

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL RELIGIOUS DISCOURSES AND MODERNITY IN NORTHERN THAI CONTEXT

As Buddhism has been a political system created by each nation-state (Hayashi, 2003: 11), we can find the incorporation of Buddhist identity into the lands which were owned by indigenous groups who worshipped the spirits in the legitimization of authority. It has created religious discourses as a ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and make function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statement, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1980: 131).

However, the process of incorporation of Buddhist identity into indigenous beliefs and practices has not been completely accomplished. Even though indigenous spirit worship was integrated into Buddhism under ‘Buddhicization’ process in which Buddhism become dominant during the premodern or was officially banned by the reformed Buddhism in the modern period, the belief in spirits still has a strong persistence and permeates into the everyday practice of the people until present. In this process, we can find the politics of religious space which had been used by both state and populace as a strategy in the construction of discourses.

2.1 Spirits Belief in Local Religious Practices

The worship of spirits was widely practiced throughout Lanna long before Buddhism first entered into the region. Until now, the belief in spirits remains a powerful meaning-system in people’s life-world. It has exerted the most persistent influence on the daily life of the people from the past until the present. We can see Buddhism and spirit worship side-by-side; many local people make daily offerings before the spirits while at the same time praying to a Buddha figure. An obvious example of this coexistence is the ‘spirit houses’ which are built as a home for local

spirits and can be seen in or outside almost every home or even in the Buddhist temple. Most of the people may call themselves Buddhist, but beneath the surface, the dominant spirits belief has the most influence on daily lives. These people believe in the ghosts, spirits, demons, and a plethora of other spirit beings. Making peace with these spirits and living financially prosperous lives is what they seek and long for.

In Chom Thong town, there are some examples that showed the coexistence of Buddhism and spirit worship which stand side-by-side. In a temple of the two Buddha's footprints which is situated in front of the Holy Relic Temple, there is a paper on temple's legend which was printed for dissemination. One side of the paper is the story of the Myth of the coming of Buddha to this area and Buddha had come for receiving food offerings at this place which became the name of the temple (the temple with the Buddha's two footprints). In the other side of paper, there is another local story telling about the local name of temple called *wat dang*. The story was about Khun Phaen, the legendary Ayutthaya warrior living some 450 years ago. Khun Phaen is also a master in mantra or formulas with supernatural power. He was a disciple of Achan Khong, a magic-expert monk, for magical studies. His biography was far more extended and rather a story by poetic authors of the early Siamese period. In the paper, the story was told that:

During the war between Ayutthaya and Chiang Mai, Khun Phaen had led an army to Chiang Mai. On his way back, Khun Phaen took a break at Chom Thong and fell in love with Laothong, the daughter of Phraya Kham Maen who was Chom Thong's ruler. When Laothong was pregnant, Khun Phaen contrived up for the baby. Then, Khun Phaen brought the dead baby from Laothong and roasted the baby in the area which was called *wat yang* (*yang* means roasted) and now became *wat dang* [translated from a paper on Wat Dang temple's legend].

Khun Phaen was the first who created Kuman Thong. In the story which was written by poetic authors of the early Siamese period, he brought the dead baby from the womb of the dead Bua Klee, one of his wives, to the temple outer area within the chanting hall where the Buddha image is placed. The temple and its outer area are so

sacred place that no mighty ghosts or spirits can enter. Based on the legend descriptions, Khun Phaen was chanting some sacred mantras to invoke the spirit of Kuman Thong while roasting the dead baby on the fire. The main purpose of creating Kuman Thong in the ancient time was for protecting the owner. The young child ghost could be activated with mantra to fight the owner's enemies or to protect the owner's treasures.

I found that the story of Khun Phaen in Chom Thong version was different from the one which was written by poetic authors of the early Siamese period, i.e. it was Plai Ngam (his son) who volunteered to lead an army to Chiang Mai, and Khun Phaen brought the dead baby from Bua Klee. However, the Chom Thong version might be the process of localization. I asked an old man, age 70, who is a lay leader of this temple that “The story of Khun Phaen is written by the author. Was it a true story here?” The old man responded firmly that “Right, that story was written by the author, but this one is the real story.” The point is not whether the story is true or false, but that the local people believe that it is true. The magical belief and belief in spirits have been transmitted side-by-side with the Buddhist beliefs until the present time. For instance, belief in Kuman Thong or a young child’s ghost is widely recognized and practices. It is traditionally created in the form of a young child with various materials, such as wood, bronze, ivory, plaster, etc. The main purpose of creating Kuman Thong in the ancient time is for protecting the owner. The young child’s ghost could be activated with mantra to fight the owner's enemies or to protect the owner's treasures. Creating present-era Kuman Thong, the guru monks no longer use such grilling method but create them with sacred materials and activate their lives by the holy mantras. Almost all the present-era Kuman Thong has been created for wealth and for fortune-fetching purposes. In Chom Thong, we could find Kuman Thong figures at the lowest step of the ‘hyper-syncretistic’ altars of spirit-mediums and magical monks in which the Buddha is placed at the highest position.

During my fieldwork in Chom Thong town, I found that people have a strong belief in spirits that offers them a powerful system of meaning in daily lives. Another example is about the story of a man who was shot dead. A woman, age 62, said there was a man who rented a house in front of her house was shot dead a few years ago. This man had an affair with another man’s wife. Then her husband hired a gunman to

kill him. She said “I saw some offerings to the spirits (banana vassal with foods, sweets, flowers and incense) before the killing day and after a few days there were also some offerings outside of the house.”

The belief in the local spirits and ghosts are accepted as an integral part of the villagers’ life-world. When the local monks preached against the ghosts or spirits, it was not because they doubted their existence: rather, they opposed the practice of worshipping the spirits (Kamala, 1997: 209). The Buddhist traditions in Lanna were influenced by the different forms of indigenous spirit-worship and by the Mahayana and Tantric traditions that flourished prior to the fourteenth century (Kamala, 1997: 3-5). Buddhism is a very flexible religion; adherents can accept or reject much of the Buddhist teachings and embrace other religions along with Buddhism.

The blend of the spirit world with Buddhism has resulted in the variety of customs and religious practice today. One striking example was the hot debate in 2004 in which a female senator Rabiabrat Pongpanich has offended Buddhists by challenging the prohibition that banned women from entering the inner area of Phra That Doi Suthep’s main pagoda. The senator was refused entrance, and said this violated her right as a woman as set out in clause 30 of the Thai Constitution. She also asked the National Buddhism Bureau to give her reasons for the refusal (Nopniwat and Saksit, 2004).

The National Buddhism Office (NBO) officially called on Phra That Doi Suthep Temple in Chiang Mai to review its rule against women accessing the temple's Buddha relic. The temple's public relations official insisted that the ban is consistent with ancient and ingrained beliefs of the Lanna culture and people. He said Rabiaprat did not understand the Lanna traditions. Rabiabrat also argued that women are allowed to visit a relic in Nan, another Lanna province. “If it's part of Lanna tradition, every temple should apply the same rule.” She added that both male and female visitors were allowed to make merit before relics in Nakhon Si Thammarat, except for women who are menstruating (Thanyaporn and Krissana, 2004). She also argued “the temples should instruct women on certain aspects of behavior, such as not entering religious places during menstruation” (Nopniwat and Saksit, 2004).

Wat Phra That Doi Suthep responded to the bureau National Buddhism in a letter they intended to be made public. The temple justified this custom of excluding

women from *stupas* by giving the following three reasons; 1) Belief: Lanna people (northern Thai) believe that objects contained in the pagoda, especially Buddha's relics, are sacred because they were religiously blessed with a *yanta* (*mantra*) to prevent them from being stolen. This *yanta* could be harmed if women or any polluted items of women, such as *pha-thung* (traditional Thai skirt worn only by women) or underwear, come close to it. Women are also forbidden to stand astride sacred objects. 2) Tradition: Because Lanna ancestors have these beliefs, they have passed these beliefs on from generation to generation, so now it has become a tradition. 3) Respect: Lanna people have good traditional customs and culture that have existed for a long time. Like other regions of Thailand, if you enter into Lanna region, then you are expected to follow and respect the beliefs of that region (Aarpawatchrute, 2004: 16 cited in Kulavir, 2007: 70-71).

Some expert in Lanna studies also believed that this custom is intended to protect the women themselves from "*khued*" or harm caused by the supernatural powers of these sacred objects. This custom is to protect sacred objects such as the Buddha's relics from the supposed impurity of women; in particular, exposure to menstruating women is believed to destroy the sacredness of object. Many northern Thai people feel this custom should be preserved, as a tradition (Kulavir, 2007: 71).

There was much public protest against her, including rallies, death threats and ritual cursing (Kulavir, 2007: 71). People in Chiang Mai and nearby provinces have been discussing the issue for more than a week through radio programs, newspapers and television. She is accused of showing disrespect for Buddhist beliefs and a Lanna custom. On July 7, dissatisfaction with her action reached the point where a crowd that included elderly people, monks, teachers and teenagers gathered at Wat Lok Moli and Buddha Sathan, Chiang Mai, to sign their names calling for her to be ousted from her political posts (Nopniwat and Saksit, 2004).

The abbot of Wat Lok Moli said what the senator had been trying to do was "really sinful" according to Buddhist customs and would stoke up anger in the fervent Buddhists of the north.

The chairman of the province's Culture and Customs Conservation Club, Pichai Kotwichian, said that he felt upset with senator and called on Rabiabrat to review her actions and apologize. Pichai said:

The custom has been accepted for a long time and has become a Lanna tradition that everyone should respect. Pra That Doi Suthep is highly respected by the local people and even high-ranking people and royal descendants have never objected to the prohibition [Nopniwat and Saksit, 2004].

One retired teacher said she felt as if the senator had insulted the people of Chiang Mai and their customs. She added she was very angry with the senator when she listened to her speaking on the subject on TV. She said:

Chiang Mai women have paid respect to and followed the prohibition and never considered it their right to enter the sacred place before, because they can distinguish the law from the customs [Nopniwat and Saksit, 2004].

Thanet Homthanikul, chairman of the Chiang Mai Teenagers Club, said it was improper for the senator to insist she had a right to enter the pagoda. He said:

As I am a Buddhist, I want to protect my religion; otherwise other people will keep on offending our religious customs [Nopniwat and Saksit, 2004].

Lanna people from Chiang Mai and nearby provinces believe that her 'disrespect' has frightened and annoyed the spirit of all Lanna ancestors who have been protecting the town and blessing all residents. Then, a ceremony to appease the spirit of the Lanna ancestors was performed at the main pagoda of Wat Pra That Doi Suthep. It was led by the President of Chiang Mai Council who is a granddaughter of Prince Kaeo Naowarat, the last King of Lanna and Prince of Chiang Mai, together with Chiang Mai's Member of Parliament, and chiefs-of-staff of the 3rd Army Region. Hundreds of monks, government officials from the Provincial Cultural Office, students, and members of the public participated in the ceremony (Autsadaporn, 2004).

Prof. Manee Payomyong, a specialist in Lanna arts and a noted person of language and culture said:

The ceremony is not new at all. It was regularly practiced in the Lanna kingdom in ancient times when any disaster that greatly affected the people occurred” [Autsadaporn, 2004].

The ceremony was begun with Buddhist ritual for making merit to the ancestor spirits, especially to the spirit of Phra Chao Kue Na, the King who brought the Buddha relics to the pagoda. Later, Prof. Manee Payomyong performed a ceremony to boost Lanna people’s morale. Many had become nervous and frustrated by the senator’s actions, and felt they needed to build up the strength of their souls again and restore peace to the city (Autsadaporn, 2004).

The origin of the tradition of not allowing women into sacred spaces, practiced in Northern Thailand can be traced back to the Lua and Haripunchai periods which were significantly influenced by Brahmanism or Hinduism. Brahmanism believes that menstruation has power to dominate or dominate the black magic or sacred object. Since that period, this belief has spread throughout other parts of the Lanna kingdom. Richis or hermit in Brahmanism and monks in Buddhism have played a significant role in perpetuating this belief. There are many factors that make Lanna the only area of Thailand that has this prohibition, i.e. Lanna is the location of the former kingdom of Haripunchai, which is the oldest source of Brahmanism in Thailand, Lanna Buddhism also has a strong belief in black magic, ritualism and traditionalism (Kulavir, 2005).

The strong magic power depends upon the protective influence of the teacher-spirits. The doctor/spirit bond is created during ceremony called ‘raising the teacher-spirits.’ In addition, to complete the rules whose observance maintains the relationship with the teacher-spirits harmony, the doctor of magic must observe specific prohibitions (or *khuet*). Some of these are concerned about the conception of women’s menstruation, for instance, not to stand under a kitchen, the center of (menstruating) female activity and decomposing food, not to stand under a flight of

steps since a (menstruating) woman could be walking down the steps, thus destroying or weakening the existent magical power (Irvine, 1982: 202-206).

Popular Northern Thai conceptions that male magical power can be destroyed by women is also found in the legend of Chamathewi, the foundress of the town of Haripunchai (Lamphun), who uses her own natural power to Wilanka, king of the Lua. In response to Wilanka's pursuit for marriage, Chamathewi tells the Lua chieftain she will marry him if he can throw on three times his spear from Doi Suthep into Lamphun city walls (30 km. away). Wilanka accept the challenge and with his first mighty throw almost manages to reach the city wall. Chamathewi, now fearful, takes her sarong she fashions a hat for the Lua chief and has it presented to him as a gift as admiration for Wilanka's great strength. He puts it on his head and launches his second throw only to find that it lands quite short of its mark. His third effort is so weak that his spear is caught by the wind like a boomerang reverses its direction and pierces Wilanka's own heart. Unwittingly, by wearing the befiled hat, Wilanka has broken the taboo of touching a piece of cloth profaned by menstrual blood (Irvine, 1982: 213).

During the Burmese control over the Northern Thailand in the history, the Burmese used this Northern Thai conception on menstrual blood by coercing the population by means of magic to bury the placenta of every male child under the steps or ladder leading up to his family's house. In this way, they ensured continued domination. If there was a child to become a leader of the people in their fight for autonomy, the exposure of his placenta to women's menstrual blood ascending or descending the steps of his house would continue to undermine his powers. This would prevent from exercising his leadership and expelling the foreign invader (Irvine, 1982: 215).

The threat of menstrual blood beyond the male persons by describing as ritually impure, justifies the exclusion of all menstruating women from the temple. For example, menstruating *mae chii* living at the traditional medical center at Thung Luang monastery cannot enter the temple and must not walk over the logs used to heat the medicinal steam room, so that the negative properties of their blood would undermine the steam's power. It is even said that menstrual blood threatens life (Irvine, 1982: 213). Another example is the prohibition of throwing water in the

temple area during Songkran (New Year festival). The elder monk, age 70, of a temple in San Khamphaeng district, Chiang Mai province said:

Throwing water in the temple during Songkran is prohibited because the water that drops down from women's skirts is considered inauspicious for the temple [from interviewing a monk of a temple in San Khamphaeng district, Chiang Mai province].

Although the ideas of menstruation are accepted by women and men, but men often use them for their own advantage. For instance, one doctor of magic told that when a man is weakened by being exposed to menstrual blood, he can recover his magical powers by running *sompoi* water through the hair. People believe that *sompoi* is a powerful plant that can correct or purify any wrong even or even evil. It is still widely used for the Songkran festival to give blessings to senior people to be healthy and lucky. From this point of view, it could be argued that beliefs about menstrual blood in Chamathewi's legend do not express the weakness of all men with regard to women, but rather show the superiority of the Thai Yuan people, both male and female, to the Lua (Chamathewi is regarded as Thai Yuan's heroine, though she might have been Lua or Mon) (Irvine, 1982: 214).

It might be argued that far from reversing the inferiority of women to men with regard to the control of supernatural power, the concept of menstruation is served to reinforce it. It provides a new source of legitimation for male monopoly of ritually high and powerful forms of magic. The belief about menstrual blood is turned to the advantage of Thai Yuan male in other ways. Women's menses can serve to activate certain varieties of magic which are aggressive and are associated with parts of the body place below the waist. These elaborations of the idea in favor of men take place in a situation where most men take the threats of menstrual blood seriously. Throughout Thailand, men avoid contact with women's lower garments. They are especially careful with the upper part of their bodies where their most valued magical powers are said to be lodged. Hence the standard practice of hanging women's lower garments below the level of man's head, and if possible, away from public view. The rules which different communities set up ensure a man's protection. For instance, in

the town of Lampang, the clothes of men and women are washed in opposite banks of the river so that the threatening blood can flow in the stream of water used to wash women's clothes (Irvine, 1982: 217). It can be seen also in everyday practice in Thailand. In many modern houses using washing machine, the clothes of men and women are separately washed, especially women's underwear and garments.

In the hot debate on the prohibition of women from entering the inner area of Phra That Doi Suthep's main pagoda in 2004, many northern Thai people only argued that it is a 'Lanna custom' that should be reserved. This custom is intended to protect the women themselves from "*khued*" or harm caused by the supernatural powers of these sacred objects. This should be noticed that whether the origin of the tradition of not allowing women into sacred spaces, practiced in Northern Thailand can be traced back to the influence of Brahmanism or Hinduism (Kulavir, 2005) and later integrated into Buddhism. When they said "this custom is to protect sacred objects (such as the Buddha's relics) from the supposed impurity of women; in particular, exposure to menstruating women is believed to destroy the sacredness of object" (Kulavir, 2007: 71), they did not realized that, in Buddhist belief, Buddhism do not have any reason to fear harm caused by the impurity of women or menstruating women. It was also the same when the elder monk, age 70, of a temple in San Khamphaeng district, Chiang Mai province said "throwing water in the temple during Songkran is prohibited because the water that drops down from women's skirts is considered inauspicious for the temple." It means that monks have also played a significant role in perpetuating this belief. The belief about menstrual blood has been embedded in practices of Lanna people under the dominant Buddhism in which the spirit beliefs and Buddhism become fuse together until people could not aware and distinguish. This belief was stemmed from the idea that women's menstruation can destroy or weaken magical power. Since the strong magic power depends upon the protective influence of teacher 'spirits,' then the doctor of magic must observe specific prohibitions (or *khuet*) which some of these are concerned about the conception of women's menstruation, thus destroying or weakening magical power (Irvine, 1982: 202-206). Therefore, they are the 'spirits' that fear harm caused by the menstrual blood. This example shows how spirits belief has a strong persistence and permeates into practice in everyday live of the people.

In the study of religion in Thailand, the scholars has devoted to the studies of the dominant Theravada Buddhist tradition in which spirits belief has been subsumed under the domination of state-sponsored Buddhism (Tambiah, 1970, Obeyesekere, 1968). But, in practices, the local belief in the spirits remains powerful meanings and has exerted the most persistent influence on the daily life of the people. It permeates even in the discourse of monks in daily practice. The monks become the carriers of spirit beliefs and there are many monks who perform magical practices.

Spirits belief is still persisted despite being officially banned by the reformed Buddhism due to Buddhist ontology which does not deny the existence of spirits or insist on the distinction between Buddhism and spirits and hence has blurred the two belief systems. Besides, the belief in the spirits appears to be more effective in dealing with worldly problems. Actually, Buddhism is dominant in some degrees, i.e. Buddhism is the state-sponsored religion, Buddhism has a more comprehensive cosmology that can integrate other non-Buddhist beliefs into Buddhist cosmology, and Buddhism has a more elaborate and powerful structure like the Sangha. Therefore, it will be misplaced to conclude that the spirits-belief has become marginalized under the dominant Buddhism.

2.2 Buddhicization Process under Political Structure of Pre-modern States

During the premodern period in Northern Thailand, the historical assertion of a Tai identity has been in the context of a particular kind of social and political development, that of the *mueang* as *mueangization* in changing historical situations, contexts, and discourses (Turton, 2000: 11). This political structure was built up at the expense of the aboriginal Mon-Khmer tribes (Davis, 1974: 38). The incorporation of Buddhist identity into landscapes which were owned by indigenous groups in the legitimization of authority in the premodern period in Northern Thailand had been done through the process of ‘Buddhicization.’ This process of ‘Buddhicization’ is characterized by means of the many legends, temples, the Buddha’s relic pagoda, the Buddha’s footprint, and other Buddhist elements. The Buddha emerges as the dominant figure in the narratives. Everyone else, whether ordinary villagers, ascetics, monks, kings, or supernatural beings, all play their part to facilitate the Buddha’s journey through the mountains and valleys of northern Thailand. The primary intent

of these legends of the Buddha's journey throughout Lanna is to establish northern Thailand as a sacred land – literally a Buddha land – through a legacy of signs, primarily bodily relics and footprints. Thus, the Buddha's itinerary links northern Thailand to the larger Buddhist world, a connection symbolized by the Buddha's physical relics widely distributed. It symbolized an intensified concentration of the Buddha's powerful presence. Through the enshrinement of relics, kings not only serve as patrons of holy sites but also as agents by which mountains are sacralized. In this capacity the king is depicted as one who maintains the dharma through patronage and reigns as the Lord of the cosmos (*chakkaphat*). The official recognition of Buddhism brings legitimation to the rulers (Swearer et al., 2004: 21-27).

2.2.1 Myth of the Coming of Buddha

The Myth of the Coming of Buddha has been the dominant narratives of Buddhist discourse in this area. It was constructed and reconstructed by both state and populace through the changing historical situations.

In the legend of *Wat Phra That Sri Chom Thong* or the Holy Relic Temple, this area was an ancient town in the period of the Buddha called *Angkharattha* Town. In this legend, Buddha had visited this area and predicted the coming of Buddha's relics after his death on the hill of Chom Thong where is now the Holy Relic Temple, one of the Buddhist pilgrimage sites for the local belief in the worship of Birth Year *phra that* or the twelve-year cycle. It was narrated in the legend that the Buddha's relics were brought here by King Asoka of India. The legend was also mentioned that the temple was first constructed by a couple who lived in the nearby area in 1452 and that it was reconstructed by Chiang Mai principality (*Phra Mueang Kaew*) in 1517. From the past until present, Chom Thong town has been created as a 'Buddha land', both ideologically and physically. It is clearly seen in places in the city that assert the coming of Buddha. The places that Buddha visited become the temples with relics or footprints. Chom Thong town was incorporated by means of the legends of the Buddha's journey throughout Lanna that established northern Thailand as a sacred land or Buddha land into a legacy of signs, primarily bodily relics and footprints. It links northern Thailand to the larger Buddhist world.

During the Pre-modern period, the myth was written in palm leaves with northern (Lanna) scripts. In the modern period, the myth was translated into (central) Thai and printed as a book by the head of sub-district in 1938. The book was reprinted many times by the Holy Relic Temple. In the era of modern rationality, the translator often impresses upon the readers that the nature of myth always includes some miracles which seems unbelievably exaggerated. Yet the readers are exhorted to take the accounts into due consideration in the course of their reading. In the book, it also included the history of the construction of the Holy Relic Temple by two villagers and the renovation by Chiang Mai Principalities as well as the names of the abbots of Holy Relic Temple since the beginning.

Myth of Buddha's Journey to the World (tamnan phra chao liap lok)

Myth of Buddha's Journey to the World was religious literature which had spread around Lanna territory, Sibsong Panna, Shan and Lan Chang including some areas in northeast region. The main content of this literature was mentioned about Buddha and his devotees that linked physical environment with the myth of each region and locality, i.e. cities, communities, people, ethnic, trading systems. Those mentioned subjects were predominantly aimed at the establishment of religious monuments in the local areas, such as Buddha's footprint and Buddha's relics. It also included the Buddha's forecasting of the progress of religion in the future in those sacred geographical areas with venerated elements.

Myth of Buddha's Journey to the World should be the type of Buddhist literature that was able to present a certain ideology which attempts to constitute diverse social and cultures under the same worship of Buddhism. It established the ideal sacred arena that indicates the integration of a philosophical ideology in a certain locality through religious literature

Myth of Buddha's Journey to the World or Buddha Myth was the literature in Buddhist religion which was composed by a Mon Monk during B.E. 21 who traveled for pilgrimage along the route to those locations which are important religious arena, namely Buddha's relics and Buddha's footprint from Lankan Continent towards Mon and Burma region until upper route which were the Lanna region, Shan, and Sibsong Panna. Such routes were supposed to be the routes of Buddha's journey in helping the

needy and the relief of the distressed. Actually, it was the travel of the composer intended to facilitate pilgrimages for believers. Those routes covered the small and large cities as much as he could and during that period there were eleven volumes of complete work. It was understood that these were broadly disseminated in those regions where Theravada Buddhism of Lankan sect had strongly embedded.

It was considered that the Lanna region would be the main centre of Buddhism in this region during B.E. 21 due to having significant evidence to support that there were the organization of the 8th Buddhist Synod of the World supported by King Tilokarat (B.E. 1985-2030) of Chiang Mai in B.E. 2020 at Maha Potharam Temple or Wat Chet Yod. And also during the Phra Mueang Kaew Era (B.E. 2039-2069) of the great grandchild of King Tilokarat, it was considered to be prosperous age of writing the Buddhist literature in Lanna.

It was possible that the Myth of Buddha's Journey to the world finally became one of the outstanding literatures with its character that was then localized. The contents of the myth could be adapted or modified to local Myth or locale while the main theme remained unchanged. Therefore, in various localities although there was no written document of the Myth of Buddha's Journey to the world to be found in the Buddhist temples, there would be a story in each locality with the geographical names which includes locations in the surrounding community in the Myth which was generally found in the northern region.

In the content of the myth, the region where the Buddha and his devotees had come to propagate Buddhism was specified as the inner region of continent from Mon, Burma, Lanna, Sibsong Panna, Shan and Lan Chang, all of them linked up with broad area during the Buddhist Era that was considered to be mainly an area around Burma, upper north of Thailand and south of China at the present.

In the Myth of Buddha's Journey to the World, it was supposing that Buddha was the surveyor in those regions including propagating Dhamma teaching to people of various ethnics in each local, such as villagers, ascetics (ruesi), yakkha, naga or forest inhabitants and Milakha (Tamila of Tamil) which meant natives i.e. Lua. In addition, there were Lue, Khoen, Man (Burmese) including Haw (Southern China).

Those regions in the Myth of Buddha's Journey to the World were locations of cultural sources along upper regions then downwards from Sibsong Panna, Shan,

Burma and Mon. According to evidence in history of Buddhism, it was found that around these areas such as Haripunchai or even regions appeared only in the myth i.e. Mueang Yonoknakpan, Buddhism was accepted and respected (Mahayana and Theravada) for a long time. This is sufficiently proven based on the available historical documents and archaeological studies. There was the integration with traditional beliefs in each local context, even if such beliefs come from Brahmanic doctrine as they have been integrated into the local sect of Buddhism. And the religion in the region had been supported by the governor and society (Thianchai, 2006: 177-201).

It can be said that the Myth of Buddha's Journey to the World represented the incorporation of a 'great tradition' (Buddhism) into a 'little tradition' (traditional beliefs). It reflects traces of interaction between the traditional beliefs and Buddhism with incidences of "acceptance" and "compromise" found mostly in Buddhist myth that are still being written and often found in Buddhist temples. At the same time, it also reflects processes of "conflict" and "resistance" between the traditional beliefs and the newly accepted beliefs (Buddhism) manifested through symbolic action of supernatural power and miracles (see legend below) (Siraporn, 2005 cited in Thianchai, 2006: 177-201). For instance, the Myth of Encounter between Buddha and Yakkhas, represented the encounter of Buddha with 'the other' which is not human but tamed and made civilized by Buddhism. The Yakkhas are regarded as the ancestor spirits of the *Lua*, an autochthonous group, who were converted to Buddhism.

Myth of Encounter between Buddha and Yakkhas

There was the Myth of the encounter between Buddha and Yakkhas which was written in the Lanna scripts but has not been translated into Thai or printed as a book. In the process of amalgamation and subsequent transformation, these oral legends with pre-Thai origins were written on palm leaves and thick mulberry paper albums that became part of the popular preaching traditions of northern Thai Buddhism. In Chom Thong, this legend was written in the Lanna scripts on palm leaves and is now kept at the temple of Mueng Klang village, which is located 10 km. from the Holy Relic Temple. People believe that this area had been the ancient *Lua* town of *Phaya Rawi* where now becomes the rice-fields. Some people said they found

some old plates, bricks, etc. while ploughing their lands which they believe that it was from the ancient town. Another evidence was inscription in the Mueng Klang temple that the temple was the old house of *Phranang Throm* who was *Phaya Rawi's* daughter. Some people said it was the center of the town in the ancient time while there was no any community around the Holy Relic Temple.

One woman introduced me to the old man, age 72, who knows about the legend. And, he gave me the hand-written paper he wrote himself about the legend. The legend narrated that:

There was an ancient town where was governed by *Phraya Rawi*. One day, *Phraya Rawi* went for hunting in the forest and met *Phraya Yakkha* who ate the meat of humans and animals. Then, the Yakkha captured *Phraya Rawi* for food. But, *Phraya Rawi* bargained that if the Yakkha left him, he will bring human for being food of the Yakkha everyday. The Yakkha agreed and *Phraya Rawi* kept his promise by sending a human for Yakkha everyday. Until one day, there was left only *Phraya Rawi's* young son. And, *Phraya Rawi* had to send his son to the Yakkha. The Buddha knew this event by his supernormal powers and came to Yakkha's town. When the Yakkha saw the Buddha approaching together with his disciples, the Yakkha was very angry and attacked the Buddha, but by the Buddha's extraordinary spiritual powers, the Yakkha prostrated at his feet. The Buddha preached a sermon to tame the Yakkha's evil nature. The Yakkha promised to observe the Buddha's precepts all of his life and follow the Buddha with his disciples, Indra God and King Asoka to give sermons to other Yakkhas and *Phraya Rawi*. The Buddha forecasted that King Asoka will bring the Buddha's relic to this location. The Buddha imprinted his footprint over the footprints of the three past Buddhas and predicted the coming of the future Buddha, *Phra Sri Ariya Metteya*, who will come to imprint the footprint over the past four footprints of Buddhas [translated from hand-written legend by an old man, age 72].



Illus. 2.1 Statues of encounter between Buddha and Yakkhas at Wat Phra Kerd, Chom Thong district.

From this legend, we can see the process of “*Buddhicization*” in *Khon Mueang* (Thai Yuan or northern people) historical discourse. The *Khon Mueang* established a powerful kingdom during the late thirteenth century, centred in the Chiang Mai basin. The political power of the Chiang Mai monarchy was based on the control over political spaces called *mueang*. The *mueang* has had a particular significance for the self identification of the *Khon Mueang* as belonging to a *mueang* domain. In *Khon Mueang* historical discourse, *Lua* represent the autochthonous people who are believed to have inhabited the region before *Khon Mueang* and other Tai groups arrived. The *Lua* also frequently appear in *Khon Mueang* ritual sequences and related ritual texts. A striking example is the encounter of Buddha and Yakkha. In the myth, the Yakkhas are regarded as the cannibal demon ancestor spirits of the *Lua*, who were later converted to Buddhism. The encounter with an autochthonous group, represented as uncivilized non-Buddhist cannibals and civilized Buddhists is a common motif in Buddhist literature. Barbarity and subjugation are not the sole representations of the *Lua*, but they have also been regarded by *Khon Mueang* as holders of the rights to propitiate the tutelary spirits of domains, implying the

superiority of the Lua over the Khon Mueang in ritual terms. The superior status of the Lua in dealing with tutelary spirits of domains appears in other Khon Mueang rituals. One historical instance concerns the royal rites of entrance into Chiang Mai city by King Kawila, after ‘making a Lua’ carrying a basket on his back and leading a dog to enter first (Swearer et al., 2004: 84).

Most aboriginal communities became Mueang-ized during the first centuries of contact with Tai invaders, but acculturation has not been an entirely one-way process. Not only did the Mueang assume proprietorship of aboriginal land, but they also inherited aboriginal territorial spirits and the means of manipulating them. The cult of the territorial spirit assimilated the ancestral cult of the local chief. At this point, dynastic and territorial concerns became fused, and statehood was made possible (Davis, 1974: 273).

The Suwan Kham Daeng Legend relates the story of the original city of Chiang Mai as founded by the *Lua* people before the birth of Buddha. At that time the city was in deep trouble, beset by demons. A certain hermit asked for help from the god Indra who gave them a protecting stone pillar and also much wealth for he knew that Chiang Mai was to become a great centre of Buddhist learning. In the course of time, however, the people came to break the taboos and the guardian kumphan demons took the pillar away and disaster struck. Again Indra was asked to help and he agreed to replace the pillar. This was the one that King Mengrai found amongst the ruins when he came to build his capital in 1296. He found out from the *Lua* prince where the pillar was and how it should be propitiated.

The significance of minorities within the traditional Tai political systems concerns not only the creation and maintenance of boundaries, but also with the categorization of ‘others’ in terms of ritual and political relations. It demonstrates that *Lua* was constructed as an autochthonous category to legitimize the authority of the Chiang Mai monarchy in ritual terms, and that this ritual relation historically consolidated the subordination of *Lua* within a centre-periphery structure. The local social categories and centre-periphery relations have been transformed as the impact of the Siamese annexation of the northern principalities. And the transformation of rituals in which centralized Buddhist discourse has been employed to incorporate into a nation-state. Finally, the religious and ritual orders have been redefined as an object

for consumption for tourist attraction under the control of Chiang Mai Municipal Council. And the previously important category of autochthony had no political and ritual significance (Tanabe, 2000: 295).

Contemporary rites associated with the Inthakhin pillar have seemingly little to do with the autochthonous Lua and their relations within the former political system. The preparation of pillar rituals is currently the official responsibility of the Chiang Mai Municipal Council with assistance from many groups, including Wat Chedi Luang and its lay committee, and the spirit-mediums from a group associated with the ritual since the 1940s have been assigned for preparing the major offerings. In addition, *ahak pu achan* (the guardian, venerable teacher), a Brahmanic office attached to the Chiang Mai court, has been in charge of the ritual as a whole (Tanabe, 2000: 305).

The Inthakhin cult consists of two differentiated sequences: chanting of Buddhist sutras for the propitiation of the pillar, in the hope of obtaining prosperity and fertility within the domain, allied with the non-Buddhist sacrificial offerings made to two kumphan. Since the Inthakhin cult has historically been regarded as one of the royal cults of the Chiang Mai court, the decline of sacrifice should be sought in political changes. The integration of Chiang Mai society into the centralized Siamese administration early this century gave rise to pressures to adapt the rites of the cult to be in line with the dominant Buddhist discourse of the centralised Sangha. The Inthakhin cult was likely to have begun to give more emphasis on Buddhist practices (Tanabe, 2000: 307).

The official Inthakhin cult has taken a new form, not only as a display of the authority of the municipality and provincial government, but as a grand celebratory spectacle. It is becoming a tourist attraction and source of profit as a major religious festival, helping to make Chiang Mai a focus of domestic and international tourism. The rites are becoming an object of consumption, with no immediate connection with their previous symbolic discourse (Tanabe, 2000: 311).

In the legend of Doi Ang Salung, Chiang Dao (the Water Basin Mountain), during his travels throughout Lanna, the Buddha meets a variety of local inhabitants, particularly the Lua, the pre-Mon and pre-Thai indigenous population of the area. In the narrative, after offering food to the Buddha and the accompanying monks, the Lua

was told that if they became Buddha's followers they no longer will need to irrigate their fields with a water wheel. After taking the precepts, the Lua found everything both inside and outside the house had turned to gold. Then, they observe the Buddhist precepts all of their lives. This illustrates that in the belief system of the northern Thai, the actual presence of the Buddha assumes a magical aura. Even taking the five precepts is glossed as prosperity and good luck rather than as strictly adhering to the ethical principles the precepts embody. Additionally, the Buddha's encounters also ascribe meaning to the places he visits as recorded by the acts of naming that take place throughout the text, for example, the area of Lua which is very dry is known as Hot. Subsequently, the Buddha predicts that the kingdom of Chiang Mai will be established as a center of monks and scholars and that those who dwell there who do not attain nirvana during his life time will do so in the time of Phra Ariya Metteya, the future Buddha (Swearer et al., 2004: 24-27).

After being presented with gifts of food and preaching to the assembled crowds in the area of the Ping River, the Buddha predicts that this very spot would be the location of one of his relics which King Adittaraja of Haripunjaya would discover. When Adittaraja comes to the throne in 1047 C.E., he did discover the relic. The discovery of the relic was an act that a modern historian would interpret as an official recognition of Buddhism as the legitimating tradition of the ruler. The palace was then made into a sacred temple with the relic enshrined in a magnificent *cetiya*. The *cetiya* reliquary becomes the axial center of the sacred city-kingdom. In magical sense, it empowers the king to rule and also symbolized the power of the king as *cakkvattin*. In addition, the legend tells that it was discovered over a spot where the Buddha relic was being protected by the indigenous guardian of the soil and by a black crow which was left there from the time of the Buddha's visit. It seemed to be interpreted for Lua's legitimation as the rightful land holders (Swearer, 1987: 107-108).

In the legend of Doi Kham (the Golden Mountain), the Buddha and his followers met some troubles. They met three Yakkhas, a father, mother and their child. The three ate the meat of humans and animals. When they saw the Lord Buddha approaching together with his disciples they were intent on capturing and eating them as was their custom. The Lord Buddha, knowing their nature, extended loving-kindness to them and by the power of his great merit prevented their defilement from

arising. Each of the three Yakkhas, with fearfulness of the Buddha's extraordinary spiritual powers, prostrated at his feet. Because of the foreknowledge of their past evil deeds, he preached a sermon to tame their evil nature. The Yakkhas promised to follow the Buddha's rules but the father (*Pu Sae*) and the mother (*Ya sae*) were unable to keep the five precepts all of the time. They asked the Buddha if they could eat the flesh of two sentinel beings once a year. The Buddha granted the request but only on the condition that it was the flesh of an animal, not a human being. He also ordered them to seek the permission from the village headman to pass by his village. For this reason there came to be a ceremony whereby a white buffalo was slaughtered for *Pu Sae* and a black buffalo for *Pu Sae-Ya Sae* but they are given only the ears (Swearer et al., 2004: 84).

Every year in April, there was the annual *Pu Sae-Ya Sae* ceremony which people believe was devised by the Buddhist monks (some say Buddha himself) to appease the two Yakkhas who lived up in the Doi Kham mountains in Tambon Mae Hea (a district near Chiang Mai). In ancient times these Yakkhas would come down and snatch up and eat the children of the area. Many believe that just by attending the ceremony where the sacrifice was made, they too would receive a special protection from these Yakkhas. A buffalo is sacrificed early in the morning and prepared for the ceremony. A single person or multiple people are chosen from the district to drink the blood and eat the raw meat of the buffalo. It is believed that spirits enter these people and allow them to consume the sacrifice. Some people are afraid to attend the sacrifice for fear that they will be chosen to be possessed. After portions of the sacrifice are consumed the chosen go to each of the twelve spirit houses and consume pieces of the offerings to the spirits. Thousands of people attend this ceremony and many believe that by attending they receive protection from sickness, automobile and motorcycle accidents, famine, disaster, etc.

Myth of Mother of Rice (Ya Kwan Khao) and Buddha

While most of the legends on the coming of Buddha in Lanna seem to reinforce Buddhism in the process of *Buddhization*, there are some legends that represent some negation and conflict. In Chom Thong area, there was a legend of the quarrel between mother of rice (*ya kwan khao*) and Buddha for highest authorities.

And, it could not arrive at a consensus. Therefore, *ya kwan khao* escaped into a dark cave. After that, people suffered from famine. The Buddha then went to see *ya kwan khao* and accept that *ya kwan khao* was higher than Buddha. And, *ya kwan khao* allowed herself to become food for the Buddha.

This legend shows that the incorporation of dominant discourse was not absolutely complete and that there still existed cultural diversity in the domain. Finally what took place is a compromise and integration of the indigenous beliefs into Buddhism. In Chom Thong area, this legend was narrated by the elder people. I heard this legend from a village out of the town (*Hua Sua* village is about 6 km. from Chom Thong town up in the mountain), but people whom I met in Chom Thong town do not mention about this legend. Some of them do not know it. In the rapid changes of socio-economic context in Chom Thong where rice growing was not main income-generating activity, the symbolic reconstruction of rice might become less significant.

The Buddhist Myth such as Myth of Buddha's relics and Buddha's footprint or Myth of Buddha's Journey to the World reflected the traces of interaction between the traditional beliefs and Buddhism. A process of incorporation of both beliefs systems involves "acceptance" and "compromise" of Buddhist literatures which were often found in Buddhist temples. However, there is the Buddhist Myth of interaction and conflict between the traditional beliefs and newly accepted beliefs, such as *Pu Sae-Ya Sae* which reflected "conflict" and "resistance" between both two belief systems through symbolic actions of supernatural power and miracles (Siraporn, 2005).

In the investigation of Levi-Strauss's last book, *the Raw and the Cooked*, Derrida gives some remarks that there is no unity or absolute source of the myth. The focus or the source of the myth is always shadows and virtualities which are elusive, unactualizable, and nonexistent in the first place. Thus, the myth is a discourse on the acentric structure. It can not have an absolute subject or an absolute center. Derrida insists that it is by this absence of any real and fixed center of the mythical or mythological discourse that the musical model chosen by Levi-Strauss for the composition of his book is apparently justified. The absence of a center is here the absence of a subject and the absence of the author as stated by Levi-Strauss: "The myth and the musical work thus appear as orchestra conductors whose listeners are

the silent performers. If it be asked where the real focus of the work is to be found, it must be replied that its determination is impossible. Music and mythology bring man face to face with virtual objects whose shadow alone is actual....Myths have no authors” (Derrida, 1972: 257-258).

The notion of myth as not having a fixed meaning of texts appears in the work of Roland Barthes. In his writing on *Mythologies*, Barthes shows that the world has been socially constructed and it is a battle of signs which supports existing ideological structure that is conceived to be natural. Myths, according to Barthes, are a system of signs. Myths transform meaning into forms, and then create second meaning that seems to be innocence to our realization. To see the meanings of things surrounding us as representation of myths is to understand the signs as cultural texts through their practices, ideologies and power relationships. In his viewpoints, myth is a double system and a type of speech defined by its intention and textuality is an interplay of codes that negates any origin (Barthes, 1972).

2.2.2 The Emergence of Religious Identity: The *Kha That* People (the Guardians of Buddha’s Relics)

Found in the Lanna history was the *kalapana* tradition that stated that principalities had to give support and offerings to Holy Relic Temple, e.g. treasures, land, animals, human, etc. There was a record that a Chiang Mai principality gave 70 families of *Lua* ethnic descendants to Wat Phra That Sri Chom Thong for taking care of the temple (Poonpon, 1983: 33-48). This group of people were “*kha that*” or “*kha wat*.” This tradition was supposed to legitimize the authority of the Chiang Mai monarchy. This tradition also reflects that the incorporation of dominant discourse was not absolutely complete and that there still existed cultural diversity in the domain. This tradition was presumed to be used for relaxing tensions between dominant and subordinate parties (Srisak, 2003: 174). In the old times, human resources were very important. It was the policy that the capital used for control of the various small towns must not to have too much power that would enabled them to disobey the higher leaders. In each *kalapana*, a great number of local people would be employed which resulted in reducing the governor’s base of power.

Kha Wat in Lanna

Kha wat was a person who was given to the temple (*wat*) in order to take care or maintain *wat* as a result of *kalapana* process which the powerful person in the Lanna region had the tradition to give land, people and articles as offering to *wat* or Buddhism. There was evidence that this tradition took place at least around B.E. 17 of a group using Mon alphabets around Mae Ping Basin in vicinity of Lamphun province. Several legends of the Lanna mentioned about the *kha wat kalapana* tradition which originated more than B.E.17 during the time of Chamathewi.

A part of the legend of Wat Phra That Lampang Luang, Lampang province stated that “Then Phra Nang ordered the people to celebrate the relics of Buddha’s throughout seven days and seven nights. After that Phara Nang offered paddy fields costing 1 million *bia* (cowrie) which belonged to the relics of Buddha and also Lam Pan Thong (ลำพันทอง) and Nang Dok Mai (นางดอกไม้) who were Phra Nang’s man-slaves and woman-slaves for taking care of relics of the Buddha. In addition, Phra Nang offered her man-slaves and woman-slaves who belong to 8 families to take care of the relics of the Buddha and the man-slaves and woman-slaves who belong to 2 families in looking after a water pond established from her praying.”

In connection with the legend of Phra That Doi Tung, it referred to *kha wat kalapana* upto Phraya Achutaracha who was the third King of Singhonawat Dynasty of Wieng Yonok Nakorn during B.E. 561-660 that “When Phraya Achutathamma Racha patronized the relics of Buddha with Arahants there. Phraya took those Tamila i.e. 500 *Lua* given for servants of the relics of Buddha for patronage in an area of 3,000 wa. Then Phraya poured the ceremonial water and returned to his residence for alms-giving and precept practices.”

Therefore, in considering the Myth of the relics of Buddha, it could be said that *kha wat* existed for a long time during B.E. 7 and there were certain proposals that *kha wat* might be used by the Lanna people who probably respected Mahayana Buddhism.

Even though during the time of Burma’s governance in Lanna, the original tradition was carried on by King of Burma who also respected and worshipped Buddhism and there was also *kha wat kalapana*. During the era of Chao Fa Sawati

Noratra Mung So Sri Mung Nara Tha Cho came to worship the Buddha's image at Wat Chiang Man in B.E. 2124 which was recorded in Wat Chiang Mun's scripture and giving *kalapana* with inscribed names of *kha wat* from the first page, line 22 until the end of page and the whole lines of page 2.

In the era of Talumin or Fa Suttho Thamma Racha in the legend of Lanna, after he conquered Lanna, he built the Vichai Aram temple as well as redeemed the people to become *kha wat* which reads: "Ten Chiang Saen villagers were redeemed to be attendants of Buddha in Vichai Aram temple so that their names were inscribed permanently until the end of Buddhism" and another phrase "We would give permission and congratulation for these ten families and one slave family in a total of 11 families as our gift for serving Buddha in Vichai Aram temple inherited by grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and their descendants until 5,000 years."

Until after independence from Burma, Chiang Mai was a vassal state of Kingdom of Siam in B.E. 2317 *kha wat kalapana* still existed and the tradition of *kha wat* was still with Buddhism in Lanna.

In the era of Phra Chao Inthawichayanon prior to the reform of politics and administration of King Chulalongkorn, it was found that there were *kha wat* distributed around out of town, according to Carl Bock's travel to Chiang Mai. Bock recorded that "One Tambon in Muang Chiangmai where people in that village had received exemption from general working. Politics Department of Chao Luang was responsible to control those people for only taking care of *wat* or temple such as cleaning and repairing or helping if there was construction of *wat*. These people were called *kha wat* or slaves of *wat*. Chao Luang had ordered *kha wat* from Ban Sam Thong (probably Mu Ban San Pathong) where there was a small village near the town to help the construction of a new temple was under construction in town. These villagers were not satisfied then they went to meet the Viceroy and brought some gifts to request him to assist them in disobeying Chao Luang's command. The Viceroy gave permission without any formality and ordered them to return homes immediately." It could be seen that the tradition to be *kha wat* was carried out even if there was political reform during the era of King Chulalongkorn. Though the rights condition of people had been changed but the state of being *kha wat* according to original tradition still existed (Sasis, 2007).

Kha Wat Kalapana Tradition

In every *kalapana* tradition, the presence of a witness is important in order to know who or which family was *kha wat* as sometimes certain problems such as *kha wat* from the place have to be addressed, etc.

For the whole Lanna region, the common people and slaves belonged solely to the King. Therefore, if the common people were brought to become *kha wat*, the King had to perform the ceremony himself. If a *wat* was built by the King or by Chao Muang or by government official, it had to get the permission of the King. Sometimes the King would also buy the common people to become *kha wat* as follows: “Phra Mungrai Naracha bought 500 families of Milaku which Achutharacha bought from Pu Chao Lao Chok then donated to attend the relics of Lord Buddha for amount to 1,000 golden tamleung and came for pouring ceremonial water and giving alms to the relics of Lord Buddha as before.”

Besides *kha wat kalapana* tradition by the King, some merit-makings were attended by either the monks or the government officials. The monks had their own people since each *kalapana* acquired a huge sum of money and properties and a lot of taxes were introduced into the temple. So it was not surprising that the monks had more money to lend out to the people and in return reaped sufficient interest to support the temple-worship. When there were loans, some people who could not pay back the loan or had not fully pay up the loan were called *khon sin than* (คนสินทาน) or people indebted to the temple. When there were merit-makings, *khon sin than* was given to be *kha wat* in order to compensate their debts. It was stated that even the monks who was the creditor had already died, *khon sin than* also became the properties of the King. In Addition, there were purchases of people who lost a lawsuit from courts to be *kha wat*. According to the laws, there were four groups of people which should not bring under mandate. 1) People who had a lot of debts and were not able to pay one's debt. They would escape to be under mandate in order to get out of the debt; 2) People who were going to loose a lawsuit; 3) People who were robbers, contenders, killers and thieves; 4) People who officially deserted their post. It was possible that those two groups were decided that they should be not existed in any mandate, therefore, those people might be finally brought about to be *kha wat* serving

the religion. Sometimes common rich people might pour ceremonial water to their slaves for becoming guardians of Buddhism.

If there was any construction of *wat*, it had also to perform *kalapana* to inhabitants who lived around there. As there was *kalapana* to inhabitants who lived far away, such nobleman or Chao Muang had to submit notification expressing intention upwards and expected those *kha wat* names were informed to the King for royal command in the seal of bearing in mind the lesson of the past. Then local nobleman had to follow up that command again. It was of benefit that villagers would take care and serve *wat* with their own will and sacrifice.

In addition to people with debts to *wat*, loss of a lawsuit or slaves of villagers or of the King, *Kalapana* could be carried out for everyone without dividing ethnics i.e. all ethnics had equal rights to be *kalapana* that depended on which area had more groups of people. It was possible that except Thai Yuan who was a majority group in society but sometimes there were Tai and Lua to be *kalapana* together and if it was a big *wat* where could have *kalapana* both Lua and Tai of the whole village.

In addition, *kalapana* people did not only be farmers in the paddy field for *wat* but also including master craftsmen to repair *wat* and men/women knowledgeable in medicine which were necessary to make a living wherever they lived.

Being *kha wat*, there would still carried on if parents were *kha wat*, children would be *kha wat* continuously in replacement of their parents as it was recorded that “If he had children and grand-children, they had to inherit as *kha wat* under any circumstances”. But it did not mean that they were unable to be free at all, as freedom of *kha wat* has been practised and could be done. *Kha wat* had the privilege of those bonded become liberated as other *kha* by bringing money to redeem them by paying a fixed price of a slave by *kalapana*. Sometimes there would have the fixed-price of a slave which freed a slave when it is paid. This fixed price is by no means uniform for everybody. Each person commands a certain price. If he was not satisfied to be *kha wat*, he could bring first the money to pay off the price oneself and had to bring that price to buy or redeem new person to be *kha wat* instead of him. The fixed price of a slave and method of payment for redeeming caused some self-serving group of people to take *Kha Wat* for private uses through payment of the money to redeem such *kha*

wat. If the temple or *kha wat* did not agree they were not able to redeem even though the person who came to redeem had a high rank (Sasis, 2007).

Duty of Kha Wat

Most *kha wat kalapana* tradition was often used to take care of Buddha which meant Buddha's statues within *wat* including the maintenance of *wat*, those monk-teachers who lived in *wat*. *Kha wat* were divided to take care of Buddhist materials and arena in each location such as Buddha's statues, Viharn, Ubosot, Hor Trai (a small building where the sacred manuscripts of the *wat* are kept inside), etc. Each person was responsible for specific task without interfering of the other, taking care of damages and restoring them to good condition.

There were beliefs in Lanna that Buddha's statue was a Buddha with blood/flesh, mind and life. Therefore, when it was notified in *kalapana* for taking care of Buddha's statue in the temple, this person has to look after and serve the Buddha's statue with utmost respect as though Buddha's statue was a human being. Lanna region often had traditions reflecting these beliefs, for example, to make such statue or bronze statue for to be saluted in a celebration dedicated to opening the eyes of new Buddha's image. After that, the Buddha statue is considered to have the same consciousness of humanness. When it was the cold season, there would be the ceremony of *tan luo hing fai phra chao* (firewood alms-giving to the Buddha) that keeps Buddha's statues warm by a burning fire and everyday the monks, novices and laypeople who take care of the temple will make food-offering. Besides, there were occasionally divisions of small groups to take care of religious arena if those temples were big and important. There are cohorts of people to take care of each side of the temple area.

In addition, there was another category i.e. *kha wat* who were responsible to pay tribute to temples, similarly to the common people who had to pay tribute to the state or slaves who paid tribute to their own creditors. These *kha wat* could stay nearby or far from the temple. When the time comes, these tributes must be delivered to the temple. There is a clear indication of the amount to be paid by each village in terms of items and money and the amount to be paid.

In the service of Buddhism, the *kha wat* people would also receive merits and virtues. Therefore, *kha* who were *kha wat* had better living than *kha* under noblemen or common head of a family. Each person was very pleased if the King or anyone *kalapana* oneself to be *kha wat*. When *kha wat* served and took care of Buddha's statue or any relics, they could be born as Gods like in case of *Pu Chao Lao Chok* who was *kha wat* at Doi Tung Buddha Relics Temple and did not go anywhere. He always worshiped the relics by offering flowers and popped rice. Therefore, when he died, he was born as a God at *Yu Khon Thorn* Mountain and climbed down by silver ladder to govern *Mueang Hiran Nakorn Ngern Yang*, Chiang Saen in the name of *Lawa Chang Karat* (Sasis, 2007).

Privileges of Kha Wat

The *kha wat kalapana* tradition was under the right of temple ownership. Nobody could take *kha wat* and used it for private or government work, not even for tax collection, with the recruitment of visitors' escorts to travel across the mountains or taking a bath of other Buddha's statues that were not under her/his responsibility. During the war, they were exempted from army service, or being herd from defeat. If they were herded to the other places before once they knew to be *kha wat*, they would be sent back to take care of the temple as before.

In the scriptures, it was notified that "Any *Chao Khun* (noblemen) must not take out people with paddy fields from Buddha even one" and cursed that "If anyone took out from Buddha, let not be *Khun* at the places where were taken out" or "Be destroyed and died with suffering in the birthplaces", etc. The use of curses meant that this forbiddance was not supposed to be a "must" but an obligation with a "should" to perform the task.

However, there were some events that people were also taken out for works in other areas, especially out of the given temple. But later on, there should be the repeat of *kalapana* in order to bring back the *kha wat* people to their place as before. It occasionally resulted to the counting numbers of *kha wat* in order to make sure that they have stayed altogether as *kalapana* or not. Due to not allow bringing out *kha wat* to be used in private or government work, this resulted in that *kha wat* had privilege

unlike other type of *kha* (slaves). Therefore, people preferred for being *kha wat* besides receiving merits and virtues from the religion.

Sometimes there were also recruitments of *kha wat* to perform other works. Those *kha wat* could always appeal with prior evidence that they themselves were *kha wat* as inscribed in *lap ngoen lap kham* (lan ngoen lan thong). For instance, in the reign of Phra Chao Intawichayanon which recruited *kha wat* from outside of the town to construct the residences in the town, those *kha wat* complained to the viceroy of being misused by *Chao Luang*.

In politics and administration, the privileges for not allowing any recruitment of the people of temple under the control of monks to work for governor or noblemen or during the war was the policy that the capital used for the control of various small towns so that they do not to have too much power, leading them to disobey the leaders in higher authority. Since each *kalapana* employed a great number of local people and human resources were as the governor's base of power, this policy proved to be advantageous to the King and the religious institutions, including the *kha wat* themselves (Sasis, 2007).

Kha Wat in the Changes in Social and Abolition of Slavery

Owing to the coming of Western countries, Siam had to develop and improve itself. At the same time, the neighbour countries of Lanna were colonized under the English colonies which the Lanna could not avoid relating to the Western countries or people under the control of foreign countries. Lanna was a land rich in forests and teaks, natural resources vied by the numerous foreign countries in their commercial ventures. Forestry concessions were requested in several spots which caused problems due to the overlapping concessions and disputes between the foreign companies and the King of Chiang Mai. At the same time, this period offered golden opportunities for Siam to play an important role more and more by sending the governor (*Kha Luang Sam Mueang*) to solve these emerging problems by agreeing to make pacts such as the Treaty of Chiang Mai in B.E. 2416 and the second Treaty of Chiang Mai in B.E. 2426.

The Management of Siamese colonies i.e. Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang, Prae and Nan was under similar administrative form as Mon Thon Thesapibarn (B.E.

2427-2442). For Mueang Chiang Mai which was the center of Lanna since ancient times, the Siamese governor managed in laying a foundation for combining powers into central authorities and setting up Mon Thon Thesapibarn. This foundation was under King Chulalongkorn's younger brother, Krom Muen Pichit Preechakorn, a special governor who had power and duty as a representative of the King which in that reform was considered to be the end of Mueang Chiang Mai and other towns as Siamese colonies. The new administration was set up by arranging Mon Thon - Mueang - Khwaeng - Tambon - Mu Ban and creating six new positions consisting of Department of Interior, Military Department, Finance Department, Justice Department, Department of Palace and Paddy Field Department. Each of this department has an appointed official.

In addition to the administrative reform in the field of economics, new tax collection was introduced, i.e. collect taxes in terms of money instead of delivering tribute paid by the vassal state in terms of goods as dictated by the cultures of the the past. There was an abolition of common people and slavery afterward. This marked the arrival of changes to the conditions of the *kha wat* in Lanna enormously. At last, this relieved obligation of common people and slave who became one part of independent labour enabled them to fully earn a living. Particularly, there was a construction of the railway tracks to Chiang Mai in B.E. 2464 and the economic system expanded. People were ready to engage in the production of rice and other goods for sales. In addition, there was an announcement of Elementary Education Act B.E. 2464 with the establishments of more educational institutions at the university level which gave people access to academic knowledge that prepared them for the various professions. With this, the Lanna society had been dynamically and drastically transformed.

After all, the social history was once turned over and also resulted in *kha wat* when such Act was put into force. *Kha wat* was once considered to be one kind of slave of Lanna that should be revoked and became the rightful citizens under the same laws.

From the community of *kha wat*, our attention is turned to the “temple's devotees community” (*chumchon sattha wat*) that was the community of village people who had common awareness in religion instead (Sasis, 2007).

Kha Wat of the Holy Relic Temple from the Past to Present

In accordance with *kha wat* at the Holy Relic Temple in Chom Thong, people often began to refer to the period of Phra Ratanarat or Phra Mueang Kaew since Phra Mueang Kaew had built Viharn Jaturamuk in B.E. 2060 and Suwan Prasat or Khong Phra Chao. When it was completed, there was a celebration. At the inauguration, Phra Mueang Kaew “poured ceremonial water for alms-giving, such as golden cinerary urn, Prasart and Viharn, temple and slaves, paddy fields, territories, forests, lands, waterways, with great offerings to the Holy Relic Temple” and then, during the reign of Phra Mae Ku and Maha Thewi, they respectfully installed relics of Buddha to Mueang Chiang Mai and blessed the relics with holy water. Phra Mae Ku and Maha Thewi jointly conducted worship and implemented magnimous alms-giving, i.e. “sacrificial offerings, silver, gold, slaves, paddy fields, land, forest waterways, metal bowl use for bathing and glass cinerary urn, decorated with diamonds and receptacle for baths. At that time, there were 41 families of *kha phra that* of the Holy Relic Temple.

During the defeat of Chiang Mai by the King Hongsawadi of Burma, it expected that *kha wat* at the Holy Relic Temple were herded to Hongsawadi since there was a patriarch who brought out the information regarding former King’s pouring ceremonial water for *kalapana* tradition to the temple that included the people. When King Hongsawadi knew, he ordered the high official to “return *kha wat*, including forest, paddy fields, territories, flower plantation, orchard, flowered trees, orange trees, waterways, and fish ponds, to the Buddhist religion until the end of the religion as inscribed by the former King of Chiang Mai” (Sanguan, 1972: 280 cited in Sasis, 2007). This tradition was maintained until the reign of Phra Chao Sutthothammarat. And, during the reign of King Rama VI of Ratanakosin, there still had *kha phra that* to work at the Holy Relic Temple up to 700 persons. This indicated that it had transmitted for several generations.

Since there were records about privileges in politics of *kha wat* in the inscription of Phra Mae Ku in B.E. 2099 at the Holy Relic Temple that all *kha phra that* of the Holy Relic Temple had to take care of the temple, do not call for fight, protect the town, work, or tributes. The duties of *kha wat* or *kha phra that* were to take care and serve *phra that*, including the religious materials, religious places

located in the temple. *Kha wat* still performed their duties which were different from other places as indicated in the legend that “let *kha phra that* took turns to watch *phra that*, posting 5 guards during daytime, and 5 others during the night. If anyone was absent during the night, he would be fined for 1,000 bia (cowries) per day and during daytime, 500 bia (cowries) per day as penalty for *kha Phra That* to sweep the sand, mow the grass, repair regularly, keep watch both day and night, go in procession to bring *phra that* for partaking of food at the crystal stand” (Sanguan, 1972: 288 cited in Sasis, 2007). These duties continued until present time with some observable changes.

Now, the duties for keeping watch have changed. During the daytime, there were normally the lay religious practitioners who take care, but during the night there were two employers and polices to keep watch over the temple. During the repair under the Department of Fine Arts with a budget of about 28 millions Baht in 2005, there was an announcement for people to take care of the temple, 2 persons per village in the night, with a total of 10 guards per night was watching throughout the temple.

In the annual ceremony for pouring water on the relics of Buddha from lunar month 5-9 in every Buddhist day, some *kha phra that* would dress in red ancient soldier costumes with ancient weapons and play local music instruments along the procession of Phra That. Some *kha phra that* would carry long-handled yellow umbrella and litter with a small house with top to respectfully invite *phra that* to partake food at the Ubosot. It was believed that Buddha had come to consume the food in this area when he came during the time of Phraya Angkarattha and no matter what Phra That was invited to anywhere, *kha phra that* had always to follow like soldiers to protect *phra that*.



Illus. 2.2 *Kha phra that* dressed in red ancient soldier costumes with ancient weapons, played local music instruments, and carried litter with a small house-top containing Buddha's relics in the procession during the annual ceremony for pouring water on the relics of Buddha.

The temple's paddy fields designated as *kalapana* areas were allocated at Amphoe Ban Hong, Lumphun province, amounting to 3 fields with an area of 11 Rai 3 Ngan. The fields were divided for rental purposes by the villagers. With the completion of a year, villagers would bring money to the temple instead of rice, as practised in the past.

At present, the older generations know that they are *kha phra that* and have duties to take care of *phra that*. But, most of the younger generations are not aware or familiar with their duties (Sasis, 2007).

In the Myth of the Coming of Buddha to the Glorious Golden Hill, the Buddha's encounters also ascribe meaning to the places he visits as recorded by the acts of naming that take place throughout the text. This legend became localized and was evident by various places in the town, for instance, the place where the Buddha came for alms-giving is now a temple with Buddha's footprints, the place of Buddha's encounter with Yakkhas and *Phaya Rawi's* town are now the rice-fields, the rivers,

the mountains, etc. The Myth is not only a fit of human imagination but seems to have really existed. This is what we might call a methodology of locality that offers an insight into how these places come into being.

In recent years, there has been conceptualization of place tied to debates concerning processes of globalization and the politics of identity (Featherstone, 1993).

For David Harvey (1989, 1991, 1993), processes of globalization may be understood as having led to a dissolution of place and a fragmentation of contemporary identities, leading to a concomitant rise in xenophobia and a reactionary place-bound politics as people search for old certainties and struggle to construct a more stable, or 'bounded', local identity. In support of his thesis, Harvey points to the kind of marketing strategies that have dominated recent interurban competition and, in particular, to a rising interest in the local heritage which is seen as an attempt to “fix the meaning of places, to enclose and defend them” (Massey, 1994: 168 cited in May, 1996: 194).

Doreen Massey has argued that there is nothing inevitably reactionary about the identification with place and that it is the nature of that identification process to determine the politics of place-identities. Massey has argued for the possibility of establishing a more 'progressive sense of place', one within which, instead of being closed, is one that is understood as the unique point of connection in a wider series of flows (Massey, 1991a and b, 1992). Here, rather than see identities as 'singular, fixed and static' or interpreting places as 'bounded enclosed spaces defined through counter position against the Other who is outside' (Massey, 1994: 168 cited in May, 1996: 194-195).

However, it does allow us to consider how local people are constructing their sense of place in relation to the social constructions of recent processes of globalization and cultural change. Attention is therefore paid to people's constructions of locality and the ways in which those constructions both feed off and into their understandings of the local area and their local identities (May, 1996: 196).

Locality is both embodied and narrated, and is, as a consequence, often highly mobile: places travel with the people through whom they are constituted. Locality then should not be confused with location. It is rather a set of relations, an ongoing politics, a density, in which places are discursively and imaginatively materialized

and enacted through the practices of variously-positioned people and political economies. It is clear that there is now no question of imagining locality as simply the biophysical, or even representational, stage on which social actors constituted. The social construction of landscape was subtle and unsettling, and more powerful than it might at first appear (Raffles, 2004: 2).

The production of locality can also be understood as a production of modernity at a time when the local was dragged into the time-space of the modern world, and in which the key to modernity was integration in the nation-state (Raffles 2004: 25). Through both daily and exceptional practices, it witnesses the construction of local subjects: the making of people who think of themselves (at least sometimes) as belonging in and to a place (Raffles, 2004: 10).

The Emergence of religious identity as *kha that* people (the guardians of Buddha's relics) has been the result of the construction of local subjects which people think of themselves as belonging in and to a place in the politics of religious space by relating themselves to the Myth of the Coming of Buddha.

It should be noted that this "*kha that*" or "*kha wat*" identity has been used for identity construction of local people who are excluded from economics, politics, religion and culture in their discourses with modernity in the context of capitalization, and the growth of commodity culture. The excluded group utilized (at least sometimes) their religious identity as "*kha that*" or "*kha wat*" in their discourses instead of their *Lua* ethnic identity that responds to the premise that the inferior ethnic group had to assimilate themselves with the dominated groups to escape from the servile positions because they could ascend through the different levels of the system by their integration into the dominated system (Condominas, 1990: 72).

2.3 Modern Thai State and Rationalized Form of Buddhism

The growth of a Western-dominated world economic system, however, was accompanied by the growth of a Western-dominated world cultural system, in which processes of capitalism and cultural hegemony transformed not only relations of power and production but also experiences of personhood, of the body, gender, time, space and religion. The appropriation of totalizing and globally diffused processes such as capitalism, commodity consumption and 'rationalist' models of development

is often inseparable from the appropriation of totalizing and globally spread religion (Stewart and Shaw, 1994: 20).

2.3.1 Centralization of the Nation and Reformation of Buddhism

In the modern period, the significance of minorities within traditional Tai political systems is concerned not only with the creation and maintenance of boundaries, but also with the categorization of ‘others’ in terms of ritual and political relations. It creates the ‘Others Within’ who are classified as inferior, ‘uncivilized,’ superstitious. This includes the other non-Buddhist social categories. The traditional Buddhist and spirit-based beliefs were judged as irrational which may have been shaped by Western and Christian influences. (Thongchai, 2000: 49-51).

Under influences of the Western colonial powers, during the last half of the nineteenth century, the Siamese King Chulalongkorn began to form a centralized state of Siam with a fixed boundary. One of the major obstacles was linguistic diversity among the various Tai peoples. To consolidate these diverse peoples, the spoken Thai of Bangkok was made the official and national language. In creating a modern Thai state, the Bangkok authorities needed not only a common language but a common religion (Kamala, 1997: 7).

During the first half of the twentieth century, many regional monastic traditions still existed in Siam. Although these traditions differed from one another as much as they did from modern state Buddhism, they shared common features with the assumption that monasteries would remain engaged in village life (Kamala, 1997: 18). Each of these Buddhist traditions was differently influenced by the many different forms of indigenous spirit-worship and by the Mahayana and Tantric traditions that flourished prior to the fourteenth century (Kamala, 1997: 3-5). The local version of the Buddhist traditions differs from the variant found in Siam; in the scripts used for the sacred literature, in the structure and content of rituals, and in the organization of the Buddhist clergy, or Sangha. The Sangha was relatively unstructured. Each temple (*wat*) had autonomy, and its clergy was only minimally tied to the clergy elsewhere. Powers to the ordain monks and novices belonged to the senior monks in each temple. There was a distinction existing between those temples that were supported by local congregations and those supported by the royalty and

nobility. The latter usually had important relics which also made them important as sites of pilgrimages (Keyes, 1971: 552).

According to a manuscript attributed to the time of King Rama V, the Sangha in Chiang Mai used to be organized into circles called *muad ubosot*. Each circle comprised many *wats* or temples, with one common *ubosot* or ordination hall. The *wat* that had an *ubosot* was called *hua muad*, the head of the circle. Each *muad ubosot* was relatively autonomous and its *hua muad* was minimally tied to the other *hua muad*. Besides the organization into *muad ubosot*, or circles, all the *wats* were reported to belong to one or more of 18 sects that overlapped the circles. The sects were named after either a place or an ethnic group (Kwanchewan, 2003: 234-236). There existed also the organization for the division of community responsibilities for temple activities which were called *hua muad wat*. Each *hua muad wat* covered various communities in the nearby area. In regional traditions, the monastery served many functions necessary to community life. It was in fact the center of lay Buddhism. Modern state Buddhism changed the concept of religiosity from a community orientation to a temple orientation (Kamala, 1997: 23).

In creating a modern Thai state, the Bangkok authorities assumed that a rationalized form of Buddhism would provide the most unity and harmony. It was convinced that 'true religion' was a matter of rational doctrine and belief, and judged that traditional Buddhism was too superstitious. Consequently, the Thammayut sect became the model for modern state Buddhism. The 1902 Act created a Sangha bureaucracy. This modern ecclesiastical system brought the unorganized Sangha into line with the civilian government hierarchy. It disdained all traditions in which folk stories and parables were used to teach the dharma and where local culture was integrated with Buddhism (Kamala, 1997: 3-7). This reformation led to a fundamental shift in the practical interpretation of the Buddhist theory of action which, in turn, has led to an increasing number of people viewing themselves as being sufficiently freed from the constraints of previous karma to effect significant changes in their lives and those of the world where they live. Reformed Buddhism, as formulated by King Mongkut and instituted under Prince Vachirayan, entailed a shift from viewing the world in cosmological terms to viewing it psychologically, and as a concomitant shift

from practice centered on communal rituals to practice centered on self-cultivation (Keyes, 1989: 121-126).

2.3.2 The Decline of Local Political Order and Contestation

Lanna Kingdom was founded in 1296 by King Mengrai, when he succeeded his father as the leader of the Ngoen Yang city state. In 1262 he founded the city Chiang Rai as his capital, naming it after himself. The Kingdom quickly grew by unifying the many local Tai rulers of the area under his leadership, as well as by enlarging to the south by annexing the Mon kingdom of Haripunchai in 1292 - the area around the modern-day city Lamphun. In 1296 he founded the city of Chiang Mai as the new capital of the kingdom with help from allies Ngam Muang of Phayao and Ramkhamhaeng of Sukhothai.

The golden age of Lanna was in the 15th century. In 1477 the 8th of the Buddhist councils was held near Chiang Mai, which worked on improving the Buddhist scriptures. The previously independent city state Nan, capital of a Tai Lue people, was added to the kingdom in 1449.

Initial decline of the Kingdom began in the early 16th century, and worsened after the death of King Kaeo in 1526. A war of succession ensued among the royal factions, Kings were assassinated; or others had to abdicate. This political instability invited an invasion from the neighboring Burmese Kingdom, and in 1558 Lanna had to surrender and thus became a vassal of Burma. When the dynasty of Mengrai became extinct in 1578, the Burmese sent their own princes to serve as rulers of Lanna.

The Kings of Ayutthaya tried to capture Lanna several times, as the Burmese posed a threat to their kingdom as well. Even though around 1600 King Naresuan, and later in 1662 King Narai as well, succeeded in occupying Chiang Mai, they were repulsed by the Burmese after a short time.

In the early 1700s the Burmese divided the kingdom into a northern part, ruled from Chiang Saen, and a southern part, ruled from Chiang Mai. The northern part was for all practical purposes annexed by Burma, while the southern region continued to be a vassal state.

After the Burmese destroyed Ayutthaya, King Taksin drove the Burmese out of Siam or Central Thailand. In Lanna, King Taksin helped Phraya Chaban (Bunma) of Chiang Mai and Prince Kawila of Lampang to successfully drive out the Burmese. On the night of February 14, 1774 Chiang Mai fell to the Siamese. Phraya Chaban (Bunma) ruled Chiang Mai as the first Duke of Chiang Mai and Prince Kawila became the first Duke of Lampang under Siamese rulership. King Rama I, after ascending to the throne, awarded Kawila with more power. Kawila became the second Duke of Chiang Mai who ruled 57 cities. The two families became closer. Not only Princess Sri Anocha, Duke Kawila's sister, married to Vice King Boonma, King Rama I's only brother, but Princess Dararasmi, Duke Inthawichayanon's daughter also became King Rama V's Princess Consort. In 1877 a Viceroy from Bangkok was sent to help the duke. In 1899 Lanna was formally annexed by Siam, and administrated as the Monthon Phayap. The last of the Chiang Mai duke, Kaeo Nawarat, never held any true administrative power. Upon his death in 1939, no successor was named to replace him (Yupparaj School, 2009: online).

Between 1874 and 1902, the royal house of Chiang Mai, which had ruled as vassals of the King of Siam, was stripped of its power and authority, although it was left with a symbolic role which was only finally eliminated in 1973 when the last heir of the house who had held position in the ancient regime was cremated. The central Thai government arrogated power over both the city and its former domains and sent officials, who were only rarely of northern Thai origin, to administer policies which were determined in Bangkok (Keyes, 1975: 62).

2.3.2.1 Centralization of the Nation and the Decline of “Chao Mueang” system

After Chiang Mai and Lanna had freed itself from the yoke of Burmese rule and came under the dominion of Siam, Lanna still controlled its own economic, political, social and cultural affairs. The Siamese Thai showed their respect for the ruler of Chiang Mai by raising him in rank from Chao Mueang Chiang Mai to Phra Chao Chiang Mai. This strengthened the friendship and respect which Lanna had for Siam. Siamese Thai traditions were accepted and adapted for local use in the administration, as well as in local customs, art and culture.

As a dominion, Chiang Mai had to pay tribute to Siam three times a year- an act which acknowledged the power of Bangkok. If tribute was not made, it would have been considered an act of rebellion. The gifts had to include one pair of silver and gold trees, each of the same size, along with other gifts as deemed appropriate. In addition, taxes had to be paid annually at a fixed rate. Taxes from the principle cities of Lanna namely Chiang Mai, Phrae, Nan, Lampang and Lamphun included teakwood of an amount dependant on the size of the city.

In addition to the annual tributes and taxes levied, Bangkok had the right to claim whatever was required, especially teak, for important ceremonies or the construction of temples and palaces. The central administration would send gifts in return. At times of war, the dominion was required to assist by sending military conscripts.

In the nineteenth century Lanna was rich in forest resources which formerly had no value as there had been no commercial logging. However this began to change from around 1829 during the reign of King Rama III, when Chiang Mai began to have contact with foreigners, especially with the British and those under British jurisdiction. The British at first wanted to purchase elephants, oxen and buffaloes but their main interest eventually became logging. The Bangkok administration allowed the British to enter the region to conduct logging on a commercial basis.

In those days, the forests belonged to the ruler of the city and if some people wished to enter the forest for logging they had to get prior permission. Initially Bangkok did not interfere, but as logging continued many problems arose because there were no fixed regulations relating to concessions and taxes. At the same time, the rapid growth of the logging industry resulted in a sharp increase in the value of timber. Struggles for concessions that overlapped loggings, brought a large number of complaints and legal charges. Unrest grew in border towns and there was an increase in banditry and killings. Many people under the British crown who were involved in logging with Lanna were murdered. The British Government sought help from the central administration in securing the safety of the British.

The central administration feared that if the logging problems were allowed to continue, political problems would follow. They feared that the British would attempt to take control of the logging business in Lanna, and that the Northern Cities would not be able to repel them.

The British Government requested that the Siamese Government overseas administration in Chiang Mai required that central control was imposed by Bangkok. In 1873, the Treaty of Chiang Mai was drafted with the main objective of preventing banditry along the borders near Chiang Mai. The ruler of Chiang Mai was required to obey the conditions of the treaty and observe the central administration's policy on foreign affairs. At the same time, the British agreed to allow Asians under their jurisdiction to take part in civil cases held in courts in Chiang Mai. The only condition was that people under British power had to agree. If an agreement could not be reached, the matter was to be sent to the British Consul in Bangkok or the British representative in Yong Salin in Burma for a decision. The central administration took control of all the forests, allocating a monthly payment for cost of timber and labour to the local rulers.

Following the drafting of the first Treaty of Chiang Mai, the central government sent a royal commissioner to oversee the administration and solve problems in each of the three provinces of Chiang Mai, Lampang and Lamphun. The status of dominion was not terminated, however, for the commissioners lacked full power in dealing with legal matters. Any legal problems which occurred in Chiang Mai had to be dealt with in Bangkok. At the same time, the central government had no policy to bring about major changes because they were afraid there would be a reaction from the Chiang Mai ruler and his followers. The commissioners merely laid the groundwork for political reform and, to ensure that the ruler did not feel that he was being oppressed and sought his approval before doing anything.

To remedy deficiencies in the first treaty and satisfy British demands for the Siamese to send fully empowered officials to take care of matters, the second Treaty of Chiang Mai was drawn up. In this treaty it was specified that civil and criminal cases against people under British rule had to be heard in international courts. However, the Consul or Vice Consul had the right to withdraw cases from international courts and have them tried in Consular Courts when it was deemed appropriate. The British Government was thus given permission to establish a consulate in Chiang Mai.

In response to increasing western, particularly British, influence in Chiang Mai, the Thais had to introduce administrative reforms. In this case, they did in the

reign of Chao Inthawichayanon. To achieve this, they established a *monthon* (circle of administration) by combining all the Lanna city states and making them part of Siam. The ruler's power and influence was gradually reduced until, upon the death of Chao Inthawichayanon, the central government fully annexed Chiang Mai to Siam. The next ruler only carried the title of Chief of State. After losing its status as a city state, Chiang Mai was administered as a *monthon thesaphiban* (centre of local administration) with a royal commissioner as governor. The city states of Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang, and Phrae. Nan and Thoen were collectively made into an administrative unit called *Hua Mueang Lao Chiang* or *Monthon Lao Chiang*, so that all the outlying city states could be combined as one group. Monthon Lao Chiang was later renamed *Monthon Phayap* and extended to include Chiang Rai and Mae Hong Son. To establish national unity, Monthon Phayap later became part of the central administration. It was considered that the best way to achieve this unity and establish a feeling of nationalism was through educational reform. Lanna schoolchildren were thus required to learn the central Thai dialect.

Monthon Phayap became a *monthon thesaphiban* in 1899 and was administered by a royal resident commissioner. The local ruler had no direct administrative responsibilities and was merely an honorary figure. The central administration also began to have a greater role in economic matters. As in other parts of the country, taxes were collected on land owned by local nobility. As a result, government revenue increased greatly as most of the land was owned by northern nobility.

When Chiang Mai became part of Monthon Phayap after Chao Inthawichayanon's death, there remained only two living Chao Mueang. They were Chao Inthawarorot and Chao Kaeo Nawarat, who were the sons of Chao Inthawichayanon. Chao Kaeo Nawarat was the last *chao mueang* of Chiang Mai.

For their part, Bangkok paid the local rulers a monthly stipend which was paid up until the day of their death. In this way they were equal to other government officials. Their position was non-hereditary, however, and upon their death it was not refilled. This resulted in the gradual end of the system of rule by the local lords.

Upon the replacement of the absolute monarchy system with the democracy system in the reign of King Rama VII, the Thesaphiban (Municipality) system of the

provincial administration including the posts of Samuhathesaphiban and Commissioners to ten Monthons were abolished by the administration of the Kingdom of Thailand Act 1933 and Chiang Mai became just another province of Thailand.

Rapidly changes came to Chiang Mai beginning with the introduction of a rail service for passengers and goods between the capital and the provinces. Economic changes were also prompt to take place as produce could be exported from Chiang Mai to the Central Region. Agricultural land for the cultivation of rice and other cash crops was expanded so that surpluses could be produced for export.

Construction of the northern rail route began after the Shan Rebellion in 1902 and was completed at cultivation in 1921. After completion of the railway, work commenced on the construction of access roads that link the railway with various points both within and outside the province. Goods transported from Bangkok were mostly luxury products such as tiles, glassware, cigarettes and perfume imported from foreign countries like Great Britain, Germany and Japan. The major export item from the north was rice. As northern farmers began to grow rice for commercial purposes, cultivation was expanded, particularly in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai (Yupparaj School, 2009: online).

2.3.2.2 Local Contestation towards Centralization of Administration

The changes were not always smooth, since people were also affected by the introduction of taxes. Men of conscription age were required to pay an annual tax of four baht in lieu of being conscripted for labor. However, even though they paid the tax, men were still conscripted without pay despite instructions from Bangkok that conscript labor should be paid. The level of suffering rose and the people became very dissatisfied with officials from the central administration because they conscripted labor for the construction of roads and bridges both within and outside the city. As a result, the central government sent troops to quell the rebellion and punished the local ruler by dismissing him from his position. Government officials from the central region were sent to take over the entire administration. From that time on the leaders of other provinces accepted the authority of Bangkok without question.

Although the power of the Prince was slowly being eroded, there was little of this impingement on Chiang Mai. The tentacles of the central government in Bangkok were closing in and the railway was drawing ever nearer. Soon Lanna would become a loyal part of Siam, but there was one last protest – the 1902 Shan Rebellion.

The Siamese Commissioner paid the Prince a very substantial pension in return for relinquishing almost all his powers: all expenses were paid for by the ruthless collection of taxes. Lanna had always been under-populated and people from surrounding areas had been encouraged, or forced, to move into the country – one source estimates that the total population of Lanna in the 1830s was 400,000. Many Shans, who were British citizens, had been brought in to work with the teak companies, others followed them to work the land or in mines. They were looked down on, mistreated and heavily taxed by the Siamese officials.

On July 25th 1902, a few hundred Shans attacked and captured Phrae. They killed all the Siamese they could find and forcing the aged Prince to sign a declaration supporting the rebels who dreamed of driving the Siamese out of Lanna and placing it under British protection. On August 4th the Shans attacked Lampang which was ably defended by L.T. Leonowens and the Danish Captain Jensen and the rebellion collapsed. T.H. Lyle, the British Vice-Consul at Nan, rushed to mediate between the rebels and the vengeful Siamese army, they persuaded many of the rebels to lay down their arms and return to their homes in the Shan States (Yupparaj School, 2009: online).

In my study area, people are still talking about the story of the conflict event in this area. They said that during the time of centralization of administration under Siamese control, there was local contestation of *chao mueang*. One critical event was when the boat of Siamese traveled along the Ping River from Bangkok to Chiang Mai, they had to pass Chom Thong. At that time the three viceroy of Chiang Mai and his soldiers sneaked to shoot at boat's side. But *Chao Inthawichayanon* forbade with the reason that this would affect his daughter, *Chao Dararassami*, who was in Bangkok.

2.3.2.3 *The Last Local Ruler (Chao Mueang) of Chom Thong*

During the reign of the King Rama V (1853-1910), the old system of Administration was reformed due to modernization. Central and provincial administration was established to ensure the integrity of the nation. In the Provincial Administration, provinces were transformed into several groups called Monthon Thesaphiban (1892) with empowered authority. High commissioners were appointed to govern Monthon Thesaphiban on the King's Behalf. However the lack of transportation and strategic consideration led to insufficient official visit to remote area of each Monthon (circle), reducing the efficient implementation of directives and communications from the central administration. To solve the problem, minimum of two neighboring provinces are merged into one Monthon. This resulted in a reform of provincial, district, sub-district, communal and village administrations (Yupparaj School, 2009: online).

The last ruler of Chom Thong town before the reforms during the reign of King Rama V was "*Chao Phraya Chai Mueang Chuen*". People called him "*Por Phaya*" (Father Phaya) or "*Chao Mueang Chuen.*" People in Chom Thong said that rulers of Chom Thong were not local people, but they were "*Chao*" (royalties) from Lamphun which was a part of Lanna kingdom. In the olden days, these rulers owned a lot of lands and they did not cultivate by themselves, but commanded the local people to do for them. The local people were afraid of these rulers because they were fierce and could order them to death. Some people said that the rulers came riding on horseback and the local people had to sit and did not dare to see when they passed. One of his granddaughters (now 80 years old) said when she was young; she lived with *Por Phaya* in a big wooden house. She had a duty to carry water for him due to *Por Phaya* did not permit the others to come near him (some said it might be for his safety). She still remembered that he always sat on a wooden stool in the middle of the room and had meeting with people. Another one of his grandchildren also showed his photo, a moustache man in Rachapataen (Racha-pattern) suit or button-up coat and loincloth with stick in his hand.

After the reforms during the reign of King Rama V in 1855, the town was divided into five sub-districts. And during the abolishment of Chao Mueang system in the reign of King Rama VII, "*Phaya Chai Mueang Chuen*" who was the last ruler of

the town was degraded from “*Phaya*” to “*Khun*” (kamnan or kwaen, the head of sub-district) under the title of “*Khun Sri Kham Rat*” who ruled only one of the five sub-districts while there were another four “*Khun*” for each sub-district. And, after the abolishment of absolute monarchy system, the title of “*Khun*” was replaced by the position of “*Kamnan*” (head of the sub-district) and the title of “*Muen*” by village headman. The town of Chom Thong was established as a district of Chiang Mai province in 1900. This led to the abolishment of Lanna states’ old system.

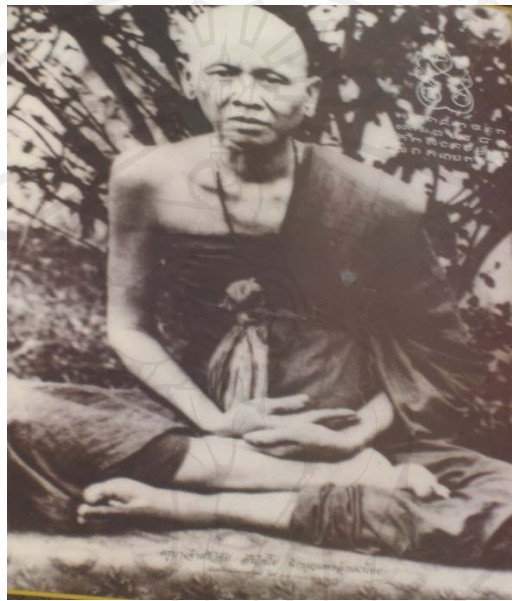
2.3.3 Local Opposition to Centralization of the Nation and Religion

2.3.3.1 Local Opposition to Buddhist Reformism: *Khruba* Movements

In the 1920s and 1930s the government confronted a powerful movement which coalesced around a man seen in traditionalist terms as one possessing extraordinary merit. The northern Thai monk, *Khruba Sriwichai*, was acclaimed a "saint" (*nakbun*) by a large part of the population of northern Thailand (see Keyes, 1971, 1977, and 1981; and Ishii, 1986). *Khruba Sriwichai* openly resisted many of the reforms instituted in the Sangha and sought to maintain the distinctive northern Thai (or Yuan) Buddhist tradition. Although he came close to doing so, *Khruba Sriwichai* backed away from advocating that northern Thailand secede from the Thai nation, and the government, in turn, refrained from jailing him, an act which probably would have made him a martyr. The conflict ended when *Khruba Sriwichai* accepted the authority of the official church, represented by the Sangha hierarchy; in turn, the Sangha tacitly allowed the northern Thai to carry out many of their traditional practices within their local communities (Keyes, 1989: 129).

Khruba Siwichai (1878-1939) and *Khruba Khao Pi* (1889-1977) were two famous monks who were consistent with *ton bun* tradition which is a uniquely Northern Buddhist variant of the *bodhisattava* ideal. “A *ton bun* is a person who has accumulated great merit (*bun*) and perfection (*barami*) in past lives or in the present life and provides opportunities for others to gain merit, expressed typically in the building or renovation of religious monuments and the sharing of merit with the laity. Both monks adhered to the forest-monk tradition and rigorously followed the practice of strict asceticism including dedication to meditation and vegetarianism. However, theirs was not the asceticism of the world-fleeing arahant but the *bodhisattava* actively

and compassionately involved in the world. Their asceticism and *bodhisattava* qualifies them to lead their followers who attribute to them a range of supernatural powers, such as discerning other people's thoughts, clairvoyance and ability to ward off malevolent spirits" (Cohen, 2000: 142).



Illus. 2.3 *Khruba Siwichai* (1878-1938).

In Chom Thong area, people still respect *Khruba Siwichai* and *Khruba Khao Pi*. All of the monks, particularly the monks who claim themselves as local monks, expressed their worship to *Khruba Siwichai*. Most of them claim to be *Khruba Siwichai*'s disciples and many of them said that they followed *Khruba Siwichai* in the road construction to Holy Relic Temple on Doi Suthep. These monks dressed in yellow robe with palm leaves fan in *Khruba Siwichai*'s style which they said it was the typical lanna style, eating vegetarians and construction of many religious monuments (sometimes not only Buddhism but with various faiths). Then, *Khruba Siwichai* in this contemporary becomes a local symbol which has been constructed and reconstructed by local monks with the different faiths or beliefs. It also distants the "others" who are not local monks which might be an anti-syncretism strategy in their construction of discourse related to the modern established Buddhism.

The lay people in Chom Thong also respect *Khruba Sriwichai* but with the beliefs in his supernormal power. Recently, there was a story that a monk's residence in a temple of *San Pa Tong* district which is not far from Chom Thong was burnt and nothing left except the photos of *Khruba Siwichai* and *Khruba Khao Pi*. People believed it was a miracle and they copied the pictures for sale. A woman in Chom Thong bought one and showed me the pictures.

Some local people still recollect their memory during the time of *Khruba Sriwichai*. One woman, age 62, said her father had also followed *Khruba Sriwichai* in the road construction to Holy Relic Temple on Doi Suthep. One old man told the story when *Khruba Sriwichai* was jailed that there was the opposition of the lay people in Chom Thong who were *Khruba Sriwichai*'s disciples. At that time, they had to communicate by secret codes called *tua siab* which had been written in lanna scripts in order to send informations amongst them.

There is a statue of *Khruba Siwichai* in a small pavilion in the compound of the Holy Relic temple. In the local temples' ceremonial hall, there is the statue of *Khruba Khao Pi* which is situated near the Buddha's image. In Buddhist days rituals, people brings flowers and offerings to *Khruba Khao Pi*'s statue in the same manner as they offer to the triple gems, namely Buddha, Dhamma (Buddha's teachings) and Monks. It should be noticed that there was no statue of *Khruba Khao Pi* in the Holy Relic temple. This is because *Khruba Khao Pi* was disrobed during the conflict against Buddhist reformism and he wore white robe until his death, so he was not accepted as a monk in official Buddhism or Sangha order. But for the local lay people, they still give respect to *Khruba Khao Pi* as a monk and also believe that *Khruba Khao Pi* is a *ton bun*. People told that *Khruba Khao Pi* initiated in the support for the constructions of district office, local temple and Elementary School in Chom Thong town while the government had no budget at that time.

In the process of nation-building during the modernization period, *Khruba Sriwichai*'s movement had been considered as a form of contestation to the reformation of Buddhism. It reflected that the incorporation process had not been smoothly accomplished, but there were the discontented voices within the process. And, religion was used as a strategy for construction of discourses in entering into modernity.

2.3.3.2 The Worship of Phra That or the Twelve-year Cycle As a Local Discourse to the Power of Siam

The beliefs of “Chu That” in Lanna or the worship at the stupa (Phra That) of one’s birth sign according to the year of Lanna animal symbol is one of the beliefs of Lanna people. This sort of Pagoda worship relates to the 12 Lanna animal signs. Lanna people believe that all Buddhists should make a pilgrimage to the stupa of their animal sign of their birth-year at least once in their life. It is for prosperity, luck, protection from the dangers of Karma, and for relaxation of the mind as well as being of the highest merit. They also believe that whenever one dies, the soul will go and stay at the stupa of their birth sign. Each of the 12 chosen stupas has a relic of the Buddha deposited inside as well. The Holy Relic in Chom Thong belongs to the Jai (rat) birth-year. It is different from other stupa because its Buddha relics didn’t stay interned in the stupa. Relics such as the right cranium of Buddha are contained in a glass cinerary. The urn is placed in the *Ku* (a unique feature of Lanna architecture, similar to a stupa) inside the temple Viharn.



Illus. 2.4 Buddha’s relics enshrined in the stupa inside the temple Viharn of the Holy Relic temple.

Phra That (stupa) of the birth-year sign becomes the sacred shrines for pilgrimage. These pilgrimage sites serve both religious and social functions for those

are pilgrims. The major religious function of the pilgrimage is to bring pilgrims into closer proximity with the actual Buddha than they are in their regular places of religious action. These sacred shrines are places where the relics of Buddha are supposed to be preserved at which the Buddha himself is believed to have made an actual visit during his lifetime.

Such proximity provides the pilgrim with a means for maximizing the religious goals of making merit and tapping the potency of sacred Buddhist's objects. Socially considered, pilgrimage both temporarily dissolves the normal ties of social structure in the pilgrim's home community and exposes the pilgrim to a larger community of devotees or between the village community (with its complex of local beliefs and practices) and the nation. Buddhist pilgrimage centers have long been patronized by the reigning monarch. The conspicuous display of the acts of royal patronage reinforces a link between religion and secular power. The pilgrimage reinforces merit-making as a religious concept and a social norm through the public display of social action directed toward valued religious goals (Pruess, 1974).

The tradition to revere the relics of Buddha enshrined in the stupas according to the twelve-year circle in Lanna has indicated that stupas are mythological invention which serve as an ideological tool base on the local cultural beliefs and the Lanna cosmological concept. The Lanna rulers invented the tradition to revere the relics of Buddha as a strategy to counter the Siamese political influence during the political reform that would incorporate northern Thai into the modern nation-state of Siam by adhering to religious mythology and beliefs as an important mechanism to construct a set of discourse (Thianchai, 2002a).

2.4 Conclusion

Throughout history, Buddhist religious space has been used in the construction of discourses in negotiating of identities. It reflected the politics of religious space which was used by both the dominant and subversive parties in constructing of their shifted identities in historical changing context.

Under *Buddhization* process during the premodern period, it was used in legitimating of the premodern rulers in *khon mueang* (northern Thai people) historical

discourse. It then created the local religious identity of *kha that* people (the guardians of Buddha's relics) who were subordinated people.

In the modern period, the centralization of the nation and rationalized form of Buddhism had been used for modern state building. It created discontented voices in terms of politics and religious discourse. In the context of capitalization, and the growth of commodity culture, the "*kha that*" identity has been used for identity construction of local people who are excluded from economics, politics, religion and culture in their discourses.

Despite the demise of rural spirit cults in northern Thailand which are much emphasized in previous studies during the past decades, the belief in spirits and practices remain locally significant and provide a basis for the politics of religious space in the contestation of meanings. Spirits belief has still been the most influence on daily lives of the people despite being integrated into Buddhism under 'Buddhicization' process in which Buddhism become dominant during the premodern or was officially banned by the reformed Buddhism in the modern period. The blend of the spirit world with Buddhism has resulted in the variety of customs and religious practice today.

In the next chapters, we can see that, in the present context of losing control over their decision-making in their lives under capitalist period, spirits belief has been multiple used as religious discourse in the construction of local religious identities by the excluded group.