

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON THE EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF SOMDET PHRA BUDDHĀCĀRIYA (TOH BRAHMARANGSI) TO THAI SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This article consisted of three objectives; 1) to study the monastic education of Somdet Toh in the early Rattanakosin period 2) to study the educational role of Somdet Toh and his literature works, and 3) to analyze the educational role of Somdet Toh to Thai Society. From the study found that the monastic education of Somdet Toh represented the life of samanera and bhikkhu in the early Rattanakosin period. He was educated Pariyatti in old Pāli tradition while practiced Patipati insight in the form of Majjhima Meditation. Many scholars neglected his educational roles in Pariyatti and Patipati. Somdet Toh played an important educational role in teaching Tipitaka and moralities. ‘School of Somdet Toh’ accommodated many novices and monks who came from all over the country to learn Pariyatti and Patthipathi. Later they went back to their provinces and became well-known teachers. Somdet Toh was not only made amulet “PhraSomdet” for no reason but mainly to cultivated people in Buddhānussati. He promoted the chanting Jinapañjara Gāthā to Thai’s society while was a pioneer in translating Tipitaka commentary of Mulapariyaya Sutta to Thai language. He composed moral poetry to teach his pupils to be up to other tricks. His collection of Gāthā reflects the needs of the monk in solving the lay problem in Thai Society. The insight of Somdet Toh innovated in solving the social problems was his educational’s role in Tipitaka. Somdet Toh’s education role changed after a century after his passing away. The purpose of propagating Somdet Toh’s fellows later seems to answer worldly purposes benefitting than the path of purification within. Of all, the importance of studying the educational role of Somdet Phra Buddhācāriya (Toh) is not only his path but also the collective historical result of early Rattanakosin monastic education. Somdet Toh was the Buddha-Sāsanadayāda in early monastic education whose impact is in monastic education and in Thai society presently and in the future.

Introduction

Somdet Toh or Somdet Phra Buddhācāriya¹ (Toh Brahmaransi) (1788-1872; B.E. 2331-2415) was born in 17 April B.E.2331 in the 7th years of Rattanakosin in the reign of King Rama I. Can one imagine how Somdet Toh perceived his early childhood life as a child of war without knowing his father after Ayudhaya's fall, Thonburi transition and joined with early dawn of Rattanakosin period? Somdet Toh was believed an illegitimate son of Phraya Chakri, who eventually became King Rama I². Another biography³ claimed some historical evidence that Somdet Toh was the illegitimate son of King Rama II.

Children of War



Somdet Toh's story appeared in the auto-biography paintings of Somdet Toh at Wat Indravihar, Bangkok, with various scholars' explanations and analyses. The story started with one day in 1787 or 1788 when the Phraya Chakri was on the military mission in northern Thailand after the Burmese invasion; he happened to get separated from his troops. As he rode along on his horse, he came across a house with a young woman about sixteen years old standing in front. Thirsty, he asked her for some water. She went to the well, got a bowl of water (in Thailand in the old days, they would drink water out of a bowl, rather than out of a glass) and crushed a lotus flower over the bowl, sprinkling the stamens all over the surface of the water. Then she handed the bowl to him as he was sitting on his horse. He took one long look at the lotus stamens on top of the water and then had to drink the water very carefully so as not to swallow them. As he handed the bowl back to her, he asked her, "Was that a trick?"⁴ "No," she said. "I saw that you were so thirsty that you might quickly drink water down and end up choking. So I figured this would be a good way to make sure that you drank slowly." Well. He asked her, "Are your parents around?" So she took him to her parents. They didn't know who he was, but he was obviously a nobleman, so when he told them, "I'd like to marry your daughter," they gave their consent.

¹Rerg Atthawibul, **Hall List name of Siam Sangharaja and Somdet Rajakana in Rattanakosin**, (Bangkok: Wat Arunrajvararam, 1978), pp. 248-250.

²Maha-Amarttri Phaya Thipkosa Sorn Lohanan, **Biography of Somdet Toh**, (Bangkok: Nithitham Printing, 1930), pp.14-15.

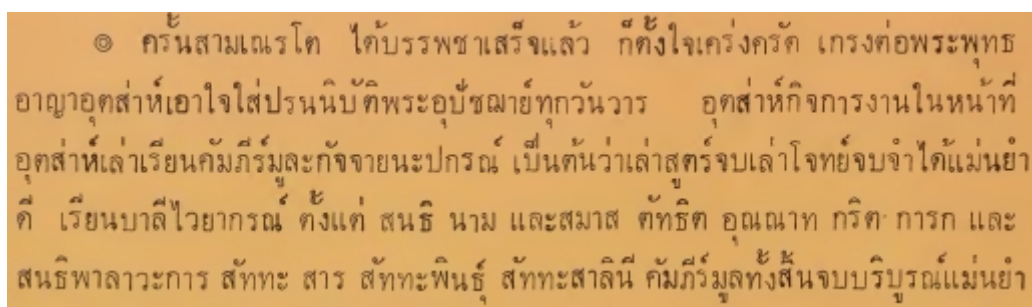
³Triyampawai, **Phra Somdet**, 7th Edition, (Bangkok: Thaibhum publisher, 2003), p. 36.

⁴Thanissaro Bhikkhu, **Legends of Somdet Toh**, (accessinsight.org, 2006).

So Phraya Chakri took a period with her during this army service, but as the mission was ending, he had to go back to Bangkok, and he gave her his belt in case she had a child with him before he went back to Bangkok. This small carving of the mother inherited in Somdet Toh in caring for the others.

Her whole family soon came to Bangkok when they discovered that she was pregnant. They moved onto a floating house on the bank of the Chao Phraya River in front of a monastery, Wat Indravihar⁵. Somdet Toh's Mother gave birth to a son and named him "Toh," which means "large." Another biography said that Somdet Toh was born near Wat Kaichon and Wat Sa Tue⁶ of Tha-Ruea district, which is very well-known among locals of Ayutthaya province. His family moved to Bangkok and stayed near Wat Bang Lumpu Bon after Somdet Toh's Birth. Venerable Luang Por Kaew of Wat Bang Lumpu Bon Temple received Somdet Toh as an adopted child.

The Buddhist Education in Early Rattanakosin



Somdet Toh was ordained as a samanera by Phra Bowornviriyathera of Wat Sangves with support from Phra Aranyik (Kaew)⁷. Phra Aranyik Kaew at Wat Indravihar (previously Wat Bangkhunpromnok) was highly knowledgeable in academics and meditation. He was well respected among general people and bandits. He was an incomparable expert in Mulakajjaya fundamental scriptures. Samanera Toh was fully committed to his role as a novice. He served his master by putting considerable effort in studying Mulakajjayapakorn Buddhist text, so he became fluent in the subject. He also studied the Pāli language, both in structure and all basic contents. The Venerable was so pleased with him that he taught him various kinds of knowledge, including meditation and practice for a strong mind. Samanera Toh became knowledgeable and gained expertise in various subjects. He usually went into the forests or to his home to try using the obtained knowledge until he was skillful in all sciences. Phra Aranyik Kaew also brought samanera Toh to Phra Horadhibodi, Phra Vichien, and Samientra Duang Krom Rajabhandit, to help to teach knowledge of Tipitaka of Buddhist Scripture.

Another biography⁸ states that Somdet Toh was ordained to be samanera by Phra KruYai of Wat Yai Muang Pichit (Now Wat Tha Luang) to study Mulakajjaya fundamental scriptures and study further with the Phra Khru Wat Chinartburi (Now Wat Phraborommathat in Chinart). Maha-Amarttri Phaya Thipkosa Sorn Lohanan in Biography of Somdet Toh

⁵Maha-Amarttri Phaya Thipkosa Sorn Lohanan, **Biography of Somdet Toh**, (Bangkok: Nithitham Printing, 1930), p. 15.

⁶Phrakru kalayanankul, **Biography of Somdet Toh**, (Thonburi: Wat Kalayanamitre, 1969), p. 1.

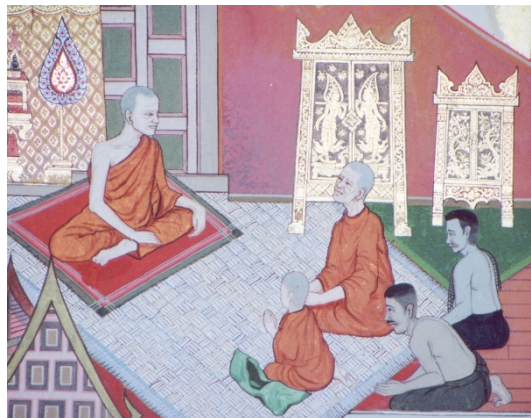
⁷Ibid., p. 5.

⁸Maha-Amarttri Phaya Thipkosa Sorn Lohanan, **Biography of Somdet Toh**, (Bangkok: Nithitham Printing, 2014).

explained samanera Toh life very descriptive that he had learned MulakajjayaPakorn, the last ten reincarnations lives of the Buddha, Dhammapada, Tika, Yochana and mantra chanting. While studying the *Tipitaka* scripture, he also learned how to translate into Laos, Khmer, and Burmese languages.



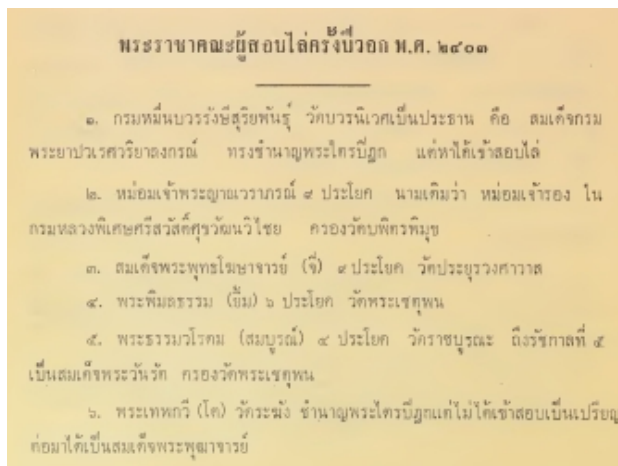
After samanera Toh completed a higher level of Pāli without any obstacle. Phra Arranyik Kaew planned to take samanera Toh to Wat Rakhangkhosittaram. One evening, the abbot of Wat Rakhang, Somdet Phra Buddhaghosachan Narg, dreamed of a giant white elephant eating manuscripts out of Temple's library⁹. After the elephant ate every palm scripture, the abbot woke up, and the dream reminded him that there would be a special person coming to his temple. Then Phra Arranyik took Samanera Toh to Somdet Phra Buddhaghosachan Narg Wat Rakhangkhosittaram in that morning.



After a period of studying at Wat Rakhang, SamaneraToh was seen as a genius who could comprehend various Pāli scriptures. So he was recommended and accommodated to meet Prince Itsarasunthon (Later King Rama II). SamaneraToh took the belt from his mother with him, and the Prince noticed and decided to give royal support to the Samanera. The Prince recommended he to study further with Sangharaja Suk¹⁰ at Wat Mahathat. The Prince also offered a royal barge to samanera Toh to give Dhamma talks to the public, which was usually offered for the royal family only.

⁹ Phrakrukalyananukul, **Biography of Somdet Toh**, (Thonburi: Wat Kalayanamitre, 1969).

¹⁰ Second Sangharaja of Rattanakosin.



(Legend of Buddhism, Prince Damrongrajanubhab)

Samanera Toh took refuge into monkhood when he was 21 years (2352 B.E.) with the support of Kromluang Issarasoonthorn (later King Rama II) to be a Royal patronage ordination under King Rama I at Wat Takrai (Wat Rajaburana) Pitsanulok and returned to study at Wat Mahathat. There was another evidence¹¹ stated that he was ordained in Wat Phra Srirattanasassadaram. King Rama, I appointed Bhikkhu Toh to be “MahaToh.” There are two approaches for monks to received Pāli status in the early Rattanakosin. First, it was by taking an exam through the sangha committee, and second it was given by the King according to his acceptance in his Pāli knowledge. Somdet Toh was appointed Pāli with passing grade 4 from the King or so-called “Parian Yok”. “Maha” in the early Rattanakosin was not only use for monks and samanera who were qualified by the Pāli exam but for royal support monk, so “Maha” stands for “Mahakarunathikun” (Great Royal Kindness).



When Somdet Toh was still samanera Toh- aged 18 in 2349 B.E. (1806), he came to learn the Majjhima Meditation system with Ven. Suk Kaithuean¹². Venerable Suk Kaithuean (1733-1822) or Suk the Forest Fowl, the fourth Supreme Patirach of the early Rattanakosin era, one of the great meditation masters of Somdet Phra Buddhacariya (Toh) Bramaramsi (1788-1872). Ven. Suk Kaithuean played an important role in establishing the Majjhima

¹¹Prince Damrong Rachanubhab and Prince Sommuti Amornpun, **Reungtang phra rachakhana phuyai nai krung Ratanakosin**, (The Appointment of High Ecclesiastical Ranks in the Bangkok Period), (Bangkok: Rungsilpkarnpim Press, 2002).

¹²Phra Khru Sangrak Veera Thavaro, **Biography of Somdet Suk Kaituen**, (Sampachanya Publication, 2009).

meditation system in the country. One of the special famous chantation of Ven. Suk to wildfowl to have peace around him in his residence called Wild fowl's Gāthā¹³:

Wild fowl's Gāthā (คาถาพญาไก่เลื่อน)

Ve da sa ku ku sa ta ve	เว ทา ส่า กุ กุ ส่า ทา เว
Ta ya sa ta ta sa ya ta	ทา ยะ ส่า ตะ ตะ ส่า ยะ ทา
Sa sa thi gu gu thi sa sa	ส่า ส่า ทึ กุ กุ ทึ ส่า ส่า
Ku tha gu pu pu gu tha gu	กุ ตะ กุ ภู ภู กุ ตะ กุ

Another important meditation master of Somdet Toh was Luang Phor Saeng, Wat Maneecholkhan in Lopburi. He was believed the one who designed and built the big white pagoda in the late period of King Rama IV by himself¹⁴. After that, he disappeared, and nobody ever saw him again. The story is about when Somdet Toh was invited to the ordination ceremony in Ang Thong. It took him only three hours to arrive from Wat Rakhang. After the ceremony, the host told people while wondered how he could come on time. Somdet Toh said that this specialty had been studied from Luang Por Saeng¹⁵. One special famous chantation Gāthā of Luang Phor Saeng¹⁶:

"Ra cho ha ra nan Ra chang ha ra ti ไร่ชอหะระนัง ไร่ชังหะระติ"

Role in Cultivating Buddhānussati

Somdet Toh also educated people on Buddhism through Buddhānussati. He initiated the production of small Buddha images anussati and gave them to people as a blessing, the Buddha image from this ongoing practice is now called "PhraSomdet." The amulets were believed to be blessed by SomdetToh through Jinapañjara Gāthā with support on the design by Luang Vicharnjarianai, the Royal Gold Craftsman¹⁷(Chang Sipmu:ช่างสิบหมู่), who helped him craft and recommended Somdet Toh to use Tung oil- น้ำมันตังอีว- to merge all ingredient in Phra Somdet for stronger quality. Phra Somdet could be implied as "innovative social media" in Thai Buddhism by bringing non-religious persons or Buddhists only an identity card to develop faith and know more about Buddhism by interacting through awareness of Buddha images. Phra Somdet amulet can also be used for the last minute of life, bringing the mind to realized Buddhānussati to good dead in the hospital or even soldier in the war¹⁸. The image of "Phra Somdet" was believed the replication of Buddha image in the Uposatha of Wat Rakhangkhosittaram. The three baselines under Buddha image in "Phra Somdet" represent "Tisikkhā" which are three aggregates of education: *Sīla* (moral discipline), *Samādhi* (concentration), and *Puñña* (wisdom). However, the protection of Phra Somdet results from the meditation of SomdetToh and also the user's moral discipline.

¹³Suchao Ploychum, **Biography and Collection works of Somdet phraariyavongsanyana phrasangharaja (Suk Nyanasamvara)**,(Bangkok: Mahamokut Press, 1987).

¹⁴King Chulaongkorn, **Rayathāng sadet praphāt Monthon 'Ayutthayā : B. E. 2421**, (Bangkok: Sophonpipatthanathorn Press, 1927).

¹⁵Phrakru kalayanankul, **Biography of Somdet Toh**, (Thonburi: Wat Kalayanamit, 1969).

¹⁶DhA V2, in Thai, [Online], Source: <http://www.84000.org/tipitaka/attha/attha.php?b=25&i=12&p=3> [April 17, 2019].

¹⁷Triyampawai, **Phra Somdet**, 7th Edition, (Bangkok: Thaibhum publisher, 2003), p.144.

¹⁸Interview with Phramaha Pongnararin Thitavamso, Wat Suthat Thepphawaram, 25 May 2018.

There are various Buddha images, from a small “Phra Somdet” to the “larger Luang PhorToh,” innovated by Somdet Toh with voluntary help from all classes of people in many temples as follows:

1. Wat Rakhangkhosittaram (วัดระฆังโฆสิตาราม), Bangkok, where he was an abbot and spent almost of his life-giving dhamma talks and produced the innovation of “Phra Somdet.”
2. Wat Mai Amataros (วัดใหม่อมตரச), Bangkok
3. Wat Chaiyoworawihan (วัดไชยวรวิหาร), Angthong
4. Wat Klangklongkoi (วัดกลางคลองข่อย), Ratchaburi
5. Wat Intharawihan (วัดอินทรวิหาร), Bangkok, where he helped to make foundation of the unfinished big Buddha image since his passing away
6. Wat Satue (วัดสะดือ), Ayutthaya, where Phra Dhammatheeraj Mahamuni¹⁹ (Thiang Aggadhammo) did the study and founded the pioneer project of Somdet Toh, by freeing the slaves after they help construct the Reclining Buddha. This is the initiative to abolish slavery in Thailand before King Rama V.
7. Wat Kudeethong (วัดกุฎีทองหรือวัดพิศเพียน), Ayuddhaya
8. Wat Lakorntham (วัดละคอนท่า), Bangkok
9. Wat KhunIndrapramool (วัดขุนอินทร์ประมูล), Angthong
10. Wat Maithongsen(วัดใหม่ทองเสน),Bangkok

Role in Dhamma Propagating

The legend stated that King Rama I listened to a Vessantara Jataka Matsi chapter sermonized by Samanera Toh and decided to give royal ordination support²⁰. When approaching the Vessantara Jataka season at the temple nearby, people always invited Samanera Toh to sermonize various chapters such as Himaphan, Thannakhan, Wanapawes, Chuchok, Chulaphon, Mahaphon, Kuman, Matsi, Sakkabap, Maharat, Chokasat, and Nakhonkan. SamaneraToh was able to sermonize all 13 chapters and make small sounds, sweet voices, rough voices, Mahaphon tricks, intonation marks and Rajasi intonation, brilliant gambit, breathing in and out, up and down thoroughly in all chapters. The supreme sacrifice made by Prince Vessantara touched the Buddhists so deeply that they liked to hear the story recited over and over again. Mahachart was so popular throughout Thailand in the early Rattanakosin and was the early dhamma teaching experienced Samanera Toh.

HRH Prince Saisanitwong discovered the evidence recorded of Somdet Toh historical Sermon named “The Sermon onthe12 Astrology Zodiac Signs (เทศน์๑๒นักษัตร)”. This Sermon received admiration explaining by Ven. Phra Ubalikunupamachariya (Chan Sirichanthoo) of Wat Boromniwas. It was published for the first free distribution (2,000 copies) in 1911. This piece is considered one fine record of a Buddhist sermon as historical evidence. The story began with Somdet Chaophraya Borommaha Sri Suriyawongse (the famous regent in the reign of King Rama V), or Somdet Phraprasart invited Somdet Toh to preach at the funeral of

¹⁹Phra Srivisutthisophon (Thiang Aggadhammo,Pali IX), **Thamnam Phrakrueng Somdet Lae Pathom Aggarakam**, (Bangkok: Thaimitrakarnpim, 1978), pp.1-14.

²⁰Prince Damrong Rachanubhab and Prince Sommuti Amornpun, **Reungtang phra rachakhana phuyai nai krung Ratanakosin** (The Appointment of High Ecclesiastical Ranks in the Bangkok Period), (Bangkok: Rungsilpkarnpim Press, 2002), p. 85.

Mom Lek (a member of his family that was his beloved one) at his residence which this research was translated from Thai into English to understand the excel of Somdet Toh's teaching in *Tipitaka*. In another time where foreign scholars come to ask a philosophical question such as where the heart of the World. Somdet To ask him short walk out from his Kuti to outside. He pointed his walking stick to the ground and told them here, "the heart of the world."



(Somdet To autobiography paints in Wat Indraviahar)

Somdet Toh delivered dhamma teaching not only to people but sometimes to the ghost. When Nang Nak at Pra Khanong District died in pregnancy, the ghost of Nang Nak had run wild. She haunted people in that area; even monks at Phra Khanong Temple were teased by her. Somdet Toh went to spend the night at Wat Mahabut at Pra Khanong Canal. He sat on the mound over Nang Nak's grave and called her to have a conversation with him. The ghost of Nang Nak talked and agreed with him in certain teachings. Phra Thep Singhaburajan, Luang por Jarun, recorded that Somdet Toh used Gatha "Metta Gunnang Arhang Metta-เมตตา คุณณ์ัง อชะระหัง เมตตา"²¹ to teach compassion and forgiveness to Nang Nak's. Finally, he dug up the buried Nang Nak's frontal bone and polished it until it was shiny. He brought it with him and invited Nang Nak's to Wat Rakhang. After that, the haunting ghost of Nang Nak was disappeared. At that time, Somdet Buddhaghosacharya (Mom Ratchavongse Charoen) was still a novice living at the cell of Somdet Toh. Nang Nak's ghost came out to disturb him. He complained to Somdet Toh that she had disturbed him. Somdet Toh shouted at Nang Nak ghost that "Don't disturb the novice," as a result, Nang Nak ghost calmed down. Once in a while, she came out to tease the novice M.R.Charoen. He had to complain to M.C. PhraPhutthabat. M.C. PhraPhutthabat was angry with Nang Nak's ghost and blamed her for being a woman and was not allowed to disturb the novice while studying. Then Nang Nak ghost calmed down²². Nang Nak became an outstanding folktale of Thai ghosts, compared to western ghosts such as Vampire or Frankenstein even though most general people neglected the teaching role of Somdet Toh, turning Nang Nak to be a good deity.

²¹Phra Debsinghapura-cariya (Jarun T.hitadhammo), **The Law of Karma: Dhamma Practice**, Vol.VI, English Tr. by Dr. Suchitra Onkom, (Bangkok: Horatanachai Printing Limited Partnership, 2004), pp. 44-45.

²²Maha-Amarttri Phaya Thipkosa Sorn Lohan, **Biography of Somdet Toh**, (Bangkok: Nithitham Printing, 1930), pp. 89-90.



Role as Pāli Teacher in Monastery

According to Prince Damrongrajanubhab, Somdet Toh had deep knowledge in *Tipitaka*, so he was named Nangsuedee²³ (Good Book), which was used in that time representing scholars who gained Pāli knowledge and used Pāli to study *Tipitaka*. “Good Book” needed two capabilities; knowing Pāli to understand *Tipitaka* (which in early Rattanakosin period there was not yet a complete Thai *Tipitaka* translation), and the other teaching knowledge from *Tipitaka* to others to become an Awaken in order to sustain sasana. Somdet Toh was simply a monastic Pāli teacher to young bhikkhu and samanera in his time. The educational Role of Somdet Toh in Pariyatti and Patipatti seemed overlooked by most of the people. In those times, Wat Rakang Monastic School received many novice monks from all over the country to learn Pariyatti and Patthipathi from Somdet Toh. Many teachers then later came back to his province became well known. Somdet Toh was also selected into the Pāli examination committee during his time in B.E.2403²⁴. One of Somdet Toh’s great disciples was Somdet Phra Puttha Baat Pilan (Mom Chao That) in B.E.2407. Somdet Phra Puttha Baat Pilan was a close disciple of Somdet Toh. He learned Pāli in Somdet Toh’s Monastic school with good knowledge in Pāli and passed the Grade VII Pāli exam. He was also the abbot of Wat Phra Chetupol (Wat Pho), the first Open University in Thailand. His literature work in poem regarding his Tudong journey was “Lilit Momchao Phra Somdet Phra Buddhācāriya Sadet Tudong-ลิลิตหม่อมเจ้าพระสมเด็จจุฬามหาราชเสด็จจรดงค์.” He was later the 7th abbot of Wat Rakhankhosittaram after Somdet Toh passed away. Another disciple of Somdet Toh since samanera was Somdet Buddhaghosacharya (Mom Ratchavongse Charoen), later the 8th abbot of Wat Rakhankhosittaram. Somdet Toh taught him to pass grade IV in Pāli since samanera. Somdet Buddhaghosacharya (Mom Ratchavongse Charoen) continued his study to pass grade V in Pāli and received royal ordination support from King Rama V with Somdet Phra Puttha Baat Pilan (Mom Chao That) as the preceptors. Somdet Mom Ratchavongse Charoen was specialized in traditional royal Buddhist chanting called sorapanbundit (สรภานบัณฑิต), especially the Royal Trut ceremony (พระราชพิธีตรุษ) in Lanka tradition. He also had capabilities in composing Buddhist poems. He composed khlung, a

²³Pim Indravicha, **Wat Indravihar and Biography of Somdet Toh in Ubosada Painting ceremony**, (Bangkok: Amrin Printing and Publishing, 1994), p.66.

²⁴Prince Damrongrajanubhab, **Prachumm pranipon kiawkub Thamnanthang phrabuddhasasana**, (Bangkok: Rungruangtham Press, 1971).

type of poem, about Ramayana in Wat Phrasrirattanasasadaram²⁵ and various khlong poems regarding Buddhism.



(Somdet PhraPutthaBaatPilan (Mom Chao That)
and Buddhaghosacharya (Mom Ratchavongse Charoen))

The Chanting: Jinapañjara Gāthā

Jinapañjara Gāthā was recognized as the most popular Gāthā for chanting among all Buddhists in Thailand. The chanting of Jinapañjara was believed to provide many benefits such as health, wealth, success, and compassion. However, everyone connected to Jinapañjara through Somdet Toh and thought he composed this Gāthā. The meaning of Jinapañjara can be translated as 'the armor of the Buddha.' Jinapañjara is a combination of two words, *Jina* means 'the conqueror,' which is the Buddha, and *Panjara* mean 'cage.' Thus, Jinapañjara means 'the cage that can protect oneself from any dangers and enemies, sometimes known in English as "The Cage of the Conquerer." Jinapañjara can be translated with a different meaning, depend on the purpose and perspective of the translator. The important point of this text is that it was composed in the form of a basic verse "Patthayawatra Chant ปฐยาวัตรฉันท" which is recognized among the Pāli scholars as to the simplest one.

However, the history and the correct Pāli version of Jinapañjara are still not well researched, especially for academic education to the public. Somdet PhraNyanasamvara, Wat Bovornives also had deep faith in this Gāthā; he discovered similar Pāli verses from Sri Lanka, so he re-edited the whole text and published it on his birthday anniversary in 1975(B.E. 2518)²⁶. He was unsure about the origin of these verses, so he asked his disciple Suchao Ploychum to research and consulted with various academic scholars, including *PhraDhammananda* Thera of Wat ThaMa-O *Lampang*²⁷.

²⁵Prince Damrong Rachanubhab, **Collections works of Somdet Buddhaghosacharya (Mom Ratchavongse Charoen) Wat Rakangkositaram**, (Bangkok: Sophonpipathanakorn Press, 1928).

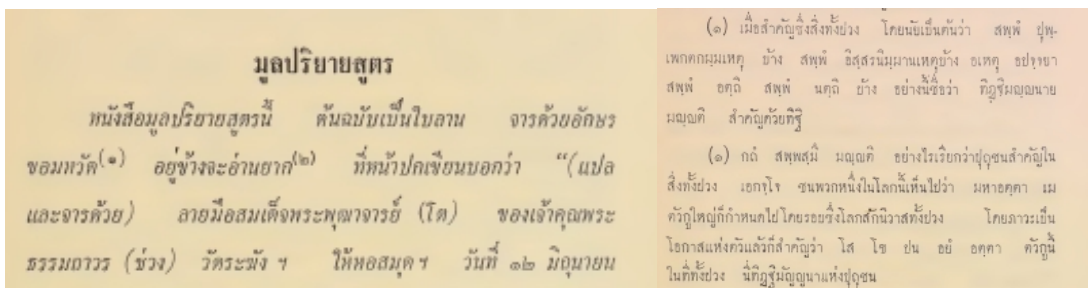
²⁶ Sulak Sivaraksa, "HISTORY OF JINAPAÑJARĀGATHĀ", **Jounal of Siam Society**, Volume 75 (1987): 301-302.

²⁷Somdet Nyanasamvara Charoen, **History of Jinapanjara**, (Bangkok:Dhammasapa Publisher, 2013), pp. 2-3.



(Jinapanjara general version and His Holiness Somdej Nyanasanvara)

Afterward, Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara held a small academic conference with the scholars on 30th January 1987(B.E.2530) in Chiangmai to clarify various points concerning the history of these verses. He found texts that mentioned this Gāthā in ancient Burmese and Sinhalese scriptures. The scriptures stated that Jinapañjara was written in Chiang Mai in the King of Lanna, Nawrahta Minsaw (1578–1607). The King was appointed to the Lanna throne by his father, King Bayinnaung of Burma. Because of the popularity of animistic rituals considered a violation of Buddhist principles, Nawrahta Minsaw consulted with the monastic community and decreed to his citizens to chant the Jinapañjara text. There are two well-known versions of Jinapañjara in Thailand. The first version was revised by Phra Bhadramuni (In), Wat Thong Noppakun with the help of Phrakhru Kalyananukul, Wat Kalayanamitr, which has been used mainly in Wat Rakhankhosittaram since 1972, and the other version by Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara Wat Bowornniwes.



(Phrakru Kalyananukul, Biography of Somdet Toh)

Mulapariyāya Sutta

Somdet Toh had Pāli knowledge highly to understand deep knowledge in Tipiṭaka. Mulapariyāya Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya, the sutta that Somdev Toh pioneered in translating commentary from the Khmer language into Thai in his approach. The scripture of Mulapariyāya Sutta, which wrote by Somdet Toh himself in hand-writing for the royal teaching occasion, was preserved at the national library. This Sutta teaches that clinging to views is one of the four forms of clinging that cause suffering by attaching something to the mind. Buddha recommended his followers to relinquish their clinging to any views in form and formless categories with relationships to mind that interpreted into the experience. The key message of this sutta that lies in the commentary scripture of Somdet Toh is the relationship between the disciples and the master. After learning knowledge from the master, there are many disciples who think that they know better than their master without respect and gratitude. They forget the kindness of the master in teaching knowledge to them. They are clinging to various views which Buddha explained in the Sutra. Unlike Somdet Toh, who

was neither arrogant nor competitive with his masters, he was committed to serve and follow his master, especially Lord Buddha. These moralities were rare to find in general disciples and were the main content of the Sutra.

Poetry for Pupils

According to the study found, Somdet Toh composed a poem, or Klawn named “Poetry for Pupils (สุภาวจิตสอนศิษย์ค้ำกลอน)” which he composed as a poem with the intention of teaching his disciples precepts-sila. This poem has poetical powers in explaining historical and moral situations with simple narrative sentences of deep meaning. This klawn has 352 words and eight khlongs. The story is all about the techniques of bandits in deceiving monks at each temple. Somdet Toh composed this klawn teaching his disciple monks in a funny style and commiserates approach. One of the stories is about the bandits using the child to cry at a river bank near a temple and asked for help from a monk. The monk was kind to help this child while going arms round in the morning; the child stole every valuable thing in the temple. Somdet Toh’s Klawn expresses smart knowledge in immoral actions through the poem, and the monk is the main character in the poem to face many disrupted and immoral persons’ tricks.

Somdet Toh’s Book²⁸

“This Samut was real. It belongs to Somdet Toh. I am the one who went to take the Samut Somdet back to Wat Rakhang from LuangPhorMaha Heng (Wat Kalayanamitr). He borrowed it from Chao KhunLamul.”²⁹ Somdet Toh’s book was given to Phra Ratchdhammabhani (ChaokhunLamul), the ex-abbot of Wat Rakhankositaram by Phra Dhammadhavorn(Chuang Chandachote), the closest principle of Somdet Toh in Wat Rakhang. Phrakrukalyananukul studied and transcribed Somdet Toh’s book that Phra Ratchdhammabhani kept. This book collected traditional local knowledge; the secret Gāthā, astrology, traditional medicine, and Yantra. Somdet Toh compiled and composed its essence in simple chanting with keywords related to Tipiṭaka. He had described many approaches to chanting Gāthā for different purposes and various techniques in focusing on a specific language with mindfulness.

A Century after Somdet Toh Passed away

Wat Rakhang, after the 100th year of Somdet Toh’s pass away [1872-1972(B.E.2415-2515)] during the time of Phra Ratchathammaphani³⁰, the 10th abbot of Wat Rakhang, with support from the civil servants and laypersons planned to rebuild a wooden Pariyatti monastic school and renovated the most invaluable Ho Phra Trai Pidok Library, but due to finance shortage, the committee of the temple decided to produce Somdet amulets on this occasion to raise support to those objectives. The famous “Somdet 100 years” amulets were in demand following Phra Somdet in Somdet Toh’s time due to the royal participation of King Rama 9th as well as the Royal family and many famous monks from all over the country, who joined the support of this anniversary. But now, few people know that this initiation was to support monastic education.

²⁸ Preecha Iamtham, **Biography of Somdet BUDDHA-ĀCĀRIYA (Toh)**, (Bangkok: Kurusapa, 1999).

²⁹ Interview with Phra Pimol Bhavanapitharn, 2018.

³⁰ Later rank before passed away was Phra Thepnyanavethi, 10th Abbot of Wat Rakhang 1972-1987 (B.E.2515-2530).

“Hoh Phra Trai Pidok was a place where Sangharaja Si stayed before, and some old people said Somdet Toh too.”³¹



(Sagharaja Sri First Abbot of Wat Rakangkositaram, Two Kingdom Sangharaja)
Fua Hariphithak was the first artist who founded Ho Phra Trai Pidok as a national heritage treasure of King Rama I’s residence with the important beauty of Ayuddhya’s mural paintings inside and craftsmanship of King Rama II as a prince that needs to be restored and reconstructed in a scientifically correct and proper way³². The reconstruction of the remaining invaluable of Ho Phra Trai Pidok Library that aging with time from 1971 to 1982 is the restoration of the historic house and the significant relevance to the Monastic education of the temple and Thai Sangha in *Tipitaka*. The First Pāli examination was held at Wat Rakhangkhosittaram, where His Holiness Sangharaja Si stayed³³ and later moved to the Grand Palace and Wat Mahathat until the end of King Rama III. King Rama, I dismantled his residence and re-erected as Buddhist Library, Hoh Phra Trai Pidok, to Wat Rakhangkhosittaram to deposited the *Tipitaka*. King Rama, I remarked that “the error of *Tipitaka* cannot lead to Patipati and Pativeddasasana. There are very few monks who have deep knowledge of *Tipitaka*. If we lost those monks, all Pariyatti, Patipati, and Pativedha would quickly disappear. All being will not have the foundation to depend on in the near future.” This *Tipitaka* house is the important signature linkage of the Three Kingdom; Ayuddhya, Thonburi, and Rattanakosin remind us of the monastic education in the early Rattanakosin period to present time.



(The Tripitaka Hall was originally the residence of King Rama I when he was still Phra Ratchawarintra in the Thonburi Kingdom.)

³¹ Interview with Phra Vibul, Monk in Wat Rakhang, 16 June 2016.

³² Interview with Sulak Sivalaksa, 1 May 2015.

³³ Prince Damrongrajanubhab, **Prachumm pranipon kiawkub Thamnanthang phrabuddhasasana**, (Bangkok: Rungruangtham Press, 1971), p. 22.

The monastic School at Wat Rakhang did not only have the Pāli part. In 1949, Somdet PhraBuddhācāriya (Arth Asapathera) as Phra Pimoldhamma visited and asked the Myanmar government to send some highly educated monks to revive and teach Abhidhamma in Thailand. However, there were also obstacles to Abhidhamma revival in Thailand. Thai Sangha during that time still had curious and rejected Abhidhamma study. Most of the questions were raised whether Abhidhamma was what did the Buddha taught. Another reason was Thai Society at that time was still unfamiliar with Myanmar due to the Ayuddhya tragedies. Somdet PhraBuddhācāriya (Arth Asapathera) had deep faith in Somdet Toh; he also composed a Thai translation of Jinapañjara Gatha. Somdet Arth recommended the sangha to start Abhidhamma education at Wat Rakhang. Phra Saddhamma Chotika Dhammajariya came to Wat Rakhang to lay the foundation for Abhidhamma study in Thailand. Phra Saddhamma Chotikahas studied in the formal and alternative Myanmar Monastic school traditions; Mahagandhayong in Amarapura, Mandalay tradition, and Mahā Visutārāma in Pakhokku. He started to design the whole curriculum in 1950 and was ready to open formal Abhidhamma University on 9 January 1955. The Abhidhamma examinations from 1955 to 1971 had 9,038 students taking the exam totally, and 38 were graduated as Abhidhamma graduates. The fellow disciples of Phra Saddhamma Chotika also helped setting up Abhidhamma School in temples all over the country, especially the main presently active one at Wat Mahathat. Wat Rakhang's monastic education in Abhidhamma educated monks in the temple and monks and laypersons all over the country, who come to learn and benefit from Wat Rakhang.

The various temples that Somdet Toh supported in his times later became the centers of local communities and supported higher education through monastic schools for laypeople as follows:

1. KositSamosorn School and *Satri Wat Rakhang School* (โรงเรียนโฆสิตสโมสรและโรงเรียนสตรีวัดระฆัง), Bangkok
2. Wat Mai Amataros School (โรงเรียนวัดใหม่อมตรส), Bangkok
3. Wat Chaiyo School (โรงเรียนวัดไชโย), Angthong
4. Wat Intharawihan School (โรงเรียนวัดอินทรวีหาร),
5. Wat Satue School (โรงเรียนวัดสะตือ), Tharua, Ayuddhaya

There are many people, from monks to laypersons, who are inspired by Jinapañjara introduced by Somdet Toh. Many studies further adjust and promote the Gatha in their Pāli investigation. At present, this study found 15 versions of Jinapañjara. The development of multimedia in propagating Jinapañjara reaches people of different groups, ages, and classes. Now people can find Jinapañjara in various media from leaflets, books, CDs, DVDs, youtube, mp3, and in the holy water bottle with different forms of creative expression. Satiengphong Wannapok was the first one who introduced Jinapañjara into a song both in Pāli and Thai with Surapol Tonavanik, a national artist who was arranging the music. There is also a famous adventure novel, “Petch Phra Uma,” which mentioned the use of Jinapañjara as a powerful mantra to defeat ghosts³⁴. Arogyasathan Health clinic, founded by Dr.Supachai Charusombun, uses Jinapañjara as Mantra therapy for his patients. The chanting is rhythmic in a certain way that can balance the blood flow, opens up the energy channels, and cures

³⁴ Panomthien, **Petch Phra Uma volume 5 : naga devi**, (Bangkok: Baan Vannagam, 1992), p. 1391.

certain diseases³⁵. There is also Jinapañjara chanting club that organizes merit activities related to Somdet Toh, such as vegetarian promotion, blood donation, and chanting on special occasions. This group comes to chant at Wat Rakhang in the meditation hall of King Taksin once a week. Somdet Toh and Jinapañjara's chanting story was also in a scene of Mae Nak movie directed by Nonzee Nimibutr. Those are the effects of Jinapañjara on laypeople, especially for worldly purposes.

Somdet Toh's story becomes a phenomenon of the belief transferring from family to schools from generation to generation internationally. The multi-educational approach becomes popular with online media, drawing collective learning and practice to a global level. SomdetToh's educational role can be the practical knowledge for Buddhist studies in the modern world. This needs to be addressed for historical and archeological studies in the scientific method to develop "SomdetToh Studies." These resources are prepared to re-check and re-correct within media and Thai Society.

Conclusion

The aim of this study is to analyze the educational role of Somdet Phra Buddhācāriya (Toh) in Thai society. In the chapter, the educational concepts are presented as found in Tipiṭaka. Then the interpretation of those concepts, which are enshrined in the commentaries and documentary methodology, are discussed. This is followed by interviews and discussion includes the review of the primary and secondary information based on literature work of Somdet Toh and related materials. The study includes the educational background of Somdet Toh, his educational role and his literature works, and the analysis of his educational contribution to Thai society.

The monastic education of Somdet Toh represented the life of samanera and bhikkhu in the early Rattanakosin. There were informal methods of textual study in the early Rattanakosin before changing into the formal oral examination with the committee. There were freedoms in designing content for students, depending on the hand of the abbot as principal, starting from traditional teaching in Kaccayana's Pāli grammar to laid foundation to study further in Pāli-Tipiṭaka and let the student decide whether they wish to continue their study in higher great Pali-Nikaya Texts. Some student went to the temple as a monk not because they wanted to study dhamma, but it was the only place where education was provided after Great War. Somdet Toh's learning journey by finding masters in Pariyatti and Patipati. The bibliological approach of monastic education through Somdet Toh shed light on broader issues and trends in re-thinking the appropriate model of monastic education of Samanera and Bhikkhu in modern Thai Society.

Somdet Toh's educational role supported and developed Buddha's way from Buddhānussati, Dhammānussati, and Saṅghānussati. His initiative work through "PhraSomdet" and "Buddha Statues" brings people's first impression of the Buddha. He solved the problem of each individual by creative teaching. He promoted the chanting Jinapañjara Gāthā to Thai's Society while pioneering in translate *Tipiṭaka* commentary of Mulapariyaya Sutta into Thai. Many scholars neglected his educational roles in composing Pariyatti literary works. Somdet Toh was renowned for his very intelligence in response to various teachings, and his vision was incomparable to other monks in his time. He laid the

³⁵ Justin Thomas Mcdaniel, **The lovelorn ghost and the magical monk**, (USE: Columbia University press, 2014), p. 74.

foundation of moral discipline and condition of giving from material to insight wisdom to develop people through the path of *Tisikkhā* education progressively in early Rattanakosin.

The disciples and fellows of Somdet Toh's educational lineages support his legacy, knowledge, and belief transferring from generation. The educational role of Somdet Toh in his time is different from a century after his passing away. The purpose of propagating SomdetToh's fellows later seems to answer worldly purposes benefitting for their own material lives but losing the initial aim of Somdet Toh, in his time, teaching people to the highest happiness, *nibbāna*. The appearance and symbols of "Phra Somdet" can derive their meaning from the association with the Threefold principle. The prayer of *Jinapañjara* should not stop benefit to only worldly purpose but concentrate and meditate to the path of purification with Somdet Toh. The teaching insight of Somdet Toh would result in lead to detachment in suffering. The insight of Somdet Toh innovates a solution in solving the social problems based on *Tipiṭaka* actively.

Lastly, the main reason behind the appointment as "Somdet PhraBuddhācāriya" was his educational's role in *Tipiṭaka*. Wat Rakhang was placed an important role in Buddhist education in early Rattanakosin by Sangharaja Si. King Rama I, The Royal Chakri Dynasty, and the Thai people attempted efforts in reviving Buddhist education in the early Rattanakosin period. SomdetToh played an important educational role in teaching *Tipiṭaka* and moralities, *School of Somdet Toh*(สำนักสมเด็จพะพุทธมาจารย์(โต)), for many novices and monks who came from all over the country to learn *Pariyatti* and *Patthipathi*, and later went back to their provinces and became well known teachers. His educational role created a community of wise people involving the integral development of an individual from different classes; The Kings, Officers, Foreigners, and Villagers, to become teacher-student, Parent-Children relation development according to the principle of *Tisikkhā*, the living education in Buddha's Way. Thai Buddhism has three major characteristics: the Monastic Community, Educational Institution, and Royal Patronage. The educational role of Somdet Toh would help inspiring one to neither achieve the aim of an ideal *bhikkhu* for the future of *sāsana* nor guide the ordinary person to holistic learning of *Tisikkhā*. Of all, the importance in studying the Educational role of Somdet Phra Buddhācāriya (Toh) is not only his individual path but also the collective result of early Rattanakosin Monastic education. Somdet Toh was the *Buddha-Sāsanadayāda* in Early Monastic Education, whose impact is in monastic education and in Thai society in the present and the future.

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