

SIHO: SPIRITUAL SYMBOL IN KHON KAEN CITY

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ABSTRACT

'Siho' or 'Thow Si ho' in Synshai which is Buddhist literature, the son of Phraya Kusaraj, the governor of Peng Chang City and his wife, Chanthra. He was born with two younger brothers, Synshai and Hoi-Sang. Synshai, 'Siha-cakkra-raja' is a name set by Indra. Siho looks like a lion with elegant shape and its main features are: purely clean animal and elephant shape with an elephant head, a lion body and a horse tail. This leads to the interpretation that the 'trunk' is the organ for food and drink. It's like having a far vision in development, bringing prosperity to Khon Kaen City. 'Ivory' is a symbol of worthiness, like Khon Kaen, which is a beautiful city with precious traditions, religions and culture to be promoted. 'A large ear' represents Khon Kaen Municipality administrators that must listen to and heal the suffering of the Khon Kaen people. The 'head', in the ancient time, it was believed that elephants must have a large head as a knowledge center (brain stores), refers to the good, effective and various educations that have been developed in Khon Kaen. The 'feet' are clawed, clinging to the ground and standing pompously; it is like Khon Kaen people that have a strong base of life and 'a tail' to fend off insects, like the Khon Kaen people will be protected and will be so happy infinity.

Keywords

Siho, Spiritual Symbol, Khon Kaen City

INTRODUCTION

From... narrative (oral tradition) to... literature

From... literature to... painting

From... painting to... dancing art

From... dancing art of... sculpture

Siho status is on the top of electricity poles throughout Khon Kaen City.

Khon Kaen City Mayor (Mr. Peerapol Pattanapeeradej), along with the management board committee, have the suspicions: Where are we from? Where do we originate from? What is the essence of Khon Kaen? What should be the symbol of Khon Kaen, resulting from the wisdom of the E-sarn people? Based on this, they began to seek answers and explanations. On the occasion of the 80th Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, King Rama IV, they organized a rehabilitation program for the precious heritage of intellectual property and the Northeastern local literacy study program on 'Synshai'. To meet both projects' objectives, they invited the philosophers or people with expertise on Synshai to create a curriculum for teaching students in 11 schools under Khon Kaen Municipality; Synshai content was used as a principle for the development of community in Khon Kaen as well. This study leads to understand the essence of Synshai, the board committee of the Khon Kaen Municipality has a joint resolution that 'the statue of Siho is a symbol of the identity, origin and essence of the Khon Kaen people' and it is installed on the top of the power poles in the Khon Kaen Municipality. In addition to being a symbol of the city, it also glorifies the art, culture and wisdom of the local community for the general public in all generations to learn its value and feel proud in the city.

MEANING OF 'SIHO'

'Siho' or 'Show Siho' has his full name as 'Siha-cakkra-raja' named by Indra (the Vedic deity in Hinduism, a

guardian deity in Buddhism). His characteristics are described in two parts:

1) Its elephant-like head implies the following four meanings:

(1) 'Trunk' is the organ for food and drink. It's like having a far vision in development, bringing prosperity to Khon Kaen City.

(2) 'Ivory' is a symbol of worthiness, like Khon Kaen, which is a beautiful city with precious traditions, religions and culture.

(3) 'Eye' is of an animal that is higher than other animals. It is like having a broad and thorough development vision.

(4) 'Head', the large head is culturally believed as the good characteristic of elephants. It is comparable to the study of the Khon Kaen people have been developed as a source of the effective and diverse academic education.

2) Its body looks like a lion. The overall character of the lion is an animal with an elegant shape. In addition, in the book of Buddhism, The Questions of King Milinda, also discussed the seven outstanding features of the lion as follows:

(1) Be purely clean animals, not tarnished.

(2) Courageously walk with their four feet.

(3) Have an elegant lower figure with a graceful necklace.

(4) Do not humble to any other animals or never be afraid of any other animals, even if they are fatal (dignity).

(5) Go for food alone, eat food in any place without making choice.

(6) Have no accumulation of food.

(7) Eat just enough (Mun Jongrien: MPP.366).

However, in terms of its distinctive features, there are two parts: the elephant-like head and lion-like body, the religious, philosophical and cultural experts commented that the shape of Siho is not divided in two parts, but three, as he tied as a Thai rhyme translated as 'elephant-like head, lion-like body, horse-like tail' (Udom Buasri: interview). To better understand the meaning, it leads to the interpretation that:

“Elephant-like shape means abundance. Comparatively, Khon Kaen has a good economy, people are happy. The foot has loud noise that is so dangerous to the enemy, but it will not harm the self. This means Khon Kaen Municipality is widely known. If there are obstacles, they can be managed successfully. A lion-like body means elegance, security and holiness. There is a religious, art and cultural implication including customary and local wisdom, patronized and honored as a fundamental element of moral ethics, good for the people of Khon Kaen; the city is livable and sustainable. The sacredness implies that the state administration or law enforcement will be well responded and cooperated by people (Phrakhruboonchayakorn: Interview).

Siho statue that is installed by Khon Kaen Municipality on the top of the power poles referring to the beauty, goodness and suitability for living, together with the development by the modern technology to prosperity. Yet it is based on a stable and sustainable culture and local wisdom. That is to say ‘do not forget, but absorb wisely with wisdom (Boonkoet Pimwaramethakul, interview).

BACKGROUND OF ‘SIHO’

The background of Siho can be studied in three different ways as follows:

1) Siho is one of the three main characters: Siho, Synchai, Hoi-sang of folk art. They all are the sons of the same king called ‘Phraya Kusaraj’, but different mothers. Siho mother is ‘Chantha’. Lun is a mother of Synshai and Hoi-sang.

2) Siho body is like a lion with elephant-like head, which is similar to an animal in the Himmaphan forest called ‘Kodcha-si’, a mixture between the elephant and the lion, very powerful and elegant.

3) ‘Kodcha-si’ in Thai history is used to be the emblem of some stewards from Ayutthaya to Rattanakosin period. In particular, during the reign of King Rama I, it was used to be one of the three seals of the law, which was used in the new settlement, called the law of three seals. It was similarly used as the seal in the Defense, Army, Marine Corps, and as a seal of official positions (Pisanu Subhamit, 2007: 83).

SIHO IN THE SYNSHAI LITERATURE

In the Northeastern Synshai literature, Siho plays a role in helping Synshai and Hoi-sang. He acts like a kind-hearted brother who helps when his brother were in trouble. Siho has a lot of power such as his body transformation to fight with the giant; has special weapons that are so loud; this causes the enemy's ears destroyed and death. But the sound is not harmful to the same side. The elephant-like head may be related to the loud sound. This makes it realistic because the sound is its important weapon of elephant (Preecha Pinthong, 2524: 56).

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF COLOR

In the Northeastern Synshai literature, Siho characteristics are distinctive and elegant. In Synshai, Siho has been interpreted and explained in four ways:

1) He is a son of a good family of Phraya Kusaraj and Chantha, King's principal consort.

2) He has courage and powerful weapon as very loud voice (causing broken ear), which can destroy a large number of enemies.

3) He is honest. In addition to acting for the benefit of other brothers, he is straightforward to help without expecting anything in return.

4) He lives in sufficient life and is not attractive to power, for example when

Synshai returned to the city and was king instead of the daughter, Siho went to live in the forest because he felt more familiar and happier. (Phrakhruboonchayakorn, 2550: 23).

CONCLUSION

Interpretation and explanation above leads to the essential conclusion that Siho is a symbol of Khon Kaen, a city that is worth living, beautiful with development in technology, economic and social studies based on local religion, art, culture, customs and traditions in Khon Kaen.

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