorary fan of *Parien Ek* to Prince Mongkut on the next day.  
Nevertheless, this incident showed clearly the hostility from Prince Rakronnaret to Prince Mongkut and put him in a state of alarm because Prince Rakronnaret, who also controlled the monastic affairs of the entire kingdom and was the most senior candidate to the throne, could go after him.

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After learning from Vinaya and Kalyani Sima Inscription about the code for sima\textsuperscript{250} holy space (see Figure 4.1), the prince learned that the size of luk nimit\textsuperscript{251}, the stone marker buried underground which demarcated holy space, had to be around one cubit in size or one arm’s length. According to the Vinaya, the clearly bounded sima holy space is a symbolic expression of the deliberate thought and careful intention to uphold Buddhist religion. In contrast, if a sima holy space is not clear and does not follow the description in the Vinaya about the bounded territory, the ordination is invalid. After he found out that the nimits of Wat Samorai were too small, Prince Mongkut then made the forceful comment that the ignorance of proper construction of holy space for ordinations in Siam was a sign of decline. If the holy space was not properly constructed or boundaries were marked vaguely, the ordination and monkshood were also invalid. The validity of Thai or Siamese monks now became a critical concern because Thai monks in the entire history of Siam had never seriously followed the strict rules of Vinaya about establishing proper sima.

**Sima in the Vinaya Code**

It is important to understand the key concepts and some crucial details found in the Vinaya code about sima, to be able to clearly discern why it was so crucial for King Mongkut’s survival and why it probably was a precursor to the idea of modern mapping. First, regarding the size of holy space according to the Vinaya code, the phatthasima (the inner sima) must be a large enough space to accommodate twenty one monks sitting side by side, because it must be a space large enough to conduct an uppapan ritual. An

\textsuperscript{250} The Sima refers to the holy space designated for monks to congregate and perform Buddhist rituals as it was defined by the Lord Buddha. According to the Lord Buddha’s code expressed in the Vinaya, any ritual (Sanghkam) requiring more than four monks needed to take place within the holy space of the sima. For a clearer idea of what sima is, see the image of palm leaf manuscript of Simakatha about detail of sima. This is the picture showing how sima is designated for holy space. The small 8 stones at the corners and around the rectangle area are the holy markers or nimit.

\textsuperscript{251} The stone in form of a ball buried underground is called luk nimit while the stone above the ground in form of lotus leaf of the holy marker is called bai sema.
*uppaphan* ritual is the ritual to re-purify impure monks at the *sanghathiset* level, which is the second highest level below *parachika*. A *phattasima* also must not be larger than the square shape of three by three *yot*, which equals 42 by 42 kilometers or 28 by 28 miles (see Figure 4.1). If it is larger than this by only the thickness of one hair strand, it cannot be considered as a *sima* or *simawibatti*.

Second, the space must be bounded and can not overlap with other *simas*. Most problems derive from the establishment of a new *sima* when the existence of the old *sima* or some pre-existing structures is unknown. Therefore, the ritual of desecrating the existing *sima* holy space must be performed before consecrating the new one. From this picture (see Figure 4.2), for instance, we can see that there are some instances that two *sima* holy spaces were connected by trees. If the space of a *sima* is connecting or overlapping with another or an old one, the *sima* is consider as defective or *sangkra*. The space between two separated *simas* must be at least three *aptaphandon* or 42 meters.

So, the designated area must be clear and before consecrating new *sima*, the ritual to deconsecrate the old one must be performed. A water source is also allowed to be used as a boundary for designating and protecting *sima* holy space. There are also several other details for using water as a boundary of *sima* holy space.

Third, a *sima* holy space must receive the consent from the kingdom’s secular rulers or *anachak* to void this area from the collection of revenue. Holy space is thus donated to the Buddhist realm or *wisungkhammakhet*. By this act, it means that the secular rulers including kings have no authority beyond the holy markers. During King Rama VI period this condition was extended to include other kinds of monastic property and in the royal cabinet meeting the senior prince-ministers discussed and considered it as an “extra territory.”

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252 Nor Na Paknam, *Simakhatha: Samut Khoi Wat Suthas Thepwararam* (Manuscript of Sima of Wat Suthat Dhepvararam) (Bangkok: Khed Thai, 1997), 13, 24.

253 Ibid., 22.
Figure 4.1. The largest area of Sima comparing to Tompkins County and City of Ithaca, left; and the typical installation of simas around ubosot, right.

The map drawn by Matthew Flis. The manuscript image from Nor Na Paknam, *Simakata Samut Koi Wat Suthat Dhepvaram* (Manuscript of Sima of Wat Suthat Dhepvaram) (Bangkok: Kled Thai, 1997), 146.

Figure 4.2. The distance between two separated simas, left; and the incidence that two simas could be overlapping each other causing the defective sima or sangkra, right.

From ibid., 106, 138.

Figure 4.3. The natural elements marked for consecrated sima such as stumps, trees or sand heaps, left; and the significant markers to demarcate the sima such as mountain, hillock, gigantic trees and forests, right.

From ibid., 148, 150.
Fourth, the seriousness of constructing the proper sima with its fixed and bounded space and precise measurements was also important as a landmark for monks because it distinguished the sima or holy space from the domestic area or khammakhet. To construct the fixed and bounded space, the boundary markers must be clearly visible and durable. In each case, the number of sima holy markers must be at least three and can be over a hundred, but they need to be designated in the proper manner with the appropriate materials. For instance, the holy marker can be a mountain of soil or stone or both, or a termite mound, but not a pile of sand\textsuperscript{254}.

The parameters for each kind of marker vary widely. According to the Vinaya, if monks use stones to be the holy markers, the stones must not be lighter than thirty two pala of sugarcane juice (5 changs) nor bigger than an elephant (16 meters tall)\textsuperscript{255}. If monks designate a mountain as a sima holy marker, the mountain must not be smaller than an elephant (16 meters). If monks use trees as holy markers, they must designate only the trees with a strong core even if the trees are only eight inches high\textsuperscript{256}. Monks can also use a forest as a holy marker but only in one cardinal direction, and they must designate a stone or a tree in the forest and not the whole forest (see Figure 4.3). The place for consecrating a sima must be an isolated space and far from the congregation of the lay community. Monks must avoid consecrating the holy markers at the very central space of the monastic complex.

**Prince Mongkut’s response to Vinaya and his idea of Sima**

It is obvious that Siamese monks did not follow all these rules very strictly. Most monastic complexes in Bangkok placed ordination halls at the center of the worship

\begin{footnotes}
\item[254] Ibid., 29.
\item[255] Ibid., 35.
\item[256] Ibid., 41.
\end{footnotes}
precinct and occasionally it functioned as both a worship shrine of the Buddha image and an ordination hall. This is crucial because the shrine was one of the busiest places in the complex, as it was the site for commoners to pray, worship the Lord Buddha, and conduct merit-making activities. However, according to the Vinaya, the ordination hall should be an isolated space for monks to conduct sacred rituals. Moreover, in most monasteries prior to Prince Mongkut’s period, the *nimit* or underground holy markers were only loosely designated and sometimes did not meet the requirements of scale for a *nimit*, as we saw in the example of the holy markers of Wat Samorai, which were smaller than indicated in Vinaya.

These problems prompted Prince Mongkut to comment that the origin of the problem derived from the lack of knowledge and ability to interpret the Pali language, which was the only means to gain a true understanding of the Vinaya and its descriptions of proper *sima* holy space. Prince Rakronnaret, the senior prince at that time probably wanted to find any example of transgression of Buddhist practice in order to disrobe Prince Mongkut and his fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that Prince Mongkut paid attention to the details of *sima* holy space, its boundary markers or *bai sema*, and the ordination process. This led to his second and third ordination. By this time he already understood that if he could fix the boundary of *sima* holy space for ordination, he could secured his religious status and validate his authority in the Buddhist Sangha. By investigating all Vinaya rules of the ordination process, Prince Mongkut deliberately strove to clarify the fixed boundary of his *sima* holy space.

**Prince Mongkut’s Development of Mahasima**

As mentioned previously, *sima* holy land was considered “extra-territory” prior to the encounter with the West, and Prince Mongkut had already understood and exercised his religious “extra-territoriality.” By interpreting these rules of constructing *sima*, he
understood that the more clearly he could carve his sima holy space out of the kingdom of his half-brother, King Rama III, the less ambiguity there would be about the validity of his status as a monk, which would also give him greater strength and security in his authority. It is important to note that all these incidences happened a year before Archbishop Pallegoix arrived Bangkok in 1830.

After he was invited by King Rama III to be the abbot of Wat Bowonniwet, the first record we find is his re-consecration of the sima at Wat Bowonniwet. The ordination hall of Wat Bowonniwet was constructed in a T-shaped plan and the holy space markers in the Front Palace style were the sima stone plates attached to the corners of the building’s wall. The holy space was designated as only the main hall but not the left and right wing halls. He complained that in this case the sima holy space could overlap with secular areas because the structures connected to other spaces were not holy. Thus, he asked King Rama III to expand the holy space of his ordination hall to encompass the entire building.

In 1846, Prince Mongkut also re-consecrated the sima holy space of Wat Bowonniwet again. This time he expanded it to include the area outside the ordination hall and used the tree and granite stones beside the ordination hall in the worshipping complex as holy markers. He also re-consecrated the sima holy space of Wat Baromniwat that was the monastic complex he attempted to use as safe house. This wat had a mahasima\(^5\) (see the diagram of mahasima holy space in Figure 4.4) covering both

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5 In the cases where there are many sacred rituals being conducted synchronously and the Sima holy space is not big enough to accommodate them, in Attakhatha, the Vinaya allows a construction of a bigger sima called a mahasima. The mahasima embraces smaller sima which is called khanthasima. So, monks can conduct different kinds of rituals within a mahasima. Between the mahasima and khanthasima, there must be a buffer space to prevent the overlapping of two Sima holy space areas. The advantage of the mahasima is that monks can conduct rituals anywhere in the entire area of monastery under mahasima. Monks do not need to have traïjivara or 3 pieces of robes all the time. However, a mahasima has many problems. As we can see from the image, the khanthasima within the mahasima could potentially be connected to mahasima area by branches of trees which would mean that the sima are overlapping and all rituals would be considered invalid. If there is any monk who is sick in the residential quarter while others conduct the ritual, the ritual will be invalid due to the rule that all monks in sima must conduct the same act at the same time.
Figure 4.4. The diagram of mahasima, left; and the manuscript showing how to consecrate mahasima, right.

Diagram redrawn from Somkhit Chirathatsanakul, Ruphab Phra Ubosot lae Phra Wiharn nai samai Phrabatsomdet Phrachomklao Chao Uheo (Ordination halls and Shrines in King Mongkut Period), 103. Manuscript from Nor Na Paknam, Simakata Samut Koi Wat Suthat Dhepvararam (Manuscript of Sima of Wat Suthat Dhepvararam) (Bangkok: Kled Thai, 1997), 66.

Figure 4.5. Plan of Wat Boromniwat, left; and its outer (stone) nimit of mahasima.

From Somkhit, ibid., 45, 110.
worshipping precinct and the residential quarter, but the residential quarter did not have a permanent wall. This was important because most monastic complexes in Siam consecrated the holy space only in the area around the ordination hall. In the case of Wat Boromniwat, by proclaiming that the mahasima covered the residential quarter as well, Prince Mongkut was intentionally using the mahasima as a tool for creating extra territory in order to protect his life in the face of a serious political threat (see Figure 4.5).

As I will argue below, his interest in clearer sima demarcation and mahasima generated two significant consequences when he became the king. First, King Mongkut’s understanding of the politics of boundaries of the wat helped him comprehend the politics of colonial mapping, particularly the British demands to demarcate clear borders. Second, his transformation of the demarcation of sima holy space to encompass not only the ordination hall as was traditional practice preferred but also other areas within the boundary of the monastic complex impacted the spatial arrangement of the royal wat precinct he designed.

Bowring Treaty: the Opening of the Modern Market Economy and Mapping of the Kingdom’s Boundary

By the 1840s, the tributary trade had declined due to the unstable government control in China, the Taiping rebellion, the result of the Opium War and colonial encroachment\(^\text{258}\). The tribute trade junks from Siam became less profitable due to the higher risk of pirate raids in the South China Sea\(^\text{259}\). Although the need of forest produce for tribute trade with China was reduced, the demand for sugar cane and rice from

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\(^{259}\) Sir John Bowring indicated that Siamese prince complained that the trade with China was less profitable due to the pirate raid in South China and he was asked to lend the British Navy force to protect Siamese trade junks to China. See more detail in Manich Jumsai, *King Mongkut and Sir John Bowring (from Sir John Bowring’s personal files, kept at the Royal Thai Embassy in London)* (Bangkok: Chaloemnit, 1970), 203.
Western markets increased steadily. Forest products were gradually transformed into cash, which became the major tax revenue of the crown\textsuperscript{260}. Commoners were willing to pay taxes in cash rather than in labor or in kind, and began to work more in large scale agricultural production, on sugar plantations and later in rice paddy fields. Sugar exports rose and at one point, Siam was the world’s major sugar exporter\textsuperscript{261}. In response to the deterioration of Chinese trade and the increasing power of noblemen who controlled the monopoly trade and tax farming system, King Mongkut tried to open more trade routes with Westerners. He invited the British envoy, Sir John Bowring from Hong Kong, and in 1855 they signed the treaty that allowed Western merchants to trade freely with suppliers through their consulate office. It ended the royal controlled trade which was farmed out to Chinese, and trade duties were reduced and shipping fees were abolished\textsuperscript{262}. Despite these changes, the royal revenue was not significantly reduced because tax farms for opium and gambling house were still preserved\textsuperscript{263} and other new tax farms were implemented.

As we saw in the discussion of the sima boundary in previous section, King Mongkut fully understood the importance of demarcating clear boundaries and agreed to establish the border between the British colonial occupied area and Siam’s domain. By delimiting the border of the kingdom according to an international agreement, King Mongkut hoped to preempt territorial dispute with colonial powers. His decision to sign the treaty signaled the readiness of the Siamese elite to embrace modernization; an enthusiasm which was fully brought to fruition during the reign of his son, King Chulalongkorn.

\textsuperscript{260} Marc Askew, \textit{Bangkok: Place, Practice and Representation}, 27.
\textsuperscript{262} Ibid., 31.
Support for Building Roads, Shop-houses and Expanding Ring Canal

One of the consequences of the free trade favoring Western demands for massive agricultural production, such as sugarcane and rice, was the need for large-scale tracts of land for cultivation and canal networks for transporting produce to Bangkok from the neighboring central plains provinces. In response, King Mongkut ordered the construction of several canals for the transportation of sugarcane to the Western and Eastern region of the central valley. In addition, the land along the canal was used for paddy cultivation and subsequently its value increased. For instance, King Mongkut granted the land along Khlong Mahasawat, one of the canals he ordered to construct leading toward the western region, to his children\textsuperscript{264}. The noblemen also followed this act by constructing canals and portioning the land out to their relatives. With this government support to develop a large agricultural land and irrigation networks, the land with access became more valuable. With the expansion of free trade, Western colonial companies established their offices and shops in Bangkok for exporting agricultural produce and importing modern goods. As an important strategic location for the trade, urban land in Bangkok began to gain value. These trade developments and emerging communities of Westerners also needed inland transportation. The king responded with the construction of new roads and encouraged the owners of the land alongside to build more shop-houses that made urban land become more valuable\textsuperscript{265}. King Mongkut also invested in this development. He ordered the building of several shop-houses around the Grand Palace for his Western consultants and English teachers. Some of the rooms were also rented to Western and Indian merchants for their shops and commercial offices\textsuperscript{266}. Moreover, the

\textsuperscript{266} Naengnoi Saksri, \textit{Ong Prakob thang Kayaphap Krung Rattanakosin} (Physical Configuration of Rattanakosin) (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1991), 200-201.
king also donated the shop houses and land along the road to his new royal monastic complexes\(^\text{267}\).

Beside his initiative for building more roads, major canals and shop houses, King Mongkut also created significant spatial changes in Bangkok’s urban structure. He ordered the construction of the outer ring canal or Khlong Padung Krung Kasem and encouraged new settlement. The distinction between rural and urban space was traditionally marked by the city wall and ring canal. But now Bangkok’s urban space had doubled, and the important areas which were once outside Bangkok, such as Chinatown and Wat Sraket, became a part of the city.

**Initiating Modern Education in the Palace and Modern Military**

King Mongkut had studied English language and Western science before taking the throne. Moreover, his brothers and young fellow noblemen also showed interest in Western knowledge. His full brother, Prince Chutamani, the viceroy or the second king, was fluent in English and translated modern artillery text books. His Prime Minister Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawong also showed interest in Western engineering for building steamships. His half brother, Prince Wongsathiratsanit studied modern medicine. D.B. Bradley called King Mongkut and his key fellows the “Young Siam”\(^\text{268}\) because they abandoned cosmology and were ready to accept modern knowledge.

When Mongkut became the king, he encouraged modern education in the Grand Palace. In 1851 he invited missionaries to teach English to women in the palace, and in 1862, an English teacher was hired to teach his royal children\(^\text{269}\). The viceroy also


initiated the training of the modern military by hiring Western army officers\textsuperscript{270}. However, neither the new modern military training nor the English classes progressed well during his reign. The military remained a small department until the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century and modern education did not become a state policy until the reign of his son. Even though these initiatives had a short life and remained at an experimental stage during his reign, they represented a very progressive vision of the king and his noblemen.

**Promoting Cosmopolitanism and Religious Tolerance**

As might be expected from his interests and background, King Mongkut had a very different vision of Buddhist religion and other faiths from his predecessor. In contrast to King Rama III, who imposed several limitations on the activities of missionaries, King Mongkut allowed missionaries to teach freely and granted them land for establishing their churches. He extended his patronage beyond Siamese Buddhist religion to other religions. To develop his diplomatic relationship with France, he also sent a letter and replica of the Thai crown to Pope Pius IX in 1852 and 1861 to address his religious tolerance, although he asserted in the letter that Siam was a stronghold of Buddhist faith\textsuperscript{271}. To indicate his relation with the colonial government of the British Burma, he also offered financial support for the construction of a pavilion at the great relic pagoda in Rangoon for Burmese pilgrimage\textsuperscript{272}. King Mongkut’s support for religious affairs reflected his aim of gaining legitimacy not only as *Dharmaraja* within his cosmological domain, but also as a cosmopolitan ruler who brought Buddhist religion into the world context.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{270}Ibid., 218.
\item \textsuperscript{272} Thiphakorawongs, *Phraratchaphongsawadan Krung Rattanakosin Chabab Hor Samuthangchat Ratchakan thi 3 Ratchakan thi 4* (History of Bangkok, King Rama III and Rama IV periods: The National Library Version) (Bangkok: Khlang Phittaya, 1963), 534-535.
\end{itemize}
King Mongkut’s policy regarding internal affairs with the Buddhist monastic order was also different from his predecessor. Traditionally, the king could intervene and govern monastic affairs as he was the real Supreme Patriarch. This was not the case with King Mongkut. Indeed, the subversive, reformist approaches to Buddhist practice he had promoted during King Rama III’s reign now became his problem. Since he was the leader of a new reform Buddhist sect before ascending to the throne, any policies he imposed on the monks would create the conflict between two Buddhist monastic orders. Therefore he did not implement a serious monastic purification or propose a grand scheme of support for a particular monastic order. Instead, he appointed his uncle, Prince Poramanuchit Chinorot, as a new Supreme Patriarch. He was a monk in the commoner sect and an abbot of Wat Pho. This was the first time in Thai history that a high ranking prince became Supreme Patriarch. King Mongkut allowed princes who were ordained as monks to retain their feudal title and feudal labor unit because they helped build strong ties between the royal members and the monastic communities.

Instead of imposing new regulations or laws, King Mongkut’s royal orders were in the form of royal announcements. During his reign, he released a total of three hundred and forty-three royal announcements, thirty-one of which were involved in religious affairs. Within the first three years of his reign, he released seventeen announcements about monastic affairs. Most of his announcements concerned monks violating Buddhist principles or Vinaya. Several of them were also concerned with the management and administration of the monastic order. For instance, in 1853, he ordered the survey of the list of monks with craftsmanship skills, and in 1856, a list of laymen residing in monastic complexes. King Mongkut also proclaimed another Buddhist holiday, Makha Bucha.

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274 Siriwat Khamwansa, Song Thai 200 Pi (Thai Buddhist 200 years) (Bangkok: Sri Anan Printing, 1981), 141-142.
day, which was the memorial day of the first Buddhist congregation by twelve hundred and fifty enlightened monks during the Lord Buddha’s lifetime. The announcement introduced more formal rituals and festivities in monastic complexes. In contrast to King Rama III, who promised jobs for ex-monks, King Mongkut released an announcement to discourage ex-monks with a high level of education from entering the bureaucracy on the grounds that there were enough offspring from royal and noblemen family to serve the government. In his royal announcement in 1854 (announcement No. 33), he also limited the bureaucratic entrance for ex-monks to only the departments involving religious affairs, royal documents and royal pundits. Ex-monks who disrobed would be listed again as conscribed laborers for the royal printing house (announcement No. 48).

Bangkok’s Urban Structure during the Reign of King Mongkut (1851-1867): From Mercantile City to Colonial Trade Center

King Mongkut’s policies to stimulate more free-trade activities with western colonial powers transformed Bangkok in three ways. First, the transportation infrastructure changed. For example, on the major watercourse of the Chao Phraya River, Chinese junks with their wooden structures of floating houses and shops gradually disappeared, and were replaced by bigger European steamships (see Plate 4.1). The road network became more important and the land along transportation routes became valuable. Second, land ownership and tenancy was altered. By the treaty agreement of 1855, foreign merchants and missionaries could own land in Bangkok to conduct their activities freely, and as a result, the western architecture of Christian churches, consulates, warehouses and trade companies emerged on the river along the southern end

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of Chinatown. Third, in keeping with the new visual discourse of the reform movement, the large bell-shaped pagoda became ubiquitous, in contrast to the former Khmer-style pagodas. The Great Mountain Pagoda, which was also a Sri Lankan bell-shaped pagoda on top of an artificial mountain, became the tallest structure of Bangkok at the end of his reign, while the four-reign Pagoda complex at Wat Pho dominated the scene from Chao Phraya River.

At the beginning of his reign, King Mongkut ordered the construction of Khlong Padungkrungkasem, or the outer ring canal eastward, to ease the congestion settlement inside the city wall. However, the new city wall was not constructed along the new ring moat. The king ordered the construction of fortresses only at the key corners of the city, which signified that there would be no more immediate threat from neighboring kingdoms. The city wall was no longer the boundary of urban Bangkok. Only the ring canal defined the city’s boundary and separated the urban space from rural land. With this new city moat, Bangkok’s urban space was doubled (see Map 4.1). The eastern outskirts of Bangkok that were once gardens and orchards became an area of new settlements, as the king also ordered his new royal wats to be constructed along the new canals. The area became filled with rice-mills, businesses, gardens, and suburban residences. Twenty-eight new palaces were constructed for new princes and eight of them were outside city wall. The majority of these princely palaces were clustered around the eastern area from the inner canal and Grand Palace to the city wall indicating the direction of development was eastward (see Map 4.2). Two of the king’s palaces in Western style garden villas were also constructed eastward (see Plate 4.2).

Following the requests of Westerners and the new development of foreign trade, the king ordered the construction of the first modern roads, including Charoenkrung (Civilized City), Bamrung Mueang (Well-maintained Town) and Fueang Nakhon

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Plate 4.1. The view of Chaophraya River from Wat Arun in 1871 showing floating houses and steamships.

From Frank Vincent, The land of the white elephant (London: S. Low, Marston, Low & Searle, 1873), 114A.

Map 4.1. The Transformation of Bangkok canal and road networks from the period of King Rama I to King Mongkut’s reign.

Based on Naengnoi Saksi, Ongprakop thang kaivaphap Krung Rattanakosin (Physical composition of Rattanakosin City), 123, 129, 253, 273; Clarence Aasen, Architecture of Siam: A cultural History Interpretation, 123.
(Prosperous Capital). He also urged merchants and property owners of the land to construct shop houses alongside the roads. Following King Mongkut’s signing of the Bowring Treaty, Charoenkrung Road was extended passing Chinatown southeastward to where European consulates and trade offices emerged. Two new consulate offices were also constructed at the southern junction between the outer ring canal and the Chao Phraya River. Below Chinatown along Charoenkrung Road, more westerner’s offices, shops and banks were built near their consulates. Bamrung Mueang Road was constructed eastward beyond the city wall. Following the request of foreign merchants, single storey shop-houses in a similar style to those in Singapore were constructed along Bamrung Mueang and Fueang Nakhon Road, which are in the inner city (see Plate 4.3). Chinese manors and floating houses emerged around the area of Charoenkrung Road and the area of outer ring canal south of Bangkok, while two storey and single storey Chinese shops were constructed along the canal next to the city wall in the south. On the Thonburi riverside, the west bank of Chao Phraya River also became populated with Chinese shops and manors, along with warehouses and ports for transporting goods from steamships.

Despite the road construction, watercourses still remained the major source of transportation. What did change, however, was that the watercourses once dominated by temporary structure of floating houses and vegetation now were dominated by permanent structures. More Chinese shops and colonial buildings were constructed with permanent materials of brick and mortar for accommodating more western traders, Indian and Chinese laborers. Rice mills, warehouses, Western churches, steamships and Chinese

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279 Naengnoi Saksri, Ong Prakob thang Kayaphap Krung Rattanakosin (physical configuration of Rattanakosin) (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1991), 206.
280 Ibid., 202-204.
281 Ibid., 205.
282 Ibid., 197.
Map 4.2. The location of palaces in the reign of King Rama IV.
Based on Nangnoi Saksi, Ongprakop thang kaiyaphap Krung Rattanakosin (Physical composition of Rattanakosin City), 145.

Plate 4.2. Saranrom Palace constructed in western style architecture and natural landscape.
From Nangnoi Saksi, ibid., 140.

Plate 4.3. View of Bamrung Muaeng Road with shop-houses replicating those in Singapore.
From Thepchoo Thapthong, Phapthai Prawattisat Krungthep Yonyuk (Historical Photograph of Bangkok in the Past) (Bangkok: Samakkisan, 1996), 66
junks were seen along the waterfront mixing with floating houses and tropical flora\textsuperscript{283}. However, the permanent structures of royal monastic complexes were also enhanced in scale and numbers and still dominated the skyline.

As mentioned above, King Mongkut also revoked the traditional law prohibiting commoners from witnessing the royal procession\textsuperscript{284}. As such, the landscape of Bangkok became a stage for royal spectacles and ceremonies. Before his reign, the commoners were prohibited from look at the royal procession and it caught looking, would have been killed by the royal guards. These taboos on public observation created a mystique of divine power. By King Mongkut’s reign, the royal procession had become a vivid and spectacular public event, although later he needed to release a royal order to punish monks who had gotten too close to his barges\textsuperscript{285}. Bangkok started to reflect the contrast between the old landmarks of traditional cosmological center built with Chinese craftsmanship and the new westernized urban facilities to accommodate the colonial trade activities.

**Monastic Structure of King Mongkut: Rejecting Traditional Cosmology and Demarcating Clear Boundaries**

King Mongkut also denounced the act of constructing large-scale monastic complexes, thereby implicitly discrediting his predecessor. He announced that constructing grand-scale monastic structures could create major problems for the

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\textsuperscript{283} From 4 articles of D.B. Bradley, “A Glide Up the Broadway of Bangkok” I, II, III and IV in *Bangkok Recorder*, 20 December 1866, 29 December 1866 and 16 January 1867.

\textsuperscript{284} Mongkut, King of Siam, “108 Prakat Yok Loek kan Ying Krasun lae Amnuyat hai Ratsadon fao dai nai thang cadet phraratchadamnoen (No 108 abolition of law to shoot commoners who observe the procession and allow commoners to participate in royal procession)” in *Prachum Prakat Ratchakan thi 4 Pho. So. 2394-2400* (Compilation of Announcement Reign IV 1851-1855) (Bangkok: Khurusapha, 1960) 281-287.

Buddhist faith since the large number of resident monks could exceed the ability of the abbot to maintain discipline. The gigantic ordination hall was considered wasteful since it was occupied on only one occasion—the day of receiving royal support on Kathin ceremonial day (the end of lent period). In part this was because the grand scale monastic complex was difficult to maintain using the monastic laborers. In the same announcement, he expressed concern about the burden of maintaining large scale royal wats, and asked noblemen or wealthy Chinese merchants to act as owners and take more responsibility for their future. His royal announcement marked the first shift in Siamese state policies that now constructing gigantic royal wats did not represent the wealthy and stability of the kingdom but the financial burden of the state.

In contrast with his predecessors, King Mongkut ordered the construction of new royal monastic complexes on a smaller scale, housing not more than thirty monks. During the seventeen years of his reign, he constructed and renovated forty-three royal wats. There are twenty-three in Bangkok and the rest are in provincial towns in the central region. For the new monastic complexes, he constructed seven royal wats; five in Bangkok and other two in the provinces of Samutprakan and Petchburi. He also reconstructed thirteen old wats; five in Bangkok and eight in the provinces of Petchburi and Nakorn Prathom, Samutprakan, Ayutthaya and Lopburi. He also renovated twelve monastic complexes in the Bangkok area and eleven other monastic complexes in provincial towns. In fact, King Mongkut’s renovation and construction projects outnumbered the work of King Rama III but these monastic complexes were on smaller scale. Although the monastic complexes constructed during King Rama III were

287 Ibid.
288 Over 17 years of his reign, King Mongkut constructed and renovated 43 wats while over 25 years of Rama III’s reign, the king constructed and renovated 39 wats. The nobles and royal members renovated and built another 30 wats in the reign of King Rama III. See more detail in Thipphakorawong, Phongsawadan Krung Rattanakosin Ratchakan thi 3 Phrabatsomdet Phranangkla Chao Yuhua Ratchakan thi 4
initiated by bureaucrats and wealthy Chinese merchants, most of the construction projects in the fourth reign were funded by the monarch himself.

However, King Mongkut did construct three grand scale monastic structures, all of which were pagoda structures. The momentous Great Pagoda at Wat Sraket and the fourth pagoda at Wat Pho were constructed in Bangkok while the largest pagoda in Thailand, Phra Prathomchedi (Pagoda of the Buddhist Genesis) was constructed on the grounds of a ruin of Mon’s Dvaravati pagoda in the western town of Nakon Prathom, which was built on the ruins of a Dvaravati period city wall. Although his order to reconstruct and construct large scale pagodas contradicted his stated aim of promoting smaller monastic complexes in keeping with his Reform Sect or Thammayutika, these large-scale pagodas nonetheless differed greatly from the works of his predecessors.

First, King Mongkut’s grand-scale constructions of royal monastic complexes were undertaken in a very different in geographical context. Most of his predecessors erected grand scale Buddhist monastic complexes within the center of Bangkok’s city wall and its vicinity, not beyond Ayutthaya and Nonthaburi (see Map 4.3). In contrast, more than half of King Mongkut’s renovation projects were in provincial towns around the central region (see Map 4.4). Analyzing his monastic constructions clearly suggests that his vision for the “geo-body” of his kingdom had departed from the idea of a mandala galactic polity with a strong center. In fact, he claimed to have abandoned this view of Bangkok as a cosmic center before the arrival of American missionaries.

Second, most of the large monastic structures constructed by his predecessors connoted a cosmological order in a Khmer style. In contrast, King Mongkut’s preference for his monastic complexes was the Sukhothai-Singhalese style with round shaped

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289 I adopted the term geo-body from Thongchai Winichakul’s concept in Siam Mapped. (Chiang Mai: Silkworms, 1994).
290 Thongchai Winichakul, Siam Mapped (Chiang Mai: Silkworms, 1994), 38.
Map 4.3. The location and number of wats built and renovated by King Rama III.

Map 4.4. The location and number of wats built and renovated by King Mongkut.

Late-Ayutthaya  Bangkok-King Rama I  Bangkok-King Rama III  King Mongkut

![Entrance Diagrams]

- = Shrine
- = Ordination Hall
- = Learning Hall
- = Pagoda

Figure 4.8. Planning arrangement of royal wats constructed in Late-Ayutthaya, Bangkok in the reigns of King Rama I and Rama III and King Mongkut.
pagodas (see Plate 4.6). Although the vertical direction of these large scale pagodas could be interpreted as the symbolic core or center of the universe in Hindu terms, in fact, its architectural features echo Sri Lankan and Sukhothai Buddhist motifs that were considered the first establishments of Theravada Buddhism in this region. The circular corridor embracing the Pagoda at Phra Prathomchedi Pagoda is similar to the old pagoda ruins at Anuratpura, the former stronghold of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka (see Figure 4.6 and 4.7).

Although King Mongkut kept a neutral position in religious affairs, his construction of new royal wats indicated his intention to continue the Buddhist reforms he had initiated. Most of the new royal monastic complexes he constructed were dedicated to his reform order or the Thammayutika sect. The layout and planning of his new wats were very different from the traditional plan. His new monastic complex employed largely a Sri Lankan style pagoda as the center of the precinct, while the Sukhothai-style ubosot or ordination hall was reduced in scale and placed behind the pagoda (see Figure 4.8). The large scale round shaped pagoda, in some royal wats, was embraced by a colonnade corridor. The wihan or shrine for worshipping and making merit was enlarged and placed in front of the pagoda. This arrangement also connoted King Mongkut’s aim to stick to the Vinaya code, which states that the ordination hall or Buddhist holy space must not be located in a public space subject to disturbances. He separated the sanghakram (holy activities) located at the ordination hall from secular activities at the shrine. In contrast, the traditional planning of the Siamese monastic complex placed the ordination hall at the center, and its holy space served communities of supporters for various purposes.

As for the architectural details of the shrine, Sukhothai architecture with round columns and ornaments were the preference instead of the rectangular columns that were

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291 Nor Na Paknam, *Simakatha* (Manuscript of Sima of Wat Suthat Dhepvararam) (Bangkok: Kled Thai, 1997), 23.
Figure 4.6. Thūpārāma Vatadāgē at Anuradhapura, Sri Lanaka.


Figure 4.7. Phra Prathomchedi at Nakhon Prathom, Thailand.


Plate 4.4. Great Pagoda at Wat Sraket, Bangkok.

From Somdet Phra Phutthachan (Kiew Upaseno), *History of Wat Sraket Ratchaworramahawihan*, cover page.

Plate 4.5. Phra Prathomchedi.

From Chanya Manawit, *Wat Luang Samai Rattanakosin* (Royal Monastic Complexes of Bangkok Era), 217.
used for the ordination hall. His architectural details and decoration for roof structures were in a traditional Thai pattern but some monastic complexes he renovated had a unique character of mixing of emulated French Gothic\textsuperscript{292} style ornaments and Chinese elements (Figure 4.9). This combination was used at Wat Bowonniwet (see Figure 4.10). At Wat Makutkasat, the symbol of the Garuda bird and Naga snake in Hindu myth (Chor Fah and Hang Hong) were used at the top and end of the roof, but ceramic flowers and leaves of a Chinese style ornaments were the patterns along the curved line of the roof (see Figure 4.11 and Plate 4.8).

**King Mongkut’s Development of Mahasima**

Following the ideology Mongkut had developed since his monkshood, his monastic complexes delineated clear boundaries of sima holy space. Traditionally, the designation of holy space by Siamese monks was vague, and only the area of the ordination hall was consecrated as sima holy space. In contrast, King Mongkut had designated the holy spaces in various scales and arrangements. In addition, he developed his practice of making double layers of sima holy space or mahasima and this became one of his monastic complexes’ unique features\textsuperscript{293}. For his new monastic complexes, simas were consecrated to encompass over the entire monastic complex compound, and were called mahasima or greater holy space. For several monastic complexes he renovated, sima holy space markers were used only to consecrate the area around the sacred precinct comprised of the ordination hall, pagoda and shrine, while others consecrated only the area around the pagoda and ordination hall.


\textsuperscript{293} As stated previously, the mahasima is the larger sima that was consecrated to cover the wider area outside the ordination hall or the entire monastic complex compound.
Figure 4.9. The gable of the shrine at Wat Bowonniwet constructed during the reign of King Mongkut showing the mix combination of Chinese ornament and emulated French Gothic croquet pattern.


Figure 4.10. Plate 4.8. The gable of the ordination hall at Wat Bowonniwet constructed in Rama III’s reign showing full Chinese embellishment.

Ibid., 171.

Figure 4.11. Plate 4.9. The gable of the ordination hall at Wat Makutkasat showing Thai framework with Chinese tiles.

Ibid., 169.
Wat Baromniwat was the first royal wat Prince Mongkut constructed the *mahasima* to cover the entire monastic complex. After having been the monarch for one year, he began to construct a royal monastic complex, Wat Sommanatwihan, in honor of his first royal consort with *mahasima* and complete details of holy markers demarcating the *mahasima* at the monastic complex’s wall (see Figure 4.12).

In 1857, he also constructed Wat Prathumwanaram. The monastic complex has a *simantric* and *khanthasima*, but the holy marker of *mahasima* has since disappeared, as it was destroyed by the construction of Rama I Road in the King Chulalongkorn period. Between 1862 and 1863, he also renovated three monastic complexes in Ayuthaya, and in two of them he extended the Sima holy space further from the ordination hall. The sima holy space of Wat Senasanaram and Wat Kawisaram embraced both the ordination hall and the pagoda. Almost at the end of his reign, sima holy space was extended to cover all structures in the entire worship complex of the shrine, pagoda and ordination hall. This was exemplified in Wat Barommawongs in 1867. At the end of his reign, Wat Makutkasat and Wat Ratchapradit were constructed with a *mahasima* covering the entire monastic complex, including the residential quarters (see Figure 4.13).

**Sima Holy Marker**

Before the reign of King Mongkut, holy space markers, or *bai sema*, were in the form of a lotus leaf plate. Generally, double-plate *bai sema* were popular. When Sinhalese monks came to re-ordain Siamese monks, they provided another *bai sema* to symbolize the purity of their re-ordination. However, at the time of King Mongkut, even the double lotus leaf plate was not regarded as pure enough for demarcating holy space
Figure 4.12. Plan of Wat Sommanatwihan with diagram showing the area of sima holy space within Mahasima comparing to holy space of Wat Chanasongkhram.

Based on Somkhit Chirathatsanakul, Rupab Phra Ubosot lae Phra Wihan Nai Samai Phrabat Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yuthao (The ordination hall and shrine in the Reign of King Mongkut) (Bangkok: Muaeng Boran, 2004), 50; and Monastery, (Bangkok: Silpakorn University, 1999), 32.
(see Figure 4.14). In his master thesis, Somkhit\textsuperscript{294} depicts the top view comparing three arrangements of holy space markers. The first two plans are the traditional, double-plate \textit{bai sema} and the last one was King Mongkut’s invention. The lotus plate holy space markers were fine for the central marker between the four corners. However, the corners present problems, because the two diagonal lines intersecting do not neatly delineate the bounded holy space.

King Mongkut saw this as an architectural ambiguity which threatened the purity of holy space. So, for the monastic complexes that he constructed or renovated in his reign, holy markers in a cubic lotus form were installed instead of the double lotus plate marker. If we review the planning arrangement of monastic complexes chronologically, we can see the development of \textit{bai sema} from the lotus plates in the period of his monkshood to the lotus cubic form at the time he was the king. This development of the \textit{bai sema} or holy marker also confirmed that he had developed very clear ideas about measurement and bounded space for \textit{simā} holy space (see Figure 4.15).

\textbf{Political Contestation in Monastic Architecture}

\textit{Royal Symbol vs. Hindu Mythical Iconography}

Instead of using the symbol of Lord Indra on the mythical elephant Erawan or Lord Vishnu on Garuda to signify his aura as a divine warrior god at the center of cosmological order, King Mongkut used his symbol of the Thai crown (which literary called “Mongkut” in Thai). Most of his new royal \textit{wats} were embellished with this symbol at the front gable of the ordination halls, shrines, window frames and gateway while several of old monastic complexes he renovated were decorated with a mix of symbols including the Mongkut on top of other Hindu symbols such as the Erawan

\textsuperscript{294} Somkhit Chirathatsanakul, “Phra Ubosot lae Phra Wihan Nai Samai Phrabat Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yuhao (The ordination hall and shrine in the reign of King Mongkut)” (Master Thesis, Silpakorn University, 1990).
Figure 4.13. Plan of Wat Senasanaram, top left; Wat Kawisaram, Center left; Wat Makutkasat, below left; and Wat Ratchapradit, right showing the different areas of sima holy space.

Based on Somkhit, ibid., 61, 65, 79, 82.
Figure 4.14. Isometric drawing of bai sema holy markers from single plate to double plate and finally the cubic sema in the reign of King Mongkut.

Figure 4.15. Diagram showing the comparison between the traditional installation of bai sema holy markers creating ambiguity of bounded space and the cubic sema holy markers solving the problem at the corner.

Figure 4.16. Isometric drawing of the holy markers at the outer mahasima with shelters, the cubic bai sema at the inner mahasima and the bai sema plate at the corner of the ordination hall which is also a khanthasima.

Based on Somkhit, ibid., 154, 157, 159, 162, 303.
Elephant\textsuperscript{295} (see Plate 4.7). His act signified the shift in the traditional practice that the
divine ruler attempted to impersonate the power of god to the modern practice that the
ruler display his personal strength. King Rama IV’s use of Hindu symbols in some of the
embellishments may be read as a contradiction, particularly when viewed in light of his
reforms. Nevertheless, it may also be viewed as his attempt to subordinate and
incorporate the traditional visual discourse within a new rational visual discourse of
rulership, symbolized by the Mongkut. Moreover, in the early record of his monkshood,
he used divine magical symbols to claim his legitimacy to the throne\textsuperscript{296}.

Moreover, it must also be noted that historically, the symbol of the Mongkut
crown had been used since the previous reign not only by Prince Mongkut but also by
King Rama III and noblemen of the Bunnak family. King Rama III also placed a Thai
crown (Mongkut) at the top of the great pagoda at Wat Arun\textsuperscript{297} (see Figure 4.17).
Noblemen from the Bunnak family invited Prince Mongkut to supervise the construction
of their family monastic complex, Wat Bupparam (Flower Monastic complex), and the
window frames of the ordination hall were embellished with the Mongkut crown symbol
symbolizing his political alliance with the family that successfully put him on the
throne\textsuperscript{298}.

\textsuperscript{295} For example, Wat Chumphonikayaram has Mongkut symbol on top of the image of congregation of
gods, Wat Senasanaram and Wat Suwandaram in Ayutthaya have the symbol Mongkut on top of Erawan
Elephant. See more detail in Somkhit Chirathatsanakul, “Phra Ubosot lae Phra Wihan Nai Samai Phrabat
Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yuhao (The ordination halls and shrines in the Reign of King Mongkut)”
\textsuperscript{296} Pawaret Wariyalongkon, Prince Supreme Patriarch, “Rueng Ratchaprawat Nai Ratchakan thi 4 tang tae
song Panuad talodchon sawankalai (history of King Mongkut from his ordination to his death)” in
\textsuperscript{297} The top decoration detail of Khmer style pagoda is “Noppasun,” the Vishnu’s weapon with nine-pointed
spear but King Rama III ordered to install the Mongkut crown instead see more detail in Somkhit
Chirathatsanakul, “Phra Ubosot lae Phra Wihan Nai Samai Phrabat Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yuhao
(The ordination halls and shrines in the Reign of King Mongkut)” (Master Thesis, Silpakorn University,
1990), 329.
\textsuperscript{298} Ibid., 323.
Figure 4.17. The spire in symbol of Mongkut at the top of the Great Pagoda at Wat Arun.

From Sumet Chumsai, Nam: bokoet haeng watthanatham Thai (Water: Origin of Thai Culture) (Bangkok: Thaiwatthanaphanit, 1985), 139.

Plate 4.7. The symbol Mongkut on Erawan Elephant at the ordination hall of Wat Mahapruektharam, top; symbol Mongkut at the ordination hall of Wat Sommanat center; and at the gable of Wat Ratchapradit.

The Discourse of Sukhothai-Sri Lankan architecture vs. Ayutthaya –Chinese architecture

Since King Rama III’s period, King Mongkut as Prince-Abbot Wachirayan had already initiated his subversive discourse of the reform Buddhist movement by adding bell-shaped pagodas in Sukhothai-Sri Lanka style and consecrating sima of Wat Bowonniwet and Wat Baromniwat. When he became the king, his architectural features were the hegemonic visual discourse competing with the traditional royal wats in a grand cosmological order and King Rama III’s Chinese craftsmanship (see Map 4.5 and Plate 4.6).

For instance, at Wat Bowonniwet, the bell-shaped Sri Lankan pagoda and a mixed Chinese with emulated Gothic embellishment shrine were added to the sacred precinct which was previously Chinese style. In Wat Pho (Chetuphon), he added an early-Ayutthaya style pagoda to the royal pagoda complex which already adorned by Chinese embellishment. His pagoda was higher than the previous three that King Rama I initiated and King Rama III ordered to construct in honor of himself and King Rama II. At Wat Sraket, where King Rama III had added a shrine in traditional Thai style and a rectangular corridor around the ordination hall but failed to finish the gigantic pagoda due to the sinking foundation on the soft ground, King Mongkut successfully completed this structure. However, he converted the initially designed Khmer Prang to be a Sri Lankan style pagoda on top of an artificial mountain simulating Mount Meru. For Wat Phra Prathomchedi (Monastic complex of Genesis Pagoda) in the western province, he found the ruins of a Dvaravati pagoda when he was a monk, and his request to reconstruct the pagoda was rejected by King Rama III. When he became the king, he ordered to reconstruct Phra Prathomchedi in a grand scale with a circular corridor recalling Thuparam pagoda at Anuradhpura, the great Buddhist ruin city of Sri Lanka. The three structures were contradictory to his original order to construct only small monastic
Map 4.5. Major royal wats constructed and renovated with bell-shape pagodas in the reign of King Mongkut.

Based on unpublished Survey Map of Bangkok in 1921-1922 from the archive of the Department of Military Map.
Plate 4.6. Royal wats with bell shape pagodas in Historic Bangkok.
complexes. This can be understood if we consider that while he sought to portray his legitimacy as a reform leader through the visual discourse of building small but purer monastic complexes, he was still competing with the legacy of his brother by constructing large scale monastic structures that employed different architectural preferences. His orders to construct three gigantic pagodas were historically involved with his competition and conflict with King Rama III.

**Mahasima Contested**

As King Mongkut preference of a small and exclusive ordination hall with double sima space or mahasima covering the entire monastic complex compound, he argued that with this new spatial arrangement, monks could conduct sanghakram or sacred rituals\(^{299}\) anywhere within the mahasima or could conduct more than one sacred ritual synchronously. This idea was actually controversial because it was only very rarely that monks in a monastic complex needed to conduct several sanghakrams at the same time. Moreover, it was more difficult to take care of the mahasima holy space when the inner and outer sima holy spaces were so close to each other. Monks needed to observe that there was no tree branch or any other structure that connected the inner holy space to the outer holy space. As the heart of sanghakram is the synchronous participation of all monks, it was more difficult to conduct sacred ritual if there is a monk who could not participate in the ritual but nonetheless was in the monastic complex\(^ {300}\). The crisp and clear boundary of mahasima could be viewed as King Rama IV’s attempt to build legitimacy for his reform Buddhist movement, in that it seriously adhered to Lord

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\(^{299}\) Sanghakram means the act or work of monks, the rituals that monks must meet to conduct. There are 4 kinds of meetings that require the congregation of monks in holy space.

\(^{300}\) This might be the case with a monk who was ill. Monks who could not participate in the sacred ritual must send his notice to the meeting or need to be within the boundary of holy space. See more explanation in Somkhit Chirathatsanakul, “Phra Ubosot lae Phra Wihan Nai Samai Phrabat Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yuhao (The ordination hall and shrine in the Reign of King Mongkut)” (Master Thesis, Silpakorn University, 1990), 138.
Buddha’s Vinaya disciplines. On the other hand, the use of *mahasima* was useful for him as it served as form of protection politically since the *sima* holy space was not in the realm of secular rulers. However, in practice, it is more or less ineffective.

His preferences created a kind of zoning system in the sacred precinct of the Buddhist monastic complex, to separate sacred rituals from worshiping or merit-making activities. The monastic grounds outside *sima* but inside the compound were once the neutral area for the community now became a holy space available for conducting sacred rituals. Moreover, with *sima* markers covering the entire monastic complex, monks could proclaim sacred rituals and expel any commoners within the holy markers. The space of the sacred precinct became a site of contestation between the activities of sacred rituals and public activities of communities.

**Christian Modern Education vs. Buddhist Traditional Education**

Because of King Mongkut’s policies granting foreigners the rights to pursue free trade and land ownership, more western missionaries and merchants visited royal monastic complexes and observed monastic activities. Already, monastic space was contested between the indigenous users who used monastic complexes for rituals and community service and western visitors who visited royal monastic complexes as an exotic place of art that represented Siamese culture in opposition to western civilization. This conflict reached a peak when American Protestant missionaries began to produce discourses criticizing Buddhist practice of worship as irrational acts of idolatry\(^{301}\). They also considered Buddhist educational service in major *wats* inefficient and the old Pali and Buddhist canon study was criticized as unfit to the situation of the kingdom that moved to market economy\(^{302}\).

Wat Pho in Transition to the Modern Context

Wat Pho’s Vicinity: from Royal Residence to Westerner Community

Since King Mongkut had opened Siam to the western trade and granted extraterritoriality, the country had had increasing contact with western traders, specialists and diplomats. To meet the needs of these foreign populations, the king ordered the construction of four major buildings to serve as the courthouse for foreign subjects, and as apartments for westerners and officials who served in the royal court. These buildings were constructed in the Tha Tien area, which had once been the area of the palace of royal princes, but was destroyed by fire. At one point, there were at least eighty-four foreigners living in this compound. Around Sanamchai Road at the east side of the Grand Palace, the king also ordered to construct two-storey shop-houses with forty units for westerners who served him as military trainers and English teachers, including several traders who also rented the shops for opening stores. Dr. William Campbell, King Mongkut’s physician also lived around this area near the grand palace. The palaces of the king’s son were mostly constructed along the city wall at the east side as well.

In 1861, King Mongkut ordered to construct (the inner) Charoenkrung Road, the first fully westernized, paved road, from the northeast corner of Wat Pho eastward. This road was intended for foreigners’ homes and storefronts along the road. This road connected to the two roads (outer Charoenkrung Road to the east and Tok Road to the south) that the king ordered to construct one year earlier. The roads started at the Sam Yod (three spires) gateway of the east side city wall and led to the east and southeastern area of westerner communities (see Figure 4.19).

303 Nængnoi Saksi, Ongprakōp thāng kāiyaphāp Krung Rattanakosin (Physical composition of Rattanakosin City) (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1991), 172, 200.
304 Ibid., 201.
305 Ibid., 200.
306 Ibid., 200-201.
307 Ibid., 140-148.
308 Ibid., 272.
Figure 4.19. Wat Pho and Bangkok in King Mongkut’s reign showing the transformation of Wat Pho’s environment and its sacred precinct.

Image from Phiphat Phongraphiphon, “Krungthep nai Samai Ratchakan thi 4 (Bangkok in the forth reign),” pamphlet for the exhibition of panoramic photography in the period of King Rama IV, April 22- May 13, 2001; plan of Wat Pho’s sacred precinct from Watchari Wacharasin, 58.
Because of these developments, Wat Pho, which was once embraced by the community of princes’ palaces and noblemen in pre-modern period, now found its precinct surrounded by a new community of foreigners who served the royal court. Wat Pho was also transformed by the new transportation activities and networks leading to the new open area of Bamrungmueang Road, Chinatown and Charoenkrung (the foreign commercial area), which were further south and east of Bangkok in King Mongkut’s reign.

**Wat Pho’s History: Transition from Axis Mundi to the Symbol of the Royal Past**

Before the end of King Rama III’s reign, the Supreme Patriarch passed away. The king prepared to appoint the most senior patriarch of Wat Suthat, one of the four largest royal monastic complexes, to be the Supreme Patriarch, but Rama III too became ill and passed away. When Prince-Abbot Mongkut disrobed and took the throne as King Mongkut (Rama IV, r. 1851-1868), he appointed his uncle, Prince Wasukree[^309] to be the new Supreme Patriarch instead of the abbot of Wat Suthat. The prince-abbot’s rank and name was also elevated to Krom Somdet Phra Poramanuchitchinorot. He was the first Supreme Patriarch who was also a high-ranking prince to control both the feudal department and the entire ecclesiastical order. Therefore, Wat Pho became the real center of the Siamese Buddhist world in this reign. Although Prince Wasukri was in the position of Supreme Patriarch for only two years and passed away in 1853, King Mongkut did not appoint any senior patriarch to the Supreme Patriarch position. Instead, he maintained the ecclesiastical administrative unit that controlled the monastic order in Bangkok and the feudal department of Prince Wasukri by giving title to his ashes in the shrine at Wat Pho.

[^309]: His feudal title was Prince Krommamuen Nuchit Chinorot.
For instance, when the Burmese monastic emissary came to visit the Supreme Patriarch in 1855, King Mongkut referred them to Wat Pho and appointed the patriarch of Wat Pho to respond to the diplomat’s letter\textsuperscript{310}. As such, Wat Pho during King Mongkut’s reign was the real center of the ecclesiastical administration.

King Mongkut also made a stop during his circumnavigation in the coronation procession at Wat Pho to worship Phra Thewapatimakon, the main Buddha statue in the ordination hall. It was a tradition that new kings of the Chakri dynasty would stop at Wat Pho during their circumnavigation. As the king allowed commoners to observe the procession for the first time in Siamese history, Wat Pho became the first monastery to stage the royal spectacle for the eyes of the masses, and since then, it has long been associated with the king’s Buddhist activities. Moreover, King Mongkut also ordered to enshrine the relics of King Rama I at the base of Phra Thewapatimakon, the main Buddha statue at the ordination hall of Wat Pho. This installation made Wat Pho more associated with the reputation of King Rama I, the founding father of Bangkok and Chakri dynasty.

Although King Mongkut invented a clearer sima and double layers of sima markers for the royal reform group (Khana Thammayutika) that he established, he did not impose any change on the old sima of royal wats of the original commoner sect (Maha Nikay). For instance, King Mongkut did not impose any changes to Wat Pho but he ordered to construct a larger scale pagoda behind the three existing grand pagodas in a Sukhothai-early Ayutthaya style. At the end of his reign, he announced that Wat Pho had been the place for accumulating the king’s merit and if this tradition continued, Wat Pho would not have any space left in the monastic precinct. He stated that from his reign forward, there would be no more significant construction projects in the precinct of Wat Pho to celebrate the king’s reign. Moreover, he claimed that because he and the previous kings (King Rama I-III) had all been alive at the same time, there should be four pagodas

\textsuperscript{310} Siriwat Khamwansa, Song Thai 200 Pi (Thai Buddhism in 200 years) (Bangkok: Sri Anan Printing Mahachulabannakhan, 1981), 135.

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together for commemorating their once being alive together\textsuperscript{311}. In this way, the meaning of Wat Pho thus was changed from being the center of cosmological order and symbol of the Ayutthaya Kingdom to being the place for commemorating the past monarchs’ merit. In this way, King Mongkut marked the end of an era by turning Wat Pho into a symbol of the royal past. Unfortunately, King Mongkut passed away in 1868, before his great pagoda was completed.

\textbf{Wat Sraket in Transition to the Modern Context}

\textbf{Wat Sraket’s Vicinity: From Suburban District to the Urban Center}

At the beginning of King Mongkut’s reign, Bangkok’s city limit was doubled following his order to construct the new city moat called “Khlong Padungkrungkasem” at the east. Wat Sraket suddenly found itself to be the center of Bangkok geographically. As described previously, King Mongkut ordered to construct a few modern roads to facilitate trade. Two of them had major impacts on Wat Pho and Wat Sraket. Charoenkrung is the modern road that also connects Wat Pho to the new business area of southeastern Bangkok. Bamrung Mueang runs from the Grand Palace cutting through the residential quarter of Wat Sraket and its funeral complex. The new road physically excluded the funeral facilities from the Wat Sraket’s precinct, which was once a part of Wat Sraket and could only be accessed by the canal at the south. The area with its unpleasant funeral activities was now visible to the public from the road. Bamrung Mueang Road did not end at the outer city moat. It connected to the new palace called Srapratham. This portion of Bamrung Mueang was also called Srapratham Road. Several bureaucrats and royal princes constructed their manors along Bamrung Mueang bringing the new communities

\footnote{Phra Khru Palat Samphiphaththanaphrommachariyachan (Bun), \textit{Prawat Wat Phrachetuphon Wimonmongkharam} (History of Wat Phrachetuphonwimonmongkharam), cremation vol. Phra Ratchaprasitthiwimon, (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkon Ratchawitthayalai, 1993), 28.}
and commercial activities to the vicinity. Wat Sraket was now in between the old city and
the new suburban area of Srarathum Palace (see Figure 4.20).

**Wat Sraket’s History: from Poetry Festival Ground to the New Urban Landmark**

In 1864, King Mongkut ordered Prince Mahesuansiwawilat to construct the artificial mountain to house the relics of the royal family members at the main royal ground. This mountain with a pagoda on top, called Borommabanphot, was 40 meters high. Other princes and monks also constructed four smaller mountains and pavilions around the vicinity and the king also ordered to have the important Buddha images on display in the procession for the commoners to observe\(^\text{312}\). Thus, the event became a big festival for Bangkok commoners.

The event inspired King Mongkut to construct the unfinished Prang Pagoda at Wat Sraket to be the artificial mountain with a bell-shaped pagoda on top, a task which he assigned to Phraya Sriphiphat (Phae Bunnak, son of That Bunnak the former Phraya Sriphiphat in Rama III’s reign)\(^\text{313}\) in 1865. With this pagoda on a gigantic mountain, Wat Sraket physically and visually became the center and the landmark of the newly expanded Bangkok city area. While the mountain pagoda was being constructed, the waterfront pavilions along the Mahanak canal were left in a state of decay. In his royal announcement\(^\text{314}\), the crown complained about their useless function and urged patriarchs of Wat Sraket to come up with solution for the dilapidated pavilions along the canal. Instead of preserving these pavilions that once were reminiscent of Ayutthaya’s poetry

\(^{312}\) Ibid., 643; Somdet Phra Phutthachan (Kiaw Uppasaeno), *Prawat Wat Sraket Ratchaworramahawihan* (History of Wat Sraket Ratchaworramahawihan) (Bangkok: Chuanphim, 2000), 8.

\(^{313}\) Somdet Phra Phutthachan (Kiaw Uppaseno), *Prawat Wat Sraket Ratchaworramahawihan* (History of Wat Sraket Ratchaworramahawihan) (Bangkok: Chuanphim, 2000), 8, 12, citing King Chulalongkorn’s royal edict announcement about the name of Barommabanphot on May 24, 1899.

Figure 4.20. Wat Sraket and Bangkok in King Mongkut’s reign showing the transformation of Wat Sraket’s environment and its sacred precinct.

Images from Somdet Phra Phuthachan (Kiew Upaseno), History of Wat Sraket Ratchaworamahawihan (Bangkok: Chuanphiim, 2000) and National Archive’s photograph collection.
festival, he proposed to dissemble them and use their materials to repair the residential quarter. In contrast to this change, the common name of Borommabanphot was not in the mentality of local Bangkokian and today this pagoda is still called the Golden Mountain Pagoda (Phukhaothong). It was clear at this point that the era of remembering Ayutthaya as a prototype had ended. It is interesting to note that Wat Pho’s pavilions faced a similar situation and were also demolished by the next reign of King Chulalongkorn. The disappearance of both Wat Sraket’s waterfront pavilions and Wat Pho’s pavilions along the wall marked Bangkok’s shift to the new modern era. There is no document indicating the condition of Wat Kor during this time. The only record involving with Wat Kor is the changes of monastic practice and its official name.

**Wat Kor in Transition to the Modern Context**

There is no document indicating the condition of Wat Kor during this time. The only record involving with Wat Kor is the changes of monastic practice and its official name. During the fourth reign, King Mongkut announced to change several royal monastic complexes and Wat Kor was changed to Wat Samphanthawongsaram to commemorate his relationship to Prince Krommaluang Phithakmontri. In 1855, the abbot of Wat Kor asked King Mongkut’s permission to re-ordain under the royal-led Reform Group (Khana Thammayutika) and Wat Kor thus became the monastic complex of Reform Group. These two incidences portrayed strong relationship between the monarch and Wat Kor. Because of the new outer ring moat, Wat Kor and Chinatown became a part of Bangkok. King Mongkut also constructed the new Charoenkrung Road which passed the east of Chinatown. The arrival of western traders, steamships and the new road with the king’s support for its storefronts could stimulate more trade activities in Chinatown and the vicinity of Wat Kor. The area became populated with the community of Chinese coolie and traders. The one and two-storey Chinese shop-houses, warehouses and
Chinese shrines became ubiquitous in the southern part of Chinatown (Sampheng and Talad Noi)\(^{315}\).

**Conclusion**

King Mongkut claimed that the delineation of holy space was the foundation of the Buddhist religion, and as such, carelessness in establishing the *sima* signified the decline of the Siamese monastic order. As I have argued, since his period in the monkhood, King Mongkut’s Buddhist reforms were asserted not only on the grounds of principle, but also for his own political expediency in his longstanding competition with Rama III. By asserting the idea of clearly delineated Buddhist space, Prince Mongkut simultaneously created a political sanctuary for himself while implicitly undermining the legitimacy of King Rama III. As the holy space of the *sima* was considered beyond the authority of the king, the more precisely Prince Mongkut could delineate and expand holy space, the more secure he was in his monkshood and future political status.

Prince Mongkut was elected King Rama IV in 1851. During his reign, he continued with his earlier reforms, doubling holy space by using *sima* to cover the entire monastery precinct. The Chinese embellishments were toned down during this period, while Sukhothai and Sri Lankan architecture and embellishments were employed for the new royal monastic complexes. I have argued that prior to the western encounter, King Mongkut already understood the importance of the meticulous demarcation of holy space for his political advantage. Because of this experience, King Mongkut was already prepared to cope with the western demands for the demarcation of fixed territory.

Moreover, following the decline of tributary trade with China, Siam under King Mongkut cooperated with the Western market and free-trade activities. Canal routes were constructed to open land for cash crop agriculture such as sugar plantations and rice.

cultivation. Road construction with shop-houses was encouraged and some of these lands were invested in by the crown and nobles. Thus, with these new economic activities, land along transportation routes became more valuable. Following these changes, the urban form of Bangkok also transformed, shifting towards more permanent structures of shop-houses and street networks. During this period, the king also donated the urban land to his new royal *wats* along with conscript laborers. This marked the beginning of the involvement of royal monastic complexes in real estate property management which will be the major factor for the transformation of Bangkok *wats* in the subsequent reign, and will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

The policies that King Mongkut instituted both in his reign and while he was a prominent monk had a number of consequences for the three royal *wats* in the case studies. First, his policies establishing free trade with western colonial powers and the development of modern roads in Bangkok had major impacts on Wat Sraket, because the monastery and funeral compound was cut through by the new Bamrung Mueang Road. Wat Sraket’s monastic precinct was previously embraced by the canal on all sides, limiting public access to unpleasant activities of burning corpses. With the road cutting through, the activities became visible to the public. The edge of Wat Sraket’s monastic precinct became ambiguous with the two split areas. Also because of these policies, Wat Pho’s precinct remained intact since it was embraced by roads at four sides. However, its urban vicinity changed when King Mongkut ordered to construct the courthouse for foreigners and a residential compound for the westerners who served him at Tha Tien. For Wat Kor, there is no specific document indicating physical changes around the wat. However, when we consider the broader picture of Chinatown (Sampheng), the area became more populated with Chinese coolies, shop-houses, warehouses and manors.

King Mongkut’s deliberate policies of constructing a double layer of *simā* holy space or *mahasimā* impacted only the royal preference of the new royal *wats* for the royal-led Reform Group and some old *wats* he renovated. King Mongkut barely changed
the existing *simā* of other big royal *wats* of the Commoner sect and there is no record of changes in the *simas* of three *wats* in the case studies. However, the idea of *mahasima* and clear boundaries instigated significant changes in the next reign which will be discussed in the next chapter.

In terms of the broader building scheme, King Mongkut imposed his preference for Sukhothai-Sri Lankan architecture by constructing the large-scale pagoda in an early Ayutthaya-Sukhothai style at Wat Pho and the bell-shaped pagoda on the artificial mountain at Wat Sra Ket, which became the tallest structure of Bangkok in the pre-modern period. By possessing the tallest structure in Bangkok, the symbolic meaning of Wat Sra Ket changed and gained more attention. In contrast to the former two, Wat Kor has no record of any royal renovation, but it did undergo a conversion of monastic practice from the Commoner Sect to the royal-led Reform Group.
MODERNIZATION AND URBAN MONASTIC SPACE IN RATTANAKOSIN CITY:
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THREE ROYAL WATS

Volume II

A Dissertation
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Doctor of Philosophy

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CHAPTER FIVE
THREE ROYAL WATS AND THE FORMATION OF NATION-STATE IN THE
REIGN OF RAMA V (r. 1868-1910)

Introduction

By the reign of King Mongkut, the deterioration of the traditional manpower system was almost complete and Chinese trade, which had once been so vital to the revenue of the crown, was slowly being eclipsed by free-trade activities and the tax farming system. Royal monastic complexes that had once relied on the crown’s support via conscript labor started to shift to paid labor and land donation. During the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the semi-feudal governmental structure became a modern nation-state with a centralized administration. This chapter will discuss seven main points related to how both royal and commoner wats transformed in response to these changes in the period of modernization. In addition, the consequences of these changes are highlighted in the royal wats of the case studies.

First, various state feudal agencies and their procedures for supporting the monastic affairs were transformed via integration into the modern centralized ministerial system that promoted standardized Buddhist practices for the entire kingdom. Second, the state’s modern perspectives toward traditional Buddhist beliefs, rituals, concepts of merit-making, and the political benefits derived from supporting royal wats changed significantly, affecting the value, usage, and the maintenance of monastery space and structures.

Third, the creation of centralized Buddhist ecclesiastical government also produced more official social connections between local monks in rural wats and the senior patriarchs of royal wats in Bangkok. This new official status within the Sangha hierarchy empowered the senior patriarchs located in Bangkok’s royal wats, resulting in larger structures for the residences of these patriarchs. Fourth, royal monastic complexes lost their support from the royal government because the king abolished the feudal
system that generated conscript laborers to maintain and renovate them. The government provided the financial support for only large scale royal monastic complexes because of their contribution to the beauty of the city, not because of their function as a moral core of society and places for a ruler’s legitimization.

Fifth, by following the model of colonial cities such as such Singapore and Penang, the modern state government shifted the financial support once earmarked for royal wats to public facilities. And sixth, the royal wats were encouraged to cultivate their urban land that was guaranteed and mapped by the government, while the land of deserted monasteries was also considered as a source of funding for Buddhist monastic purposes. Lastly, the development of modern Buddhist education created the need for modern classrooms in wats, which led to incompatibilities in the built environment around historic sacred precincts of royal monastic complexes.

The Political Context of State & Religion during the Reign of Rama V (r.1868-1910)

King Mongkut’s diplomatic abilities are well known and his knowledge and interest in modern science was significant. This interest cost him his life in 1868. He died of malaria contracted during his expedition to a Southern town to observe the solar eclipse. His son, Prince Chulalongkorn, who was only 15 years old, was elected the new king. As in his father’s case, the support for his throne was mainly from the noblemen of the Bunnak family, especially the Prime Minister, Chao Phraya Srisuriyawong. The council of princes and noblemen also appointed Srisuriyawong as the regent and Prince Wichaichan, the son of the second king in King Mongkut’s reign, as the Viceroy.

The Economic Transformation: the End of Tax Farming system and the Emergence of Rice Export Economy

Because of these two important appointments, there was no significant change in state policies from 1868 to 1886, since the Bunnak family still dominated in the
government and benefited from most of the state’s monopolies and tax farming system. It was not until 1886, when the old noblemen retired and the viceroy passed away, that the king gained authority and started his modernization of the country. Under the authority of the regent, the young king continued to receive special modern education. He took two trips to experience neighboring colonial cities. His first trip was in 1870 when he traveled to British Singapore, the Malaya strait settlement and Dutch Batavia. His second trip was to British India with his brothers in 1875. In the same year, his initiative to promote modern education in the Buddhist monastic complex was announced. In 1872, the king continued to hire the British teacher, Francis George Patterson, to educate his brothers, most of whom went on to become major backers of his administrative reforms. Their early western education and experience of colonial towns could be seen as the major influences behind several of the modernization policies that directly affected the built form of royal wats in Bangkok. Before turning to a discussion of how these policies affected the built form and space of royal monastic complexes, it is first necessary to offer some further background about the political and economic changes of the period.

From 1868-1885, the economic situation of the Siamese kingdom was transformed. The tax-farming system that had been an effective revenue system for King Rama III and Mongkut’s reign became corrupt. The Chinese tax collectors and provincial lords did not provide counterbalancing interests. Instead, they became collaborators and co-conspirators, resulting in less profit to the crown. In the 1870s, the sugar plantations that western traders expected to be profitable could not compete with subsidized beet sugar in Europe and sugar produced in Dutch Java. From the 1870s, rice replaced sugar

316 Chulalongkorn, King of Siam, Chotmaihet Praphat Tang Prathet nai Ratchakan thi 5 (chronicle about Royal visit foreign countries in the fifth reign), cremation vol. of Prince Krom Luang Adison Udomdet, (Bangkok: Sophonphiphattananakan,1925).
318 Ibid., 99.
as the major export from Bangkok. This meant that rice-mills were created, re-orienting land development, canal construction and the shipping business. Western traders dominated Siam’s rice milling, shipping, banking and import business but later lost most of the business to Chinese traders\(^{319}\). These new economic activities grew fast and allowed the king to shift his revenue base from a tax farming system to a new rice export economy. In 1874, the king already responded to changes by establishing Hor Ratsadakonphiphat to control most of the revenue\(^{320}\). By the late-1880s, when King Chulalongkorn assumed his full authority in the Siamese government, Siam’s political and economic system had already changed drastically and was waiting for the king to impose a more appropriate political system.

**Cabinet Ministry Reform: The Rise of Princes as Ministers**

After the retirement of the Regent and the death of the Viceroy in 1883 and 1886 respectively, King Chulalongkorn gained full authority and appointed his half brothers, princes, and young nobles who had received a similar Western education to the new cabinet ministerial system. He then set about transforming the Siamese traditional mandala state that had relied on the hand of nobles and feudal lords into a centralized bureaucracy controlled from his court at Bangkok. In 1887, King Chulalongkorn asked his brother, Prince Devawongse to study the structure of European governments while he was attending the Queen Victoria’s fiftieth anniversary on the throne\(^{321}\). The prince reported back to the king about establishing a cabinet based on the British system with twelve ministers to replace the traditional cosmological order of two major chief

\(^{319}\) The initial market for Siamese rice was in Europe thus could be controlled by the European traders but later the demand was shifted for Asian market. See more in Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thailand: Economy and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 100; and G. William Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand: an Analytical History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957).

\(^{320}\) Phassana Kitthawon, “Botbat khong Kana Song nai ruang Kan Suksa nai ratchsamai Phrabat somdet Phra Chulachomklao Chaoyuhua (Role of Monastic Order in Education during King Chulalongkorn’s reign)” (Master Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1981), 45

ministers and four Chatusadom ministers controlling various subordinate feudal units. In 1888, the two chief ministries of Kalahom (army and command of the southern principalities) and Mahatthai (civil service and command of northern principalities) and four key ministries of Wiang (capital city), Wang (palace affairs), Khlang (finance, foreign affairs and port cities), and Na (agriculture) were reshuffled into a modern ministerial system. The Kalahom became the Ministry of War. The Mahatthai was transformed to the Ministry of Interior which became the backbone of King Chulalongkorn’s modernization scheme and centralized administration. The Wiang became Nakhonban or the Ministry of Bangkok Municipality. The Khlang ministry was divided into finance and foreign affairs ministries, and the Wang and Na remained. The ministries of Justice (Yuttitham), Public Works (Yothathikan), Army and Privy Seal were created. The new ministers serving his cabinet now were his royal brothers who had been exposed to Western education and had experienced trips to colonial cities. The only ministerial position left for a Bunnak noble was the Minister of Public Instruction (Thammakan). The Krom Thammakan or the Department of Public Instruction that was originally designated to take care of only royal wats was elevated to be the new ministry to supervise Buddhist wats of the entire kingdom. This ministry was a key catalyst in transforming the royal monastic structure. The ministry was comprised of the old Krom Thammakan (support for royal wats, education and general monastic affairs), Krom Sanghakari (taking care of the invitation to senior monks for the royal activities and delivering support for learnt monks), and the newly established department of public education (Krom Samansueksa).

322 For Example, Prince Damrong, the Minister of Interior or Mahatthai traveled to Europe in 1891. Prince Naritsaranuwattiwong, the Minister of Public Work visited British Burma and Sri Lanka in 1898. Prince Naratworrarit, Minister of Bangkok Municipality or Nakhonban, visited America as early as 1884. Prince Devawongs, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, visited England in 1887.

323 This is a general description. In several periods, Thammakan and Sanghakari were assigned the jobs that overlapping each other.
In 1892, the regional and provincial administration was put in place to control the former feudal principalities and vassal states in response to increasing French colonial force in Laos and British logging activities along the Burma border. The fourteen regions (Monthon) and regent officials (Khaluang Thesaphiban) were created, at first to assist feudal lords but later on gradually to replace them with central administrators from Bangkok. From the 1870s to 1890s, tax farmers were supervised by bureaucrats and finally in 1892, the Ministry of the Interior also took control of most commodity taxes from Chinese tax farmers. The establishment of the Region-Regent (Monthon - Thesaphiban) system had three major consequences. First, in a semi-feudal system, local lords had full authority to establish their own administrative units, including appointing patriarchs and abbots. In the new system, all powers were transferred to a hierarchical structure of centralized administration in Bangkok, including the monastic appointments. Secondly, the modern administration of Monthon needed more officials with a western education. The new modern educational system was in demand to produce new officials who could serve these new tasks. Thirdly, the Monthon system became the backbone for the establishment of educational reform and the Buddhist ecclesiastical government.

**Educational Reform: The First Split within the Monastic Complex**

Until 1886, the first secular school opened for commoners was at Wat Mahannopharam (Monastic complex of Prince Annop). A royal announcement in 1884 made clear that the king preferred to continue traditional education in *wats* but wished to introduce a new modern curriculum. This reluctance to establish separated public schools was due to the concern that the modern knowledge could cause conflicts with Thai tradition. Moreover, it would deplete more of the royal treasury if new schools were

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324 Ibid., 201-202.
established under a new agency. The use of existing monastic structures as classrooms was also considered appropriate since there were already facilities in every community.

However, this new movement still taught students in a traditional manner, only supplementing the traditional curriculum with Thai language and Mathematics using new standard texts for students. The project did not make great progress under the newly established Department of Education until 1898, when King Chulalongkorn asked his half brother, Prince Patriarch Wachirayan, to be the Director of Educational Management. This appointment brought about the king’s Announcement of Educational Management in Provincial Towns. With this announcement, Prince Wachirayan was assigned to take care of primary schools while the middle and high school levels were overseen by the Department of Education. With Wachirayan’s leadership, senior monks with a high education (mostly from Reform Order) were appointed as educational advisors for the fourteen Monthon, and put in charge of establishing secular education in wats all over the kingdom. These Monthon educational advisors investigated the possibility for new schools, supervised local wats, coordinated local authorities, and reported to the king. For the material and government support for monks, Prince Damrong, the Minister of Interior and Ministry of Public Instruction were in charge. Thus, the modern education for commoners in monastic complexes expanded rapidly throughout the kingdom. Although modern formal education took place in wats, this movement was the starting point that split the educational management between secular and religious studies.

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326 Phassana Kitthawon, “Botbat khong Kana Song nai ruang Kan Suksa nai ratchsamai Phrabat somdet Phra Chulachomklao Chaoyuhua (Role of Monastic Order in Education during King Chulalongkorn’s reign)” (Master Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1981), 52-53.
327 Among the first senior advisors, 11 from Reform Order and only 2 from Commoner Order. See more detail in Phassana Kitthawon, ibid., 48.
328 Ibid., 150.
Modern Buddhist Studies: Making of the World Buddhist University

For the development of traditional monastic education, in 1893, King Chulalongkorn ordered a new inscription of the Buddhist Canon or Tripitaka and he ordered the transcription of the original copy from Khmer into Thai. In his view, having the canon in the Thai language would be a benefit for spreading Buddhist education, and at the same time, it would help to eradicate popular beliefs of the sacredness of Khmer language.329 This reconvocation of the Buddhist canon was not only an act of a Dharma Raja in the eyes of his people in Siam, but also represented King Rama V’s aim to assert the status of Siam as the only Buddhist independent kingdom in the world. This is exemplified by the following declaration by King Chulalongkorn:

All Buddhist kingdoms in the past were used to borrow Tripitaka from one another for reference when in need but now Burma and Ceylon are under the British, the rulers are not Buddhist … and do not uphold Buddhist religion. Monks practice Buddhist alone without state support. If there are more vices than goodness, the Dharma will fall apart. For Cambodia, it is now under the French and is depleted. There is not enough wealth to support the Buddhist religion. For the Laos which is under Siam, now its rulers and people believe in evil spirits and have let these beliefs penetrate into Buddhist practice. We can no longer trust in their Tripitaka. Siam now is only one country with Buddhist prosperity. It is the auspicious time to conduct an investigation of the Tripitaka to ensure the strong foundation and continuation of Buddhism in the future330.

The attempt to assert Siam as a Buddhist educational center was also described in the first development plan for Buddhist education submitted by the Minister of Public Instruction, Chao Phraya Phatsakorawongs331. Although the plan was not approved, it depicted the Siamese top ministers’ vision of Bangkok as the last stronghold of Theravada Buddhism in the world.

329 Ibid., 93.
330 Wachirayanwarorot, Prince Patriarch, Phra Vinaipidok Mahapang lem 1, (Bangkok: Mo Po To, 1902).
Another illustration of King Rama V’s aspiration to transform Siam into a world center of Buddhism was King Chulalongkorn’s decree that monks should not preach by starting with the date of the Buddhist Era and counting the years left before 5000 B.E.\(^{332}\). King Rama V abolished this practice on the conviction that Buddhist Religion would continue to prosper. This Buddhist prophecy originated with a monk, Buddhakosa of Ceylon,\(^{333}\) and it is repeated in the Kalyani Inscription\(^{334}\) of King Dharmachedi of Mon Kingdom, where the Reform Order of King Mongkut originated. King Rama V’s action changed the view of history from a traditional Buddhist cyclical path (birth, growth, decline and end and rebirth) to a Western modern historiography of linear progression.

From 1892 to 1893, the king’s support for Pali study and examination in the traditional monastic system was discussed in his ministerial cabinet. The final result proposed by the Minister of Public Instruction was a Buddhist university for the royal-led Reform Group (Khana Thammayutika), with a modern management system and western science subjects. He also had a high hope that Thai Buddhist academy would surpass Sri Lankan Buddhist education\(^{335}\). The university, called Mahamakut Ratchawitthayalai, was scheduled for launching as a part of the cerebration around the 25\(^{th}\) anniversary of King Chulalongkorn’s coronation. Even at the time of the inauguration of this Buddhist University, it already had created the conflicts within monastic orders since it was seen as promoting the new royal-led Reform Group while devaluing the importance of the Commoner Order\(^{336}\). By 1898, another Buddhist University, Mahachulalongkorn

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\(^{332}\) Phassana Kitthawon, “Botbat khong Kana Song nai ruang Kan Suksa nai ratchsamai Phra Batsomdet Phra Chulachomklao Chaoyoohua (Role of Monastic Order in Education during King Chulalongkorn’s reign)” (Master Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1981), 94.


\(^{335}\) Ibid., 176.

\(^{336}\) For instance, the Minister of Public Instruction expressed pessimism toward the Commoner Order when he visited Wat Mahathat, the center of monastic education for Commoner Order. See more details in Craig J. Reynolds, “The Buddhist Monkhood in Nineteenth Century Thailand” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1972), 172.
Ratchawitthayalai, was established for the Commoner Order (Maha Nikay) following the example of Mahamongkut Ratchawittalai. In the cabinet discussion, the question of the consequences of sectarian split for the Siamese Buddhist religion as a whole in Thailand was raised by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince Devawongs, who asked why the Buddhist academy should be separated into two orders. There was no record of the outcome for his important question from the cabinet meeting document.

The Sangha Act of 1902 and Monastic Structural Reform: Establishing the Buddhist Papacy

In 1902, King Chulalongkorn released the first Buddhist Ecclesiastical Law. It established the first Buddhist government whose cabinet members were comprised of eight high senior patriarchs who formerly were the ecclesiastical governors and deputy governors of the Northern, Southern, and Central regional groups. The new law elevated the royal-led Reform Group (Thammayutika Nikay) from scattered factions mainly in the Central region to be the fourth group. The law also supported the appointment of fourteen senior monks who mostly resided in big royal monastic complexes in Bangkok and its vicinity to be both the educational advisors and ecclesiastical governors of fourteen education regions. The highlight of this law was that it united the position of the regional educational advisor and the ecclesiastical governor to be the same person. After the educational announcement in 1898, the senior monks who worked as provincial educational advisors found that they had no authority over the regional patriarchs who governed local monastic complexes. With the 1902 legal and educational policies, the central government put senior monks of royal wats in a position that could determine the future of local officials and monks.

337 His full title at the time was Prince Krommamuen Devawongwaropakon
338 Ibid., 187.
Moreover, the Religious Law also established a formal pyramid structure of hierarchical administration with the ecclesiastical cabinet or Maha Thera Samakhom (the Council of Elders) at the top. Prince Wachirayan thus resigned from the directorship of Provincial Educational Management to be the chairman of the cabinet, which now started to handle the monastic affairs independently. The duty of Minister of Public Instruction for monastic affairs in Bangkok changed from being that a position that traditionally served the king and implemented his decisions vis-a-vis monastic affairs to a position that facilitated the communication among the king, his cabinet ministers and the senior patriarchs.

The law also enhanced the power of an abbot to manage monks and the assets in the area of his royal wat. It indicated the punishment and fines for those who violated the order of an abbot. Hence, a monk was obligated not only to follow the Lord Buddha’s Vinaya rules but also to adhere to any order of an abbot in the wat where he resided. Previously, the traditional law of the secular government could not punish monks who committed wrong doing at the lower level than the serious violation of committing sexual transgression and murder (Parachik) according to Vinaya⁴³⁹. Only monks who committed Parachik misbehavior were disrobed and prosecuted. Under the new law, a monk could be punished if he resisted the order of the abbot⁴⁴⁰, and the abbot could expel anyone who resisted his order from his wat. Moreover, the abbot’s duty was extended to regulate and register lay commoners who were involved with wat’s business⁴⁴¹. If they disagreed with the abbot and refused to move out, they were subjected to be jailed for a month and

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⁴³⁹ National Archive R 5 S 16/1, 17 Sept 1901 letter from Prince Krommamuen Ratchaburi Direkrit, the Minister of Justice to King Chulalongkorn. Prince Ratchaburi investigated King Rama I’s Kot Phra Song and King Mongkut’s royal edict and concluded that there was not any written document indicating the rule to punish monks if they did not commit highest violation of Vinaya.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., Religious Law, Muad or Section 4 About Abbot, Martra or Article 17 Power of Abbot, Rule No. 5.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., Religious Law, Muad or Section 4 About Abbot, Martra or Article 13 Duty of Abbot, Rule No. 2.3 and 8.
fined. Before this law, there was no clear rule about the abbot’s power over
commoners. Moreover, according to archival documents of King Rama III and King
Mongkut, it was the duty of the Chao Krom Wat or monastic labor registry officials to
clean up royal wats and expel strangers before royal visits.

Before the 1902 Religious Law, senior monks in provincial towns were promoted
to be patriarchs of the areas by the local governors of provinces or feudal princes with
local support and an approval from the king at Bangkok. The appointment usually was
not opposed by the Bangkok court. With the new law, the appointment of the provincial
patriarch needed to go through both the new, centrally appointed secular and
ecclesiastical governors at every level. The appointments were sent from local, district,
provincial, region and regional administration to Bangkok’s Ministry of Public
Instruction, which consulted the royal secular cabinet and the cabinet of senior patriarchs
before making a final decision.

In addition, the 1902 Law determined the legal status of a monastic complex,
distinguishing between wat and samnaksong. According to the law, a wat must have the
clear demarcation of sima holy space, or wisungkamasima. This indicates that the king
officially withdrew his supreme power over the land of the monastic complex and
donated it to the Buddhist realm. A samnaksong is a monastic residence that has not
received the king’s consent to establish sima holy space. By this definition, most
monastic complexes that wished to alter their sima holy space or the ordination hall and
had previously received consent from local rulers had to request consent from the king at
Bangkok through both the state and ecclesiastical hierarchical structure of the Monthon.
This law dramatically reduced the power of local rulers and substantiated King

342 Ibid., Religious Law, Muad or Section 4 About Abbot, Martra or Article 17 Power of Abbot, Rule No.
6.
343 National Library Document, Mai Rub Sang Ro 3 (Rama III), Mai Kamnodkan Sob Luang Petpanee Cho.
So. 1206, Lek Thi 3 Too 118 Chan 1/1 Mad thee 3 and Mai Rub Sang Ro 4 (Rama IV), Cho. So. 1216, Lek
Thi 59 Tod Krathin Wat Samphanthawong.
Chulalongkorn as the only legitimate Buddhist supreme ruler in Siam. By indicating the duty of the Ministry of Public Instruction to assist the monastic governors at a regional level, this law also expanded the authority of the Ministry from only supervising royal monastic complexes and supporting high ranking patriarchs as in the previous feudal system to monitoring all monastic complexes in the kingdom.

The new administrative system and ecclesiastical government not only destroyed the social networks and local identities of provincial monastic complexes and rural communities, but also gave direct power to senior monks in royal monastic complexes in Bangkok to inspect monastic orders and appoint monks in provincial towns under their regional responsibility. In addition, the law enhanced the power and reputation of senior monks in Bangkok by giving them nation-wide connections and control over monastic complexes in the regions they governed. This transition occurred in a similar way to the transformation of the secular government discussed earlier in that the shift from a constellation of chiefdoms and principalities to an emerging unified nation-state under the absolute monarch undermined the authority of local overlords. As the local monastic complexes and communities lost their identity and autonomy, the royal wats at Bangkok gained power through their national administration.

Before the promulgation of this law, the abbots of wats in provincial towns were mostly under the supervision of the senior patriarchs who ordained them or who had been their teachers, and were not strictly under the governors by any geographical definition. Senior governor patriarchs in Bangkok had no real administrative power and only played the role of consulting the king regarding monastic affairs within the region. In essence, their authority derived from the lineages that they had cultivated via social networks through their Buddhist study and ordination. In contrast to this, the 1902 law provided the senior patriarchs with a position and real power to determine the future of provincial monastic complexes and monks without the respect of their ordination lineage. This law
provided the senior monks wider opportunities to meet new patrons in the new governmental administrative system outside their own social networks.

Although the Religious Law of 1902 legalized the authority of abbots and created the entity of an ecclesiastical government, there was no explanation of the position of the Supreme Patriarch. This position was left vacant after the death of Supreme Patriarch Sa in 1899. The king did not appoint any senior monks to be the supreme patriarch because traditionally this person had to be the senior monk who was either a teacher or preceptor of the king. The absence of a supreme patriarch implied that the king was the head of both the state and ecclesiastical government. The king never held a cabinet meeting of the ecclesiastical government and the meetings were often handled by Prince Patriarch Wachirayan, the younger brother of the king and the patriarch of the Reform Order. Because of his position as the director of provincial education reform administration and his job as the acting leader of Buddhist ecclesiastical government and the Patriarch of the Reform Order, Prince Patriarch Wachirayan was the most influential icon of the monastic order in the modern history of Siamese Buddhist Religion.

Changing the Idea of Royal Support: From Conscript Labor to Financial Aid

Although most royal wats were negatively affected by the declining number of conscript laborers at the beginning of King Chulalongkorn’s reign, two new royal monastic complexes were constructed and still obtained corvée labor. Wat Ratchabophit was constructed a year after King Chulalongkorn’s first coronation and the construction of Wat Thepsirin was launched in 1879 after his second coronation. These two monastic complexes were still assigned laborers in the old custom344, although the king also planned to abolish it.

344 National Archive R 5 S 29/1 and Prawat Wat Thepsirinthatrawat (History of Wat Thepsirinthatrawat) (Bangkok: Mahamakut Rachawitthayalai, 1999), 18.
During this period (1880-1902), problems and disputes about losing laborers and corruption in the monastic land grants were reported to the king and his new cabinet ministers. Wat Ratchabophit, which actually had only recently been built (construction began 1868 and completed in 1888), lost its control over these laborers during the tenure of the first abbot. From 1898 to 1900, the abbot, Prince Arun sent his appeals to the king and the Ministry of War offering to return conscript labors to the king and they were listed as soldiers. The abbot explained that the registry officers had failed to control the conscript laborers in order to ensure that they performed their duty at this wat. The conscript laborers barely showed up at the royal wat and the registry officers paid wage laborers to do the work instead. The prince abbot asked to keep only the registry officials and to receive funds to hire commoners to guard and clean the monastic complex instead of forced laborers.

By going into detail about the local administration in 1899, the story can reveal how difficult it was at the time to capture a monastic laborer. After the request of the abbot Prince Arun, it took almost one year for the Ministry of War, which had all registry lists of the labor forces, to issue a letter to the local governor to capture one monastic laborer who lived in the southern province of Bangkok, Nakhon Khueankhan. It also took another year for this local governor to clarify the documents and communicate with the Minister of Bangkok Municipality, the district official, and the village headman to arrest this laborer, because he claimed to be a soldier under the army of another prince. This case spurred the king and his cabinet to realize that the labor management system

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345 His full name was Prince abbot Pra Ong Chao Arunniphakunakon.
346 National Archive R 5 S 29/1, 26 December 1898. Letter from the Prince-Abbot Arunniphakhunakon of Wat Ratchabophit to Phraya Montrisuriyawong, representative of Minister of War or Kalahom and vice versa, page 3-5. Ministry of Kalahom’s duties was changed from overlapping control of the southern region and army to control only labor and army and left the duty of provincial control to Ministry of Mahathai (formerly control of the northern region) or interior as the result of modernization started in 1886.
347 Ibid.
348 National Archive R 5 N 40.4/80, first 20 pages.
was in decline, and was leading to the deterioration of royal *wats* and the government needed to find solution to maintain them.

In the same year, Wat Suthat, one of the four biggest royal *wats* in Bangkok, was in trouble with a similar situation. The monastic complex lost track of its ninety-one laborers after its Chao Krom Wat or registry official position became vacant and thieves started to loot the monastic complex at night. The deputy official complained that the job was too difficult to handle. In this case, the abbot of Wat Suthat also asked to return the management of all monastic laborers to the king and the Ministry of War and instead receive a money allowance. The royal *wat* still preserved the royal title of Chao Krom Wat for the lay advisor or accountant. The Minister of Finance, Prince Mahison\(^\text{349}\), also urged the cabinet to establish a proper management system for maintaining royal monastic complexes in this changing economic situation and suggested that the decline of the royal *wats* was linked to its dependence on the labor system while other bureaucracies had shifted to monetary operations. He also pointed out that the Department of Labor Registry in the Ministry of War was not the proper authority to care for royal *wats* because there was no consideration of merit there. He suggested that a monastic complex could be one kind of business entity using its full labor capacity and capital. He proposed that the government should follow three steps. First, the classification of royal monastic complex had to be created. Second, the financial allowance according to the architectural and historical significance had to be deliberated. Finally, the revenue from the *wats’* monastic donated land had to be calculated to balance the expenditures\(^\text{350}\).

On 19 October 1899, Chao Phraya Phatsakorawong, Minister of Public Instruction, and Prince Prachak\(^\text{351}\), the Minister of War, discussed the problem. They proposed replacing conscript labor with a financial allowance. Even then, some royal

\(^{349}\) His full name at the time was Prince Krommamuen Mahisonratchaharuethai.

\(^{350}\) National Archive R 5 S29/2, 25 April 1899 letter from Prince Krommamuen Mahisonratchaharuethai to King Chulalongkorn.

\(^{351}\) His full title at the time was Krommamuen Prachaksilapakhom.
monastic complexes would not have enough laborers left to collect money for their maintenance anyway. The Minister of Public Instruction was also concerned that the money from head poll tax of these laborers would not be enough for all the royal monastic complexes which received feudal labor support. He proposed to support only the most important royal monastic complexes and provide money for maintaining each of them. These monastic complexes were Wat Phrachetuphon (Wat Pho), Wat Arunratchawararam, Wat Suthatthevararam, Wat Ratchabophit, Wat Ratchapradit, Wat Thepsirin, Wat Phra Phutthabat and Wat Phra Prathomchedi. All of them were monastic complexes with fine architectural details. Secondly, he proposed to terminate the manpower controlling position of *Chao Krom Wat* or the monastic labor registry official. *Chao Krom Wat* was transferred from the Department of Labor Registry (Krom Phrasuratsawadi) in the Ministry of War to the Ministry of Public Instruction, but without salary because there was no job for them. A head poll tax would be collected from the laborers who used to be monastic laborers (*lek wat*) and sent to the Ministry of Public Instruction. Thirdly, the Ministry could appoint a lay manager (*makkhanayok*) who demonstrated the ability to manage a royal monastic complex’s revenue as a new *Chao Krom Wat* with royal title and ranking. The king agreed to the proposal but still had no idea how to solve the problem that the money from the poll tax of labors might not meet the cost of maintenance. From this letter correspondence, it was clear that the conscript labor management for royal monastic complexes had come to an end. Under the new system, the Ministry of War (Kalahom) collected poll tax and sent these funds directly to the Ministry of Public Instruction, thereby centralizing the government management system of monastic complexes under only one united authority, the Ministry of Public Instruction. At this point the Ministry also took charge of the financial support of royal *wats*. Key administrative monks no longer dealt with several feudal authorities (kroms).

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352 National Archive R 5 S 29/1, 24 October 1899. Letter from Prince Krommamuen Prachaksinlapakhom and Chao Phraya Phatsakorawong to King Chulalongkorn.
such as older Thammakan (for general royal support), Sanghakari (for royal rituals), Suratsawadi (for monastic labor), Ratchabandit (teachers for Pali language), Khlang (money for educated monks) and Na (rice for cooking food).

However, it should be noted that the government already used a centralized system to manage and shift labor forces and tax revenues from one area to another area on special occasions. For example, in 1895, Wat Phrachetuphon (WatPho) received special laborers from the northern province of Phitsanulok for its renovation project. These laborers had to pay head poll tax of eighteen baht annually if there was no renovation work. The letter from Prince Damrong, the Minister of Interior, asked the king to reduce their tax burden to six baht indicating that the government had already collected tax in the form of money to renovate the royal monastic complexes before 1899. The regent governor or Thesaphiban controlled the list of laborers and sent the list and revenue to the lay accountant (Waiyawatchakon) of Wat Phrachetuphon or Wat Pho under the close supervision of senior monks. In this case we see that the Ministry of Interior (Mahatthai) took control of the tax from the monastic laborers in provincial towns using the regency system (Thesaphiban) instead of the Ministry of Kalahom (Defense). There were also several cases that the abbots of wats disputed with the officials over the control of monastic laborers such as the case of Angkor Wat in Siem Riep that labor control was organized from Bangkok.

353 National Archive, M 14/11 14 February 1895 Letter from Prince Krommanu Damrongrachanuphap to King Chulalongkorn for tax collecting money from Monthon Phitsanulok for monastery renovation. Prince Damrong found that these monastic laborers were collected 18 baht a year by the regent official (Khaluang Thesaphiban) but the standard money for head tax was only 6 baht.
354 National Archive, R 5 S 6 P/22 Letter from Chao Phatsakorawong to Prince Krommanu Sommut Amonphan, 24 November 1899. Angkor Wat in Siem Riep was under Siamese authority from the beginning of Bangkok period until 1907. In 1899, two patriarchs from the Angkor area traveled to Bangkok asking the king to rule over their dispute with the newly Bangkok-appointed governor over monastic conscript labors. Angkor Wat, which was under Siamese control at the time formerly received approximately one thousand laborers to maintain the ruins and the associated Buddha statues. The governor had taken two hundred and fifty laborers from the monastic complex inside Angkor Wat to serve government duties and left only three hundred laborers for the monastic complex. The patriarchs asked the king to give them the right to choose their registry officials, but the central government preferred not to intervene in this matter in an area that was considered vassal state. Letter from Prince Krommamuen.
The end of the monastic labor registry system finally came in 1905, when the military drafting law began and all young men were required to enter the military system. Consequently, the head poll tax to cover the expense of a royal monastic complex’s maintenance or renovation project was completely brought to an end. During this period, however, there were several wats sending petitions to the king to request the waiving their monastic laborers from military drafting.

For instance, the abbot of Wat Sattanat petitioned the king to allow his monastic complex to retain the revenue from the tax of monastic laborers. In response to the request, the king asked Prince Damrong, the Minister of Interior, for his opinion. Prince Damrong explained that the new military drafting law would replace the old manpower system and all royal monastic complexes would lose their revenue from monastic laborers. He asked the king whether or not royal monastic complexes should receive the same amount of revenue for their renovation. After receiving this response, the king also asked Prince Mahison and Chao Praya Wichitwong, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Public Instruction, to resolve the problem and use it as a standard practice for the future.

Both ministers sent a report to the king on April 7, 1906 describing the historical status of monastic laborer as a kind of slave whose family member would be included in the assets of the monastic complex till the end of 5000 B.E. (Buddhist Era). After the Emancipation Law of 1899, the category of slave labor was dissolved, but monastic

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355 National Archive, R 5 S 28.2/26, letter from Pra Phutthawiriyakon, abbot of Wat Sattanart, to King Chulalongkorn, September 1905.
356 National Archive, R 5 S 28.2/26, letter from King Chulalongkorn to Prince Damrongrachanuphap, 15 September 1905.
357 National Archive, R 5 S 28.2/26 letter from Prince Damrongrachanuphap to the king, 5 October 1905.
358 His full title was Chao Phraya Wichitwongwutthikrai.
359 National Archive, R 5 S 28.2/26, letter from King Chulalongkorn to Prince Mahisonratchaharuethai and Chao Phraya Wichitwongwutthikrai, 11 October 1905.
laborers still had to pay 6 baht per head in poll tax for maintaining royal monastic complexes and other renovations. First, the Ministers suggested that the newly registered laborers could no longer be a monastic asset since they had become free people by law. However, the older people could continue to pay head poll tax to support the monastic complexes until the end of their generation. These people should be lifted to the level of Kamnan (commune headmen) or Phuyaibaan (village headmen).

Secondly, the king had to support only the important royal wats for which he had special faith and interest. The solution was to classify the royal monastic complexes in four categories. Firstly, chan phiset, or the special class, was the classification for the most elaborate structure, possessing Lord Buddha Relics or a footprint. Secondly, chan ek, or first class was the group of royal wats that the king had constructed in an open public space or monastic complexes that contributed to the beauty and elegance of the city in a large area. Third, chan tho, or the second class was the group of royal wats that the king built in provincial towns, or that the royal members had constructed and sponsored with royal patronage. The third class was the group of monastic complexes that high ranking nobles or bureaucrats had constructed and contributed largely to the elegance and beauty of the city. It is interesting to note that the criteria of classification came from a combination of traditional beliefs in Buddha relics and modern concept of the beautification or the city’s open space\(^\text{360}\). The reason to preserve royal monastic complexes was not only the legitimacy of the king as a dharmaraja or the continuity of the Buddhist religion, but also the sense of urban landmarks and the beautification of the city.

Following this hierarchical system, the list and classification of one hundred and seventeen royal monastic complexes was created and the financial allowance was

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\(^{360}\) National Archive, R 5 S 28.2/26, opinion for classification of royal monasteries from Chao Phraya Wichitwongwutthikrai and Prince Mahisonratcharuethai to King Chulalongkorn, 4 April 1906 indicating the obligation for maintaining Chan Phiset royal monastery as for the elegance of the capital city (Khwam Sa-nga Ngam Khong Phra Nakhon).
allocated according to this classification. The special class royal *wats* would receive money allowances according to their different expenditures. The first class monastic complexes would receive sixty baht monthly allowance for hiring three guards or cleaning staffs and one hundred twenty baht for annual maintenance expenditure. The second class received forty baht to hire two employees for service and eighty baht for annual maintenance work. The third class received twenty baht monthly for one employee to maintain the monastic complex and 40 baht for annual maintenance.

However, the ministers made clear that this money allowance could not be treated as a permanent religious asset which would be available indefinitely. If the monastic complexes could not get enough revenue from its land rent to pay the maintenance cost, the government would pay them the rest to meet the cost. In contrast, the government would stop providing this support if the monastic complexes could generate more revenue from their rent than the government’s allowance. The Ministers also gave lay manager (*makkhanayok*) or lay accountant (*waiyawatchakon*) power to manage this support freely, as long as it was not used for the private expenses of monks. The classification of a royal monastic complex could be changed depending on the evaluation of the government. The royal *wats* that received government support would give their monastic laborers to the government. For the rest of the royal *wats* that had enough income from land and could maintain their monastic structures, the government would withdraw support. This was an important point in as much as the Ministry of Public Instruction had to supervise and monitor the revenues and expenditures of royal *wats* closely. The more efficient the monastic revenue collecting process was the less financial support the government had to pay to the royal *wats*. The cabinet finally agreed upon this proposal.
Emerging Commercial Monastic Land: Managing, Mapping and Defending the Holy Real Estate Properties

Since the trade and commercial activities expanded at the beginning of the fourth reign, the land became more valuable. The land along the new roads was in demand for both commercial and residential activities. The crown who was the sole owner of the land in the entire kingdom also recognized the benefit from the land and landownership of his subjects. He started to invest in the rent of shop houses and also grant the land to his subjects with clear demarcation. King Mongkut donated land with shop houses along Fueang Nakhon Road to his two important and favored monastic complexes. By 1895, King Chulalongkorn also donated shop houses and land for his royal wat, Wat Ratchabophit, at the cost of 3,880 baht. The increasing land donations (Thoranisong) and the donation of products from assigned land (Kalapana) that followed the expansion of modern monetary system also increased the tasks for monks and lay supporters in royal monastic complexes, as now they had to handle revenue from land in the form of money instead of labor management. According to Buddhist precepts (Vinaya), monks cannot hold money or manage material wealth of the wats by themselves. Hence, the revenue from the rental of monastic land and negotiation with tenants and contractors also required to be handled by lay accountant (Waiyawatchakon or Uppatak Wat). By the time of King Mongkut, some royal wats had both a lay accountant who took care of rent benefits and a labor registry officer (Chao Krom

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361 These wats are Wat Bowonniwet where he had been the abbot, and Wat Ratchapradit, a newly constructed monastic complex near the grand palace. See more detail in Wachirayanwarorot, Prince, Tamnan Wat Bowonniwet (History of the Monastery of Viceroy Residence) (Bangkok: Sophonphiphatthanakon, 1922), 49.
363 Thoranisong is the land that an owner donated to a monastery completely while Kalapana is the land that still belongs to the owner but the revenue from the land goes to the monastery. The revenue of Kalapana land is also called Kalapanapon.
Wat)\textsuperscript{364}. For example, in 1901 Wat Bowonniwet still possessed some fifty-one \textit{lek wats} and also had lay accountant who served as a financial secretary of the abbot\textsuperscript{365}.

In contrast to labor registry officers, a lay accountant was not a government official who was appointed by the king. A lay accountant was appointed solely by the abbot to handle money, although there are documents showing that some of them received a royal title, such as \textit{waiyawatchakon} of royal monastic complexes in Bangkok\textsuperscript{366}. They did not have salary from the government, but received some from the monks they served. These lay accountants were obligated to send their reports and money to the Ministry of Public Instruction. When monastic complexes were renovated or new construction was needed, the Ministry provided the money that \textit{wats} had previously collected. Some of them received a percentage commission of the revenue. For example, the lay accountant of Wat Prathumkhongkha received a 12% and 13% commission of the total benefit from the monastic complex’s properties in 1900 and 1901 respectively, which was accepted by Prince-monk Wachirayan. This management without the government’s participation eventually led to the problems of irregular financial transactions and an inefficient revenue collecting process. For instance, in 1898, the lay accountant of Wat Ratchapradit was reported as incompetent in his task of collecting revenue and the royal monastic complex requested the Ministry of Public Instruction to

\textsuperscript{364} Wachirayanwarorot, Prince, \textit{Tamnan Wat Bowonniwet} (History of the Monastery of Viceroy Residence) (Bangkok: Sophonphiphatthanakon, 1922), 50 in \textit{Tamnan Wat Bowonniwet}, the lay accountant was called “Uppathak Wat” who took care of revenue from land rent and tenement house and managed the renovation of this monastery. The lay accountant of that time was Prince Krommamuen Anantakan, brother of the Prince-abbot and Supreme Patriarch Pawaret.


handle the collection of rent\textsuperscript{367}. In 1902, the lay accountant of Wat Bowonniwet was proven to have mismanaged revenue and the abbot, Prince-Patriarch Wachirayan, recognized this financial irregularity. The lay accountant was later forced to resign, although he was the grandson of King Mongkut\textsuperscript{368}.

The land donation for monastic complexes also became a major source of dispute because the properties had not been surveyed to establish clear boundaries. In addition, there was no mapping or recording system to demonstrate the extent of monastic land. In 1893, the Ministry of Public Instruction asked the abbot of Wat Bowonniwet and the Ministry of Bangkok Municipality to secure the land by making a map. There were several disputes on the monastic land during the 1890s period. For instance, in 1896, the donated land of Wat Makutkasat was occupied without the monastic complex’s permission. In 1898, two important royal \textit{wats} of the Reform Order, Wat Bowonniwet and Wat Ratchapradit were involved in similar conflict which made the Ministry of Bangkok Municipality create maps of the Wat Rathcapradit’s property\textsuperscript{369}. In the same year, Wat Ratchaburana encountered a similar problem and the king ordered both the Ministry of Public Instruction and Department of Sanitation, or Krom Sukaphiban, to investigate the ownership of the land\textsuperscript{370}. The commoners who settled on the land claimed that King Rama III had granted them the right to live on this parcel. Therefore, they argued that it belonged to the public not the monastic complex. The dispute went through the Circuit Court, the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court, which announced the final decision in May 1902 in favor of the commoners. However, the king ordered the Ministry of Bangkok Municipality to serve as the owner of the public lands and to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 209.
\item ibid., 205-209.
\item Ibid., 206.
\item National Archive R 5 Kh 4.5/3, 19 May 1899 letter from King Chulalongkorn to Phraya Thewetwongwiwat.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
produce legal papers to grant the land to this wat\textsuperscript{371}. There was also a dispute about the collection of rent of Wat Ratchaburana from the Siam Power Plant Company. The royal wat claimed that the company did not pay the rent in full from 1889 to 1898. The problem became complicated because the company was taken over by the Ministry of Public Construction and also would be subcontracted to another private owner. The Minister of Public Instruction and the king needed to secure a contract indicating that the royal wat should receive rent regardless of whether the owner of the company was a branch of government or not\textsuperscript{372}. In the cases of Wat Ratchaburana and Wat Suthat, the king expressed his disappointment in the Ministry of Public Instruction’s handling of revenue from the rent of monastic land\textsuperscript{373}.

Finally, the cabinet followed the Minister of Finance, Prince Mahison, and asked the Minister of Public Instruction for clarity regarding the government expenditures involving monastic activities\textsuperscript{374}. The report from the Ministry of Public Instruction was presented in August of 1901 and was still unclear. This led the king to order an audit of the Ministry of Public Instruction for all expenditures, budget for modern education, and revenue from the monastic land of schools and hospitals\textsuperscript{375}. After finding several irregularities and mismanagement, the Minister of Finance recommended seventeen methods to collect the revenue of wats’ monastic properties for the king\textsuperscript{376}. This led to the

\textsuperscript{371} National Archive R 5 Kh 45/3, 22 May 1902 letter from King Chulalongkorn to Prince Krommaluang Naretworarit, Minister of Bangkok Municipality.

\textsuperscript{372} National Archive R 5 Kh 4.1Chó/10, 4 Nov 1898 letter from King Chulalongkorn to Chao Phraya Phatsakorawong.

\textsuperscript{373} National Archive R 5 Kh 45/3, 19 May 1899 letter from King Chulalongkorn to Theveswongwiwat, and R 5 Kh 4.1 Chó/10, 18 Nov 1898 letter from King Chulalongkorn to Prince Krommamuen Mahisonratchaharuethai, Minister of Finance.

\textsuperscript{374} National Archive R 5 S 29/2, Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, 28 April 1899.


\textsuperscript{376} National Archive R 5 S 1/79, 7 March 1902 letter from Prince Krommamuen Mahisonratchaharuethai to King Chulalongkorn.
resignation of the Minister, Chao Praya Phatsakorawong, on April 1902 because the audit revealed his irregular expenses.

The increasing problems of mismanagement of the monastic properties led to the establishment of Regulation of Monastic Revenue on May 17, 1902 following the Religious Law that was passed on July 19 in the same year. The Regulation for Monastic Revenue (Kor Bangkhub Ngoen Kalapana) created tight supervision over the collection of revenue and management of a wat asset. In the letter to Phraya Wutthikanbodi, the acting Minister of Public Instruction, the king asked what had been done previously. The acting Minister replied that three methods were used.

First, officials from the Ministry of Public Instruction handled the management of monastic land. This method was implemented for several royal monastic complexes with a rich land endowments in the Chinatown area. The Ministry of Public Instruction and Prince-abbot Wachirayan, who by this time became the most influential figure of Buddhist organization, took control of revenue of royal monastic complexes in Chinatown area where the land value soared steadily. The revenue from the land and rent was put in a private bank for interest and used for other royal monastic complexes that lacked funding. A second method was to appoint a highly respected noble or royal member to be a lay manager of a monastic complex or a “Makkhanayok”. The last method was to let the abbot and lay accountant or Waiyawatchakon handle the revenue alone.

In the letter to the king written after consulting with Prince Damrong, the Minister of Interior, Phraya Wutthikanbodi suggested that the second method was the more

378 National Archive R 5 S 25/1, letter from Phraya Wutthikanbodi to King Chulalongkorn, 16 May 1902.
379 National Archive R 5 S 8/2/3 letter from Phraya Wutthikanbodi to Prince Krommamuen Sommut Amonphan, 25 August 1901, Phraya Wutthikanbodi described the type of monastic revenue or Kalapanapon. The document indicates that the revenue from land rent and interest from deposit in bank of several royal monasteries was used to help the lesser endowed royal monasteries.
380 The actual translation of Makkhanayok is the leader to the path of enlightenment.
suitable solution. The other two methods were inappropriate because the first might have added more of a workload for the Ministry of Public Instruction while the third method would lead to scandal. Based on this discussion, on May 17, 1902, the Regulation for Monastic Revenue (Kho Bangkhub Rueang Ngoen Kalapanapon) was announced. The cabinet members nominated several royal members and high ranking nobles for the position of lay supervisor for important royal monastic complexes. The regulation indicated that any monastic complex having high revenue from property must have one or more makkhanayok for managing revenue and using these funds to protect the monastic complex from decay. The abbot of a monastic complex might have consulted with the Minister of Public Instruction to select a respected person to be a makkhanayok and proposed to the king to appoint this person, who would receive a royal signature on an appointment certificate (Sanyabat). By August of 1902, the Minister announced the success of this method and asked the king to extend this method to other commoner wats. The commoners who were appointed would receive a certificate from the Ministry of Public Instruction instead of a royal signature.

The regulation indicated that a makkhanayok had full authority to manage all property of the monastic complex for the best benefit of religion and to sign the rent contract if the period of rent did not exceed three years. If the rent exceeded three years, the contract required the consent from the Ministry of Public Instruction. The regulation also provided the makkhanayok power to appoint lay accountants (waiyawatchakon) for the rent collection jobs, as well as the supervision, management and maintenance of the revenue of a monastic complex. The most important duty of makkhanayok was to submit an annual report of expenditures and revenue to the Ministry of Public Instruction for reporting to the king.

Several problems arose, however, after the proclamation of religious law and regulation of monastic revenue in 1902. One important question was the management of property and revenue of the vacant wats in the kingdom. According to the Religious Law
of 1902, vacant monastic complexes were under the jurisdiction of the secular not the ecclesiastical government. The Minister of Interior, Prince Damrong questioned the disposition of revenue that was donated to the vacant monastic complexes and proposed three proper procedures to deal with these cases. First, he proposed to remove all revenue for the vacant monastic complexes, although this procedure might insult the intention of previous kings. The second method was to compile all revenue from these vacant wats and use it for royal donation projects such as printing books for religious studies. Third, he proposed to use the money to help restore some important wats. At the cabinet in April 1904, the Minister of Finance, Prince Mahison, suggested that the revenue should be used for the royal donation or merit making in Buddhist activities, a proposal with which the king agreed381. However, a conflict arose between the Ministry of Interior, which controlled the provincial administration’s collecting revenue from land of vacant wats, and the Ministry of Public Instruction, which supervised the expenditure of the revenue from monastic land regarding the authority to handle the rent contract and determine the use of this revenue. The cabinet agreed that the Ministry of Interior should collect the revenue from royal monastic complexes, including those of the vacant ones, and sent it to the Ministry of Public Instruction for religious expenditures382. It was determined further that the revenue from vacant wats in the provincial towns had to be used for religious activities only in their respective provinces.

King Chulalongkorn’s Vision of Urban Policies

As a result of King Chulalongkorn’s visit to the colonial cities of Singapore and Batavia in 1870 and 1875, the European colonial cities became the model for developing

381 National Archive, R 5 S 8.3/6, cabinet meeting for the land and revenue for vacant monasteries, 18 April, 1904.
382 National Archive, R 5 S 8.3/6, compilation of correspondent letters between the king, Minister of Interior and Minister of Thammakan about renting the land of vacant monastery in Nakhon Chaisri Province for constructing railroad line.
Bangkok and other towns in Siam. In 1889, the Department of Public Works (Krom Yothathikan) was created to develop public facilities, focusing mainly on the road network in Bangkok. The first director was Prince Nari
declare the year without a number.

In 1890, the concept of establishing a construction company to handle public construction of roads and facilities was circulated among the king’s closest officers with the aim of reducing the cost of public construction by the western construction companies. By 1892, the department was elevated and renamed the Ministry of Public Works (Yothathikan). Prince Nari
declare the year without a number.

Prince Nari was in charge until 1893, and was replaced by other key members of Chulalongkorn’s cabinet ministers. After several cabinet changes, he returned in 1899 and remained in the position for six years. The ministry worked closely with the Ministry of Bangkok Municipality (Nakhonban), which was under Prince Naretworrarit. By 1907, the sanitary department (Krom Sukhaphiban) was transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry of Bangkok Municipality. Both Prince Nari and Prince Naretworrarit had visited Western colonial cities. Prince Nari visited British India and Sri Lanka in 1880 and in 1884, Prince Naretworrarit visited American cities. The correspondence between the king and his key ministers contains the Siamese perspectives on road construction as a means to beautify the kingdom, to attract foreign merchants, and to facilitate security measures.

From 1890s to 1910s, the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of Bangkok Municipality and the Privy Purse Office (Phra Khlang Khang Thi) worked in collaboration to build more road networks and roadside shops. The Ministry of Public

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383 Larry Sternstein, *Thailand: The Environment of Modernisation* (Sydney: McGraw Hill, 1976), 107; suggested that King Chulalongkorn’s visit to colonial towns of Singapore and Penang was used as model for Bangkok; Marc Askew, 2002, 31 also put similar claim citing Sternstein but went further to include British town of Calcutta. Also finds elaborated detail of colonial town street preference in the king’s corresponding letters in National Archive R 5 YT1/90.

384 His full title was Prince Krommamuen Naritsaranuwattiorng.

385 National Archive R 5 YT 99/1, 27 August 1890 letter from Prince Phuwaretthamrongtsak, Prince Sommut-Amonphan, Prince Chaiyanuchit and Prince Nilawan to King Chulalongkorn.

386 National Archive R 5 YT 9/8 49/4 local protest for the new road construction.
Works conducted a survey of properties, mapped possible projects, calculated the construction costs and proposed to build more streets and shops. The Ministry of Bangkok Municipality facilitated the projects by evicting local owners of existing structures. The king also invested in constructing shop-houses and land development through the Privy Purse Office\textsuperscript{387}. The roads was also considered by the king and his princes to be the best solution for improving sanitary, clearing up slum areas and protecting from fire. The initiation of standard land transportation normally gained ground after several fire disasters, especially in Chinatown\textsuperscript{388}.

Beside modern roads, King Chulalongkorn also built several new canals in keeping with his view that constructing canal annually brought prosperity to the country. He also issued several royal orders for maintaining and protecting the canals\textsuperscript{389} because of their essential connection to the irrigation of rice farms in the upper Chao Phraya River Valley. He also ordered the construction of Klong Sawat Prem Prachakon to the north, and this canal later on became the major mode of communication to his royal suburban villa. Elaborate European style bridges at junctions of canals and roads were constructed by the king and his noblemen in honor of the crown’s birthday.

The road construction became the apparatus to formulate monastic properties. The construction of shop-houses on monastic land was also supported by Prince Wachirayan who occasionally visited royal \textit{wats}, inspected the monks’ practices and evaluated the physical conditions. For instance, if a residential structure was in poor condition and the \textit{wats} lacked funding, he recommended to the king that a street should be cut through the residential quarter. The road construction helped remove dilapidated structures for monks and opened up space for shop-houses which also generated the revenue to the monastic

\textsuperscript{388} National Archive R 5 YT 9/94 and R 5 YT 9/190.
\textsuperscript{389} Canal Protection Law in 1903, the law prohibited disposal to canal and protect edge of canal. See more detail in Piyanart Bunnak, 1982, 124.
complexes to construct the new buildings\textsuperscript{390}. Moreover, Prince Patriarch Wachirayan also suggested the use of funding from Mahamakut Ratchawitthayalai, the Reform Buddhist University for the investment of these shop-houses\textsuperscript{391}.

In 1897, King Chulalongkorn visited Europe and discovered that, among Western “civilized” urban space and architecture, he preferred the Italian Renaissance and Baroque styles\textsuperscript{392}. From 1889 to the end of King Chulalongkorn’s reign, about twenty Italian engineers, architects and artists were hired for royal projects\textsuperscript{393}. From King Chulalongkorn’s letter to his chief queen written on his visits to Europe, he revealed his fascination with the museums, public space and royal chapels of European cities such as Venice, Milan, London and Paris\textsuperscript{394}. For instance, he complimented the public ambiance of Piazza San Marco with its outdoor activities of Venetian citizens and St. Mark Cathedral with its elaboration of marble and stone. However, he also noticed that the ownership of shop-houses along the street had fallen to the hand of the British businesses and questioned the financial situation of the Venetian elites\textsuperscript{395}. In Milan, he complimented its street scene as being an example of orderly civilized public space, and admired Milan’s Cathedral as being the most elaborate one, comparable to the royal monastic complex of Wat Pho in Bangkok. In spite of his admiration for the cathedral, he expressed the opinion that were such an extravagant structure located in Bangkok, he could not effort the cost of its maintenance\textsuperscript{396}. Moreover, in Florence, he admired the city

\textsuperscript{390} National Archive R 5 S 8/1 30 August 1902 letter from Prince Patriarch Wachirayanwarorot to King Chulalongkorn and NA R 5 YT 9/22 15 pages correspondent letters between Prince Krommatthawat Phitthayalap to King Chulalongkorn dating from 15 December 1897 to 11 August 1900 regarding the conversion of residential buildings to shop-houses in the land of Wat Suthatthepwararam.

\textsuperscript{391} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{392} Maurizio Pellegrini, “The making of the Siamese Monarchy’s Modern Public Image” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Australian National University, 1997), 91-97.

\textsuperscript{393} Ibid., 91-92.

\textsuperscript{394} Letter from King Chulalongkorn to his chief queen, 14 May, 1897 in Phraratchahattalekha Muea Sadet Praphat Europe Pho. So. 2440 Lem 1 (King’s writing for His Europe Visit Vol.1) (Bangkok: Khurusapha Suksaphan, 1962), 155.

\textsuperscript{395} Ibid., 154.

\textsuperscript{396} Ibid., 169; letter on 17 May, 1897.
as a center of artists, complimented the Italian artisans, and commissioned the same artists for producing sculpture and several artworks for the European royal court images, regardless of the very high cost\(^{397}\).

Although he admired the public spaces and civic facilities in European “civilized” cities, he felt annoyed and insecure because the European royal families and commoners shared public space without receiving any special treatment\(^{398}\). From this account of ambivalence to share public space with westerners of ordinary origin, it is apparent that King Chulalongkorn still maintained the core ideology of his divine rulership. Western cities were an “exotic” source to enhance his righteousness. In London, he praised that city as being similar to Kabilaphat, the capital of Lord Buddha’s ruling Sakaya family in northern India, and compared his European trip to the holy journey Muslims made to Mecca\(^{399}\). In this telling comparison of his European journey with a pilgrimage to the Lord Buddha’s origin and Hajji to Mecca, we can see how King Rama V regarded European artistic materials, skilled craftsmanship, and architecture as contemporary forms that were used to give Bangkok new prosperity and potency. This was similar to the Buddha relics, manuscripts, monks, and Bodhi tree seeds from Sri Lanka and India which had been used to embellish royal monastic complexes as urban centers in the past.

**Bangkok’s Urban Structure in the Reigns of Rama V: the Duality of the Cosmological Citadel and Cosmopolitan Colonial City**

Turning now to the urban vicinity of royal monastic complexes, during the reigns of King Rama III and King Mongkut, the vicinity of Bangkok’s royal monastic complexes had already changed drastically due to the transformation of the economy.

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397 Ibid., 193; letter on 1 June, 1897.
398 Letter from King Chulalongkorn to his chief queen, May 14, 1897 in Phraratchahattalekha Muea Sadet Praphat Europe Pho. So. 2440 Lem 2 (King’s writing for His Europe Visit Vol.1) (Bangkok: Khurusapha Suksaphan, 1962), 151.
399 Ibid., 318; letter on 30 July, 1897.
The Thai traditional floating structures of shops and houses were replaced gradually by brick structures of Sino-Portuguese shop-houses, especially when Western and Chinese trade became significant and more inland roads with European storefronts were encouraged by King Mongkut. As stated previously, he himself invested in building shop-houses along the road he ordered to construct and rented them. Furthermore, he donated the land with shop-houses to his newly built royal wats as a permanent source of funding. Both King Chulalongkorn and Prince Patriarch Wachirayan continued their father’s initiative, planning and constructing roads to solve several urban and monastic problems and consequently gaining benefits from the development along the roads. By the time of King Chulalongkorn, one hundred and twenty new roads were built (see Map 5.1). By 1883, the road network with postal directory was comprised of seventy seven streets and one hundred and two lanes. During his reign, he constructed seventeen bridges for celebrating his birthday since he was 42 until his death and other twenty-three bridges were constructed by princes and noblemen (see Plate 5.1 and 5.2).

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400 Thipphakorawong, Phraratchaphonsawadan Krung Rattanakosin Ratchakan thi 4 khong Chao Phraya Thiphakorawong (History of Bangkok in the reign Rama IV by Chao Phraya Thiphakorawong) (Bangkok: Khurusapha Suksaphan Phanich, 1978), 283.
Map 5.1. The comparative maps of Bangkok from the reign of King Rama I and King Chulalongkorn showing the new modern road network expanding and imposing into the old canal system in the reign of King Chulalongkorn.
Plate 5.1. The detail maps showing the coordination among the new roads, manors, royal wats, palaces and canals.

From Plan of Bangkok 2439 B.E. (A.D.1896), Royal Survey Department.
Plate 5.2. The major bridges at the junctions between canals and roads.

Image No. 1, 2 and 5 from Anak Nawikmun, *Samutphep krungthep* (Bangkok Image Book), 87, 90, 89.
When the Viceroy passed away in 1886, King Chulalongkorn dissolved this traditional position and instead created the position of Crown Prince which was a western concept. Consequently, the Viceroy palace was divided into several parcels. The main precinct of the Viceroy Palace was transformed into a national museum. The outer barrack area of the Viceroy Palace was demolished and the royal cremation ground was expanded to become a royal park (see Map 5.2). Moreover, with the formation of modern cabinet ministry posts instead of traditional feudal organizations, the ministry headquarters were constructed near the Grand Palace in a Baroque style (see Plate 5.3 and 5.4). The king also constructed his new Dusit palace, modeled after a European’s garden picturesque villa at the northern edge of the old capital city and laid the ground for a new boulevard, Ratchadamnoen, connecting the new and the old palaces.

This new boulevard and its major arteries have several Baroque style bridges at the conjunction of the old canals. The European style palaces for princes were constructed mostly at the edge of the old city’s outer ring moat in all three major directions; the north, south and east. These new villa style palaces became the center of new settlement outside the old city (see Plate 5.5). The major group of the princes’ palaces surrounded the Dusit Palace near the outer Ratchadamnoen Boulevard and along Samsen Road, the northern riverfront street. Some palaces were constructed toward the eastern edge of the old city and some at the southern end of the old city near the Chinatown settlement404. They also constructed shop-houses around their palaces and collected rent for their income (see Map 5.6)405. However, these new palaces were no

Map 5.2. The urban transformation in the inner area of Bangkok after 1886.

Based on Plan of Bangkok 2439 B.E. (A.D.1896), Royal Survey Department and unpublished Survey Map of Bangkok in 1921-1922 from the archive of the Royal Survey Department.
Plate 5.3. The public buildings in western architectural style in the inner area of historic Bangkok.

Images No.1 and 4 from Naengnoi Saksi, Ongprakop thang kaiyaphap Krung Rattanakosin (Physical composition of Rattanakosin City), 177, 180. Images No. 3 from Thepchoo Thaphong, Phapthai thang Prawattisa Krungthep Yonyuk (Historical Photographs of Bangkok in the Past), 77. Image No. 4 from Anak Nawikmun, Samutphap krungthep (Bangkok Image Book), 151.
Plate 5.4. The public buildings in the area around the inner historic Bangkok.

Images No.2 from Thammakiat Kan-Ari, Phranakhon Kwuan Chom (Capital City Sightseeing) (Bangkok: Manager Group, 1995), 244. Images No. 1 and 4 from Anak Nawikmun, Samutphap krungthep (Bangkok Image Book), 148, 150. Image 3 from from Thephchoo Thaphthong, Phaihai thang Pravattisa Krungthep Yonyuk (Historical Photographs of Bangkok in the Past), 76.
Plate 5.5. The new palaces constructed in western style with picturesque gardens.

Image No. 2 from Thepchoo Thaphong, Phaphitthong Prawattisa Krungthep Yonyuk (Historical Photographs of Bangkok in the Past), 89. Image No. 3 from Clarence Aasen, Architecture of Siam: A cultural History Interpretation, 196. Image No. 5 from Naengnoi Saksi, Onprakop thang kaiyaphop Krung Rattanakosin (Physical composition of Rattanakosin City), 143. Image No. 6 from Prani Klamsom, Yan Kao Nai Krungtehp, (Old district in Bangkok) (Bangkok: Muaeng Boran, 2002), 209.
Plate 5.6. The Chao Phraya River, canal and street scenes in Bangkok during the reign of King Chulalongkorn

Image from Thepchoo Thapthong, Phapthai thang Praawattisa Krungthep Yonnyak (Historical Photographs of Bangkok in the Past), 23, 24, 32, 41, 47, 70.
longer the centers of feudal command as in an old semi-feudal structure but the private residence of key royal families. Because of the expansion of modern facilities, the old structure of the city walls, gateways, and fortresses were gradually demolished. Beside Buddhist pagoda spires, fortresses and city walls once were the major symbols of the traditional city, but now these elements became obstacles of new development such as roads for the modern city. The new Baroque villas of the king were planned in a grid pattern in the north and eastern suburbs of Bangkok, resulting in the mushrooming of Western-style mansions of royal princes and new business districts. The royal villas at the eastern suburb (Phrayathai and Srarprathum) would become the new business district in the future.

Monastic Structures during the Reign of Rama V: From Traditional Sri Lankan-Sukhothai to Cosmopolitan Architecture

Since the reign of King Chulalongkorn spanned over forty-two years, passing through several transformations from a traditional semi-feudal state to a modern-nation state, his architectural preferences transformed significantly from his early age to the end of his reign. From his emulation of King Mongkut’s Reformist preference for Sukhothai-Sri Lankan styles at the beginning of his reign, to his preference for Gothic architectural features, and finally ending with a stylistic syncretism reflecting his colonial experience from all over the world, the monastic architecture of King Rama V’s reign reflects the major upheavals and transformations of his era (see Plate 5.7).

The first royal wat constructed under King Rama V’s order was Wat Ratchabophit (Monastic complex of the Royal Ruler) which he built in 1869 to celebrate his ascension.

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407 Ibid., 232.
Plate 5.7. Major royal wats renovated and constructed in the reign of King Chulalongkorn.

1. Wat Rachathiwat renovated under Khmer influenced motif
2. Wat Benchamabophit constructed in Thaistyle with Khmer proportion, Javanese decorative art, Florentine stained glass, and Italian marble
3. Wat Ratchabophit constructed with fully King Mongkut’s Sri Lankan-Sukhothai architecture but Gothic interior decoration
4. Wat Thepsirin constructed in King Mongkut’s preference first but public school buildings constructed in Gothic influenced architecture.
5. Wat Niwetthammaprawat built fully in Gothic preference

Image No. 1 from Charuni Inchoetlai, Sinlapakram Wat Rachathiwat (Art in Wat Rachathiwat), 40. Image No. 2 from Chonlath Thammawarangkun, Prawat Wat Benchamabophit (History of Wat Benchamabophit), 3. Image No. 3 from Sutchit Sananwai, Kan Sueksa riaeng kan Otkb Sathapattayakram Wat Ratchabophit (Study of Architectural Design Study of Wat Ratchabophit), 263. Image No. 4 from Prawat Wat Thepsirin thrawat (History of Wat Thepsirinrawat). Image No. 5 from Saroj Dhitikiattipong, Guide to Wat Niwet Dharma Prawat in incorporating Bang Pa-In Palace.
to the throne. Although the monastic complex was constructed on a small scale, it had highly elaborated details and took twenty years to complete. The planning arrangement and architectural preferences were influenced by the royal monastic complexes of his father, King Mongkut. This monastic complex employed double layered holy markers to delineate the monastic complex following King Mongkut’s preference, and the plan of the monastic complex was very compact similar to other monastic complexes of King Mongkut. Wat Rachabophit also echoed King Mongkut’s design in that it used the architectural style of Sukhothai and a Sri Lankan bell shaped pagoda (see Plate 5.8). Moreover, the unique character of this monastic complex is the circular corridor embracing the pagoda at the center and the perpendicular axis of the two gateway pavilions that attach to this ring corridor. The circular corridor embracing the pagoda and connecting the Ordination hall and shrine was similar to King Mongkut’s Phra Prathomchedi at Nakhon Prathom and the Tooparam pagoda ruins at Anuradhpura, the ancient Buddhist city of Sri Lanka (see Plate 5.9).

There is one feature of Wat Ratchabophit that was also strikingly different from the monastic complexes of King Mongkut. Although the exterior of the main buildings were embellished with Thai ornamentation, the interior was decorated in a Gothic style with the structures of point-arches and buttresses. The west side of the royal monastic complex served as a royal cemetery and several tombs were erected in Gothic architectural style in 1884. The transition from Reform Buddhist style started to be clear in his second monastic complex. In 1877, his second monastic complex, Wat Thepsirinthrawat (Monastic complex of Queen Thepsirin), was constructed and the royal ordination hall was also in a King Mongkut’s preference.

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409 Ibid 93.
1. Overview of Wat Ratchabophit showing Sukhothai style shrine, circular corridor and ordination hall embracing Sri Lankan Style Pagoda.
2. The front gable of the ordination hall with the symbol of Phra Klai (Thosor crown) on top of lyparphut Elephant connoting the similar symbol to King Mongkut preference of Mongkut (Thai Crown) on top of Erawan Elephant.
3. The interior of the ordination hall in Gothic decoration.
4. The royal cemetery structures in Sri Lankan pagodas, Gothic towers, Angkor spires and Baroque domes connoting the architectural preference in King Chulalongkorn period.

Plate 5.8. Wat Ratchabophit

Plate 5.9. Plan and elevation of Wat Ratchabophit comparing to Wat Sommanat and Wat Phra Prathom Chedi constructed in the reign of King Mongkut and Thuparama of Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka.

Based on Sutichit Sananwai, ibid, 88, 98; Somkhit Chirathatsakul, Ruphab Phra Ubosot lae Phra Wihan Nai Samai Phrabat Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yuhao (The ordination hall and shrine in the Reign of King Mongkut) (Bangkok: Muaeng Boran, 2004), 50; Clarence Aasen, Architecture of Siam: a cultural history interpretation, 35; Seinake Bandaramayake, Sinhalese Monastic Architecture: the Viharas of Anuradhapura, 141.
The major structures of this royal *wat* also took almost twenty five years to finish\textsuperscript{410}. However, over the duration of its construction, the planning arrangement changed. The shrine with the pagoda top roof and an ordination hall were placed next to each other with a Bodhi Tree in between. The gateways were constructed in the form of the crown or Mongkut. The design of this shrine was initially similar to King Mongkut’s ancestral shrine in the Emerald Buddha Precinct, but this gigantic construction scheme was finally abandoned and its original foundation was removed in 1922\textsuperscript{411}. Instead, Rama V established a Buddhist school in 1890 under the new Mahamakut Ratchawithayalai University that began to teach the Buddhist canon and Pali language using modern methods\textsuperscript{412}. The two public school buildings with their Gothic features were constructed in 1895 at the north side of the front area and, in 1906, it became the teacher training school\textsuperscript{413}. The large area of the public and monastic school distinguished this monastic complex from a traditional *wats* (see Plate 5.10). King Chulalongkorn’s abandonment of the original plan to shift to constructing a modern school signified his departure from the old world of building sacred Buddhist structures in favor of modern education.

His third royal *wats*, Wat Niwet Thammaprawat was constructed in 1878 at his summer palace, Bang Pa-In Palace near Ayutthaya. The monastic complex was built in a Gothic style in the linear axis plan on an island outside the palace facing the Chao Phraya River. Moreover, its subsidiary structures, such as the chanting pavilion (Sala Suad Mon), portico, and tower housing Buddha images and the Buddhist library (Hor Trai) were also constructed in a Gothic style. The residence of the abbot was built in Gothic cottage

\textsuperscript{410} *Prawat Wat Thepsirinrathrawat* (History of Wat Thepsirinrathrawat), Cremation Vol for Phra Sasanasophon, 16 Jan 1999, (Bangkok: Mahamakut Ratchawithayalai Press, 1999), 3; 43.
\textsuperscript{411} Ibid 6, 26; 74.
\textsuperscript{412} Ibid, 25.
\textsuperscript{413} Ibid, 71.
Plate 5.10. Wat Thepsirinthewat showing both King Mongkut’s architectural preference for the ordination hall and emulated Gothic style for public school buildings.

From Prawat Wat Thepsirinthewat (History of Wat Thepsirinthewat) (Bangkok: Mahamakuttratchawithavalai, 1999).
mixed with Neo classic and the interior space was adorned with stained glass windows. The stained glass depicting King Chulalongkorn’s image was originally made in France and the other ten windows portrayed the ten images of the Bodhisattva from the last ten Jataka stories\textsuperscript{414}. Again this royal \textit{wat} was also built for the Reform Buddhist Sect or Thammayutika Nikay, and was also a modern Buddhist school under Mahamakut Ratchawittayalai University (see Plate 5.11).

His fourth royal \textit{wats}, Wat Benchamabophit Dusitwanaram, was constructed in 1899. The monastic complex is known as the Marble temple and became the icon of Thai Buddhist architecture\textsuperscript{415}. The king had four major purposes for this royal \textit{wat}; first, it was the monastic complex of his new palace at Suan Dusit; second, it was the museum of Lord Buddha statues; third, it was the college for Maha Nikay monks; and finally it was the masterpiece of Thai craftsmanship\textsuperscript{416}. The ordination hall was designed in a crucifix plan which had never been used before in Thailand (see Plate 5.12). As many Thai architects and scholars point out, the proportion of the ordination hall and the spatial arrangement of the cloister embracing it echoes those of Khmer Angkor\textsuperscript{417}.

At this royal \textit{wat}, Italian engineers and craftsmen were hired to assist the construction and marble finishing\textsuperscript{418}. The interior space was adorned with stained glass

\textsuperscript{415} For instance see the website of Tourism Authority of Thailand at \url{http://www.tourismthailand.org/bgsn/html/59.html} (Extracted March 19, 2005) and \textit{D.K. Travel Guide Thailand}, (London: D.K. Publishing, 1999), 102-103.
\textsuperscript{417} Ibid 91 and Somkhit Chirathatsanakul at School of Architecture, Silpakorn University, interview by author, 15 January, 2003.
Plate 5.11. Wat Niwetthammaprawat constructed in full Gothic architecture.

1. Inner courtyard inside the rectangular corridor.
2. Pavilions in Javanese style in front of the ordination hall.
3. The ordination hall from the main entrance.
4. The abbot’s residence in western style.
5. The public school building in Baroque.

Plate 5.12. Wat Benchamabophit showing various architectural motifs from Thai with Khmer influence, Javanese, and Baroque.

From Chonlathi Thammawarangkun, Prawat Wat Benchamabophit (History of Wat Benchamabophit) (Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing, 2000)
motifs from Florence in a Thai ornament pattern. The exterior decoration employed white marble from Carrara, Italy. The pavilions in front of the ordination hall were constructed in a Javanese style while the decoration of Khmer style lion statues adorned the main entrance. The fifty-two Lord Buddha statues along the cloister were transported from all over the country of Siam and many of them were duplicated from Japan, India, Sri Lanka, Burma and Cambodia. The planning arrangement was significantly different from the previous reign in that the monastery compound occupied two third of the total monastic precinct. The residential quarter was comprised of public school buildings in British Baroque and abbot residences in French Neo Classic style architecture, a large scale library, and museum and the residential quarter in Thai style.

His last work was Wat Rachathiwat. The construction began in 1909 which was only less than a year before the end of his reign and two years after his second trip to Europe (see Plate 5.13). This royal wat was another example reflecting the influence of Angkorian architecture. It has long history associated with King Mongkut’s religious reform movement. The main ordination hall of this royal wat was built in a Chinese style and became dilapidated during King Chulalongkorn’s reign. The king started to renovate this royal wat by appointing Prince Narit as his chief commissioner for the renovation. Following the king’s intention, the main ordination hall was altered significantly to reflect Angkorian motifs but the interior mural painting was carried out by an Italian artist.

421 For more detail of the list of Buddha Statues see Prawat Wat Benchamabophit, 163-166.
422 The architectural style was determined by the author and Professor Michael Tomlan from the photographs of the buildings. The exact explanation of architectural preference is not the scope of this dissertation. The further studies in detail of local history, information of the architect and materials should be pursued for determining the specific style.
Plate 5.13. Wat Rachathiwat showing the changing architectural motifs from Chinese to Khmer motif with mural painting by Italian artist.

artist. The decision making process in the renovation of this royal wat connoted the influence of Western concepts of preservation of antiquity. We can see the king’s conformity to ideals of preservation from his letter to Prince Patriarch Wachirayan. Describing his investigation of the existing condition of the ordination hall at Wat Rachathiwat, King Chulalongkorn stated the following: “the structures built in the reign of King Rama III, the pagoda was renovated with poor Chinese architectural craftsmanship and it was not older than eighty years”\(^{423}\). In the traditional context, the ruler who renovated monastic complexes never cited the age or quality of architectural craftsmanship found in Buddhist structures as a reason to reconstruct them. Rather, they renovated temples to make merit by upholding the Buddhist religion. In contrast, the age and architectural significance were the major considerations of the British-led preservation movement. That Rama V gave such a reason to renovate the royal wat indicated a paradigm shift in the meaning of Buddhist architecture within the nation. Besides the construction of the ordination hall and pagoda in the sacred precinct, his public school and Buddhist school were also major considerations in the renovation process.

The planning arrangement of royal monastic complexes in this reign depicts the importance of educational buildings within the residential quarter that were expanded to accommodate new facilities. From his second royal wat, Wat Thepsirin, the residential quarter became larger and was dedicated to be one of the very first public schools in Thailand. The abandonment of King Mongkut’s preference for a gigantic pagoda indicated a significant transition in that the practice of building structures for worshipping activities without interior functions was obsolete. From the 1870s to the 1890s, the Gothic style architecture became the preference instead of Sri Lankan-Sukhothai. The public school buildings at Wat Thepsirin, the cathedral of Wat Niwet Thammaprawat and

\(^{423}\) letter from King Chulalongkorn to Prince Patriarch Wachirayanwarorot, 12-19 June, 1908 from Prawat Wat Rachathiwat, (Bangkok: Suwat, 2000), 45-55.
the residence of Prince Patriarch Wachirayan at Wat Bawonniwet were examples of this new Gothic trend. After his Europe trip in 1897, the last two royal wats depict the return of Khmer architectural preferences. To understand this revive of Khmer motifs, we must consider the historical context. As the French laid claims on the territory of Cambodia which was historically regarded by ruling elites as a vassal state of Siam, the architectural motifs in King Chulalongkorn’s royal wats echoed the historical connection between Siam and Cambodia. The monastic architecture built during the latter part of his reign, such as Wat Benchamabophit and Wat Rachathiwat, employed more Khmer architectural patterns recalling the style of late Ayutthaya and Early Bangkok periods before King Mongkut. For instance, the symbol of Lord Vishnu riding on Garuda was foregrounded again. This symbol had been used extensively during the late Ayutthaya period, and as many scholars have argued, this symbol and other architectural motifs signified the Siamese rulers’ absorption of Angkorian culture through conquest. These icons and architectural preferences reflected Siam’s long history of cultural ties with Cambodia and its superior status as the conqueror.

Rama V’s monastic construction also reflected his concern with modernizing the administrative and educational systems in order to establish Siam’s parity with the West. For example, at Wat Benchamabophit, the bas-relief sculptures found on ten panels located at the front gables of the cloister were symbols of his ten ministries. Moreover, the mural paintings of the main ordination hall were not images of Trai Phum cosmology connoting sacred geography but rather represented eight pagodas from his major vassal states which were later incorporated into the nation of Siam. The use of actual stupas located in territory of former vassal states was an iconographical means of asserting his political authority over these dependencies. It connoted that he was the divine ruler at the center of cosmology as well as a worldly ruler who controlled his former

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dependencies via modern administration. Moreover, the stylistic combination of architectural details reflected the Siamese ruling elites’ experiences in Europe and Western colonial towns in Asia. The architectural embellishment of Wat Benchamabophit was in a traditional Thai style with some decorative patterns from both Javanese and ancient Khmer architecture, while its unique materials included Carrara marble and stained glass from Florence, Italy. These multicultural details point to the Siamese ruling elites’ practice of emulating western colonial powers who collected artifacts of the kingdoms they colonized or encountered along their travels.

King Chulalongkorn’s building program for his royal wats represented his claims to legitimacy as a cosmopolitan Theravada Buddhist monarch in a new global context of competing colonial powers and world religions. In the architectural embellishment of his royal monastic complexes, we can see an amalgamation of traditional Buddhist space and modern space. For instance, the mythical icons reflecting the Buddhist cosmological order were used to compose abstract symbols of his regalia and ministerial emblems reflecting his absolute authority. Moreover, the collection of fifty-two Buddha images from around the nation and the world found at Wat Benchamabophit signified far more than just the King’s continuing support for Theravada Buddhism. On the one hand, this collection of Buddha image replicas reflected the Western practice of building museums to house important national artifacts. On the other hand, this collection also reflected Rama V’s conception of himself as the last independent ruler in the Theravada Buddhist world.

This was because with the advancement of British colonial power in India, Sri Lanka and Burma, these kingdoms had witnessed the loss of their Buddhist monarchs and

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425 Chatri Praktinontakan describes in detail how King Chulalongkorn and Prince Damrong obtained important Buddha images in “Wat Benchamabophit lae Kati Chakrawalniyom Samai Mai (Wat Benchamabophit and new cosmological ideology)” in Silpa Wattanatham, Vol. July 2003, 80-96 but Chatri could not explain why King Chulalongkorn and Prince Damrong also collected Buddha images from the independent countries outside Siamese sphere such as Sri Lanka, Japan, Burma and Cambodia.
the decline of Theravada Buddhist Studies. The archive shows that Rama V was acutely aware of this disappearance of Theravada Buddhist rulers, and that he sought to position himself as the guardian of this world religion on behalf of other Theravada Buddhist nations including Burma, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Laos. Moreover, it is important to note that King Chulalongkorn was not alone in this assessment. In fact, by entrusting the king with the protection and distribution of the Lord Buddha relics uncovered at a new excavation site in India, the government of British India also recognized King Chulalongkorn as the last independent Theravada Buddhist monarch. The traditional images, icons, buildings and spatial arrangement of his royal wats were mixed with western craftsmanship in order to create a new place for Siam as the center of Theravada Buddhism in the modern world.

Moreover, as the provincial education system, the modern Buddhist universities and the ecclesiastical government were created by centralizing the administration under senior patriarchs and abbots in Bangkok, the residential buildings for the abbots in the royal wats of King Chulalongkorn also began to reflect unique architectural features since they became the centers of his educational reform and the living and working quarters of ecclesiastical governors. For instance, at his first royal wats, Wat Ratchabophit, the abbot’s residence was on a similar scale to other residential buildings. In contrast, in his second and third royal wats, Wat Niwet Thammaprawat and Wat Thepsirin, the abbot’s residences became the center of the residential area and were constructed in a Victorian and Gothic style. Furthermore, for Wat Benchamabophit, the abbot’s residence became a

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426 Wachirayanwarorot, Phra Vinaipidok Mahawipang lem 1 (Vinaya Vol 1) (Bangkok: Mo Po To, 1902).
427 The study of letters of Sri Lankan monks to Siamese key ecclesiastical persons depicts the solicitation of Sri Lankan monks to King Chulalongkorn as a Buddhist protector who could negotiate with non-Buddhist colonial authority. See more detail in unpublished writing of Anne M. Blackburn, “Global Flows, Plural Locations: 19th-century Colombo in Relation to Bangkok.”
428 There are several claims of Rama V as the world Buddhist monarch by both Thai and British officials in National Archive R 5 S 11 Phra Saririkkathat cited in Department of Religious Affairs, Prawat Wat Sakes Rachavoramahawiharn lae Chotmaiheit Raung Phrasareerkatth Muang Kabilapas (History of Wat Sakes and Royal Chronicle of Lord Buddha Relics from Kabilaphat), Cremation Vol. Supreme Patriarch Yoo Yanotayo, (Bangkok: Prime Minister Office Printing, 1965), 32-129.
large scale building and was constructed in Italian Baroque style. Most of the unique residential buildings of abbots in the past were built specifically for the royal members who became monastic persons, such as the abbot residence of Prince Wasukri at Wat Pho, Prince Mongkut at Wat Bowonniwet and Wat Rachathiwat, and Prince Wachirayan at Wat Bowonniwet. Now, building an abbot’s residence on a large scale was a common practice since these abbots held important positions in the new ecclesiastical government. One exception in the past was the residence structures built for princely abbots, who were also conferred the royal titles and feudal departments (krom) with conscripted laborers. These residential structures were large because they had to accommodate their people and the administration of a feudal labor registry for controlling manpower. In contrast, in the period of Rama V, the senior abbots had large residences because these structures also served as offices supporting their positions in the central administration.

**Political Contestation in Monastic Architecture**

**The Discourse of Sacred Texts for Enlightenment and Merit vs. Modern Education for Building the Nation-State**

In the pre-modern educational context, Buddhist royal wats were used mainly to teach sacred texts, Buddhist morality, and local craftsmanship, and students at the monastic complexes pursued the path of enlightenment, became bureaucrats or specialized craftsmen. Following the king’s policies which gained momentum in 1898, the royal wats became a contested space. Whereas some wished to see the traditional function of wats continue, a new discourse of modern education aimed to produce bureaucrats for serving the modern state administration following a Western colonial model.

The space of the royal wats became a new discursive field where the study of traditional sacred text for Buddhist studies (Pali language and Tripitaka) conflicted with the state’s modern education that focused more on secular subjects such as mathematic
and standard Thai text. From the perspective of Siamese leaders, the idea to use monastic complexes as centers for modern education helped to reduce the financial burden of the royal government while also incorporating Buddhist moral teaching into a new body of western knowledge. However, it also precipitated the end of many traditional practices of local communities and senior monks. For instance, one of the consequences of the shift to modern education was the devaluation of traditional beliefs associated with Khmer script. It is interesting to note that even after this shift, some parents insisted on their children learning the Khmer text because of their belief in its sacredness as the language for writing the Tripitaka and their belief that studying this text would earn some merit. In contrast, the major policy makers at Bangkok aimed to develop Thai education to be compatible with European standards, especially the British model, so that Thai students could adapt to acquiring western knowledge easier. Moreover, patriotism and loyalty to the crown was also included in the modern text books by Prince Patriarch Wachirayan as an instrument to foster nationalism.

The Regional Center of Ecclesiastical Administration vs. Community Center

After 1902, by following laws that created the ecclesiastical government, senior patriarchs were chosen to be the ecclesiastical governors of fourteen Regions. Royal wats became the administrative centers for these senior patriarchs. The royal wat was once a common place for both local and royal communities, and a site where social connection were established through everyday activities of merit making and the ordination of local people. In the new central ecclesiastical structure, these Bangkok royal monastic complexes became meeting places for regional monks whose wats were subordinated to

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429 National Archive R 5 S 12/20 report for religious and educational management of Ratchaburi Ro So 117.
430 National Archive R 5 S 2/6 report from Phraya Wisutsuriyasak, Siamese Ambassador at London
431 Wachirayanwarorot, Prince and Supreme Patriarch, Pramuan Niphon Kan Suksa (Writing about Education) (Bangkok: Mahamakut Ratchawittayalai, 1971), 133.
the high ranking patriarchs or abbots of Bangkok royal *wats*. The space of the royal monastic complex shifted from a being common ground for local and royal activities to a regional ecclesiastical center for new provincial patron-client relationships.

**Discourse of Making the Modern Buddhist University vs. Traditional Paramount Legitimacy**

The monastic complex’s residential space was further contested when King Chulalongkorn decided to develop the monastic education along with the modern secular public school. The new focus on education started with his new discourse of making a Buddhist world-class study center by using western learning methods and standard examinations. By 1893, the king had established the first Buddhist University for the Reform Order, Mahamakut Ratchawittayalai. The new university had separate classrooms for different levels of monks, fixed schedule of classroom, activities, standard textbooks, modern teaching equipment, and a standard system for course evaluation.

The major school buildings were constructed in the precinct of the royal *wats*, signifying the contestation between the old traditional and new modern practices of learning. Moreover, these new structures were built in Gothic and Victorian style in contrast to traditional Thai architecture of the ordination hall and other structures in the sacred precinct such as the shrine and pagodas. These structures were occasionally used as learning space in the past but now they were not efficient enough to accommodate modern teaching methods.

For instance, in the second royal *wats* he constructed, Wat Thepsirin, the king was reluctant to continue the traditional building plan of the gigantic pagoda on the grounds that there was no function for the structure other than worshipping activities\(^{432}\). The pagoda scheme was changed to be a shrine, but was finally abandoned in 1922 while the

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\(^{432}\) *Prawat Wat Thepsirintrawat* (History of Wat Thepsirintrawat), Cremation Vol for Phra Sasanasophon, 16 Jan 1999, (Bangkok: Mahamakut Ratchawittayalai Press, 1999), 42.
residential spaces were made to accommodate the new function of modern classrooms with the new form of western architecture. After the establishment of Mahamakut Ratchawiththayalai University, the king ceased to construct any gigantic pagodas or shrines in his royal wat, but he provided larger areas of the residential quarter for modern school facilities such as libraries, museums, and classrooms. Read in terms of a visual discourse, these new facilities reflected the king’s preference to building modern education instead of traditional gigantic shrines for his legitimacy.

**The Discourse of the Modern Reform Order vs. the Traditional Commoner Order**

In the first stage of the official announcement for provincial education in 1898, the senior patriarchs were appointed as the provincial directors, and eleven of them were from the Reform Order while only two were from the Commoner Order. Moreover, half of them were also involved with the management of Mahamakut Rachawitthayalai University, the reform order institution. While Prince Patriarch Wachirayan was the Director for Provincial Education, he was questioned by Prince Damrong, Minister of Interior why he appointed very small numbers of patriarchs from Maha Nikay (Commoner Order) to be provincial directors and governors in comparing to patriarchs from the Reform Order. What this conflicted signaled was a discursive shift regarding the definition of modern education and the role of monastic complexes in two Siamese orders. While Prince Wachirayan was a proponent of the Reform Order and the leader in modern education who put Reform Order monks in higher command position, Prince Damrong was the proponent of the greater unity between the two sects.

433 Phassana Kitthawon, “Botbat khong Kana Song nai ruang Kan Suksa nai ratchsamai Phrabat somdet Phra Chulachomklao Chaoyuhua (Role of Monastic Order in Education during King Chulalongkorn’s reign)” (Master Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1981), 148.
For the establishment of modern Buddhist University, both the Minister of Public Instruction and Prince Wachirayan focused more on building a university for Thammayutika Nikay (Reform Order). For the curriculum of Mahamakut Ratchawittayalai, Prince Patriarch Wachirayan included English, Thai and mathematics beside Pali language interpretation and Tripitaka (Buddhist Canon) for monks to teach in local public schools. The administrative monks of the royal wats that followed the new monastic education of Mahamakut Ratchawittayalai were challenged by local monks on the ground that these subjects were not a path of enlightenment. Moreover, the king’s sponsorship of producing new Tripitaka written in Thai instead of Khom (Ancient Khmer) followed by Prince Patriarch Wachirayan incorporation of the new curriculum, also conflicted with traditional ideas about the power of Khom script. The curriculum was also used as a model for Commoner Order (Maha Nikay) University by the Minister of Public Instruction. This created discomfort to senior Maha Nikay monk who was accustomed to using ancient Khmer language435.

The creation of modern Buddhist University fostered contestation because the key creators were biased against the monks from the Commoner Order preferring to hand the leadership to Reform Order. This prejudice could have created a major split between the Reform and Commoner Order. The Minister of Foreign Affairs raised significant question regarding the unity of the Thai Buddhist order when the Minister of Public Instruction presented the idea at the cabinet meeting436. The king also expressed his support for the improvement of the Commoner Order’s education while Prince Patriarch Wachirayan was reluctant to help on the ground that he lacked knowledge in meditation437. The king established Mahachulalongkorn Ratchawittayalai in 1896 at Wat Mahathat, and in 1899 he ordered the construction of Wat Benchamabophit, while the

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435 Ibid., 185.
436 Ibid., 188.
437 Ibid., 192.
Prince Patriarch avoided giving support to the crown to create a new facility for Commoner Order monks. According to Wat Benchamabophit’s archival research, the king complained that Prince Wachirayan did not want the Commoner Order to surpass the Reform Order\(^\text{438}\). King Chulalongkorn had resented this obstacle, and moved forward to create this royal [*wat*] in a grand scheme as a Buddhist college\(^\text{439}\) for only the Commoner Order, in elaborate details employing European artisan, materials and the ideology of Buddhist colonial museum collection. Wat Benchamabophit’s ravishing architecture was indeed the result of contestation between the Reform Order leaders in modern Buddhist Education and the king with support of several princes, who wanted to provide an equal opportunity in modern education for the Commoner Order.

**Visual Discourses of the Nation Past vs. the Prosperity of the Ayutthaya Kingdom**

As we saw previously, the Ministry of Finance and Public Instruction came up with the maintenance allowance and classification of royal [*wats*] to determine the level of allowance. The meaning and function of building and maintaining monastic structures changed from being an indicator of prosperity as in the pre-modern context to being a financial burden of the king in the market economy. As Prince Damrong made clear, the key change was that the maintenance support offered by the state to the royal [*wats*] was no longer “Kalapana” – in other words, aid to the royal monastic complexes was not guaranteed forever like monastic conscript labor. The meaning of this support also shifted from being a Buddhist asset of the holy realm to state financial allowance for historic preservation.


\(^{439}\) Ibid., 22.
In addition, the preservation and support of the royal wats became dependent upon the king’s own choice of merit making, the royal wats’ importance in term of the capital city’s elegance and the present of important relics. Restoration was no longer solely about the legitimacy of the ruler or a sign of prosperity. In term of the king’s own choices to renovate his favorite royal wats, the criteria he used to determine whether to preserve certain structure changed after the colonial encounter. King Rama III’s discourse of building Bangkok as the revival of Ayutthaya’s glory, by particularly constructing royal wats, was obsolete. In contrast, Rama V’s preference was for a modern city that reflected the new idea of cosmopolitanism and prosperity.

As we see from the historical proverb, “krang baan muang young dee khao sang wat hai luk len” (in the good times of the past regimes, people built their monastic complexes for children to play), building wats was clearly associated with the kingdom’s prosperity in pre-modern context. In contrast, the prosperity of the new city was about new westernized public facilities. After his European tour, the discourse of preserving old age materials, and the British influence of preserving existing architectural quality “in situ” appeared in a correspondence letter between the king and his key cabinet members, while the merit-based concept of renewing Buddhist structure was toned down. The classification of royal monastic complexes depicted a shift in the discourse of renovating monastic complexes, from a merit based activities to western concept of a nation’s past. Moreover, the king prohibited the traditional teaching of the cyclical decline of Buddhist religion within 5000 years, and asserted that Buddhist religion would prosper forever. His speech shifted the discourse of traditional belief in

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440 Damrong, Prince, Munhet hang kansang wat nai Prathet Thai (Rationale of monastery construction in Thailand) (Bangkok: Rongphim Krom ’Uthokkasat, 1956), 153.
441 normally the good time of past regime or “baan muang young dee” refers to Ayutthaya from Damrong, Prince, Munhet hang kansang wat nai Prathet Thai (Rationale of monastery construction in Thailand) (Bangkok: Rongphim Krom ’Uthokkasat, 1956), 17.
442 National Archive R 5 S 6/11(P), Investigation Report of Wat Prachetuphon from Prince Naritsaranuattiwong to the king, 15 March 1902, the prince indicated that the renovation of the old structure would not be totally new but would maintain the durability of structure.
cyclical history of rise and decline to the discourse of linear progression making the
distinction between past, present and future.

Wat Pho in Modernization Context

Wat Pho’s Vicinity: From Western Community to Modern Market

By the period of King Chulalongkorn, The area of the waterfront south of the Tha
Tien area became the new palace for Prince Chanphat\textsuperscript{443}. The prince asked the king’s
permission to remove some parts of the city wall to make a road to his palace\textsuperscript{444}. The
southern area of Prince Chanphat was the palace of Prince Prince Chakraphong.

At the east side of Wat Pho, the old jail was on Sanamchai Road opposite to Wat
Pho and King Rama V wanted to improve the jail as part of the development of the
justice system. The jail for minor prisoners was constructed on Habphey Road, where the
Ministry of Justice is located today, and the prison for serious criminals was constructed
at Tambon Trok Kham\textsuperscript{445}. In this reign, the palaces alongside the Grand Palace on
Sanamchai Road were demolished and the courtyard buildings in Baroque style were
used as the new headquarters of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior\textsuperscript{446}.

The south and west side of Wat Pho was also a vital area which was in a process
of transition. The south of Wat Pho was, at this time, the site for the palaces of four
princes; Prince Adison Udomdet, Prince Phumin, Prince Bodin and Prince Narueban\textsuperscript{447}. In this period, the area between the courthouse for foreign subjects and the Wat Pho
waterfront transformed from stilt houses to more concrete structures of shop-houses and

\textsuperscript{443} His full title of the time is Prince Krommamuen Phichaimahinhrarodom
\textsuperscript{444} Phra Khru Palat Samphiphatthanaphrommachariyachan (Bun), \textit{Prawat Wat Phrachetuphon
Wimonmongkhlaram} (History of Wat Phrachetuphonwimonmongkhlaram), cremation vol. Phra
Ratchaprasitthiwichan, (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkon Ratchawittayalai, 1993), 132.
\textsuperscript{445} Ibid., 180.
\textsuperscript{446} Ibid., 178.
\textsuperscript{447} Map of Wat Pho in 1907 on page 251 from Phra Khru Palat Samphiphatthanaphrommachariyachan
(Bun), \textit{Prawat Wat Phrachetuphon Wimonmongkhlaram} (History of Wat
Phrachetuphonwimonmongkhlaram), cremation vol. Phra Ratchaprasitthiwichan, (Bangkok:
Mahachulalongkon Ratchawittayalai, 1993).
the Tha Tien Market with an inner courtyard. Moreover, the floating houses started to disappear since the steamship became prominent and created a high tide, which made the floating houses unsuitable for living, and as a result, more houses were constructed along the roads. The area around Maharoek Fortress, which was occupied by several bureaucrats and smaller palaces in previous reigns, was united to be the school for women called Sunanthalai. The fortress and city wall was then demolished to make a good use of school space. The government offices started to move to the vicinity of Wat Pho as well. The area next to the palace of Prince Chakkraphong at the southwest side was the office of the Department of Maps and Survey.

For more details regarding the Tha Tien market area, in 1909, the king and his royal ministers decided to transform the courthouse and apartment compound for foreign subjects into a commercial complex of shop-houses and a market place. In the archival correspondence, the king and princes agreed to build the shop-houses on three sides embracing the market inside. The courthouse for foreign subjects and apartment compound were removed and the small cement factory at the north of the compound was also proposed to be removed due to health problems it caused, and the Foreign Affairs compound would move there instead. From the correspondence letter between the king and his secretary, the market places at that time were also considered very crowded, unhealthy and dirty. The construction of a modern market would reduce the problem of public eye-sores of the old run-down huts that occupied the space before. These changes were encouraged, as it was also expected that they would generate a good amount of the rent revenue because Tha Tien was a center of product distribution throughout the city.

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448 Nangnoi Saksi, 'Ongprakop thang kaiyaphap Krung Rattanakosin (Physical composition of Rattanakosin City) (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1991), 211.
449 Ibid., 132.
450 Map of Wat Pho in 1907 on page 251 from Prawat Wat Phrachetuphon Wimonmongkhram.
452 National Archive, R5 YT 9/108, Rueng Tat Thanon Thaiwang lae rueng tham Talad Tha Tien, letter on 21 May, 1908 from Prince Krommamuen Sommut Amonphan to King Chulalongkorn.
The king also ordered Chao Phraya Sukhum to construct the permanent road (Tanon Thaiwang) between Wat Pho and the Grand Palace and remove the portion of the city wall from Tha Tien to Thaiwang Road\(^{453}\). The shop-houses constructed at Tha Tien and Sanamchai Road were the first generation of inland storefronts for the new road development and later on these storefronts mushroomed on other main streets such as Charoenkrung, Fueang Nakhon and Bamrung Mueang Roads\(^{454}\). Moreover, several westerners who served the king closely such as the king’s physicians, Dr. Peter Gowan\(^{455}\), Dr. Righter\(^{456}\), and Rolang Jacqumin, the Belgian legal advisor and Sean Klunig, a British architect,\(^{457}\) also lived in the government’s houses in the Tha Tien area near the courthouse for foreign subjects and the apartment compound (see Plate 5.14).

**Wat Pho’s History: from the Symbol of Royal Past to the Image of Siam**

King Chulalongkorn came to the throne when he was only 15 years old and was under the supervision of the regent. After King Chulalongkorn underwent a second coronation when he was 20 years old, he was ordained by Prince Bowonrangsi Suriyaphan, the abbot of Wat Bowonniwet. After the king disrobed in 1874, he appointed the prince-abbot as the new Supreme Patriarch and elevated his title to Prince Krom Somdet Phra Pawaret Wariyalongkon\(^{458}\). Now the center of monastic order shifted to the

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\(^{453}\) Ibid., National Archive, R5 YT 9/108.


\(^{455}\) National Archive, R5 Kh 4.1Kh/1, Rueng Thi Baan Mor Gavin Tambon Tha Tien.

\(^{456}\) National Archive, R5 Kh 4.1Kh/74, Rueng Thi Baan Mor Ryter thi Tha Tien.


\(^{458}\) Prince Bowonransi Suriyaphan was King Mongkut’s closest disciple and had been an abbot of Wat Bowonniwet after Prince Mongkut disrobed.
Plate 5.14. Map of Bangkok in 1890 and 1910 and images showing the transition of Wat Pho and Tha Tien riverfront from the end of Rama IV's reign to Rama V's period.

The maps from the Plan of Bangkok B.E. 2439 (A.D. 1896) by the Royal Survey Department and Map of Bangkok in 1908 by the Department of Land; the image from Niyada Laosunthon, Prachum charuek Wat Phrachetuphon (Compilation of Inscription of Wat Phrachetuphon).
hand of the royal prince-monks of the Reform Group at Wat Bowonniwet. As a result of this, Wat Pho lost its status as the center of ecclesiastical administration.

As described in the beginning of chapter, the new reign of King Chulalongkorn represented the new era of modernization and the government structure was transformed from a semi-feudal system to a modern administration. Wat Pho was also impacted by this change in several respects. I will discuss this impact by focusing on three major points: the process of renovation; royal support, including the maintenance system which was involved with construction; and the larger scope of its role in society.

For the renovation process, at the beginning of the reign, King Chulalongkorn still did not have a formal western-style cabinet ministerial system. He ordered his senior prince to renovate Wat Pho in the similar system of using the favorite and closest feudal departments to manage the construction and repair. Around 1879-1889, King Chulalongkorn ordered Prince Mahamala to renovate the ordination hall459. After the formation of the cabinet ministerial system, it was no longer the king’s role to assign the task of renovating royal wats to any favorite noblemen and feudal princes, as this task now belonged to the Ministry of Public Construction. In 1899, the Ministry renovated the three grand pagodas at Wat Pho and all budget proposals now had to be approved by the Ministry of Finance460 which was now also a different unit from the king’s personal assets.

In 1902, about the same time that the first Religious Law was passed, Rama V ordered an investigation for the major renovation of Wat Pho. Prince Narit was assigned to investigate and he submitted his proposed budget for renovating Wat Pho to the king.

459 Prince’s feudal title was Krommaphra Bamrabporapak in Phra Khru Palat Samphiphatthanaphrommchariyachan (Bun), Prawat Wat Phrachetuphon Wimonmongkharam (History of Wat Phrachetuphonwimonmongkharam) cremation vol. Phra Ratchaprasitthiwimon, (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkon Ratchawittayalai, 1993), 31.

460 National Archive, R 5 S 6/6 (Ph), Ruang Patisangkhon Phra Chedi Wat Phrachetuphon 3 ong (Reconstruction of 3 grand pagodas at Wat Phrachetuphon), letter on 25 April, 1899, from Chao Phraya Thewetwongwiwat, the Minister of Public Construction, to the king regarding the construction of Wat Pho since Prince Phitthayalapthada was the Minister.
In the letter to the king\textsuperscript{461}, he reported five major points. First, there were too many satellite pavilions and pagodas which had no good use. He proposed to renovate only eight satellite pavilions from a total of twenty one and also wanted to fix only thirty-two from seventy-two pagodas. Second, he calculated that the total cost of renovation was 648,936 baht. However, if he included other minor renovations, the cost was up to approximately 670,000 baht.

Third, he proposed to divide the cost to spend only 40,000 baht per year, which means it would have taken seventeen years to complete all the renovations. There were documents regarding this portion of the budget for the renovation of Wat Pho until 1910—the end of the reign\textsuperscript{462}; however, after the end of King Chulalongkorn’s reign, there was no longer any documentation about this renovation. Wat Pho’s documents indicate that the demolition of satellite pavilions stopped after the end of the reign and the Ministry of Public Construction totally demolished eight pavilions\textsuperscript{463}.

Fourth, the procedure of renovation had to change. Prince Narit proposed that the renovated structure should not look completely new but should be more durable. Fifth, he commented on the king’s idea to fix Wat Pho incrementally over several years, saying that this plan might not work because when one structure was finished, other structures might have already fallen into a state of critical decay and would cost more to reconstruct.

\textsuperscript{461} National Archive, R 5 S 6/11 (Ph), 33/85, Wat Phra Chetuphon (24 June 120-31 August 129), letter on 25 March, 1902 from Prince Naritsaranuwattiwong to King Chulalongkorn regarding investigation of Wat Pho.

\textsuperscript{462} Ibid., the letter on 4 September, 1907, Phraya Sukhumnaiwinit, the Minister of Public Construction still reported the construction to Crown Prince Wachirawut. From National Archive R 5 S 6/11 (Ph), 33/85 letter on 17 December, 1907, Prince Naretworarit asked for using extra 8,000 baht from the funding of Wat Phra Sri rattanasatsadaram to buy new Chinese ceramic roof tiles for Wat Pho’s renovation. Moreover, from letters among King Chulalongkorn, Prince Chantaburi and Prince Sommutamonphan between 11 and 29 August, 1910, the renovation of Wat Pho still was in the consideration of the king and his close ministers.

\textsuperscript{463} Phra Khru Palat Samphiphatthanaphrommachariyachan (Bun), \textit{Prawat Wat Phrachetuphon Wimonmongkhiram} (History of Wat Phrachetuphonwimonmongkhiram), cremation vol. Phra Ratchaprasitthiwimon, (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkon Ratchawittayalai, 1993), 25.
By King Chulalongkorn’s reign, the satellite pavilions which housed a complete set of five hundred and fifty Jataka Buddha stories and medicinal knowledge and the four group pagodas which signified Wat Pho as a cosmological center were ignored and threatened to be demolished. By this time, the concept of renovating the royal wats had also changed. From now on, the wats signified the past heritage of the nation and hence rather than renovating the monastery to appear new and to signify the continuity of Buddhist religion, monasteries were maintained to appear antiquated. On April 2, 1902, the king sent a letter to Prince Narit stating that he agreed for the most part with his proposal, but that he would like it to be done in ten years, and he also ordered to transfer the responsibility of maintaining Wat Pho from the Ministry of Public Instruction to the Ministry of Public Construction until the renovations were finished.\(^{464}\)

Regarding the royal support and maintenance system, Wat Pho in pre-modern period received special treatment beside the supervision of Chao Krom Wat from the department of labor registry since King Rama III appointed Prince Latdawan to supervise the feudal unit of Wat Pho’s laborers. This was the clear indication of the special status of Wat Pho which had higher degree of integration between the feudal state and monastic affairs. In case of Wat Pho in this transitional period, its monastic construction works were solely under the Ministry of Public Construction. In addition, the tax from conscript laborers of Wat Pho was also collected by the Ministry of the Interior instead and sent directly to Wat Pho.\(^{465}\) While the monastic revenues of other wats were under the tight supervision of the Ministry of Public Instruction, Wat Pho in contrast, became more independent from the Ministry’s control.

\(^{464}\) National Archive, R 5 S 6/11 (Ph), 33/85, Wat Phra Chetuphon (24 June 120-31 August 129), letter on 2 April, 1902, from King Chulalongkorn to Prince Krommakhun Naritsaranuwattiwong.

\(^{465}\) National Archive, M 14/11 14 February 1895 Letter from Prince Krommanueng Damrongrajanuphap to King Chulalongkorn for tax collecting money from Monthon Phitsanulok for monastery renovation. Prince Damrong found that these monastic laborers were collected 18 baht a year by the regent official (Khaluang Thesaphiban) but the standard money for head tax was only 6 baht.
In 1874, about the same time that the king appointed the new Supreme Patriarch at Wat Bowonniwet, Prince Latdawan the commissioner who built the famous shrine of the Reclining Buddha and also the commander of the registry laborers of Wat Pho passed away. As a result, the monastic laborers began to have problems because the entire Siamese semi-feudal structure for controlling manpower was already crumbling. By 1891, the laborers and registry officials of the worshipping shrine of Prince Poramanuchit, the former Supreme Patriarch and deceased abbot of Wat Pho, petitioned that Phraya Anurak Ratchamontien who was assigned to supervise the laborers had taken laborers for his own purposes. As such, this high ranking nobleman had violated King Mongkut’s order to retain the unit of conscript laborers of Prince Supreme Patriarch Poramanuchit for maintaining the abbot’s residential quarter and shrine. This signified that the labor control system of Wat Pho was in critical decay. As the semi-feudal system was malfunctioning, the government also collected cash for the head-poll tax instead of labor. In 1895, the government shifted the laborers for the renovation of Wat Pho to help Wat Sawang-arom. Prince Damrong asked the king to reduce the burden of head poll tax that was imposed on conscript laborers of Wat Pho from 18 baht to the normal rate of 6 baht. The higher head poll tax of Wat Pho’s laborers can be interpreted as signifying their special status although there are no further detailed documents of these laborers.

As stated previously, the royal government tried to reduce the state’s burden of renovating royal wats by securing their monastic land properties and tightening their asset management through the Ministry of Public Instruction. Wat Pho was seriously impacted by this policy, since it did not have a large parcel of urban property to generate enough

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467 National Archive, R 5 M 66/3, letter 10 and 26 October, 1882 between Chao Phraya Mahisonthamrong, Director of Labor Registry (Krom Phrasuratwadi) and Phraya Wutthikanbodi, Minister of Public Instruction (Thanmakam).
468 National Archive, R 5 S 6/22 (S), Ruang Phrasong Lae Phra Aram Wat Sawang Arom mueang Sawankhalok (monks and monastic complex of Wat Sawang Arom at Sawankhalok town).
revenue. Wat Pho’s limited land property was due to the fact that it was surrounded by the Grand Palace and the palaces of several princes. Most of the funds for general renovation and maintenance of its residential quarters and subsidiary structures came from the residential monks and lay manager (makkhanayok) who persuaded local supporters to donate money to Wat Pho. The lay manager and monks organized Buddhist ceremonies, impressive chanting rituals and exuberant festivals to attract people to join the events and thus support the royal wat financially\textsuperscript{469}. The king also complimented the monks that helped him relieve the financial burden of renovating Wat Pho’s enormous structures in sacred precinct and maintained that Wat Pho could not be left behind\textsuperscript{470}. In 1903, Wat Pho’s monks helped with some minor renovation and decoration of the elaborated ordination hall, and the archive reports indicate that the reason to renovate had shifted from the perpetuation of the Buddhist religion to being important sightseeing spot for foreign visitors\textsuperscript{471}. At this historical juncture, the important status of Wat Pho shifted from being the cosmological center of the Buddhist world to a place representing the kingdom’s culture and civilization to foreigners.

By 1904, the lay manager, Phraya Siharatrithitkrai, tried to rent the land of Wat Pho that was once the port and waterfront facilities of monks but had become a dilapidated area\textsuperscript{472}. The king agreed but he wanted to be sure that the construction of this

\textsuperscript{469} National Archive R 5 S 6/13 (Ph), Rai Ngan Makkhanayok Wat Phrachetuphon (report of lay manager of Phrachetuphon monastic complex), letter on 1 June, 1903, from Phraya Wutthikanbodi (signed by Wisutsuriyasak, Permanent Secretary the Ministry of Public Instruction), to King Chulalongkorn via Prince Krommakhun Sommut Amonphan, the king’s secretary. Phraya Wutthikanbodi described Wat Pho as the unique monastic complex (wat) because it lacked revenue from land property (Kalapana) to sustain its structure. He honored monks of Wat Pho because they took responsibility for maintaining the monastery.

\textsuperscript{470} Ibid., response letter on 1 June, 1902, from King Chulalongkorn indicated his appreciation to the monks of Wat Pho.

\textsuperscript{471} Ibid., letter on 11 February, 1904, from Phraya Wutthikanbodi to the king via Prince Krommakhun Sommut Amonphan reporting the request of lay manager of Wat Pho, Phraya Siharatrithitkrai, for the king’s consent to change the nine-tiered umbrella of the ordination hall’s main Buddha statue by the donation of monks and local supporters. The lay manager promised to restore the elaborated golden umbrella to be as good as the original one.

\textsuperscript{472} National Archive R 5 S 6/12 (Ph), Thi Thoranisong Wat Phrachetupon (the donation land of the monastic complex of Wat Phrachetuphon), letter on 2 April, 1903, from Phraya Wutthikanbodi, the Ministry of Thammakan to the king via Prince Krommakhun Sommut Amonphan.
are would present a neat appearance and that it would be compatible with the land in its vicinity which was owned by the Privy Purse Office\footnote{Ibid., letter 2 April, 1903 from the king to the Minister of Public Instruction.}. However, the plan was not realized. From 1904 to 1907, Wat Pho started to earn from rent revenue of the \textit{wat}’s riverfront area, but revenues were still very minimal when compared to the cost of renovation and maintenance of the residential quarter which still was being funded by monks\footnote{National Archive R 5 S 6/13 (Ph), Rai Ngan Makkhanayok Wat Phrachetuphon (Report of lay manager of Phrachetuphon monastic complex), letter on 5 December, 1907, from Phraya Siharatrithikrai to Chao Phraya Wichitwongwutthikrai reporting the revenue and expenditure of Wat Phrachetuphon. The revenue was only 96 baht and the cost of renovation of residential quarter was 11,623 baht 4 att. Most of expenditure was covered by the monks and local supporters including lay manager, minor royal members and low ranking noblemen.}. In 1905, the government dissolved the feudal system and proceeded to implement the new military draft. Wat Pho and other major royal \textit{wats} lost their conscript laborers. The royal government changed to a monetary system and a classification scheme for royal \textit{wats} was initiated to rationalize monetary support. Wat Pho was in the special class with the rank of royal great honor and received the highest payment of 2,400 baht annually for its maintenance costs. As stated in previous section, the primary reason for supporting Wat Pho and other large scale royal \textit{wats} was the beautification of Bangkok. Wat Pho was still the center of the royal attention, but this was because it embodied the aesthetic preference of urban space and national heritage. In 1909, the king also appointed another lay manager of Wat Pho, Khun Chamniyotha, because Phraya Siharatrithikrai was about to retire. In 1910, Wat Pho was reported to earn some revenue from renting space to vendors at the Thai New Year festival in the monastic precinct and from donations from several minor princes and princesses\footnote{National Archive R 5 S 6/13 (Ph), Rai Ngan Makkhanayok Wat Phrachetuphon (Report of lay manager of Wat Phrachetuphon), letter on 21 June, 1910, from Chao Phraya Wichitwongwutthikrai to the king via his secretary, Prince Krommakthun Sommut Amonphan reporting the revenue and expenditure of Wat Pho.}. With less support from the crown, Wat Pho started to make a relationship with minor princes, princesses, and local bureaucrats to earn some support. The festival rituals at Wat Pho were once organized by
the crown to redistribute his wealth surplus to people. In contrast to the pre-modern period, in this reign, the festivals were organized by the kings and the senior monks in the royal wats to regain wealth surplus from the people in order to maintain the monastery.

**Wat Sraket in Modernization Context**

**Wat Sraket’s Vicinity: From State Funeral Ground to Shop-Houses**

Ever since Wat Sraket had become the tallest structure in Bangkok, its monastic space came to be contested in several respects. Archival documents show that in 1892, the Grand Mountain Pagoda had become the sanctuary for the homeless and its grounds had become a grazing land for local horses and cows. Because of this, the Minister of Bangkok Municipality had to prohibit all unrelated activities and ordered the police at the station nearby to arrest the violators\(^{476}\).

As the land along the road became more valuable in this reign, the monastic donation land, the cemetery, and the state funeral facilities of Wat Sraket were considered by the government as the source of income to sustain the expense of Wat Sraket’s renovation. In 1890, the king and Prince Damrong ordered the Ministry of Public Instruction to investigate the income from Wat Sraket’s land, including its cemetery and funerary land since there were three private individuals who offered to collect revenue from the rent and fees of these parcels for the government\(^{477}\). The Minister of Public Instruction proposed that if he could redevelop several dilapidate buildings of the funeral complex and regulate the service fees, this revenue would help Wat Sraket for its expenditures for the maintenance of its monastic precinct\(^{478}\). Wat Sraket in that time had nineteen tenement houses around the cemetery, seven saw mills and thirty four rentable

\(^{476}\) National Archive R 5 N 49.5/6, Chang Kham Rueng Barommanapanhot Wat Sraket (Announcement about the Grand Mountain Pagoda), on 17 September, 1892.

\(^{477}\) National Archive R 5 S 6/13 (S), Rueang Khit Chat Thai Thoranisong Wat Sraket Hai Riabroi Talot Tueng Thi Pao Sop Fang Sop (proposal to organize monastic donation land of Wat Sraket including cemetery and funeral facilities), letter on 29 July, 1890 from Prince Damrong to the king.

\(^{478}\) Ibid.
buildings on the edge of the monastic precinct along the canal at the north and west sides\textsuperscript{479}. There were many boats staying at the canal beside the monastic precinct and they could also be charged rent.

However, Prince Damrong’s concept probably was not realized because in 1895, when Prince Narit and Prince Chaiyanmongkon traveled along Bamrung Mueang Road from Sraprathum Road, they found that the funeral complex was still in a state of deterioration. The two princes, who also had positions in the cabinet ministerial administration, volunteered their labor to the king to redevelop the funerary complex on the grounds that the area of Wat Sraket, including the city funeral facilities, had become a highly visible site within the newly developed urban center\textsuperscript{480}. The dilapidated structure of the funeral complex was regarded as an unsanitary public eyesore, and shameful in the eyes of international visitors\textsuperscript{481}. However, the project was not realized either because both princes could not collect enough financial support to renovate the whole funeral complex. Later on, in 1896, the princes proposed to clean up only the funeral structures and move the cemetery to another \textit{wat} by cutting a new road connecting them\textsuperscript{482}. The introduction of the road system had major impacts on the monastic space of Wat Sraket. In the pre-modern period, Wat Sraket was on the island with canals on all sides. With the arrival of the new roads and the filling in of part of the canal in front of the ordination hall, Wat Sraket faced the road and the waterfront in the north, and the west became its dead end backyard. This new road, which was later called Chakraphatthiphong Road, was eventually constructed to connect to the outer Ratchadamnoen Road, the grand boulevard, north of the city wall and cut through the front of Wat Sraket.

\textsuperscript{479} Ibid., letter on 27 June, 1890 from Luang Thanaphonphithak to Prince Damrong.
\textsuperscript{480} National Archive, R 5 YT 8.5/3, Rueang Tham Meru Wat Sraket, letter on 2 March, 1895, from Prince Krommakhun Naritsaranuwattiwong and Prince Phra Ong Chao Chaiyanmongkon to King Chulalongkorn.
\textsuperscript{481} Ibid., letter on 7 November, 1896, from Prince Krommakhun Naritsaranuwattiwong and Prince Krommamuen Mahisonratchaharuethai to King Chulalongkorn.
\textsuperscript{482} The new road that the prince proposed was also in the king’s plan. Thus, the king ordered the Ministry of Public Construction to cut the road which is today Worrachak Road.
Chakraphatthiphong Road also cut through some residential buildings of Wat Sraket in the front. With the arrival of the roads, the canals in the east and south gradually deteriorated since people would use roads instead, therefore making the boundary of Wat Sraket’s property unclear. To mark Wat Sraket from the road, the king ordered to construct a permanent wall\(^\text{483}\). Unlike Wat Pho that had a clear boundary since it was surrounded by the prince’s palaces, historically Wat Sraket’s border was demarcated by the canals and thus it became unclear with the arrival of roads.

The new funeral operation was not a successful service and could not generate enough of a stable income since the business of providing funeral services was unpredictable. Moreover, the poor still used the temporary funeral incinerator near the Golden Mountain Pagoda and did not want to pay the fee to use the government ones. Therefore, in 1900, the prince asked the king to stop the temporary incineration service and construct the shop-houses along the cemetery wall to collect rent for supporting the funeral service, thereby stabilizing revenue and creating more livelihood opportunities in the area\(^\text{484}\).

Five years later, another prince, named Narathip\(^\text{485}\) asked to rent the area north of the Golden Mountain Pagoda to open a music hall and facilities for the new tramway company. The prince also noticed the slum-like structures and sawmills around the waterfront area of Wat Sraket and proposed that he would build his music hall in a great manner that would also create a pleasant environment for the waterfront area of the Golden Mountain Pagoda and Wat Sraket. The Minister of Public Instruction and the lay manager at first were not sure if such an activity could be considered appropriate but the

\(^{483}\) National Archive, R 5 S 6/16 (S), Rueang Tham Kamphaeng Wat Sraket, letter on 20 August, 1900, from Phra Sathitmankan to King Chulalongkorn.

\(^{484}\) Ibid., letter on 11 November, 1900, from Prince Krommakun Naritsaranuwattiwong and Prince Krommamuen Mahisonratcharuethai to King Chulalongkorn.

\(^{485}\) His full title at the time was Prince Krommamuen Narathippaphanphong
king finally gave him permission to rent space\textsuperscript{486}. Wat Sraket thus also became an entertainment and transportation center. Local people as well as noblemen tried to develop the funeral complex space and waterfront area that had become dilapidated. Wat Sraket’s northern waterfront area underwent several changes from the water park for a poetry festival to a rural grazing land and, in this period, it eventually became a new node of transportation and lumber business area with a high rent value (see Plate 5.15).

**Wat Sraket’s History: from Relic Landmark to Strategic Tower**

The structure of Borommabanphot was completed in 1878 and was enshrined by King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910) with the Lord Buddha relics from the Grand Palace. In 1890, the king also dedicated his Tooth Relic replica to Wat Sraket and also ordered Wat Sraket and the Ministry of Public Instruction to organize the celebration of the Grand Mountain Pagoda. In this festivity, the king ordered to have all kinds of entertainments such as Thai classical music orchestra, various Thai soap operas, and Chinese opera, and to attract more commoners with the shopping venue of 240 vending stalls\textsuperscript{487}. Wat Sraket started the festival on December 1, 1890 and the festival has been conducted annually until today (except during the period of WWII and the renovation of the Grand Mountain Pagoda after the end of the war). The festival also generated an impressive amount of donation revenue for the first year but went into deficit for the following year and the Ministry of Public Instruction needed to get a loan from Wat Pho\textsuperscript{488}.

Moreover, in 1899, the colonial government of British India discovered the Lord Buddha relics in the area believed to be Kabilaphat, the capital city of the Lord Buddha’s

\textsuperscript{486} National Archive, 3029/36 STh 7.6/24, Rueang Barisat Rotrang Thai Chao Thi Wat Sraket (Thai Tramway company rent space of Wat Sraket), letter on 15 February, 1906 from Prince Krommamuen Narathippapahanphong to Phraya Inrathibadisiharatrongmuang, Makkhanayok Wat Sraket.

\textsuperscript{487} Ibid., letter on 1 December, 1890, from Luang Thanaphonphithak and the Ministry of Public Instruction’s staffs of the event to Prince Damrong Rachanuphap, the Minister of Public Instruction.

\textsuperscript{488} Ibid., letter on 8 January, 1892, from Luang Thanaphonphithak to Phraya Wutthikanbodi reporting the revenue from the festival celebrating the Tooth Relics at Grand Mountain Pagoda.
Plate 5.15. Map of Bangkok in 1890 and 1910 and images showing the transition of Wat Sraket from the end of Rama IV’s reign to Rama V’s period.

The maps from the Plan of Bangkok B.E. 2439 (A.D. 1896) by the Royal Survey Department and Map of Bangkok in 1908 by the Department of Land; the image from the National Archive.
family’s ruling kingdom. The Viceroy of India, Marquis Curzon also decided to present the Lord Buddha relics to King Chulalongkorn on the grounds that he was a true Buddhist monarch and the leader of all Buddhists in the world\textsuperscript{489}. After several cabinet ministry meetings and discussions about the credibility of Western scholars in determining the authenticity of the relics\textsuperscript{490}, the king ordered to send an emissary to receive the relics. Interestingly, he decided to install the Siamese portion at the Wat Sraket’s Great Mountain Pagoda and conducted an international ceremony to allocate the relics to Buddhist representatives from other countries at Wat Pho.

While Wat Pho was already home to numerous pagodas housing the Lord Buddha relics and royal family relics at the beginning of the first reign, it was not until the fifth reign that Wat Sraket was the place of Lord Buddha relics. Wat Sraket became the landmark in the fifth reign because of the traditional beliefs surrounding the Lord Buddha’s relics and because of the physical appearance of its monumental structure which made it the center of the new Bangkok. By housing the Lord Buddha relics from India, Wat Sraket demonstrated King Chulalongkorn’s legitimacy as one who had accumulated such a great store of merit that he had come to possess the Lord Buddha relics. Moreover, this showed that he established his international reputation as the world’s Buddhist leader.

While Wat Pho has a small parcel of riverfront and port area to earn rent revenue, Wat Sraket has the area larger than half of the entire monastic precinct to generate revenue. Although the monastic land of Wat Sraket was significantly larger than that of Wat Pho, Wat Sraket had a similar experience to Wat Pho that the revenue from festivities and donation for events was far higher than income from rents. In 1890, the

\textsuperscript{489} Khanasong Wat Sraket (Monastic order of Wat Sraket), \textit{Chotmaihet Rueang PhraSaririkathan Muang Kabilaphat} (Chronicle of Lord Buddha Relics from Kabilaphat) (Bangkok: Chuanphim, 2000), 59, 62. \textsuperscript{490} Ibid., 49-53 citing National Archive R5 S11 (No.) 1/11.
donation from the Tooth Relics festival was more than half of the estimated rent revenue from monastic donation land\textsuperscript{491}.

In the fifth reign, Wat Pho’s major construction projects were already completed, and the government authorities became more concerned about the preservation of its detailed structure. By contrast, at the same time, Wat Sraket had more construction projects both inside the monastic precinct and on its monastic donation land. Inside the sacred precinct, monks and patrons constructed several pavilions around the vicinity of the Grand Mountain. Wat Sraket’s northern waterfront area underwent several changes from the water park for a poetry festival to a rural grazing land and, in this period, it eventually became a new node of transportation and timber construction business area with a high rent value. The new construction projects in Wat Sraket at this time reflected the contestation between the emerging concept of “civilized” urban space versus the traditional function of the monastery, which included the funerary services.

As the highest point in the urban area, the Grand Mountain Pagoda was now considered a strategic point of defense and security of Bangkok. Field Marshal Chao Phraya Surasasakmontri proposed to remove the pagoda and build a fortress with a canon on the top and station an army regiment on the mountain to protect such a strategic point of Bangkok. The king agreed with the latter idea and the army took over the maintenance of the Grand Mountain Pagoda from Wat Sraket\textsuperscript{492}. It was not until 1890 that the army returned the management of the pagoda back to the monastic community\textsuperscript{493}. Moreover the

\textsuperscript{491} From National Archive R 5 S 6/13 (S), Luang Thanaphonthak reported to Prince Damrong that the estimated revenue from the rent of space and fee would be around 16 chang but according to National Archive R 5 S 82/1, the donation from festival was 36 chang 25 baht which was more than half of rent revenue.

\textsuperscript{492} So Phlaynoi, Lao Rueang Bangkok Somphot Krung rattanakosin 200 Phi(Bangkok: Bamrungsan Printing,1982), 246-247.

\textsuperscript{493} National Archive R 5 S 8 2/1, Rueang Phra Song lae Phra Aram Panak Patisangkhon, letter on 14 December, 1890, from Prince Damrong Rachanuphap to the king.
western expert once proposed to use the Grand Mountain Pagoda to house the reserve water and pumping house for the public water management of the city of Bangkok\textsuperscript{494}.

When King Chulalongkorn classified the rank of royal *wats*, he gave Wat Pho the classification of special class with the rank of royal great honor (Ratchaworramahawihan), and Wat Sraket was classified in a similar rank but was at the first class. However, when Prince Wachirayan became Supreme Patriarch, Wat Sraket was downgraded to the level of second class, while Wat Pho retained its first class status with special recognition.

**Wat Kor in Modernization Context**

**Wat Kor’s Vicinity: The Arrival of New Road and Urban Block**

During the time of King Chulalongkorn, the Chinatown area experienced significant changes. Since King Mongkut signed the treaty with western countries increasing the trade to Siam, Chinatown had grown congested. The warehouses and narrow alleys of Sampheng Road became the major problem since they caught on fire easily. The king and his prince ministers tried to improve the conditions of the heart of the kingdom’s economy by cutting new roads and encouraging permanent structures. Before this period, Chinatown had only Sampheng Alley as a major road running parallel to Charoenkrung Road. By the end of King Chulalongkorn’s reign, the major road was Yaowarat Road running in a northwest to southeast direction along with Chareonkrung Road. Songwat Road was constructed along the waterfront warehouses. There are several roads running perpendicular to Songwat connecting to Yaowarat Road. The last portion of Songwat Road also turned up to meet Yaowarat Road and it cut Wat Kor’s monastery island in half (see Plate 5.16).

\textsuperscript{494} National Archive R 5 N 5.1/9, Monsieur Darvee Kho Tham Kan Sukhaphiban, letter from Lieutenant Colonel Farida de Rozzoli, Engineer for the City of Bangkok to Prince Krommamuen Naretworrarit, Minister of Bangkok Municipality, 39-40.
Plate 5.16 Maps of Bangkok in 1890s and 1910 and image of Yaowarat Road showing Wat Kor in transition with the new road.

The maps from the Plan of Bangkok B.E. 2439 (A.D. 1896) by the Royal Survey Department and Map of Bangkok in 1908 by the Department of Land; the image from National Archive.
Wat Kor’s History: Splitting the Island Monastery

In contrast to Wat Pho and Wat Sraket, where attention from the government focused on the sacred precinct and the crumbling corvee labor system, Wat Kor received the special attention of Prince Patriarch Wachirayan because of its monastic donation land in the lucrative area of Chinatown. In 1899, he sent his fellow monk name Phra Palad Chuen to assist the abbot of Wat Kor in reporting the management of the monastic properties, including the collection of income from renting shop-houses and costs for the general maintenance.

From 1899 to 1902, the revenue of the rent collection was supervised by Phra Palad Chuen and more land parcels around the royal wat were converted to rental space, including the boatyard. The revenue from rent and donation was up from 680 baht to 3,880 baht within three years. In 1904, this royal wat also constructed funeral service facilities behind the sacred precinct with the help of local supporters. In 1906, the revenue went up to 8,750 baht and in the following year it was 13,206 baht but some of the revenue came from the support of the Department of Sanitation to clean up the area for the new Songwat Road and for building the new monastic residence. In the report, the lay manager also indicated that the area had caught on fire, and that this incident devastated some of the monastic properties. The renovation of Wat Kor needed to wait for the government’s decision regarding cutting a new road into the monastic precinct.

495 National Archive R 5 S 6/31(8), Wat Samphanthawong, letter on 16 September, 1903, from Prince Patriarch Krommamuen Wachirayanwarorot to Phraya Wuthikanbadi; letter on 31 August, 1903, from Phra Palat Chuen Pariantho to Prince Patriarch Krommamuen Wachirayanwarorot reporting the revenue and expenditure of Wat Samphanthawong.
496 Wat Samphanthawong’s private document, letter on 4 June, 1905, from Phra Palad Chuen Pariintho to Prince Patriarch Wachirayanwarorot reporting the revenue and expenditure of Wat Samphanthawong.
497 National Archive R 5 S 6/32 (S). Wat Smaphanthawongsaram, letter on November 1907, from Phra Sunthonphimon, lay manager, to Phraya Wisutsuriyasak, the secretary of the Ministry of Public Instruction; letter on 4 January, 1909, from Phra Sunthonwimon, lay manager, to Chaophraya Wichitwongwutthikrai.
The lay manager also proposed to get loan from Mahamakut Ratchawitthayalai Foundation to build new shop-houses and warehouses along the new road to increase the revenue of Wat Kor. After the new road cutting through the monastery area was built, Wat Kor, with the support from the department of Sanitation, removed its fourteen units of monastic residential structures and only nine were rebuilt but were also adjusted to align with the new road. From the report of the lay manager to the Ministry of Public Instruction, we know that the monastic community also constructed nineteen new units of shops and warehouses and planned to construct another twenty six units of shop-houses under the supervision of Prince Patriarch Wachirayan. However, according to the letter from Phra Palad Chuen, the monastic manager, to Prince Wachirayan, Wat Kor planned to construct seventy three units of warehouses and twenty units of houses which in return would generate more than 11,160 baht annually.

With respects to the size of the monastic precinct, when compared to Wat Pho and Wat Sraket, Wat Kor earned much more rent revenue than the former two. In the same year, Wat Sraket collected around 8,775 baht from its rent revenue and the festival of its Grand Mountain Pagoda but its monastic precinct was four times larger and needed more maintenance. For Wat Pho, the rent revenue from its tiny monastic donation land was only around 1,200 baht in 1903 and increased to around 1,440 baht within five years. From the newspaper coverage of the fire around Wat Kor in Bangkok Times, we learn that the Wat Kor district was made up of shop-houses on the Privy Purse

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498 Ibid.
499 National Archive R 5 S 6/32 (S), Wat Smaphanthawongsaram, letter on 4 January, 1907, from Phra Sunthonphimon, lay manager, to Phraya Wisutsuriyasak, the secretary of the Ministry of Public Instruction reporting the revenue and construction of the monastic complex.
500 From Wat Samphanthawong’s private document, letter on 18 February, 1904.
501 National Archive R 5 S 6/19 (S) 17/85, Rai-ngan Makkhanayok Wat Sraket (Report of Lay Manager of Wat Sraket), letter on February 8, 1908, from Phraya Inthrathipdisiharatroangmueng, lay manager of Wat Sraket, to Chaophraya Wichitwongwutthikrai, the Minister of Public Instruction.
502 National Archive R 5 S 6/12 (P) 13/14, Thi Thoranisong Wat Phrachetuphon (Monastic Donation Land of Wat Phrachetuphon), letter on 2 April, 1903, from Phraya Wutthikanbadi to the king via Prince Krommakhun Sommutamonphan, the royal secretary.
503 Bangkok Times, on 7 January, 1907, Disastrous Fire in Bangkok: Enormous Damage.
Office’s properties and Chinese merchant warehouses whose import goods were worth 10 million ticals\textsuperscript{504} at the time. As the trade became more and more important to the Siamese economy, Chinatown expanded and grew congested with timber construction shops and warehouses which were easily to catch on fire. On the next day after the fire, the newspaper complained that the area had to be improved for the sake of the prosperity of the economy and proposed that the government step in to build the new road. It was a common practice in this area that when the fire broke out, the government took the next step to construct the new road with standard pavement and sanitary system.

The fire that broke out in the area around Wat Kor paved the way for the this royal wat to invest in the new development of shop-houses along the road which later was called Songwat, and the portion that cut through Wat Kor’s residential quarter was called Songsawat. In fact, road construction was the government policy to improve the area to make way for more standard shop-houses and sanitation. Since 1892, the king and his royal ministers ordered to construct Yaowarat Road parallel to Charoenkrung Road in order to stimulate more business in the area\textsuperscript{505}. Moreover, several new roads perpendicular to Sampheng Road in Chinatown were constructed after the fire in order to improve the area\textsuperscript{506}. There was no record why the king and his ministers decided to construct the road through the middle of the monastery compound on the island of Wat Kor. One possible reason would be the high value of the land which was already the consideration of the cabinet ministers\textsuperscript{507}. If the government cut the road to other private

\textsuperscript{504} 1 tical could equal 1 baht.
\textsuperscript{505} National Archive R 5 YT 9/109, Yothathikan Rueang Kan Korsang lae Tat Thanon Pi 109, 110, 111 puek thi 1 (Public Construction on the subject of Construction and Planning Roads), letter on 21 January, 1892, from Prince Krommanuen Naritsaranuwattiwong to King Chulalongkorn discussing the construction of Yaowarat Road.
\textsuperscript{506} Ibid., letter on 13 June, 1891 from Prince Naritsaranuwattiwong to King Chulalongkorn.
\textsuperscript{507} National Archive R 5 YT 9/104, National Archive R5 YT 9/104, Tat Thanon Nai Thi Phoengmai Thi Tambon Wat Samphanthawong (Wat Kor lae Tat Thanon Chueam Thang Rawang Thanon Chakrawat lae Thanon Ratchawong (Cut the road in the land of Wat Samphanthawong District and the road connecting Chakrawat Road and Ratchwong Road), letter on 17 May, 1907, from Prince Krommaluang Naretworrarit to Crown Prince Wachirawut, on the letter the prince mentioned that the land value of this area was very high.
properties, the cost for compensation would be very high for the new road while the land value of the property along the road would increase, which would also benefit Wat Kor. Indeed, this road made significant changes to Wat Kor.

**Conclusion**

In King Chulalongkorn’s period, the legitimacy of Siamese ruling elites was based on their ability to modernize the kingdom and manage modern public facilities. The state revenue surplus shifted from corvée labor to a monetary system. When King Rama V abolished the feudal system and all monastic conscript laborers were freed, royal monastic complexes lost their laborers and their head poll tax. Instead of replacing the loss of labor with money for all royal monastic complexes, the king, by the recommendation of the Minister of Finance, suggested that royal *wats* had to maintain their physical condition on their own. The king would support only the ones in which he had special faith and the interest in Bangkok’s urban beautification. Moreover, the king’s support would cease when these royal monastic complexes could collect enough revenue for their maintenance. Prince Mahison, the Minister of Finance, also suggested that a monastic complex could be a business entity with a full capacity to manage its capital. According to these new discourses, the good abbots of royal monastic complexes were the ones with skill in managing monastic land and revenue, not necessarily the enlightened ones. In addition, the key ecclesiastical administrator, Prince Patriarch Wachirayan also mentioned that Siamese Buddhist religion was different from Western religions that possessed their own sources of funding. Following this claim, the prince patriarch already involved in the management of revenue of several royal *wats’* donated lands, and had designated some parts of the royal *wat* for generating revenue.

The first ecclesiastical law was initiated in 1902 and the Regulation for Monastic Revenue was announced. The law empowered abbots as protectors of their monastic complexes’ assets and by the king appointment, the regulation created the position of lay
manager (*makkhanayok*) to supervise the management of monastic complexes and submit annual reports to the king. By these two appointments, in some cases, a monastic complex’s properties became contested among abbot, the lay manager (*makkhanayok*), the Ministry of Public Instruction and the lay accountant (*waiyawachakon*). There are several cases of mismanagement by lay accountant and some had conflict between the abbot and the lay manager (*makkhanayok*). Moreover, since the urban land became more valuable for rent, open spaces around royal *wats* also were converted to shop-houses by them if they had strong evidence and government support to claim those territories. In several cases, the *wats*’ ownership over monastic donated lands were contested by the local neighboring communities for their land ownership. The *wats*’ space which was once considered the land outside the mundane world now was contested for its worldly value.

The formation of the central ecclesiastical administration and the initiation of the modern secular education in *wats* also impacted royal *wats*’ space. The residence of the abbots, who were also high ranking patriarchs holding key positions in the central system, became larger to accommodate offices and meeting space. The modern schools required space with facilities that the open-air pavilions or shrines could not provide. New western architecture was integrated into the *wats*’ space. The king’s architectural preference for his royal *wats* shifted from King Mongkut’s style to a more syncretistic preference mixing Gothic Baroque and Angkorian motifs.

Each of the three royal *wats* in the case studies faced these changes in different way. Wat Pho and Wat Sraket constructed their modern schools in monastery compounds with western architectural features. The royal preference for renovating Wat Pho echoed the British Romantic approach, while Wat Sraket was installed with Lord Buddha Relics to attract pilgrims in a traditional way. Meanwhile, the boundaries of Wat Sraket and Wat Kor were altered significantly. Wat Sraket was carved by new roads at the east and south sides and needed to construct walls for its sacred precinct and shop-houses to cover up the funeral facilities. Wat Kor’s island monastery compound was divided in half by the
new Songwat Road (later renamed Songsawat) and its value soared up. The prince patriarch paid attention closely to this royal wat and the land of monastery compound was altered significantly to maximize the rent revenue. All three royal wats developed their land commercially, but Wat Kor seemed to pursue its commercial activities most vigorously under the authority of Prince Wachirayan.