



LAO KRANG COMMUNITY'S IDENTITY ACCORDING TO BUDDHISM

Putthinan Thanathammarot¹ and Phalla Ath²

Phrong Madue Temple Nakhon, Pathom Province¹
Thailand¹

Pou Snay School, Prey Veng Province²
Cambodia²

Email: wanwimoledu@gmail.com¹, phallaath518@gmail.com

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Abstract

The research entitled “Lao Krang Community's Identity According to Buddhism” aims to study 1) To analyze the identity of the Lao Krang community in Nakhon Pathom Province. 2) To analyze the identity of the Lao Krang community in Nakhon Pathom Province according to Buddhism. 3) To analyze the identity of the Lao Krang community in Nakhon Pathom Province according to the Buddhist principles.

This research was the qualitative research, which emphasized documentary research and field research by using interview forms as a tool for data collections, participatory observation and following sequence of steps. In the related researches, literature and documentary exploration, it was to study the theoretical concept of the Lao Krang community identity analysis, their identity analysis in according to Buddhism and according to the Buddhist principles in Nakhon Pathom Province from primary and secondary data sources. The tool for collecting field data was the interview forms conducted with the purposive samples taken recorded by audio recorder, camera, video camera and note book. A descriptive data analysis had been applied and presented those information and suggestions.

The results show that: The identity of the Lao Krang community in Nakhon Pathom Province, at first the Lao Krang ethnic group combined Lao Song, Lao Wiang, Lao Krang, Chinese and Mon, who later wanted to create new traditions and cultures. This showed that group was very strong and linked to the festival of Songkran flags at Phrong Maduea Temple, merit making ceremony and tradition to raise the spirits in the local language. It showed that the Lao Krang people have long been established. Their beliefs and the important point from this finding. It was assumed that the history has not been recorded in writing but there have been seen from telling stories and a long history from the ancients and growing making merit in ghost belief. The most people in the past thought that raising the spirits leader called Chao Phoe Singhan or Chao Phoe Sai Faa (lightning god) would protect their community members or worshipping ancestral spirits and respecting ghosts and the village gods. In addition, it can be seen from another corners that Buddhism and the Lao Krang rites were not in conflict but uniting Buddhism as the center of harmony and was consistent with the legends found in their rites.

Keywords: Lao Krang identity; Community; Buddhism

Introduction

Human beings in the world had their own cultures, wisdom and religious principles to improve the quality of life and most importantly, with different identities. The Buddhist teachings about improving the quality of life influenced the promotion of their identities. Their identity expression was based on internal and external development principles, namely, physical and mental development. Buddhism offered a principle that whether the Buddha arose or not. Truth existed objectively in its nature. The Buddha attained enlightenment and discovered truth and revealed it (Somdej Phra Phutthakhosachan, 2016, 47). In ancient times, humans believed that the meaning of life and all things arose from the inspiration of mysterious powers such as spirits, deities, and other sacred things. Therefore, when various natural phenomena such as lightning, thunder, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, floods and storms, humans feel fear. As the Lord Buddha spoke to *Akkittatta* who was ordained as a hermit and followers as follows:

“Most humans threatened mountains, forests, monasteries and pagodas as refuges”. (Dhp. (Thai version) 25/188-192/92)



From the Buddha's words as mention above, it can be explained that because they did not know the cause of those phenomena, when human beings did not know and there were no ways to prevent and to fix it, they believed that the various phenomena were caused by the action of a sacred thing or the power of the gods who made it. Therefore, the belief arose and became one of the causes that made human beings feel accepted and trusted. The way of life and how people treated to those beliefs can be expressed in many ways but the important one was the symbolic rite because it emphasized the cultural values expressed by both concrete and abstract actions as rituals were part of the traditions of the people reflecting life and well-being. The feelings of the members of the group and the conduct of the rituals shed light on three social relations: the relationship between humans and the natural environment, the relationship between humans and the supernatural and the relationship between humans and humans. The studying of the rituals in the year and the life cycles will be helpful to understand the role and the importance of the rituals in the way of life of the people who assembled to perform the rituals (Somboon Suksamran, 1987, 14). The most groups lived in the central region of Thailand such as Nakhon Pathom Province, Suphanburi Province Chainat Province, and Uthai Thani Province. The Lao Krang often called themselves Laos or Lao Khee Kham or Lao Kham. The meaning of the word affluent was unknown. Some people assumed that it came from the word Phu Krang, which was the name of a mountain resembling a bell in the northeast of Luang Phrabang in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the genesis of Lao Krang.

In the era when there was a tribute to Lao Khee Tai (Southern Laos), another group of Laos who used Tai or Khee Tai as a tribute. Therefore, it was called Lao Khe Krang and Lao Khee Tai, Laos Yellow Turtle. Because of the habit of Lao Khrang there liked to live in the forest like a turtle with a yellow shell. As the people in Dan Sai District, Loei Province and Dan Chang District, Suphanburi Province, which had a sound like the Lao Krang people, was called Lao Dan or sometimes has a name according to the place of residence, such as Lao Non Phoe Daeng (Banphot Phisai District, Nakhon Sawan Province) or some people called the name a parody of the speech of the Lao Krang by calling Lao Krang, Lao Ka La, or Lao Loe Koe. However, assuming the names of some Lao group was difficult to ascertain because the naming of the Lao group may be caused by calling each other separately by groups, such as Lao Wiang

because they come from Vientiane. Lao Puan because they come from Phuan Chiang Khwang. There was a problem as how Lao Krang and Lao Tai got their names. It was assumed in two ways, was the Laos that came from Laos Phu Khang as for Lao Tai, it was Lao from the southern part of Lao in Champasak Province because, there was a voice like the Lao in that area.

The Lao Krang and Southern Lao were called Southern Lao but its origin was unclear (Sisak Valliphodom, 1982, 59-60) because the community and ethnicity were mobile and there were change, adaptation, application and new things everyday in their lives. The community and ethnicity were also dynamics with movement all the time (Phra Srithawatmethee, 2016: 103). There were continuity of relations, rituals, and Buddhism was deeply rooted in their societies for a long time. Nakhon Pathom was another province where the Lao Krang ethnic group lived which was related to Buddhism. There was a cultural tradition that has been inherited for a long time. It could be developed as a source of learning, a learning center for other localities to study from the historical footprints of the Lao Krang people in Phrong Maduea sub-district. It reflected cultural uniqueness, including language, dresses, traditions, rituals and beliefs. When the way of the world changes, it affected their inheritance. Preserve ancient traditions and cultures have been handed down through generations and might eventually be forgotten. However, in terms of cultural identity that was identifiable in many aspects, especially the identity of beliefs and rituals which were the foundation to the way of life and very indispensable to the Lao Krang ethnic group because they were the clearest symbols of the Lao Krang. Although the Lao Krang people had a strong belief in ancestral spirits and prominent in their cultural way; but Buddhism influenced of the traditional culture in the settlement where the Lao Krang people lived. It resulted in harmonizing the traditional beliefs with the Buddhist beliefs. Many rituals such as parading Songkran flags, ordaining Nagas, making merit on Buddhist holy days and making merit, etc., reflected that the Lao Krang people have been greatly influenced by Buddhism in their ways of life. At present, the social situations have changed to the globalized societies, direct and indirect subversions of cultural ways are widespread and rapid. The cultures associated with Buddhism of the Lao Krang people today have been affected by the changing situation.



Research Objectives

1. To analyze the identity of the Lao Krang community in Nakhon Pathom Province.
2. To analyze the identity of the Lao Krang community in Nakhon Pathom Province according to Buddhism.
3. To analyze the identity of the Lao Krang community in Nakhon Pathom Province according to the Buddhist principles.

Literature Reviews

In 1712, the history of the Lao Krang people engulfed the Kingdom of Vientiane and the Kingdom of Luang Prabang or collectively known as "*Srisattanakahanut*". At that time, Luang Prabang was under the rule of King Gingkissa (1712-1722). The Kingdom of Luang Prabang was characterized by mountainous landscape of forests and plains. Most population settled in the areas with the high abundance of each locality. There was a group of people who had settled together as a large group in a mountain area called "Phu Kub", living by hunting forest products, hunting game, mobility and shifting cultivation or farming (Chanan Wongviphak, 1986: 11). The Lao Krang were forcibly brought into Thailand during the war between Thailand and Laos with orders from Thailand as an independent Laos to send tribute and the Lao Krang kitchen to Bangkok. From the important evidence of the status of the city where the Lao Krang people originally lived, it was a large city with a dense population. It was an important in terms of military strategy. Therefore, the inhabitants of this city were forcibly sent down many times. Most of them were sent to Phitsanulok Province and some to Bangkok, especially after the rebellion of Chao Anuwong; His Majesty the King Nangklao Chao Yu Hua, therefore intended not to build up the country again. For this reason, the people of Vientiane and neighboring towns were forcibly brought down as prisoners of war including the Lao Phu Kang people (Ratchada Suksaengsuwan, 2004: 21).

From historical evidence, it was found that The Lao Krang were probably brought into Thailand during the reign of King Krung Thonburi in 1778 and during the reign of King Rama I in 1791. The Thai army went to attack Luang Phrabang and forcibly brought Lao families to this period. The linguistic evidence believed that Lao Krang was a dialect of Luang Phrabang,

Lao PDR because the tonal separation in Lao Krang was close to Luang Phrabang tones.

Lao, and the Lao Krang people's legend noted that their ancestors migrated from Luang Phrabang (Walleeya Watcharaporn, 1991: 11- 12). Their ancestors had initially immigrated into Thailand due to the war between Thailand and Lao like with other Lao ethnic groups from the Thonburi period to the reign of King Rama V of the Rattanakosin period. The Laotian migrants were divided into two groups:

Group 1 : Lao Lanna came from the northern part of the country such as Chiang Saen, Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, etc., collectively called Lao Yuan, from Yonok Region.

Group 2 : Lao Lan Chang came from the Lao PDR mainly divided by origin or ethnic groups, for example, Lao Puan came from the five and six Puan towns in the Hua Phan Region. Lao Song (Phu Thai, Tai Dam) came from Sipsong Jutai Region and Vientiane, etc.

By assumption, some groups of Thai people came from the Lao Krang descents. They were group of people forcibly taken from the left bank of the Mekong River and settled in the central region of Thailand, such as Uthai Thani, Chainat, Suphanburi, Phichit, Nakhon Sawan, Phitsanulok, etc. Some groups migrated to the Chao Phraya River Basin and to Thonburi in early Rattanakosin periods. Phrakru Chanchotirat, the Abbot of Wat Kong Lat, Huai Duan Sub-district said that Lao Krang at Kong Lat originally came from Luang Phrabang, Lao PDR during the reign of King Rama I and temporarily stayed at Dan City. After that, it was sent to Kong Lat. They carefully monitored them closely because this group of Laotians were intellectuals and feared their rebellious resurgences but they were thus moved to Nakhon Pathom in order for surveillance and closer to Bangkok. They were near the eyes of the King in the reign of King Rama III.

Chao Anuwong rebelled but pleased His Royal generals to subdue and forcibly evict the Lao people from Vientiane and settle at Kong Lat but no lands to make a living; some Lao Krangs at Kong Lat have then dispersed to various provinces such as Suphanburi, Chainat, Nakhon Sawan, Phichit, Phitsanulok,



Kamphaeng Phet, Sukhothai, Kanchanaburi and Prachuap Khiri Khan (Jinda Chatwong, 1986: 36). The Lao ethnic group was Southeast Asian people who speak Lao-Tai settled in the northeastern parts of central Thailand and in the Lao PDR. During the 18th century until the liberation war for independence in Indochina, this Lao ethnic group has developed socially with the Tai Lue, Tai Yuan, Kha, Khmer, Viet, Ho, Hmong, and Burmese. The Lao ethnic groups so-called "Lao Derm", such as Thai Song, Thai Dam, Thai Khao and Phu Thai, settled in Thaeng city, Lai city and other cities in the Sipsong Jutai area. In the part called "Lao Mai", namely Lao Luang Phrabang, Lao Phuan, Lao Wiang, Lao Champasak settled in Luang Phrabang, Chiang Khwang, Vientiane and Champasak in the plains on the left bank of the Mekong River before moving to the right bank of the Mekong River in northeastern Thailand. Some Lao ethnic groups settled in the central region, such as Prachinburi, Ratchaburi, Petchaburi, Suphanburi, and Nakhon Nayok by their unique way of life in terms of beliefs, religions, occupations, settlements community organization, home building, customs, traditions, handicrafts, architecture, medicine, literature, and language. These lifestyle patterns have changed less than Thai-speaking peoples and among other groups, thus attracting attention among western and eastern scholars witnessed in the study of life patterns, the traditional community pattern of the Thai people (Jaruan Thammawat, 1998: 182).

With regards to their cultures, the Lao Krang people have adopted traditions, cultures, beliefs, dress, weaving, and the use of the Lao language represented their own ethnic identity including the introduction of their wisdom of the art and their weaving called Khit weaving (- a name of a type of woven fabric through making a pattern by using a thin, flat piece of wood with a curved edge so that one end is pointed as a tool for poking the lines or warp lines in collecting and lifting according to the desired pattern in each row) and Jok weaving. Khit was cotton-oriented weaving but Jok weaving was silk-oriented weaving such as the Teen Jok skirt. Other groups weaved the body skirt with normal cotton but the Lao Khrang weaved Mudmee silk to *teen sin* (the foot/base of traditional tube skirt) with Jok or weave a whole piece of Jok (Siri Phasuk, 2002: 94-96).

In the early Rattanakosin period, the former LaoPDR was a colony of Siam. At that time there were wars between these two countries several times together. Finally, in the reign of Chao Anuwong of Vientiane (BE 2369), who thought of recovering independence to separate the government from Siam. This Lao King had the support the Champasak City (Bassac, 1713-1904) and brought

an army to seize Nakhon Ratchasima. He also ordered the royal family members to forcibly sweep the people of Saraburi back to Vientiane but did not maintain that victory for very long by being subdued by an army from Siam in 1927, after the suppression of Chao Anuwong's rebellion by hitting Vientiane twice, King Nang Klao (Rama III) ordered the destruction of Vientiane in order to prevent Lan Chang people from rebellious resurgence and graciously freed the Vientiane Kingdom. The King Nang Klao (Rama III) did not appoint anyone to rule Vientiane again. But to merge the aforementioned Kingdom with the kingdom of Siam. From that incident, various groups of Laotians from Vientiane and Luang Phrabang Kingdoms were forcibly huddled and settled in cities near Bangkok in order to strengthen Bangkok. King Rama III later ordered different groups of Laos to be dispersed in several places, including Saraburi, Lop Buri, Phanat Nikhom, Nakhon Chai Sri and Suphanburi. In addition, among the captives who were taken at that time, there were Lao people from the "Phu Kang" area as well because they migrated from that area, causing people to call this group of Lao people as "Lao Phu Kang". But later on, there were many names that were distorted from the original, such as "Lao Krang", sometimes called "Lao Yellow Turtles" because the habits of these Laos like to live freely in the forest like a mountain turtle with a yellow shell, which were resistant to terrain and climate. Sometimes they were called Lao Krang according to the name of the sub-district or local address, for example, those in Dan Sai District, Loei Province were called "Lao Dan", those in Banphot Phisai District, Nakhon Sawan province called "Lao Non Phoe Daeng" and "Lao Nong Muat" or some people called it in a way that mimics the speech, which Lao Krang people like at the end of the sentence as "Ka la" by calling them "Lao Ka la".

Research Methodology

This research was the qualitative research, which emphasized documentary research and field research by using interview forms as a tool for data collections, participatory observation and following sequence of steps.

In the related researches, literature and documentary exploration, it was to study the theoretical concept of the Lao Krang community identity analysis, their identity analysis in according to Buddhism and according to the Buddhist principles in Nakhon Pathom Province from primary and secondary data sources. The tool for collecting field data was the interview forms conducted



with the purposive samples taken recorded by audio recorder, camera, video camera and note book. A descriptive data analysis had been applied and presented those information and suggestions.

Results

The identity analysis of the Lao Khrang Community in Nakhon Pathom Province, was as Follows:

The history linked to ethnicity and culture from the start of ethnic grouping as Lao Krang and started a network of organizing 5 ethnic groups, i.e., Lao Song, Lao Wiang, Lao Krang, Chinese and Mon. Later, Thai Yuan was also added into the group. The history connected with traditions, beliefs and spirit raising, the connection with traditions, beliefs, and raising ghosts arose from the Songkran flag parade tradition. This indicated that the history of the Lao Krang people originated from local traditions, beliefs and cultures. Presumptive history, there was no written record but mostly assumption found from interview. The researcher assumed that anyway the history of the Lao Krang people had a long history, beliefs, rituals and traditions.

An Identity Analysis of the Lao Krang Community in Nakhon Pathom Province according to Buddhism, the results of the research were as follows:

Lao Krang identity in beliefs and rituals - in the past, they also believed in ghosts. If they were sick, they transgressed their vows but to be save or successful in life, they had to consistently practice the rituals because rituals were believed that if they attended the ceremony and they witnessed the successful villagers who never failed participating rituals and most successful people vowed. When it came to history; it was basic. With the habits of this ethnic group, they loved peace and were faithful to Buddhism. There will be continuous religious practices on religious days with merit making.

Reasons for the beliefs and rituals related to the identity of the Lao Krang people; they respected Chao Phoe Shrine (Shrine god) in every village, including in Ban Na, Phrong Maduea witnessed by many houses that make merit with the shrine as a votive offering. Most people made merit in the middle of

their houses. The people in the area had special beliefs about sacred things and about the Chao Phoe Shrine. For example, worshiping the Shrine god required a live chicken to be offered and worshiping the Shrine god as part of a community ceremony by the whole village.

The identity of the Lao Krang people about beliefs and rituals related to Buddhism found by most people believed that Buddhism existed since its inception led to faith in views of ghosts and gods. The Lao Krang people respected and found symbols rather than rain and thunder. Most of the time, if no one told them, no one would believe them. This showed that each person at that time had no profound belief in Buddhism. Most people believed in ghosts. Some people believed in Buddhism originated from another belief of the Lao Krang people. As for their Buddhist beliefs and the ritual beliefs, there was no conflict between them. In their Buddhism and ritual beliefs, there were links between each other.

An Identity Analysis of the Lao Krang Community in Nakhon Pathom Province According to Buddhist Principles, the Results of the Research are as Follows:

The influence of Buddhism over the ancient Laotian people, in the past, people believed in ghosts, if one were sick, it meant one committed disrespect one's home ghosts. The vows would help dispel suffering through successfully attending the ceremony of the vows Ritual of Lao Krang like most people. Their history and the basic background by ethnic habits were peace-loving and their mind believed in Buddhism.

The history of Lao Krang influenced by to Buddhism was always counted Buddhism since ancient times witnessed by elders will sit and wait to offer food to monks early in every morning and their descendants born in Thailand made merit and offered food to the monks. Sprinkling holy water will help dispel miseries. Monks were invited to bless building a house for prosperity and sand dropping was consecrated and symbolized to prevent calamities.

The influence of Buddhism inherited by the Lao Krang people today according Buddhism found in the religious and the elders' teachings are still true – “do good earns good” and Buddhism has strengthened it. Science can answer



this. Ghosts are respected, but Buddhism has played a part in making people strong in the life of the Lao Krang people.

Discussions

The study on Identity Analysis of the Lao Krang Community according to Buddhist Principles in Nakhon Pathom Province by considering, it can be used to discuss the results of the Content as follows:

Objective I: The identity of the Lao Krang community in Nakhon Pathom Province.

From the study of The Lao Krang's history and "The Lao Krang Identity" in Nakhon Pathom Province; they were evicted into Thailand during the time of war between Thailand and Laos. At the beginning the Lao Krang ethnicity has combined with 5 groups, i.e. Lao Song, Lao Wiang, Lao Krang, Chinese and Mon, who aim to preserve traditional arts and culture. This group is very strong and links to the festival of Songkran flags at Phrong Maduea Temple, rituals, merit-making festivals, ghost raising traditions and use their own local language. They believed that they have confederated for a long time. Major discovery is their history has not been recorded in writing but has consecutively been relayed, say the Laotian descendants who migrated to the inner cities in the early Rattanakosin period and from the Lao people from Lanna provinces. Their capital is Vientiane located in the left bank of the Mae Khong in the northeastern region of Thailand. Their causes of migration were the war between in the Laos and Lanna provinces in the early Rattanakosin period. It was a war to usurp cities between Thailand and the Kingdoms of Vientiane, Burma and Vietnam. Some Lao cultures prohibited by the Thai government. It can be seen that the Lao community had no social and cultural influences on society at that time. Although they are allowed to perform rituals according to their beliefs and religion and the right to travel around but the Lao societies are not in the same level with Thai societies (Bang-On Piyaphan, 1986).

Objective II. The identity of the Lao Krang community in Nakhon Pathom Province according to Buddhism.

From phenomena related to beliefs, rituals, making merit for prosperity and Buddhism. Most Lao Krang believe in ghosts since old days witnessed raising the ghost spirits namely Great-father Singhan (Lightning Spirit Lord), who protects the Lao Krang people in the community and respects the ancestor spirits, such as during Songkran, making merit and dedicate merit to those who have passed away. In addition, another angle can be seen that Buddhism and rituals of the Lao Krang find no conflicts but consistent harmony in practice. Rituals in Lao Song society can be divided into 2 types: Buddhist rituals and traditional belief rituals and the Lao Song, its communities, villagers and every family member will strictly obey this belief and considered their rituals and belief as a duty. It also shows filial piety to ancestors, unity and oneness. The ritual practices of the Lao Song reaffirm the existing social structure, which are responsible for creating solidarity in society and represent the status between individuals in society that formulate various groups (Wasana Arunkit, 1985).

Objective III: The identity of the Lao Krang community in Nakhon Pathom Province according to Buddhist principles.

It was found that in the ancient times, Buddhism had a great influence on the identity of the Lao Krang people in Nakhon Pathom Province. It can be witnessed with their making merit in the middle of the ritual house or the belief in ancestral spirits by linking with Buddhism. Most Lao Krang used to believe in Buddhism, but every ceremony began with Brahman rituals. As for the relationship between Buddhism and the Lao Krang, it links with temples, houses and schools being the center of focus. Consistent with the content that during this period of change, members take many new things into the community. Making the overall screens of the communities in the villages formerly an agricultural-societies with the current of economic and social changes pushing people in the community to adapt in different directions and become more diverse and complex. In particular, new careers rise, and obviously, industrial production has increased considerably along with productivity, whereas agricultures in Ban Khok's social and cultural society have dramatically changes excluded their kinship relations and ethnic awareness because their community

relationship is strong and influences their adaptation and changes, which have been so long bred within their communities (Kanuengnuch Piyaboon, 1995).

New Knowledges

The main 3 new knowledge from this research are as follows:

Body of Knowledge 1: The profound ethnicity, culture, traditions, beliefs, ghost raising and practices though unrecorded in writing spotlight the connection between the Lao Krang identities with its history and origins as illustrated in Figure 1.

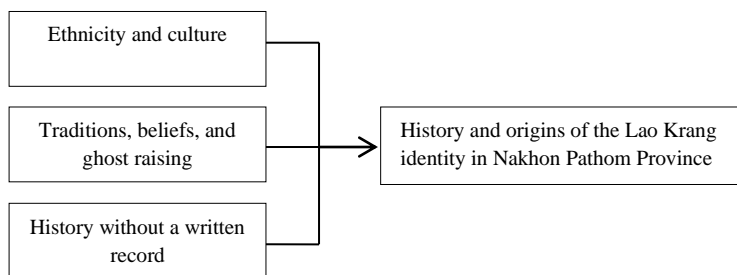


Figure 1: presents knowledge about Lao Khrang's history

Body of Knowledge 2 : Faith, rituals, worshipping Chao Phor (Shrine god), and the Buddhist beliefs prominently identify the history and origins of the Lao Krang Communities in Nakhon Pathom Province as illustrated in Figure II.

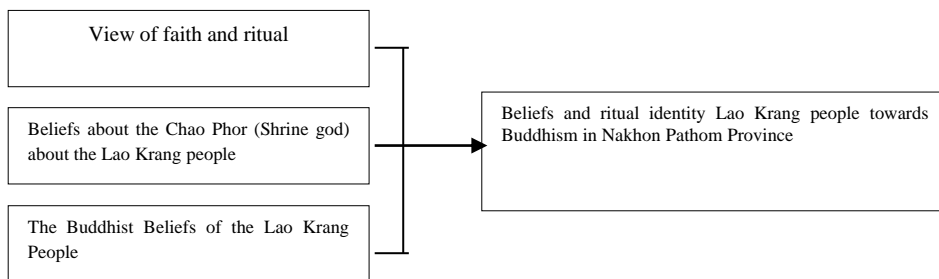


Figure 2: presents the knowledge of beliefs and rituals related to the Lao Krang identity.

The Body of Knowledge 3: the Buddhist rituals, the Lao Krang history and the inheritance of Buddhism evidently influence the Lao Krang

communities in Nakhon Pathom Province according to Buddhist principles as illustrated in Figure III.

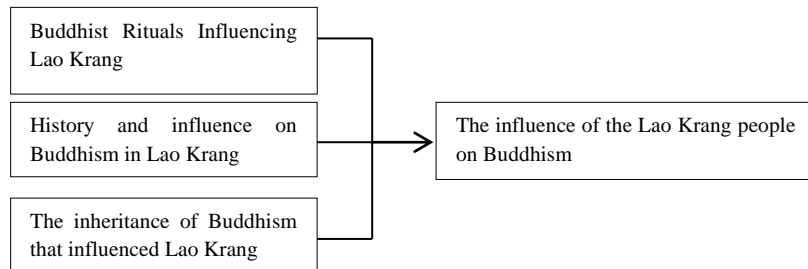


Figure 3: present the knowledge and the influence of Buddhism on the Lao Krang people in connection with the rituals, history and succession to Buddhism.

Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the identity of the Lao Krang community according to Buddhism and Buddhist principles in Nakhon Pathom Province, Buddhism influences the Lao Krang communities from birth till death which appear in their culture, traditions, beliefs, rituals, and daily life practices such as making merit in the center of their homes by linking with Buddhism and the Buddhist principles. It is evident that most Lao Krang are familiar with Buddhist practices before. Upon their arrival to Thailand by settlement in Nakhon Pathom Province, they have continued to inherit Buddhism until today. These prove their profound relationship between homes, temples and schools in line with the Buddhist principles.



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