

# คุณค่าของพิธีกรรมเลี้ยงผีเจ้าพ่อขุนตานกับการแก้ปัญหาของชุมชน ผู้ใช้น้ำแม่ตานในจังหวัดลำปาง

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อาจารย์ประจำคณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์  
มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏลำปาง

## บทคัดย่อ

การนำเสนอในครั้งนี้ได้แสดงแนวคิดที่เจาะลึกในความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างมนุษย์กับธรรมชาติในมิติของภูมิวัฒนธรรมที่ลุ่มน้ำแม่ตาน อำเภอห้างฉัตร จังหวัดลำปางโดยการสืบค้นหารากเหง้าของมรดกในพิธีกรรมและความเชื่อที่ตกทอดมาสู่ผู้คนที่นี่ในปัจจุบัน

น้ำแม่ตานมีกำเนิดมาจากเทือกเขาขุนตานกั้นระหว่างจังหวัดลำปางกับจังหวัดลำพูน และไหลผ่านชุมชนต้นน้ำที่อำเภอห้างฉัตรและไหลลงน้ำแม่วังที่อำเภอเกาะคา ชุมชนผู้ใช้น้ำตั้งแต่อดีตได้สร้างความเชื่อ และกลายเป็นรูปแบบประเพณีคือการบูชาสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ ผู้ดูแลแหล่งต้นน้ำคือเจ้าพ่อขุนตาน และได้สร้างตำนานและสัญลักษณ์มารองรับความเชื่อที่เจ้าพ่อขุนตานคือช้าง โดยดูจากพิธีกรรมการเลี้ยงผีก่อนฤดูทำนา และสร้างศาลที่ใช้ คือการบูชาช้างเผือก นี่คือการร้อยเรียงของความเชื่อของผู้คนต่อสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ นั่นคือเทพเจ้าที่มีอำนาจปกป้องแหล่งน้ำของผู้คน

ดังนั้นการสร้างเรื่องราวให้สอดคล้องกับภูมิประเทศจึงเป็นที่มาของคำว่าภูมิวัฒนธรรมโดยมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อให้คนใช้น้ำได้ยอมรับกฎกติกาของระบบเหมืองฝายและมีกฎจารีตที่ใครก็ไม่ควรฝ่าฝืนเพราะเมื่อมีการละเมิดผู้คุมกฎคือเจ้าพ่อขุนตานจะมองเห็นและมีบทลงโทษผู้คนต่อไป จึงทำให้ชุมชนอยู่กันอย่างสันติในการใช้น้ำต่อไป

**คำสำคัญ:** ภูมิวัฒนธรรม, ภูเขาขุนตาน, ตำนานท้องถิ่น, พิธีกรรมเลี้ยงผี

# The values of spirits exhibition as resolution of water conflict management in Mae Tan River, Lampang Thailand.

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores the relationship between humans and the natural environment, emphasizing cultural landscapes throughout human history and the deep cultural associations between traditional communities and natural sites. It also explores the communal management and preservation of cultural landscapes and biological diversity. The patterns of cultural landscapes have been passed down to the present.

The case study is of Mae Tan, a river located is on a tributary of the Wang River in the Lampang province of Northern Thailand. In Northern Thailand, mountain ranges stretch from north to south, sloping to the basin area, and the rivers Ping, Wang, Yom, and Nan run through the lowlands from north to south. These rivers join as the great Chao Phraya River, which flows into the gulf of Thailand.

This research in social anthropology and geography employs cross-cultural comparisons, anthropological and geographical methods, including the use of archaeological and historical data, as well as observational and survey methods, to determine cultural cross-currents. This research was described in the meaning defined of the river upstream on the Khun Tan Mountains as a sacred place. For example; the spirit shares water with the habitants; the mountain is considered home to the gods or spirits (for instance, in local mythology, a white elephant is

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considered the god of water. Spiritual rituals can be found everywhere from the watershed to the river.

This paper aspires to renew the world around us and to preserve cultural landscapes. Local communities nowadays face many social problems leading to social disorganisation. A story of gods that dwell in forests as sacred space that everyone know story passed from one person's mouth for example; "phi pan nam" mean "water sharing by gods".

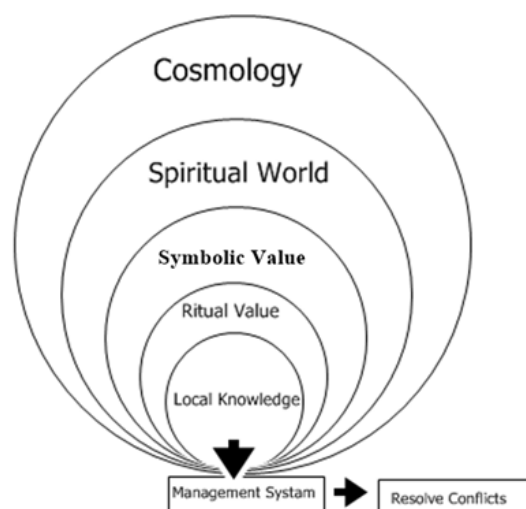
Thus, the studying and learning traditional approaches for water conflict resolution should be an opportunity to think about and discuss these social problems. Finally, this paper shows how this methodology helps solve a conflict over the sharing of water, promoting socialization and sustainability which will continue for a long time.

**Keywords:** Cultural Landscape, Khun Tan Mountains, Local Mythology, God of water, Sacred Space

## Introduction

Cultural landscapes are a legacy for everyone. These special sites reveal aspects of our country’s origins and development as well as our evolving relationship with the natural world. They provide scenic, economic, ecological, social, recreational, and educational opportunities, helping communities to better understand themselves. (Charles A. B 2005, 5).

This paper discusses natural resource management that relationships which solutions of water conflicts management by process of community organization through targeted activities. Thus, in this case study, we choose supernatural sanctions which would be principles the people believed came from supernatural sources, such as deities with deep cultural associations to traditional communities and their natural sites to resolve water conflicts. Local knowledge has been a main asset in maintaining the livelihood of local communities throughout history. It is passed down from one generation to another orally, through first hand observations and personal practices. Indigenous people interpreted the meaning of ritual symbols by dramatizing the responsive meanings which rituals may be prescribed by the traditions of a community, including a religious community. The past, according to spiritualism, is a realm inhabited by spirits, both good and evil of various spiritual manifestations. Indigenous cosmology explains the daily motion of the sun across the sky and back again under the ground such as metaphors and personification, deviates from the literal meaning of god words demand human worship. Thus the mountain, in its closeness to heaven, is considered a sacred place, the home of god or a spirit house, leading to the rituals of spirits as the idea of resolution of water conflict management. (see diagram)



The Khun Tan mountain is located in northern Thailand. Mae Tan are the river streams and watershed flowing from the high mountain to lowlands. Khun Tan experiences three seasons; summer, from March to June, rainy, from July to October, and winter, from November to February. The temperature varies from 38 degrees Celsius during the hot season, to as low as 5 degree Celsius during the cold. Rainfall, which occurs mostly during the rainy season, averages approximately 1,034 mm. per year. (Gordon Young 2011, 33) A supernatural tradition holds that god inhabits all the trees, rocks, water, and land, which scholars call animism. Animism is the belief that animals, plants, rivers, mountains, and other entities in nature contain an inner spiritual essence. This has led to a supernatural understanding of existence as well as correlation with the functional universe. It is through these agencies that they relate themselves with the cosmic mind which govern the moral and ethical arena of the individual as well as the social life. A moral precept is an idea or opinion that's driven by a desire to be good. An ethical code is a set of rules that defines allowable actions or correct behavior. (Ludwig Wittgenstein & Cyril Barrett 2010, 97)

Mountains are considered sacred in many cultures around the world because their peaks extend towards the heavens and the other celestial bodies. (Naess Arne 1973, 1150) They therefore carry a rich symbolism. The vertical axis of the mountain drawn from its peak to its base links it with the axis of the world, and as is the case with the cosmic tree, mountains are identified as the center of the world. This belief is attached, for example, to Mount Tabor by the Israelites and the Meru Peak of the Hindus. There are also numerous examples of artificial or symbolic mountains such as the Mesopotamian ziggurats and the Egyptian Pyramids, and the temple-mountain of Borobudur. In most cases, the peaks of real and artificial mountains are the sites for sanctuaries and shrines. (Christopher L. C. E. Witcombe 2004, 211)

A sacred mountain in China developed a long time ago before the creation of the written word. Since antiquity, mountains were thought to embody the mythical and primordial power and energy that created cosmological order, structured geographical hierarchy, and sanctioned political authority. Soaring between heaven and earth, mountains were considered not only as places inhabited by the divine but also by the divinities themselves. (Wei-Cheng Lin 2014, 16) China has some of the oldest recorded history of any country on earth, the myth of Pangu was Xu Zheng during the Three Kingdoms period, people have considered the realm of heaven as covering the realm of earth, and from this belief arose the idea that heaven could fall down if unsupported. The mountains were believed to perform this function. The four sacred Buddhist

Mountains of China are Wu Tai Shan to the north, Emei Shan to the west, Pu Tuo Shan to the east, and Jiu Hua Shan to the south. According to Chinese mythology, these refer to the Five Great Mountains, which originated from the body of Pangu (盘古/盤古 Pángǔ), the first being and creator of the world. Because of its eastern location, Mount Tàì is associated with the rising sun, which signifies birth and renewal. It is thus often regarded as the most sacred of the Five Great Mountains. In accordance with its special position, Mount Tàì is believed to have been formed out of Pangu's head, while Mount Heng in Hunan is considered to be a remainder of Pangu's right arm, Mount Heng in Shanxi his left arm, Mount Song his belly, and Mount Hua his feet. (Joan Qionglin Tan 2009, 613) All of sacred Buddhist Mountains of China were thought to embody the mythical and primordial power and energy that created cosmological order.

A sacred mountain in India, Mount Kailash is believed to be the abode of the Hindu deity Shiva. Mount Kailash or Gang Rinpoche (simplified Chinese: 冈仁波齐峰, Gāngrénbōqí fēng, Sanskrit: कैलास Kailāsa) is a peak in the Kailas Range (Gangdisê Mountains), which forms part of the Transhimalaya in Tibet. It lies near the source of some of the longest rivers in Asia: The Indus River, the Sutlej River (a major tributary of the Indus River), the Brahmaputra River, and the Karnali River. It is considered a sacred place in four religions: Bön, Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. The mountain lies near Lake Manasarovar and Lake Rakshastal in Tibet. Every year, thousands make a pilgrimage to Kailash as part of a tradition which goes back thousands of years. Pilgrims of several religions believe that circumambulating Mount Kailash is a holy ritual that will bring good fortune.

The importance of this holy mountain in Hinduism is event, among other places, at the famous Ellora Caves in India, where the largest and most important rock-carved temple is dedicated to Mount Kailash. According to a description in the Puranas, Mount Kailash's four faces are made of crystal, ruby, gold, and lapis lazuli. It is the pillar of the world, raising to a height of 84,000 leagues, and is the center of the world or the mandala, being located at the heart of six mountain ranges and symbolizing a lotus. From it flow four rivers, which stretch into the quarters of the world and thereby dividing it into four regions. (Colin Wilson 1996, 148) Mount Kailash is the holy mountain in Hinduism and other religions, especially Buddhism in South East Asia

The sacred texts the Hindu religion explain that all the inhabitants of the earth emerged from the primordial sea. The Rivers of Mount Kailash are the Indus, the Sutlej, the Brahmaputra, and the Karnali. A cultural landscape of sacred mountain both India and China are associated in

the minds of the communities with powerful beliefs and artistic and traditional customs, embody an exceptional spiritual relationship of people with nature.

The two holy sites have in common a sloping landscape, which leads to a water tank or a seasonal lake. Physical models are common in studies of hill slope form and process. Examples of physical models designed to understand landslides, earth flows, and debris flows abound in geological engineering and watershed hydrology literature. (Denlinger, R.P. & Iverson, R.M. 2001, 554)

Wat Phu Champasak is considered one of the oldest archaeological sites in Laos. One temple on this site was constructed around the 5th century but most buildings found in the complex are from the 11th to 13th centuries. Wat Phu has been an ancient temple for Buddhist religious practice and replaced Hinduism in Laos in the 13th century. Phou Kao Mountain, its shape, identified in ancient times with the linga, the phallic symbol of Shiva, from which originated its ancient name, Lingaparvata, and its reputation as a sacred mountain. (UNESCO 1999, 4)

The river of Wat Phu Champasak is Mae Khong River; The Mekong River is one of the world's great rivers. It tumbles down through the Himalayas and southern China into Southeast Asia and flows along the borders of Laos, Burma and Thailand through the Golden Triangle into Cambodia, where it flows in one direction in the wet season and the opposite direction in the dry season. It finally empties into the South China Sea at the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. The Cosmographic conceptions encountered in Southeast Asia reflect the ethnic and religious diversity of the region's inhabitants. Hindu traditions, one encounters a bewildering variety of animistic beliefs. (Joseph E. S 1987, 178)

A sacred Mountain of Thailand; Chiang Dao Mountain, the mountains of northern Thailand constitute part of northern Thai identity. They inspire fear and awe, respect and love, curiosity and creative imagination. They define both the physical and mental landscape of northern Thailand. In preserving the fascinating folklore of these sacred mountains. (Donald K. Swearer; et. al 2004, 5). Local myth holds that the mountain represents a three-headed elephant. In the full moon of Buddha Day, the people can see the light from the mountain flying toward the other mountain, called Doi Nang, which means a female elephant.



Picture 1 Chiang Dao Mountain; a three headed elephant Mountain (Source: Webby 2015, online)



Picture 2 Rituals in worship; a three headed elephant (© Phanuwat Chaichana 05/11/2014)

The villagers hold a ceremony for the three-headed elephant before planting their crops every year. The river of the Chiang Dao Mountains is the Mae Ping. Mae Ping River flows through the city of Chiangmai and provides the surrounding rural countryside with much needed water for the irrigation of rice paddies, gardens and crops. The Mae Ping is known to locals as the “Lifeline of the Province”. The river is 569 km long, and has its source in the mountains near Chiang Dao, in the northernmost part of Chiangmai Province.

Some of the world’s great rivers originate in Tibet, the Himalayas and southern China and extend into Southeast Asia. The cultural landscapes are not different because they had been developed to solve common problems, especially those of water management.

## Discussion

Many scholars accept the influence of Indian cultures on the establishment of sacred mountain sites in Southeast Asia, but in reality local people have created ritual spirit homes since prehistoric times. Prehistoric humans such as Homo erectus migrated north to south from Beijing to Java. (Pope, G.G. 1985, 70) Worship at sacred sites on mountains, or mountains themselves as being sacred can be found in most ancient cultures, while sacred sites are present in most of the world’s religions and these landscapes of spiritual culture are connected to a power water management of the spirit. For example, Mount Tàì is believed to have been formed out of Pangu’s head. In Chinese mythology, Pangu refers to giant people who built the earth as well as the nature. In northern Thailand, the old myth refers to two Giant men, named Phu la Heong and Ayi Ngum Fa which built a mountain, Doi Duan in the Phayao Province. The stories of Ayi Ngum Fa contain many events, such as the preparation of a trap for wild hen at the hill, which in the ancient myth of the city refers to the boundary of Wiang Phu kam Yao, an old city in Phayao in the 13th century.

A comparison of Northern Thai and Chinese myths (Pangu of Tai Mountain) reveal similarities in the standing stone or Menhir. The histories and religions of Southeast Asian societies was intersected by a spiritual or invisible realm as spiritual landscape that protect places, pathways, rivers and mountains since ancient times, present day.

The Khun Tan Mountain Is located in northern Thailand; its other name is the Phe Phan Num range, in which Phe means the spirit, Phan means divide, and Num means water. Archeological evidence found in the areas of Lampang province includes an old stone at Kho Ka district and

Mae Ta district, polish stone tools in many places, which indicate human dwelling, and graves. (Per Sorensen et al. 1976, 33) This suggests that these sites were constructed to hold religious ceremonies. Evidence of burial traditions has also been found. Menhir or the standing stone discovered at the watershed of both Mae tan River and the banks of Mae Ta River as led to the discovery of a burial of a human 5000 years ago, (Sayan Praicharnjit, 2011, 141)



**Picture 3** Ritual spirit exhibition Chao phor khun Tan (Source: Suparp Tajai 2018, online)

## Conclusion

The spirits living within a spiritual landscape were established to protect areas of land which, are especially important to the maintenance of biological diversity. The people of Mae Tan River have complied with their duty to cooperate and build relationship between people living near the watershed and at the river's end, leading to the formation of a mutual, local tradition. Examples include the white elephant ceremony before the plantation of crops.

The cooperation of people who used the Mae Tan River extends beyond the ceremonial. They are also working together to create a water sharing system. This is reminiscent of the spirits living in a sacred stone, whom the local people call Chao Phor khun Tan, and who possess the power to control the rain that is important for the raising of crops and animals, and the control rivers, lakes, and oceans.

The other names are Chao Preal Pong Fa [God of Vocano], Chao Lra Fa Kaew [God of Sky]. They help to protect people and to provide them with essential items such as water and food.

In order to guarantee the goodwill of Chao Phor Khun Tan, the people of Mae Tan River must perform rituals and ceremonies every year. Finally, this paper has sought to explain the meaning of symbol rituals in scared mountain, and to analyse and decode these symbols. It has found that the elephant is symbolic of the mountain. This understanding has helped people create a local consciousness, to reproduce rituals and ceremonies, and to integrate into them a watershed management leading ultimately to sustainability.

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