

Buddhist Monk's Holy Heart Relic: Specific Religious-Cultural Artifact in Thailand

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Abstract

Heart is the important organ of any human. This vital organ is believed as a religious symbol in Christian culture. The heart relic of saint is seen in many countries. Buddhism, the relic is also an important belief. Most holy artifact that are relics are bone relics. Here, the authors present and discuss on Buddhist monk's holy heart relic which is extraordinary case in Buddhism. The examples from Thailand, a tropical county in Indochina are presented.

Keywords: Heart, Relics, Buddhist, Monk, Relic.

Introduction

Heart is the important organ of any human. This organ is necessary for regulation of blood circulation. Heart locates in chest cavity and has a lotus-like shape. This vital organ is believed as a religious symbol in Christian culture. The heart relic of saint is seen in many countries. In some famous Roman catholic churches, the saints' holy hearts are displayed and allowed for worshipping by pilgrimages. An example of those famous holy artifacts is The incorrupt heart of Saint Jean Marie Vianney.

Buddhism, the relic is also an important belief. Most holy artifact that are relics are bone relics. Here, the authors present and discuss on Buddhist monk's holy heart relic which is extraordinary case in Buddhism. The examples from Thailand, a tropical county in Indochina are presented.

Case studied from Thailand

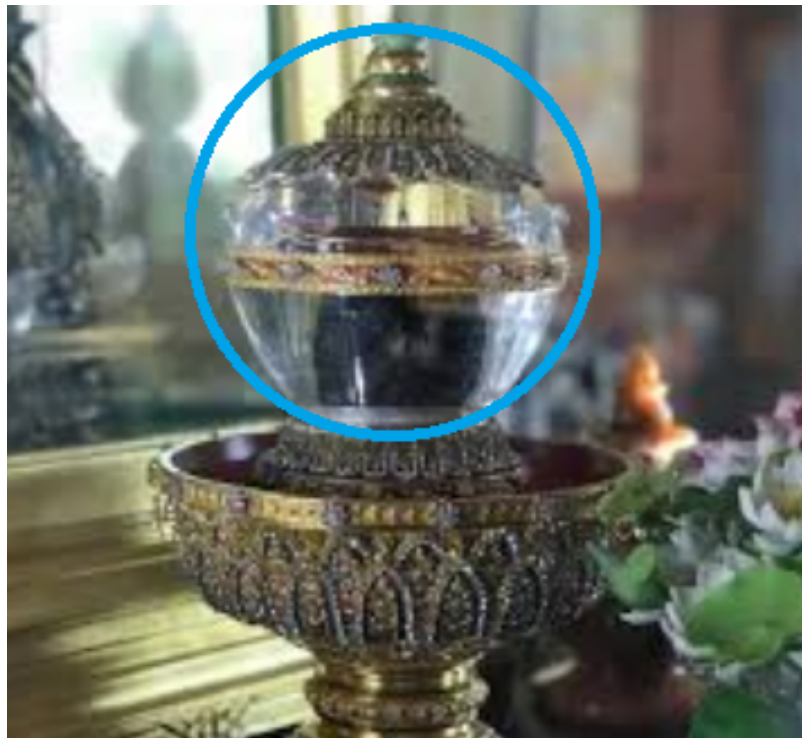
In Buddhism, the relics are also worshiped but the holy sacred heart is extremely rare. In Thailand, a country in Indochina that most people practice Buddhism, there are some few cases of Buddhist monk's holy heart relics. The good examples are relics displayed at Arsom Phaimorakot at Chiangrai province, Wat Wichai at Nakornpanom province and Wat Makutkerewon at Nakornratchasrima province (Figure 1).

All of those relics are of famous Buddhist monks in Thailand. The relics are detected after cremation ceremony of the monks. The whole body of those monks could be burnt but the

hearts were remained and incorruptible. Therefore, the local people brought the hearts for worshipping purpose at the pagodas.



A.Arson Phaimorakot at Chiangrai province



B.Wat Makutkerewon at Nakornratchasrima province

Figure 1. Some famous Buddhist monk's holy heart relics in Thailand

Discussion

Incorruptibility is an important specific religious-cultural belief. It can be seen in Christian, Hinduism and Buddhism. In Buddhism, the holy dead bodies of many Buddhist monks are presently seen. Those holy dead bodies are usually displayed in glass coffins or ossuary for worshipping at many famous Buddhist pagodas [1 - 2]. Local people usually visit to the pagodas for pilgrimage purpose and might have some specific practices such as creeping beneath thorough the coffin containing holy dead bodies [3].

Here, the authors present on a more extraordinary situation, holy heart relics, which are specific religious-cultural artifact in Thailand. This kind of relic is rare in Buddhism. As already mentioned, this holy relic is usually originated after cremation ceremony. When cremation is performed, the whole body of those monks could be burnt but the hearts were remained and incorruptible. Although Buddhism does not mainly focuses on holy relics and heart is not a sacred organ in Buddhist belief, the holy sacred heart relic is also observable in Thailand.

Conflict of interest: None

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