

บวชป่า : การใช้ภูมิปัญญาพื้นบ้านในการอนุรักษ์ทรัพยากร
ป่าไม้ในชุมชนภาคเหนือผ่านพิธีกรรมบวชป่า
Tree Ordainment: Indigenous Knowledge for
Forest Conservation in Northern Thailand
Community through Buat-Pah Ritual

สุธีรพงษ์ ศรีวิราช* ปราภก แก้วเศษ และ ไพรัช ถิตย์ผาด
Suteepong Sriviraj* Prarop Kaoses and Pairat Thidpad

คณะวัฒนธรรมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยมหาสารคาม
Faculty of Cultural Science, Mahasarakham University

*E-mail: thoasmartshop@gmail.com

Received: Oct 27, 2017

Revised: April 19, 2018

Accepted: April 27, 2018

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้เป็นงานวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาพัฒนาการของภูมิปัญญาพื้นบ้านบวชป่าในการอนุรักษ์ทรัพยากรป่าไม้ในชุมชนภาคเหนือ 2) เพื่อศึกษาปัญหาการใช้ภูมิปัญญาพื้นบ้านพิธีกรรมบวชป่าในการอนุรักษ์ป่าชุมชนภาคเหนือ 3) เพื่อค้นหาภูมิปัญญาพื้นบ้าน และวัฒนธรรมท้องถิ่นที่ทำให้เกิดการสังเคราะห์การบวชป่าในชุมชนภาคเหนือ ทำการศึกษาในพื้นที่สามจังหวัดภาคเหนือคือ พะเยา แพร่ และน่าน ระหว่างเดือนสิงหาคม 2555 ถึง กันยายน 2558 เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยได้แก่ แบบสัมภาษณ์ แบบสังเกต แบบสนทนากลุ่ม และการประชุมเชิงปฏิบัติการ มีการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลภาคสนามจากการสัมภาษณ์ การสังเกต การสนทนากลุ่ม และการประชุมเชิงปฏิบัติการ นำข้อมูลที่ได้มาตรวจสอบความถูกต้องด้วยวิธีการแบบสามเส้า แล้วทำการวิเคราะห์ตามวัตถุประสงค์ และนำเสนอผลการวิจัยในรูปแบบเชิงพรรณนา

ผลการศึกษาพบว่าผู้ริเริ่มการนำภูมิปัญญาการบวชป่ามาใช้ในการอนุรักษ์ทรัพยากรป่าไม้ในภาคเหนือ เกิดจากแนวความคิดของพระภิกษุผู้ที่มีความรู้และเป็นปราชญ์ท้องถิ่นชื่อพระโสภณพัฒน์ม รองเจ้าคณะจังหวัดพะเยา

เจ้าอาวาสวัดโพธาราม ซึ่งเป็นผู้ที่มีความรู้ ต่อจากนั้นแนวความคิดนี้ได้แพร่กระจายออกไปยังท้องถิ่นอื่น ๆ และมีผู้นำไปปฏิบัติจนทั่วภาคเหนือ และยังคงปฏิบัติอยู่ในปัจจุบัน ภูมิปัญญาการบวชป่า เกิดจากการสังเคราะห์ และการผสมผสานระหว่าง พิธีกรรม ความเชื่อทางด้านพระพุทธศาสนา ความเชื่อในสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ลี้ลับเหนือธรรมชาติเช่น ผี เทวดา นางไม้ เจ้าป่า เจ้าเขา ร่วมกับภูมิปัญญาพื้นบ้านจนประยุกต์และกลายเป็นเป็นพิธีกรรมบวชป่า ซึ่งเป็นวัฒนธรรมใหม่ที่ถูกสังเคราะห์ขึ้นมาที่เป็นที่ยอมรับในชุมชน และประสบความสำเร็จในการอนุรักษ์ทรัพยากรป่าไม้ได้เป็นอย่างดี

คำสำคัญ : บวชป่า ภาคเหนือ การอนุรักษ์ ป่าไม้ ภูมิปัญญา

Abstract

This research is a qualitative research study with aims of 1) studying the development of the indigenous knowledge of Buat-Pah ritual (tree ordainment) in the conservation of trees in Northern Thai communities. 2) studying the difficulties in applying indigenous knowledge of Buat-Pah ritual in the conservation of trees in Northern Thailand. 3) identifying the factors which created or synthesized the Buat-Pah ritual in Northern Thailand. The research areas include Phayao, Phrae and Nan province in northern Thailand. Field research and document analysis were conducted from August 2012 to September 2015. Research tools included interview forms, observation forms and workshop. The research data was analyzed by using data triangulation method and the research results were descriptively presented.

The origin of the indigenous knowledge of Buat-Pah ritual was first created by a Buddhist monk named Phra Sophon Phat No Dom who is the Ecclesiastical Provincial Governor of the provincial Buddhist order in Phayao province and is also the abbot of the Wat Photharam temple in Phayao province. The Buat-Pah ritual by Phra Sophon Phat No Dom was aimed to preserve and protect the forest and environment of their

community which was being deforested. The practice of Buat-Pah ritual gained momentum and the ritual was duplicated and is popular throughout Northern Thailand. The Buat-Pah ritual was created or synthesized from the fusion of Buddhist rituals, local beliefs in spirits and deities and the indigenous knowledge of local communities resulting in a newly formed culture of Buat-Pah which has been accepted by the community and has proven to be a successful practice in the preservation of forestry and water resources.

Keywords: Buat-Pah, Northern Thailand, Conservation, Forestry, Indigenous Knowledge

Introduction

Deforestation in Thailand is the result of 1) Deforestation to grow cash crops. 2) Damaging agricultural practices in which forest are cleared to grow crops until the soil is depleted of nutrients. 3) Deforestation due to the increase in population and housing demands. 4) Forest fires. 5) Industrial development such as building dams and over-logging and 6) Strip mining. During the past 4 decades, natural resources in Thailand have been used without definitive conservation plans which have only increased the damage to the environment, increased deforestation and created droughts in areas which used to have ample water sources (Ping, 2015). 4 decades of deforestation has destroyed 67 million rai of forests or about 1.6 million rai every year. In 1961 Thailand had an estimated forest area of 53.4 percent, by 2533 there was only 27.95 percent. Community members, public and private organizations struggled to restore and prevent deforestation and the rapid destruction and depletion of the natural resources of their community. The majority of community members lack of knowledge and awareness in the importance of their natural resources or how to

use them efficiently, have led to disagreements between the community and government agencies. The insufficient communication and cooperation between community members, public officials and private organizations is the main reason for ineffectiveness of the community's environmental protection plans (Phetrat, 2005).

Thailand's 10th National Social and Economic Development strategy for the conservation of natural resources is to focus and emphasize in management development to create a balance between using and preserving Thailand's natural resources. The strategy also promotes and supports sustainable development and conservation of natural resources through the process of community participation with emphasis on equality, local culture, community lifestyles and also the capability of the community in using natural resources through the development of indigenous knowledge. The indigenous knowledge of communities is the accumulated knowledge of community members that can be applied efficiently and encompasses a diverse range of knowledge (Wasi, 1995). Indigenous knowledge is fundamental in community development and is the basic knowledge of the community that has been passed down directly and indirectly through the generations and is a proven and practical method in their daily lives (Chansoon, 1990).

The application of indigenous knowledge of tree ordainment ritual or locally referred to as "Buat-Pah" Ritual is a tactic of environmental conservation for the preservation of forests and water resources. Other indigenous Ritual such as paying homage to spirits, ghosts and deities in nature are also the community's method in maintaining balance between their community and nature (Wiset, 1997). Buat-Pah Ritual contribute to the cultural capital of the community by raising awareness in the importance of natural resources and also unites community members (Nanthasen, 2005).

Buat-Pah Ritual are similar to the Longevity Ritual for Rivers which is a common ceremony in Northern Thailand communities to trace the providence of the river which is an integral part of their livelihood. The ordainment part of the Ritual is derived from the act of wrapping the ordained trees with yellow monk robes as symbol that the trees are ordained. Buat-Pah ritual was conceived by adopting Longevity Ritual for Rivers and Monk Ordainment Ritual as a model and integrated with the indigenous belief of paying respect and homage to deities and spirits of nature. Buat-Pah Ritual activities include 1) Surveying large trees in areas that are in danger of being cut down or are in danger of deforestation to be ordained. 2) Invite community members to participate in the preparation of offerings to the spirits and deities which normally include 1 serving of stick rice, 1 banana and betel nut and betel leaves. 3) Prepare yellow robes to match the number of trees being ordained and adequate ordainment ritual materials such as ceremonial threads, holy water bowl, turmeric water erect a shrine to invite deities and spirits to stay and guard the trees, tether the ceremonial threads to encompass the trees to be ordained and the ceremonial site. 4) The Buat-Pah ritual is divided into two parts. The first is the offering ceremony to the deities and the second are the monk ceremonies to ordain the trees.

Tree ordainment Ritual or Buat-Pah ritual originated in Northern Thailand and has been adopted throughout Thailand and has also been adopted in Cambodia and Laos (Morrow, 2011). It is a practice that is widely accept by the communities in Phayao and Northern Thailand and has been successful in promoting the conservation of natural resources and forest. The phenomena of Buat-Pah ritual is consistent with Withange (2014) and the application of tree ordainment Ritual which is gaining momentum in Sri Lanka. Buddhist monks of Sri Lanka followed the example of tree ordainment ritual from Phra

Sophon Phat No Dom in Thailand which stemmed from the struggle to protect Sri Lanka's Nilgala Forest which was in danger of being deforested to promote infrastructure development. This is consistent with Darlington (1998) in her essay in which Buddhists involved in environmental actions see Buddhism as critical for providing practical and moral guidelines for ecological conservation. Similar tree ordainment Ritual were also observed in Laos where villagers in Phongsaly, led by the efforts of The Phongsaly Women's Union in their actions to protect and conserve coniferous forest near Phienxay village in Bounneua district (Vientiane Times, 2008).

Previous researches on Buat-Pah Ritual or tree ordainment by Thanoo (1999), Chuenboonperm (2008) and Somdee (2000) were focused to only 1 research area while the researcher purposively chose three research areas in three different communities to 1) Study the development of the indigenous knowledge of Buat-Pah ritual (tree ordainment) in the conservation of trees in Northern Thai communities. 2) To study the difficulties in applying indigenous knowledge of Buat-Pah ritual in the conservation of trees in Northern Thailand. 3) To identify the factors which created or synthesized into the Buat-Pah ritual in Northern Thailand.

Materials and Methods

The research area includes three provinces in northern Thailand which include Phayao, Phrae and Nan. The areas were chosen because 1) The provinces are in an area where the forest is more abundant than other provinces but are in danger of deforestation. 2) The research areas have a continuity of Buat-Pah ritual practices of more than 10 years. 3) The research areas were in close proximity to each other and it is theorized that the ritual was transferred and influenced the practices to each other provinces. Field research and document

analysis was conducted from August 2012 to September 2015. Research tools include interview forms, observation forms and workshop. The research data was collected from the research tools which included results from research informants.

Research informants were purposively chosen and divided into 1) Key informants included the village headman from local communities, chief executive of Sub district Administrative Organizations, forestry service administrators and director of the Provincial Buddhism Office, private forest conservation groups, private volunteer protection groups and private organizations in the community. 2) Casual Informants included the abbots from Buddhist temples in the community, Buddhist monks and laypersons, representatives from the Sub district Administrative Organizations and representatives of the communities. 3) General Informants included individuals who regularly practice Dharma at the temples in the community, tourists and from the general public. A total of 216 research informants were selected in the research. Research informants in Phayao province included 37 Key Informants, 21 Casual Informants, and 21 general informants. Research informants in Phrae province included 22 Key Informants, 30 Casual Informants and 21 General Informants. Research informants in Nan province included 22 Key Informants, 21 Casual Informants and 21 General Informants. The research data was analyzed by using data triangulation method and the research results presented by using descriptive analysis method.

Results

Before Buat-Pah ritual was invented, community individuals and groups used various methods such as petitions and protest in promoting the protection of the environment and forestry with minimal results. The conservation of trees and water sources is an

important issue that must urgently be acted upon and resolved in every region of Thailand. The rapacious consumption and gathering of natural resources by community members, capitalists or government agencies has deforested vast areas in Thailand and especially in northern communities. The competitive nature of commercial and urban development has also had a negative impact on the ecosystem to the extent that community members, private organizations and public officials are struggling to restore and prevent further ecological damage. The conservation and proper use of natural resources is fundamental to the economic development of Thailand because it is the basis of the happiness and prosperity of the community and society as a whole (Chamrik, Santasombat. 1993).

Si Thoi Sub district, Mae Chai District, Phayao Province

Si Thoi Sub district is located in the plains in Phayao province in Northern Thailand. Si Thoi community includes 11 villages in which 9 villages are located in urban territories and 2 villages in the western rural areas which are located on the steps of mountain ranges and hills which are the borders between the provinces of Phayao province and Lampang province. The mountain are known as Phi Pan Nam Range which is a continuous mountain range stretching from Southern China and also the location of Doi Luang forest and Yao ethnic villages. The Mae Chai stream originating from the western mountains run through the plains and drains into the Ing River which is a tributary of the Mekong River. There are also 14 streams that crisscross the plains draining into the Ing River. Doi Luang forest is a healthy forest which covers large areas of Phayao province and has always been a focus area for environmental preservation and protection due to the legal logging concessions in the past and current illegal logging activities.

Efforts by Phra Sophon Phat No Dom in the protection and conservation of forests started as early as 1979. At that time the temple and community were at odds with Si Thoi Sub district administrative officials and private contractors who were awarded logging concessions. Initial efforts through negotiations and sermons were ineffective in deterring deforestation which eventually led to the invention of Buat-Pah ritual which relied on local community beliefs and Buddhism. The first practice of Buat-Pah ritual in October 14th, 1987 by Phra Kroo Maana Natee Pitak (current title is Phra Sophon Phat No Dom) and the community of Wat Photharam temple in Si Thoi sub district, Phayao province was received with criticism and doubt. Many people within and outside of the community viewed the practice as ridiculous but Phra Sophon Phat No Dom and the organizers had faith that their intention and message of protecting the environment would get through to the masses. Si Thoi Sub district public administrators at that time ignored Buat-Pah ritual at Si Thoi Sub district but had to intervene when the Buat-Pah practitioners clashed with loggers in the community. Phra Sophon Phat No Dom's life was harassed and in danger. Authorities and community members provided protection for Phra Sophon Phat No Dom with armed guards. One month after the Buat-Pah ritual in Phayao province in Northern Thailand, Southern Thailand was drenched with heavy rainfall and many communities were destroyed by floods and drift logs that were illegally cut. Many lives were lost and the communities in the South were devastated by the destruction. The people and government of Thailand realized the dangers of deforestation and the negative views towards Buat-Pah ritual was changed. People in other communities were now in support of the practice and people throughout the country requested and demanded that logging concessions be revoked and logging illegal. The large public demand for the total discontinuation of logging in Thailand

was successful and in 1988 the government proclaimed all logging concessions to cease operations which also included Si Thoi Sub district. Community members of Si Thoi believe that the national decision to stop all logging is because of the Buat-Pah ritual and the practice was later picked up by Phrae, Nan, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and other provinces in Northern Thailand. The Buat-Pah ritual at Si Thoi Sub district served as a model for others to follow and is an example of the strength of community participation in which Buat-Pah ritual is still practice to the present day. Currently Phra Sophon Phat No Dom, is the Ecclesiastical Provincial Governor of the provincial Buddhist order in Phayao province. Buat-Pah ritual was synthesized from Longevity Rituals and the ordainment Ritual of Buddhist monks with the hope that people would desist from cutting down trees that were wrapped with yellow monks robe and that they would fear karma. The tactic of inventing a tree ordainment ritual in the protection of the forestry and the environment was gradually adopted by other communities in northern Thailand in which they still practice to this day.

Sa lab Sub district, Song District, Phrae Province

Sa lab Sub district is located in Phrae Province in Northern Thailand. The mountainous region of Sa lab is home to 10 villages which are located far apart from each other and connected through dirt gravel roads. Sa lab shares its borders with Phayao province and Lampang province and is also the location of Mae Yom National Park and a large forest containing many valuable trees such as Thai Golden Teak wood. The highlands of Sa lab include the continuation of the Phi Pan Nam mountain range and the location site of proposed Kaeng Suea Ten Dam proposal at Kaeng Suea Ten Rapids on the Yom River which is the main tributary of the Nan River. The Yom River has its source in the Phi Pan Nam Mountain Range in Phayao Province,

Thailand and near Mae Yom National Park.

The successful outcome of Buat-Pah Ritual in Si Thoi Sub district in 1987-1988 was picked up by Sa lab Sub district in neighboring Phrae province in 1989 and was aimed at preventing the deforestation of Kaeng Suea Ten forest from the proposed construction of Kaeng Suea Ten dam project. The community efforts and participation of Sa lab community members has so far been able to prevent the construction of the dam by the Thai government. But during the past decade, plans to renew construction of the dam continues to resurface. The community participation of Sa lab Sub district in the prevention of Kaeng Suea Ten dam has been supported by many environmental conservation groups which continue their vigilance to this day. The Buat-Pah ritual at Kaeng Suea Ten rapids in Sa lab Sub district has grown to become a large event and not just a local tradition. The ritual is an annual event that is included in the planning and is a responsibility of the administrator of Sa lab sub district Administrative Organization. Buat-Pah ritual was practiced by community members of Sa lab sub district, Song district, Phrae Province in which they received guidance and example from Phra Sophon Phat No Dom, the abbot of Wat Photharam temple in Si Thoi sub district, Mae Chai District, Phayao province. The purpose of the Buat-Pah ritual in Sa lab sub district was to also protect the teak forest of the community which would be devastated and lost forever if Kaeng Suea Ten dam was ever constructed. Buat-Pah practices in Ruang Sub district, Phrae Province was positively received by community members and they continue the ritual up to the present day.

Ruang Sub district, Mueang District, Nan Province

Ruang Sub district is located in Nan Province in Northern Thailand and is located west of the provincial Center of Amphoe Mueang Nan District. Most areas of Ruang Sub district is covered in forests. Ruang Sub district is abundant in forest trees and abundant natural resources and home to 8 villages. The mountainous regions of the Ruang Sub district has been faced with increased occurrences of landslides due to deforestation through illegal logging in the community.

Buat-Pah rituals in Ruang Sub district, Nan Province was first organized in 1990 during a meeting between Phrakhru Phithak Nantha Khun, the abbot of Wat Aranyawat in Nan province, Ruang Sub district community leaders and 200 NGO members at Ban Nam Kian in Ruang Sub district, Nan Province. The purpose of that meeting was in regards to the conservation and protection of the community's natural resources. The outcome of the meeting was the unanimous decision to perform a Buat-Pah Ritual for Ruang Sub district in 1990. The meeting was attended by mostly farmers from Northern Thailand Communities. The purpose of the Buat-Pah ritual was to also benefit the farmers of the agricultural community to value and protect their natural resources. The Buat-Pah Ritual was communicated to the public through parades and banners to raise awareness of the fragile environment and the importance of taking action to protect their land and water sources. The organized rally and parade was effective and unity through community participation which the organization received an overwhelming donation of more than 12,000 trees to be replant the forest and grow in the temple grounds at Wat Aranyawat. The community also contributed to the parade by decorating parade floats with grass flowers, mushrooms, grass brooms, herbal plants and other flowers to show their support and the unity within the community. The first Buat-Pah Ritual in Ruang Sub district was performed in the

community forest 5 Kilometers away from Wat Don Fueang, Ruang Sub district, Nan Province.

The driving force in support of Buat-Pah Ritual was through the unity of community leaders from the 4 villages and leadership of Phrakhru Phithak Nantha Khun, the abbot of Wat Aranyawat in Nan province. Phrakhru Phithak Nantha Khun had been preaching and trying to protect the forest and the environment since he was ordained as a Buddhist monk. Phrakhru Phithak Nantha Khun, was born in a village forest and grew up surrounded by the rich abundant natural resources of Thailand northern rain forests. He understood at an early age that the community relied upon the forest and it was important that the natural resources be used with care. Regular sermons, teachings and suggestions by Phrakhru Phithak Nantha Khun and community leaders were unsuccessful in deterring loggers and water development projects. After years of unsuccessful negotiations, community leaders and Phrakhru Phithak Nantha Khun received advice from Phra Sophon Phat No Dom, in Phayao province in 1990 and organized their first Buat-Pah ritual in which they ordained the teak trees of Huai Luang forest.

Table 1 summarizes the comparisons between Buat-Pah ritual in Phayao, Phrae and Nan provinces. The Buat-Pah rituals which were created at Si Thoi Sub district is the basis of Buat-Pah rituals that have been followed by other communities in Thailand and abroad. The first part includes preparations for performing the Buat-Pah ritual which include,

Table 1 Comparison of Buat-Pah Ritual in Phayao, Phrae and Nan Provinces

Province	Offerings	Ritual Practices	Special Activities
Phayao	Analogous	Analogous	None
Phrae	Analogous	Analogous	None
Nan	Analogous	Analogous	Music exhibitions, Entertainment Activities, Cooking Competitions Cooking Competitions

1) Buat-Pah preparation meetings attended by all parties to determine the forest area to be ordained.

2) Preparations of the required materials and delegating responsibilities so that all aspects are managed properly.

3) Mark the trees to be ordained which usually start with the largest tree in the planned area and count the number of trees to be ordained so that offerings and yellow robes are procured accordingly.

4) Erect a shrine near the largest tree and give prayers to inform the deities and spirits that a Buat-Pah ritual was to be prepared in this location.

5) Inform community members in advance to the Buat-Pah schedule.

6) Preparation of Buat-Pah materials which include a principle Buddha statue, ceremonial threads, yellow robes, holy water bowl filled with pure clean water mixed with turmeric water and Acacia Concinna fruit, weapons which include spears and swords to be placed within the shrine during the ceremony, ceremonial bowl surrounded by offerings of candles, sticky rice, bananas, betel nut and betel leaves and tobacco. Buat-Pah ritual in Si Thoi Sub district is performed by the

community's mystic called Pho Chan which initiate the ritual by tethering the ceremonial threads surrounding the trees to be ordained and end tying them to the base of the principle Buddha statue. This is followed by a discourse by the Pho Chan to invite the deities and spirits of the forest to inform them of the ritual and ask for their presence and for their protection of the trees and forests. The Pho Chan will also ask for harsh punishment for all those that destroy and cut down the trees and lay the offerings at the shrine and base of the largest tree.

The second part of the Ritual is performed by Buddhist monks who recite the Chaimongkon Kahtah chant (stanzas for the blessing or glory of victory) and the yellow robes are wrapped around the principle tree. Then the holy water or turmeric water bowl is speckled onto the principle tree. Afterwards the remaining trees are wrapped with yellow robes by community members and monks and speckle them with holy water.

Buat-Pah ritual of Sa lab Sub district is modeled after Si Thoi Sub district in Phayao province. The offerings are identical to the practices in Phayao province but the community in Sa lab Sub district have added the Longevity Ritual for Rivers along with Buat-Pah ritual which are both performed at the same day and location. The Longevity Ritual for Rivers was adapted from the Longevity Ritual for People which are ceremonies to trace the providence of the well-being of individuals, homes and the community. The addition of the Longevity Ritual is important to the communities in Sa lab Sub district which creates unity and cooperation within the community in their faith in Buddhism and respect to nature which support the preservation of the community's forestry and water sources. The Buat-Pah ritual and Longevity Ritual is performed along the river bank of the Kaeng Suea Ten Rapids and the offerings are placed on the river bank. The principle Buddha statue is

situated on top of an erected terrace above the river bank. Both ceremonies are performed at the same time and are also in the same location. Both ceremonies continue to be performed up to modern times with good community participation.

Buat-Pah ritual in Ruang Sub district under the leadership of Phrakhru Phithak Nantha Khun is consistent with Buat-Pah ritual in Si Thoi Sub district. Difference in ritual practices is the inclusion of the Longevity Ritual for People which is included in the Buat-Pah ritual in Ruang Sub district and also the inclusion of Music exhibitions, Entertainment Activities, Cooking Competitions which are not present in Phayao and Phrae province. Minor differences include 1) The meeting to prepare the Buat-Pah ritual is attended by Buddhist monks, community members from all 10 villages and 200 Non Government Organization members (NGOs). 2) The offering bowls or trays are made from fresh Banana tree sheaths carved into square trays to hold the offerings. 3) Buat-Pah Ritual in Ruang Sub district uses two Buddha statues. The first statue is the large principle statue which is about 4 feet high situated near the principle tree and the secondary smaller statue is situated near the ceremonial platform for performing the Longevity ritual. The ritual procedures are identical to practices in Si Thoi and Sa lab Sub district. 4) Leading members of the community and attendees vows to protect the forest and environment and 5) Food exhibitions and contests and indigenous culture displays such as indigenous Tom-Tom Drum performances and cultural dances. 6) Parades and Public relations is the primary tool used by the organizing committee to inform the public and also to gather cooperation with public and private organizations within the community.

The ritual practices of offerings to deities and tree ordainment is the same with Si Thoi and Sa lab Sub district. The Longevity ritual is performed at the same time during the Chaimongkon Kahtah chant

where attendees tether themselves to the ceremonial threads connecting the ceremonial area to the Buddha statue near the ceremonial platform.

The concluding action of the Buat-Pah ritual in Ruang Sub district is to have leading members of the community and attendees proclaim their vows in front of the smaller Buddha statue to protect and preserve the forest and the natural environment. The Buat-Pah ritual in Ruang district is very large and is due to the fact that the event is supported by a large community who participate in the ritual. Modern Buat-Pah ritual in Ruang Sub district hasn't changed much since the first Ritual were practiced there. The only changes include 1) The ceremony area has been permanently cleared of shrubbery to make the area more convenient for attendees. 2) Construction of a permanent foundation for the principle Buddha statue and shrine. 3) The principle Buddha statue was at first an upright stance statue but has currently changed to a sedentary posture. 4) The surrounding area of the ceremony is planted with banana trees and fruit trees to give a more pleasant atmosphere. 5) The ceremonial area has also been expanded so that more tents can be erected to accommodate the large number of attendees that participate in the Longevity ritual in which people tether ceremonial threads from the roof of the tents to their heads.

Difficulties of Applying Buat-Pah Ritual

Limited difficulties were observed in the practice of Buat-Pah ritual activities without major complications. Minor problems In Si Thoi sub district, Mae Chai district, Phayao province is that several community administrative leaders in Mae Chai district lack understanding and are not aware of the benefits that the community will receive from Buat-Pah Ritual. The lack of knowledge and

awareness from the officials is due to the fact that they were newly appointed officials to the community from other regions and have little or knowledge of the local beliefs, customs and background of the community. Community participation in Buat-Pah Ritual in Si Thoi was very high and the majority of the people that participate in Buat-Pah Ritual in Si Thoi are Si Thoi community members and also members of the community of Wat Photharam temple.

The problem of forest conservation due to continuous attempts by the Thai government to construct the Kaeng Sue Ten dam is considered the largest obstacle in the practice of Buat-Pah in Sa lab sub district. The additional obstacle is the long distance and the transportation route between the community and the Buat-Pah ritual activity area. Buat-Pah Ritual in Sa lab sub district is performed at Kaeng Sue Ten Rapids which is 60 kilometers from the village of Ban Don Chai where the coordination center for the ritual is at. The distance from the center to the ritual site was a major problem in the past due to the poor conditions of the road and the limited transportation in the community. This has now been improved because the roads are now paved with asphalt and transportation vehicles have significantly increased.

Buat-Pah Ritual in Ruang Sub district face management difficulties because sometimes there are very many people participating in the Ritual and the organizers were not able to accommodate everyone. The management of large ritual events is not a common problem and have only recently occurred due to the increased number of participants which was from the effectiveness of public communication and support of Buat-Pah Ritual in Ruang Sub district.

Conclusion

The development of Buat-Pah ritual in Northern Thailand was created to address the problem of the community in combating deforestation and over-logging. Before Buat-Pah ritual was created, community members were unsuccessful in deterring deforestation. Petitions and protests against deforestation were not successful in deterring the destruction and plundering of the community's resources. The Buat-Pah ritual which was introduced in Phayao province through the efforts of Phra Sophon Phat No Dom, the abbot of Wat Photharam temple in Si Thoi sub district, Mae Chai District, Phayao province and community members provided a model for other communities and conservation groups to follow and has proved successful in uniting the community in the effort to protect their natural resources. Buat-Pah ritual is the result of applying the indigenous knowledge and beliefs in Buddhism, Animism of community leaders and members. The efforts of Phra Sophon Phat No Dom relied on the belief that the forests and trees would be protected in they were ordained and revered liked Buddhist monks. Buat-Pah ritual activities in the Si Thoi, district was adopted by other northern Thailand communities and was popular and practiced by communities in Phayao, Nan and Phrae province. Each community adapted the Ritual and modified them to best suite their community and made the activities consistent with the livelihood, beliefs and tradition of their community. The ritual was initially aimed at the conservation of the community forest by applying and integrating Buddhism Ritual together with community beliefs and create a tactic so that community members are aware of the importance of their ecosystem and also to create strength and unity within their community. The success of Buat-Pah Ritual in the Si Thoi, district was the reason that the invented ritual was adopted by other communities which shared the same belief that

the ritual was effective in protecting the environment and forest. The application of the indigenous knowledge of Buat-Pah was created through the combination of belief in Buddhism and Animism into an invented ritual tradition of Buat-Pah with the aim in the conservation of the natural resources surrounding Thai communities.

The main obstacle of Buat-Pah ritual is that it was created to address and prevent the destruction of the natural resources of the local communities in Northern Thailand and is a direct response to industrial and housing development interests in the area. The forest and resources in rural communities in northern Thailand are continuously being threatened by industrial development, housing development (Si Thoi Sub district, Phayao province) and commercial exploitation by local businesses. There is also mounting pressure and successive attempts from the Thai government in the effort to develop Kaeng Sue Ten Dam in Sa lab sub district.

The synthesis of Buat-Pah Ritual in the conservation of forestry and natural resources is the combination of Buddhist ritual and Animism such as the beliefs in deities and sacred spirits that dwell in nature (Maruean, 2007). The factors and elements that contributed to the synthesis of Buat-Pah ritual stems from the fact that rural villagers, community members and individuals were determined to find a way and method to protect their natural resources. The ritual was a strategy or tactic in getting community members to act and to protect their environment. Buat-Pah ritual is a cultural approach to natural resource management and is the right of passage created by the local community. The synthesis of Buat-Pah Ritual in the conservation of forest in Northern Thailand comes from the fusion of Buddhism rituals and supernatural beliefs in nature of local communities. The characteristics borrowed from Buddhism was a direct adaptation of Buddhist ordainment Ritual for monks but modified to be applied to

trees. The characteristics from supernatural beliefs is that there are spirits and natural deities in the forests and trees and that these sacred entities must be worshiped and payed homage. Both traits were borrowed from traditional Ritual and applied in ordaining trees as a tactic to defer deforestation in the hopes that will make the loggers be afraid of committing sin by falling trees that have been ordained. Buat-Pah is a continual process of acquiring knowledge, knowledge transfer, transmission of knowledge and also adapting knowledge and skills related to the conservation and preservation of forestry and natural resources which eventually led to the creation of Buat-Pah or tree ordainment Ritual in northern Thailand which has spread to local and international communities. This is consistent with Hongsuraphan (2008) in which the conservation and preservation of community forests in northeast Thailand was most efficient and practical through community participation and through the application of local community beliefs, culture, tradition and Buddhism. The application of Buddhism as a method or medium to preserve natural resources is also consistent with Uthatho (1997) which Buddhist monks play an important role in conservation efforts through Buddhism and their support of their community. The effectiveness of Buddhist monks in protecting the environment is also shared by Krawanchit (2000) in which Buddhist monks in the province of Nakorn Ratchasima were vital in coordinating conservation and development efforts in protecting community forests.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Local administrates can improve their efficiency and effectiveness in the management of the natural resources of the community by involving and including community representatives to witness and also take part in the policy planning and participation in activities involving

the natural resources of the community. The involvement of members of the community will benefit local administrative development efforts and lessen conflicting views and opinions which will lead to practical methods and development of their community. It will also provide an efficient evaluation and assessment of community development.

Reference

- Banchit Sairokham, Thanat Baiya. 2006. **Buat-Pah Suebchatta Maenam Ritual: On the Use of Traditional Beliefs, Rites, and Ceremonies for Conservation and Management of Forests and Rivers in Northern Thailand.** Rak Muang Nan Foundation.
- Chansoon, Samart. 1990. **What is Folk Wisdom?** Department of Cultural Promotion.
- Chamrik Sane, Santasombat Yot. 1993. **Research report on Community forest in Thailand: Development guidelines.** 2nd edition. Krungthep, Chulalongkorn University. 193-194.
- Chuenboonperm, Pisit. 2008. **The Study of Tree Ordination Culture and Forest Conservation: A Case Study of Dong Mae Ped Forest in Sa-at Chai Si Sub district, Don Chan District, Kalasin Province.** Khon Kaen, Khon Kaen University.
- Darlington, Susan M. 1998. **The Ordination of a Tree: The Buddhist Ecology Movement in Thailand.** *Ethnology*, 37(1) (Winter, 1998), 1-15.
- Hongsuraphan, Ladda. 2008. **Appropriate Models of Conservation, Rehabilitation and Development of Cultural Forests of Forest Monasteries in Northeastern Thailand by Having Community Participation.** Mahasarakham University, 261-268. (in Thai)

- Krawanchit, Dusita. 2000. **Local Community Rights in Northeast Thailand**. Krungthep. Sat Four Printing, 127-132.
- Maruean, Isaraphap. 2007. A Model of Waste Management in Accordance with Hill Tribe Sociological in Paklang Sub district Pua District Nan Province. **KKU Journal for Public Health Research** Vol.6 No.2 April-June, 2013, 61-111.
- Morrow, Avery. 2011. **Tree Ordination as Invented Tradition**. ASIANetwork Exchange (Fall 2011). 19:1, 53-60.
- Nanthasen, Nanthamit. 2005. **Building Social Cooperation in Forest and Water Resource Conservation in the Area of Lai Nan Sub district, Wiang Sa District, Nan Province**. Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. 13-19.
- Phetrat, Chao. 2005. **National Economic and Social Development Plan No. 9 on the Management of Natural Resources and the Environment**. Uttaradit, Uttaradit Rajabhat University. 1-2. (in Thai)
- Ping, Xu. 2015. **Environmental Problems and Green Lifestyles in Thailand**. Nanzan University. Retrieved 20 Mar 2015.
- Pongpet, Mekloy. 1991. **Stopping the Chainsaws with Sacred Robes**. Bangkok Post, March 29. 27-28.
- Sorndee, Jaithip. 2000. **Communication Strategy in the Community Forest Ordination Project**. Bangkok, Chulalongkorn University.
- Thanoo, Wallapa. 1999. **The Application of Buddhist Concepts on Tree Ordination for Forest Conservation: A Case Study for Tambon Srithoi, Amphoe Mae Chai, Changwat Phayao**. Chiang Mai, Chiang Mai University.

- Uthatho, Supha. 1997. **Thai Buddhist Monk Role in the Next Two Decades (2541-2560)**. PhD Dissertation, Krungthep, Thammasat University, 61-90.
- Vientiane Times. 2008. **Phongsaly Forest Ordination to Preserve Natural Resources**. Vientiane, Vientiane Times (February 2008).
- Wasi, Prawet. 1995. **Culture and Development**. Bangkok, Office of the Cultural Commission of Thailand.
- Wiset, Sahatya. 1997. **Wisdom in the Conservation and Restoration of Upstream Forests**: Love Forest Group of Si Thoi, Si Thoi district, Mae Chai District, Phayao province, Krungthep, Thammasat University.
- Withange, Hemanth. 2014. **'Friends of heart International'** web site (4/02/2014): The story of Tree ordination in Sri Lanka. (Accessed 10/04/2015) <http://www.foei.org/news/the-story-of-tree-ordination-in-sri-lanka>.