Nature, Nurture and Nation in Folk Oralities in Thailand and Beyond

Wasinee Sutiwipakorn Topoonyanont

A Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
2022

Centre for Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies
SOAS, University of London

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the interrelationships between humans and Nature[1] as represented in the Thai folk oralities - from folk lullabies to rural belief systems. This includes a consideration of the portrayals of the archaic female guardian spirit (Mae Sue), the folk narratives in the *Rathasena Jātaka,* and the legend of Jao Mae Nang Non (the Great Reclining Lady) of Chiang Rai province. These conceptual materials have represented the relationships between humans and the natural environment in alignment with human emotions and beliefs in more-than-human entities.

The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on theoretical insights derived from socio-ecology, political ecology, feminist political ecology, intertextuality, colonial discourses, and religious hybridity. It interrogates cultural deep history in relation to the natural environment and spiritual beliefs and practices connected with Nature, as portrayed in the day-to-day lives of rural people and their oralities. It further examines the ways in which these cultural-natural histories and local peoples' practices come under the control of Siamese/Thai patriotic epistemologies in the making of the modern nation-state.

The study begins by scrutinising the practice of Siamese/Thai hegemony since the late era of the Ayutthaya Kingdom (the eighteenth century) to the early Rattanakosin period (where dominance of grand narrative becomes rigorous during the reign of King Rama V, 1868-1910). The research questions revolve around issues of how environmental politics has created a rift with rural-based traditions; how the nation-state usurps eco-space, both literally and figuratively (in the case of oral literatures); and how nationalistic narratives have exploited rural voices through reinterpretations of folk oralities. The main research methodology focuses on political ecology, intertextual analysis, and colonial discourses, in combination with in-depth interviews of 64 individuals with Thais, with ethnic minorities, with the southern forest-dwelling nomadic tribe (maniq), and with Lao people, all of which were undertaken during fieldwork from October 2019 – March 2020.

To demonstrate national disruptions to the rural people's lifestyles and their oralities, the opening chapter foregrounds the socio-ecological dimensions portrayed in regional folk lullabies where surrounding Nature – including both the positive and negative characteristics of Nature - thrives alongside human communities. Within the nature-oriented traditions represented in regional rhymes, the environmental politics of the Thai state reveal the intricate processes of Cultural-Natural intervention. The study further explores the link between matriarchy and nature-based embodiment as represented through female guardian spirits such as Mae Sue in lullabies and the perceptions of the Mother Nature. Here, the re-articulations of female spirits by Siamese/Thai scholars manifest the extent to which the central elites have

[1] In this thesis, "Nature" uses capital "N" to differentiate it from being used as the essential quality or character of something such as "the nature of cats are inquisitive and adventurous." The use of Nature, here, implies an abstract and essential force of all things, both in the material and spiritual world. Nature, in this sense, then conveys the sophisticated and transcendent character of Nature, open to an understanding of it as a conceptual resource.

imposed a coupling of femininity and the natural sphere, in the same way they have imposed a distinction between Cultural and Natural.

The attempt to define the uniformity of national identity has resulted in the marginalisation of rural peoples' cultural heterogeneity and has served to push eco-space into the background of the narratives, as is shown in central lullabies. Furthermore, the breach between humans and Nature has grown more intensely fraught, as seen in a case of Phra Rot Meri story in the *Rathasena Jātaka*. By endorsing an intertextual analytical approach towards the *Rathasena Jātaka*, this thesis uncovers the conflicts that exist between the central and the peripheral people in each transformation of the narratives. Within the aesthetic in each version of the *Rathasena* story, Nature is closely associated with the insurgency and violence that the state has inflicted on humans and nonhuman others.

In light of these core vs periphery controversies, however, the case study of the tale of the sacred mountain of Jao Mae Nang Non reveals how the natural environment becomes a "contested terrain" of negotiation where rural people and Tai Yai ethnic people from the Shan states in Myanmar, who have migrated to the northernmost regions of Chiang Rai province, have redefined their cultural identity in relation to spiritual beliefs and practices towards the mountain.

In place of considering folk oralities from a merely aesthetic perspective, as has been the norm in previous Thai literary studies, this thesis proposes a re-examination of their relationships to national and local identities, arguing for the significance of their contested terrain through environmental politics and ecological literary lenses. Folk lullabies and folk narratives do not solely express a harmonious cultural relationship with Nature in which trees, rocks, rivers, and caves, are represented inanimately. Rather, the natural space in Thai folk literature displays a rich diversity in terms of its spiritualistic dimensions, its features of insurgency, and of violence between the nation-state and the local people, the latter always seen as being unorthodox and on a par with untamed Nature.

A core feature in the modernised nation-making process is one of taking control over the cultural beliefs and practices of local people and their relations to the wilderness. Instead of regarding culture as static, this study opens up new perspectives on understanding culture in the spheres of fluidity and hybridity. The realisation of how eco-space has been distorted and destroyed by the intervention of the state also has implications for future environmental consciousness as a result of which the natural environment might be made more secure.

Acknowledgements

'If I have seen further
it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.'
(Sir Isaac Newton, 1675)

This thesis is my journey – along the way there have been several individuals taking part in this marathon. Without their tremendous support and encouragement in the past few years, it would be impossible for me to complete this task.

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to my lead supervisor, Prof Rachel V. Harrison for her treasured support and insightful comments. Her understanding and intellectual virtue have brought me immense knowledge both in the academic journey and in my personal life. I also would like to express my sincere gratitude to my co-supervisor, Dr Mulaika Hijjas for her invaluable comments and patience. Both of my supervisors have brought me out to experience my experimental method during the course of my PhD degree.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Chiang Mai University who granted me a scholarship to pursue my PhD, also the Division of General Education, Faculty of Humanities for granting me sabbatical leave to complete this study. I am also grateful to Assistant Professor Sarawanee Sukhumwada for all her help and advice right from the starting stage in shaping my interest in literature and cultural studies, and also Associate Professor Rattana Na Lamphune who wrote me a recommendation letter to study at SOAS. I also could not undertake this journey without the help and support of Michael Mish and Sirithorn Siriwan who have been always delighted to listen to my ideas since the formulating stage of my thesis.

Additionally, my endeavor would not be possible without the generous support from my fieldwork participants. Many of them were mentioned in the core chapters. However, my fieldwork across Thailand and Laos would have been impossible without unsung benefactors who helped me set sail for the insightful fieldwork: Sarot Ratthanamas, Uraiphas Janthong, Aphinyata Thanakwang, Pol.Sen.Sgt.Maj. Jirat Chanutwisit, Khun Pui, Khun Noang, Kanokrat Katoungtung, Tanakon Jindasap, Pornpansa & Sanya Phanphitthayut, Nuanwan & Thammarat Nutadhira, Jirapong Wongwiwat, and Kamonsri Likhitprakairung.

I am also thankful to my colleagues and friends in the UK: Magda, Eddy, Ahmad, Natasha, Vanessa, Michelle, Mariq, Petar, Gustavo, Saranpat Boonhok, Duangtida Saisuk, and Natthakit Phetsuriya, for their late-night talks and moral support. Heartfelt thanks should also go to my Thai colleagues and friends who never cease to help me in searching for Thai material resources. I am deeply indebted to Assistant Professor Thanyarat Apiwong, Petcharat Muangkhiaw, Phumsak Potinam, Khachonvannakon Khechonchirapradidha, Panudet Arpichai, Napat Satittawakul, and Ampika Pramoj Na Ayudhaya.

More importantly, without the unwavering support and nurturing of my family both the Sutiwipakorns (Wiwat, Darunee, Rungluck, Nanthaporn, Kanyarat, Netnapa, Warakorn, Napus, and Netechanthra) and the Topoonyanonts (Surachet and Nopmanee), I would not have completed this journey. Most of all, one of the biggest sources of my strength goes to my husband and son who unconditionally love and care for me no matter how difficult my journey gets. Thank you for believing in me.

The very last part, I would like to dedicate it to my late mother, mother-in-law, and aunts whose souls are at peace looking me from above. You all will be loved and remembered, always.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Lists of Illustration

Notes on Transliteration and Referencing

There is no agreed system of representing Thai in Roman script. The Roman systems have some limitations because the 26 letters of the Roman alphabets are insufficient to represent all the consonants, vowels, diphthongs, and tones of Thai. In this thesis, I have adopted the Royal Institute system of romanising Thai where there is no distinction between long and short vowels, and the tones are not represented. I have followed the Royal Institute system in using "j" for the Thai "jor jan", for example, *jan jao* for "dear Moon" or Jao Mae for "the great lady". Additionally, even though Thai writing does not normally use spaces between words, I have rather rendered spaces between words and phrases for ease of reading. For example, I have rendered "*phleng klom dek khong thai*" for the Thai lullabies for the easy read, as opposed to how "*phlengklomdekkhongthai*" is originally structured in Thai.

I have followed the Thai reference system for Thai authors by using given names before surnames. I have also followed the Thai authors' preferred spelling of their own names in English when known, rather than romanising them to maintain consistency. The citation of Thai authors, both in-text and in the bibliography, is therefore alphabetised by the author's first name.

Chapter 1
Introduction

This thesis is an examination of interventions made into rural cultural beliefs in relation to Nature, and specifically into the oral traditions of folktales and lullabies. These destructive interventions came as part of a process of constructing Siamese/Thai[2] national identity by the urban elites operating from the dominant (urban) centre. From folk lullabies to folk stories and their legends, the environmental underpinning of rural-based folk oralities is of deep cultural value. It illustrates the question of the human entanglement with Nature which has inspired the profound teachings and spiritual ecologies embedded in the perceptions of rural peoples in Thailand. Within the framework of national cultural identity, nationalistic discourses around the construction of Siam/Thailand have implanted a deep Nature-Culture divide, one in which Nature falls into the domain of the "must-be-tamed".

This study aims to capture a very broad set of environmental representations in folk rhymes, folktales, and legends by considering that these oralities have been redefined, reinvented, and embellished to fit the core narratives of the nation-state through hegemonic and conventional Siamese/Thai ideologies. I have developed key research questions within the 4 main perspectives, setting out to explore: 1) Nature-related knowledge among rural people from peripheral regions 2) intertextual transformations 3) the Nature-Culture divide and 4) environmental conflicts with the Thai grand narratives. With folk oralities collected and rewritten by the central Thai state, it has, I argue, caused cultural disruption to rural peoples' old traditions and to their cultural memory. As a result, it leads to a break in the link between rural communities and the delicate balance of their lives in connection with natural landscapes. The purpose of this thesis is therefore to investigate the scheme of national cultural interventions and environmental politics that has disrupted the natural spheres represented in folk oralities. The folk lullabies, the folk belief system in relation to the archaic female guardian spirit of the Mae Sue, and the folk myth that has been transformed into the state-supported Buddhist tale of *Rathasena Jātaka* will be discussed and analysed. I then move on to an examination of natural representation in the folk legend of Jao Mae Nang Non, considered by the people of Chiang Rai to be a counterpoint to the national narration of central Thai elites. In

[2] Prior to 1939, present-day Thailand was known as Siam. During the Siamese revolution of 1932, spearheaded by *Khana Ratsadorn* (The People's Party) and the rising Bangkok middle classes, Siam was transformed from an Absolute to a Constitutional Monarchy.

the case of the Jao Mae Nang Non legend, I argue that it is one of the contested "in-between spaces" (to use Homi Bhabha's term) that opens up a new arena of literary discourses, hybridising folk orality pushing rural peoples' sophisticated senses of environmental spiritualities to the fore. As a result of rural peoples' reactions to the state's conventional narratives, there comes the question of how the environmental underpinning of sociopolitical constraints under the administration of the Siamese/Thai nation-state has created a cultural rift in relation to deep folk memories which is reflected in numerous Thai-language cultural histories. Such interventions by the Thai state have not merely caused changes in the biosphere and geosphere in general, but have also disrupted rural people's environmental management and their nature-oriented knowledge.

Research Rationale

Thai conservative nationalists take pride in the fact that their nation has never once gone through formal colonisation by the imperial Western world. Under its "long pedigree" and "noble past", Thai nationhood legitimises national and cultural hegemonies which are uncontested and monolithic (Reynolds, 2006; Chanokporn, 2015). Starting from the late fifteenth century, the premodern Siamese elites developed a strong sense of the mandala state, where tributary governance structures were dictated by the Siamese centre of authority. The mandala system consists of the core centre (*manda*) and the periphery (*la*) encircling the core (Tambiah, 1977). Even though under the mandala system the tributary states had autonomy to self-regulate their distinct local identities (Paik, 2018), Siamese statecraft still influenced the peripheral states and the adjacent neighbours such as Myanmar, Laos, the Khmer and the Lanna kingdom (the latter is known as the former northern civilisation in the premodern epoch before falling under Siamese colonisation in the eighteenth century) in terms of land use, access to environmental resources, and political control over populations.

After the late eighteenth century, the influences of colonialism and industrialisation from Western culture imposed rigid separations, if not a polar contrast, between Culture vs Nature, Humans vs Nonhuman, Logic vs Sentiment, and Male vs Female, to name just a few. Drawing inspiration from Western-centric perspectives, the Siamese elites adopted the false hierarchical dualism that disrupted rural peoples' nature-oriented knowledge and cultures by promoting state-supported "high" culture and "highbrow" literature as superior to, and more civilised than, folk literary traditions and beliefs. As a result of such practices, conventional style of narratives was utilised to conceal the cultural pluralism lying in the folk rhymes and

other folk oralities. This hierarchy grew with the expanding power of the nation-state, which has adopted colonial practices from the West, marginalising the culture of the "Other" and interfering in the interdependence between humans and non-living entities at the local level.

The terms "vertical and horizontal relationships" in ecology have come into play in the interrelations between ecological structures and state control. In the science scheme, vertical diversity is essentially concerned with the number of trophic levels across different elevational gradients in a food chain, whereas horizontal structures involve the species' interactions within trophic levels (Zhao, Q, et al., 2019). In the contexts of anthropological and phenomenological approaches, vertical and horizontal relationships take on a slightly different meaning. The two terms are mediated by the interrelationship of feelings and biological revolution in response to a horizontal vision to see ourselves as parts of planetary organism, rather than top-down relationships (vertical vision) controlling Nature (Von Essen, 2010; Descola, 2013). In the case of the re-articulation of folk narratives by the Thai state, however, vertical transcendence has changed rural people's situated knowledge to make it conform, leading to a decrease in ecological values in the attempt to become a "modern" state.

Nationalism is built into the requirements of modernity (Smith, 1999) in which ordinary rural people's natural environment and natural cultural sensibilities are regarded as "other worldliness…peculiarly unsuited to capitalist modernity" (Reynolds, 2006: xiii). This fixity of national discourses results in the perceptions of the natural sphere as profitable and instrumental, awaiting to be mined and exploited. In the 1980s in the Western world, the environmental management under the domination of capitalism had been portrayed as the practices of patriarchy (King, 1993). With this perspective, a discipline called feminist political ecology (which stems from ecofeminism and political ecology) has emerged. It is concerned with the oppression of Nature and femininity at the sociopolitical level. Moreover, it stresses how female communities tackle environmental problems spiritually and institutionally. Several feminist political ecologists, such as Wolf (1972), Warren (2009), Elmhirst (2015), Sundberg (2017), pinpoint ideas of how masculinity and Western mindsets always position science as an absolute reality and define Nature and femininity as passive, non-agent, and non-subject. The inferiority of Nature associated with passive femininity has become a sociopolitical trajectory under the Western-centric practice of taking a dualistic episteme to project a rigid separation between (male) Humans and (female) Nature. The questions of how the beliefs of gender shape the production of knowledge about Nature, hence, are worth exploring.

To further explore my study of folk rhymes in connection to nature-oriented perceptions and contested areas with Thai dominant narratives, I investigate the relationships between Nature and the archaic power of femininity represented in the Thai folk beliefs through their poetic folk rhymes. The worship of femininity and Nature in several contexts around the globe and also Southeast Asia has become a situated knowledge based on the nature-based beliefs in conjunction with the veneration of female goddesses/spirits. Natural environment has been feminised, on the one hand, due to the patriarchal nature of society. On the other hand, Nature has been seen as the embodiment of female characteristics whether it be the sublimity, beneficent, and destructive. In the primitive contexts of Siam, as well as several parts of the world, the mystic power of Nature has shared its innate and intrinsic characteristics with females. The ways Nature provides resources and manifests her mystic power have been considered to be the same as the ways mothers treat their children. Unfortunately, in the dichotomy between (male) Humans and (female) Nature, the link between Nature and feminine spiritualities has become the axis of exploitation, bulldozing, tameness, and colonisation to a very great degree (Estés, 2008). It is therefore crucial to ponder the suppression of natural power by relating it to the exploitation of femininity.

In the case of Thai sociopolitical contexts, when the discussion about gender and power relations has been raised, several Thai scholars mostly focus on the modern nation-state formation starting in the nineteenth century under the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868 – 1910). As several cultural historical scholars point out, the patriarchal system was brought into matrilineal premodern society by Victorian sexual discourses in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, American influences during the Cold War era, and Japanese business ideologies from the 1980s onwards, introduced additional male-oriented systems (Chanokporn, 2015). Such interventions resulted in a drastic change towards gender relations in which Chanokporn postulates that it affects and suppresses womanhood to make ways for the modernised Thai nationhood led by patriarchy since the aforementioned periods. I, however, argue that the sociopolitical interventions resulting in the domination of feminine spiritualities and the natural realm appeared long before that era, dating far back to the Ayutthaya civilisation circa fourteenth century. During that era, femininity and Nature were once intertwined, as Pranee Wongtet (2006), Pornpen Hantrakool (2003), and Santita Ganjanapan (2011) agree. Traditions, nature-oriented rituals, productions, and reproductions gave rights to female social management, economic arrangements, and matrilineal kinship principles respectively, as

marked in The Three Seals Law[3] (Pornphen, 2003: 252). In practice, however, the relationships between femininity and Nature were exploited by the practices of the Siamese elites and the intellectuals who regarded females and Nature as objects belonging to patriarchal structure. This scenario has been articulated in the folk oral traditions that deserve further exploration.

Siam's bureaucracy and environmental colonialism over peripheral states and adjacent neighbours become another central concern in this thesis. Noting that Thai people (historically and culturally) are members of a "diasporal state in existence" (Turton, 2015: 4) where cultural areas stretch out along with those of ethnic people all over Thailand, cultural space, in Turton's understanding, is hence not monolithic but highly diverse. This is supported by Thongchai's arguments in *The Other Within: Travel and Ethno-Spatial Differentiation of Siam Subjects 1885 – 1910* (Thongchai, 2015), where he addresses the fact that ethnic identities are mixed and are in complex relationships with the state. This ethnic identity is also constructed according to a Siamese sense of Self that "…reaffirmed their superiority, to justify their rules [through many kinds of knowledge and narratives]" (41). Therefore, the collective memory presented in folk myths and legends that help identify individuals with place and landscape has been used as a form of soft power to lay claim over other ethno-spatial landscapes and to change their ethno-religion. Folk myths and legends have then become parts of power-knowledge under the Siam/Thai-centric scheme. For Rachel Harrison (2011, 2014), Thai literature derived from premodern oral literature has gone through a process of adaptation that is not simply a case of replication, but of reinvention and reinterpretation to serve the colonial discourses of Siamese/Thai practices.

With all these reasons, I would like to take a closer look at the study of ecocriticism wherein literature and environmental concerns become interlinked. However, with the sociopolitical nexus pointed out in the above-mentioned Rationale, the interdisciplinary framework – be it ecological science, political ecology, feminist political ecology, politico-

[3] The Three Seals Law or the Three Seals Code (*kotmai tra samduang*) is a traditional Thai code of law compiled in 1805 by the order of King Rama I (1782 – 1809). The importance of The Three Seals Law lies in the fact that it constitutes the existing legal texts that survived during the war between Siam and Burma in 1767. In a Royal decree issued in 1794, It is stated that only ninth or tenth of the Ayutthayan code of laws survived the catastrophe due to the Siamese-Burmese war, one of them was *kotmai tra samduang*. This led King Rama I to order a prompt "cleansing" (*kan chamra*) of the corpus of laws. Each volume of the corpus is stamped with all three official seals of the ministries of Mahatthai (north), Kalahom (south), and Phrakhlang (treasury), hence the name of the compilation (Pornpen, 2003).

religion, or intertextuality - are employed to explain these observations. I choose to talk about ecological science first because the field has been initially used by several scientists concerning global environmental crises such as climate change, toxic pollution, changes to bio- and geo-spheres, just to name a few. However, my main concern will be drawn back to the literary field in the subsequent investigation.

Literature Review

Ecological Science and its Limitation

When discussing ecological crisis, the pioneer scholars mostly come from ecological science focusing on the Earth's interwoven biological system and how human's land and natural exploitations affect the natural sphere. The term "Anthropocene" has initially come to current debate through a Dutch atmospheric chemist, Paul Crutzen (1933 – 2021) whose premise on the destruction of Nature and the "self-regulated Earth system" (Schliephake, 2020: 6) is that it is caused by human actions. An American-born Australian chemist, William Steffen (et al. 2011), also stresses that the "Anthropocene is born from the realisation that the 'human imprint on the global environment has now become so large and active that it rivals some of the great forces of Nature in its impact on the functioning of the Earth system'" (842). This entails techno-scientific influence and modern discourses from an array of scientific parameters in monitoring the environmental depletion with the scientific tools to calculate the carbon footprint, the decrease of biodiversity, and the changes of rock strata patterns caused by human activity, to name just a few.

With the technocratic science-based management addressed above, the study of social-ecological systems is also worth exploring because it takes into account the different ways that the science and socio-ecological components interact with one another. Social-ecological systems (SESs) was introduced by C.S. Holling (1973, 2004) in the field of sustainable development science. As all living beings and non-living entities seek to continue living, SESs as a sustainable science has sprung from the pure scientific scheme to consider not only material-ecological assessment but rather concern with the systems where social, economic, ecological, cultural, technological and other components are strongly linked through their adaptive cycles and dynamics of resilience. Socio-ecological systems (SESs) explore the ecological functions that are determined by complementary attributes: resilience, adaptability, and transformation of the system's dynamic in ecology. Aiming to absorb ecological disturbances and adapt to the undergoing changes, the socio-ecological systems attempt to

integrate the stability landscape and ecological systems in order to process a set of concepts within the scientific discourses.

However, the interactions between social dynamics and ecological processes in the scientific discourses of current ecological crises could not be set as a single discipline to solve the problems. Sociopolitical aspects which have influenced cultural memory and premodern stories are worth analysing as well. A wide array of interdisciplinary approaches is needed. Schliephake (2021: 5) highlights the possibility of interrogating Human-Nature interactions, focusing on modernity and postindustrial effects and also the ideology of human history, sociopolitics, history imagination, and cultural construction. Armed with these arguments, my thesis will explore the natural-historical perspectives that are deemed to challenge cultural history promoted under the rubric of discourses of Thainess.

Ecocriticism

Although the concept of my study employs Western environmental studies as part of its discussion, I do, however, carefully examine the understanding of the natural environment as seen from Western perspectives and acknowledge that it might not fit the Thai context in terms of sociopolitics, cultures, economics, and nature-oriented deep history knowledge. Notwithstanding that Thai culture is in dynamic flux where Nature, culture, history, and religion blended together, I will examine notions of refashioning and rearticulating Thai folk narratives to fit orthodox conceptions and the aesthetic criteria of the nation-state.

Ecocriticism was officially introduced in the mid-1990s in the United States and United Kingdom. Cheryll Glotfelty (1996), being considered as one of the preeminent pioneers, foregrounds the fundamental premise of ecological studies on literature by stating that "human culture is intimately connected to the physical world" (XV). Several other ecocritics such as Glen A. Love (2003), Greg Garrard (2004), and Lawrence Buell (2005) agree on the link between humans and nonhuman Nature as one whole microorganism, and as part of coexistences in shared landscapes. Writings about the natural world or nature-oriented literatures thus have been categorised and examined in the genre of "Nature Writing". This genre, however, has been detected by Jonathan Bate (1991) and Timothy Morton (2007) to have contradicting flaws and they argue the methodology is paradoxical in the sense that it retains the notion of the rigidity of Human-Nature-Culture separations. In Morton's *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, he points out that those writings about the natural

world have no connection with Nature, but are rather a new phase developing from romanticism, which appeared in Europe and Euro-America in the Romantic Age of the late eighteenth century (Morton, 2007: 2; Deming and Savoy, 2011: 5). Morton's reticence about mainstream ecocriticism revolves around the Nature-Culture separation in ecocriticism which, he argues, has noticeably limited the investigation of Human-Nature complexity in the phenomenal world. In other words, the intensive highlight on Nature has tamed Nature itself and has also discarded human culture stemming from the phenomenal world per se. Bartosch (2013) and Plumwood (2003) are also against this Culture-Nature divide. They stress that ecocriticism exemplifies the boundaries of human/animal/nature whereby the West has standardised beliefs in Nature. Turning against ecocriticism theory, the terms "EnvironMentality" from Bartosch and "Ecological Humanities" from Plumwood come to an interplay. These concepts link Nature and Culture in alignment with human emotions attached to places, landscapes, and multispecies. These could not separate out from one another. The interdisciplinary conceptions about "almost human", "beyond human network", and "more-than-human entities", therefore, come into play. Environmental studies have become more transgressive to the parameters of interdisciplinary and transnational approaches where insurgency and violence in relation to the cultural factors are regarded as root causes of environmental crises.

Looking back to the representations of Human-Nature relationships in Thai folktales, Nature in general is essentially considered as only one of the settings in the descriptive category of literature. According to Pacharawan Boonprobkul (2019: 377), natural settings in stories can be regarded as 1) stories' backgrounds, and 2) literary methodology supporting characters' psychological conditions. These stakes of natural portrayals in literature, hence, convey isolated proportions apart from human significantly. Even though there are numerous researchers such as Pongpan (1986), Benja (2001), Priyarat (2006), and Suwannee (2010) investigating Thai folklore within the folkloric, thematic perspectives, it was found that the images of Nature relating to humans have been dismissed in terms of sociocultural conflicts, natural cultural deep history, and identity negotiation. Siraporn Na Thalang (2005) also makes a further note that folklore studies were initially concerned with data collection and tale type classifications. Later, the studies focused more on how folktales were assimilated to adjacent areas, while the analysis of sociocultural conflicts within the literary texts remain rare.

Among the afore-mentioned issues of conventional tropes of Human-Nature interrelations, Thanya's *The Giantess and the Mermaid: Nature 'Otherness and their Indifferent Differences* (2013) seems to be the closest pioneer research that undertakes Thai literary conceptions of a literary-environmental approach in *Phra Aphai Mani* poems to understand the internal system of narration in relation to Human-Nature interactions. Thanya's study investigates images of Sunthorn Phu's (the well-known royal poet during King Rama II era, 1786-1855) sea ogress and mermaid portrayed in the *Phra Aphai Mani* epic poems to be paralleled with Nature. Both the sea ogress and the mermaid are Phra Aphai Mani's lovers during his maritime voyage. The same situation occurs in Homer's Odyssey when the main protagonist, Odysseus encounters Calypso and the mermaids on the way back to Athens. These nonhuman feminine protagonists are projected as oriental aliens. According to Thanya, the sea ogress is the representation of the wilderness of Nature, while the mermaid is represented as the timid and infatuated side. Their love for Phra Aphai Mani is immeasurable, but their eventual fates are identical: they are left abandoned and heartbroken. The research reveals the perspectives of humans towards Nature as something exotic. While the portrayal of the sea ogress as a wild beast is unpleasant for the male protagonist, the mermaid is objectified as carnal and biddable. Thanya's research emphasises the ideology of patriarchy which dominates women and concurrently exploits Nature.

Thanya's work, nonetheless, brings up another green perspective towards mystical female characters. His approach to Green Ecocriticism resonates in his latest work *Green Folklore: Folklore Studies in the View of Ecocriticism* (2018). Thanya emphasises the importance of ecocriticism perspectives towards Thai myths and legends by arguing that those of premodern literature could open up new ways of understanding Thai society and culture through a traditional ecological lens. In Thanya's introduction on Traditional Ecological Knowledge derived from the West to look at myths and folktales, however, seems to have overlooked the concepts of cultural deep history and sociopolitical trauma and resistance between the state core and folk peripheries.

Utilising the single ecocriticism approach to analyse the relations between humans and natural world in literature therefore might be insufficient. It comes to my prior premises that ecocriticism derived from the West to make sense of natural catastrophes in particular the Western culture might not fit the Thai context in terms of sociopolitics, cultures, economics, and nature-oriented deep history knowledge. Thai culture, on the other hand, is one of great

cultural heterogeneity and ethnic pluralities (Turton, 2015; Ryan, 2018; and Chi Pham et al, 2019) whose environmental culture is deeply ingrained as a part of them. That is to say, Natural and Cultural milieu determine the way in which humans are able to become an integral part of the ecosystem in spiritual terms. Nature and Culture have a fraught interrelationship in the ways in which each term have been defined against one another. However, Nature dealing with life, death, nourishment, and reproduction cannot be separated out from Culture because of the various ways in which they often influence each other. Cultural perceptions shape how people perceive and interact with the natural world. For example, indigenous cultures have deep spiritual and symbiotic relationships with Nature, considering it sacred and imbued with spiritual significance. Human understanding of the complex network of essential quality of life and also of natural landscape is also endowed with cultural practices that are modified to fit religious rituals and traditional ceremonies. That is to say, Cultural and Natural areas cannot be separated out from one another because human culture and human cognition represent an adjustment to the particular environment that help shape cultural behaviour and practices. Unfortunately, the disruptions of premodern Siam and the Thai state's modern discourses have relegated folk beliefs and cultures in relation to nature-oriented knowledge to the sidelines of the dominant literary culture that sets Nature as the Other. Additionally, under the operation of Siamese/Thai colonial discourses, they have also pushed "other cultures" into hegemonic relations by means of modernisation where the cityscape disrupts the natural sphere. This stratification has deep consequences for the multi-layered cultural spaces of Human-Nature embodiment.

Once again, the investigation of Thongchai's "geo-body" (2014) is relevant for the current debate. In Thongchai's *The Other Within: Travel and Ethno-Spatial Differentiation of Siam Subjects 1885 – 1910* (2015), a play "Sangthong" (recomposed by King Rama II of Chakri dynasty) becomes an exemplary case to demonstrate the construction of ethnographical images as opposed to Siamese highbrow culture. For Thongchai, Sangthong (represented as an indigenous character) reaffirms Siamese superiority over "the other within" (41). This same notion of superiority is expressed in Chetana Nagavajara's statement (cited by Harrison, 2014), where he highlights a common conservative-nationalist sentiment in the following terms: "we come from a culture where the door is always open to receiving guests at every opportunity. But the house itself is ours" (26). That is, the idea of "diasporal state in existence" (Turton, 2015: 4), among those who have resided in Thailand, has been subjugated to the hegemony of

Thainess. The ethnographical image of Sangthong has been once again enacted as oriental alien in conjunction with Nature-as-primitive and Nature-as-animal.

Political Ecology and Feminist Political Ecology

My investigation concerning the conflicts in environmental politics between the central core and the peripheries brings me to look at key research which explains the causes of conflicts and negotiations in the Thai rural contexts in depth. Political ecology has emerged from the anthropological field dealing directly with socio-economic structures and the unequal power relations between capitalists and rural forested areas. This theoretical framework was introduced by environmental scholars such as Piers Blaikie (1985), Raymond Bryant (1998), Karl Offen (2004), and Paul Robbin (2012). The idea of political ecology tackles conflicts over the access to environmental resources under the practices of Western scientific knowledge during the colonial era, while the poor in developing nations have been left struggling with economic dispossession, land-grabbing, and the industrialisation of agriculture, all of which have affected rural environmental health.

In the case of Thailand, the work of Variya Doungnoi's *Political Ecology of Conflicts and Resistance to Mining of Social Movement* (sic.) (2019) investigates the conflicts and confrontations between the rural people's group "*Phetchabun people do not accept mining*" (*khlum khon Phetchabun mai-aw mueang-re*) and the Thai state-led development plan into her study. Having the natural arena as the politicised frontier, many local scholars and local people in Phetchabun province promote the resistance campaign to counterattack the power-knowledge of the state in terms of environmental management. A case study of *Women and Lands in a Special Economic Zone of Mukdahan* by Kanokwan Manorom (2019) also addresses the constraints between ethnic minorities residing near the Mekong River, bordering on Savannakhet province in Lao PDR. For the Thai state, those ethnic people who live close to forested areas are considered members of the Communist Party fighting against the state, and the campaign to enclose the natural landscape then comes into play. The link between environmental politics and the literary contexts, however, has remained untouched.

Having said that, this study will also expand to an investigation of the oppression of Nature in the same ways it happened to femininity. This concept then brings me to explore the interrelationships between Human-Nature, femininity, and state oppression. When these three tropes align with each other, ecofeminists such as Marina Warner (1996), Karen Warren (2000),

Val Plumwood (2003), Barbara Creed (2007), Vanda Zajko (2008), Elizabeth Barber (2013), Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies (2014), have important contributions to make. Drawing on these theorists, my thesis develops the link between women's inequality and environmental degradation. Even though ecofeminism is known as a postmodern theory derived from the feminist movement against the domination of women and the seizure of natural bodies, my study relates to this conception under the examination of premodern folk cultural memories and their oralities which were retold long before ecofeminist theory came into existence. However, this framework still helps contextualise Thai feminist political ecology in its clear counter to the politicisation of the environment.

Feminist political ecology stems from ecofeminism and political ecology where the ideas of gender relations, environmental management equality, and access to environmental resources are interlinked (Sundberg, 2017). Kanokwan's study (2019) demonstrates what has happened in the case of land-grabbing, urbanisation, and land use as a result of the Thai development plan as illustrated in several areas of the Isan border region. Here, the local feminist movement has responded to the politicisation of forested areas by arguing that the Thai state needs to take female sensibilities and traditional knowledge into consideration, in response to urbanisation. These tropes of research, in addition, further expand into the case of female bodies as they are used in terms of politics as well. Chutima's "*Love is Homesickness": Nostalgia and the Fetishisation of the Female Body in Mae Bia* (2011) reveals how the influences of the Thai modern nation-state's episteme and patriarchal systems are set against female bodies and introduce a patriarchal form of morality to Thai contemporary fiction. Feminine figures in folktales are also formed by men, which Jung refers to as "the anima" – that is, man's femininity (Von Franz, 1993: 2). Patriarchal politics and male historiography cause female struggle that link to the oppression of the natural environment. Pinkaew Laungaramsi's *Wombs of the Nation: Disciplining Reproduction and the History of State and Women's Sexuality in Thailand* (2020) also stresses the idea of how Thai state intervention controls women's bodies and her reproductivity by means of a material perspectives of logic in controlling labour stability and in oscillating sexual politics over women's reproduction and her moral order. Although the elements of the femininity-nature relationships are overlooked in her piece, Pinkaew addresses the long historical processes of the state controlling women's wombs and their rights over sexuality (for further details see Chapter 3). In practice, the femininity-nature oppression from the Ayutthaya period was transmitted to the Rattanakosin episteme (from the early eighteenth century) during the state formation of the Chakri Dynasty.

The oralities of femininity-nature suppression were gradually implemented, as a result of which 'Motherlands' (*mathuphum*) have gradually been transformed into 'Fatherlands' (*phithuphum*) (Thanes, 2014).

Female bodies and female nature have long been targets of the state's imagination. During the Ayutthaya to Rattanakosin period, nirat (นิราศ), lyrical poetry dealing with love-separation, flourished among Kings and the courts, for instance: *Khlong Nirat Thawathotsamat* in the Borommatrailokkanat era (1448 – 1488), *Nirat Nakornsawan* in Narai kingdom (1656 – 1688), and *Nirat Narathip* in King Rama VII period (1925 – 1935) (Ruenruthai, 1973: 300 – 304). Thai bittersweet nirat were composed during a long journey away from a female lover. The yearning for the eventual reunion between both partners is compared with flora and fauna along the journey with artificial narrated patterns. Female bodies in nirat are always linked to the landscapes. The implications of these travel poems, according to Manas (1999: 42), is rather that they are "constructed, controlled, and subverted canons" in the same sense that state poetics and state colonials controlled Nature and femininity.

Apart from the above-mentioned studies in relation to the politicisation of environmental constraints over natural landscapes and female bodies, there is still room to scrutinise the domination of state power over Thai folk archaic beliefs in Mae Sue, the feminine figure of Meri*,* in the *Rathasena Jātaka*, and Jao Mae Nang Non since all these of premodern cultural deep memories remain untouched to some degree.

Politico-religion and Intertextuality in Folklore Studies

Siraporn's *Conflict and Compromise between the Indigenous Beliefs and Buddhism as Reflected in Thai Rice Myths* (2000) gives insights into how the tale of the Rice Goddess (Mae Phosop) becomes an intertext with the introduction of Buddhism in Thailand. In the initial version, the Rice Goddess is revered by many of Tai ethnicity. Without her, all lives would be doomed. The story has then been changed into the version of the angry Rice Goddess who is very sensitive but also vengeful when disregarded by the Buddhist lay peoples, resulting in an inferior status for her natural personification in relation to the Buddhist hierarchy. Poramin's study on *Conflict and Compromise in Thai Myths* (2004) investigates Tai creation myths, Thai rice myths, solar-lunar eclipse myths, hero myths and Buddhist myths to scrutinise nature-oriented representations. In his findings, the contextual constraints between indigenous beliefs

and Buddhism reveal how Thai people adopt Buddhism and adapts their animistic belief systems with a degree of compromise. By way of example, I refer to Daen-arun Saengthong's "*The Myth of Sao Hai*" (2003) which opens a new gateway to comprehend an old tale of the female ghost residing in a "millennial tree". The story has an ecological agenda, voicing the experience of the periphery against the official history of the state at the centre of power. Safeguarding cultural memory in Daen-arun's *Sao Hai*, Wanrug (2015) analyses the re-emergence of a marginalised figure whose voice is heard against Siamese hegemonic plotting. Basically, the short story of Daen-arun's *Sao Hai* is the closest piece dealing with interrelationships between Human-Nature, femininity, state oppression, the formation of nation-state.

Literature Review in Relation to the Case Studies in this Thesis

1. Folk lullaby[4]

As pointed out earlier, my study will analyse folk lullabies, folk archaic beliefs of female guardian spirits (Mae Sue), the *Rathasena Jātaka*, and the legend of Jao Mae Nang Non to tackle nation-state discursive disruptions against Human-Nature embodiment and local identities. Starting with my research into Thai lullabies, several well-known lullabies have a poetic form of simple and repetitive lyrics that are easy to remember and sing. These traditional lullabies often follow a simple pattern of rhyming quatrains, with a regular meter of 5-6-5-6 syllables per line. Most of the classic songs are recorded and recited in central Thai written dialects (Varittha, 2008). They are typically soothing, gentle, and have simple melodies that help lull babies and young children into a peaceful sleep. However, it is worth noting that there are unique characteristics such as dialect, poetic structure, culture, and musical traditions distinguished in each corpus of regional lullabies in Thailand where the remnants of the song are orally recited and are very rare indeed.

[4] The lullaby is a song sung by parent or caregiver to lull children to sleep or the soothe a child. Lullabies are sung to infants at bedtime to comfort and calm them. On the other hand, nursery rhymes are meant to be fun and educational. Nursery rhymes can be sung and recited and often include actions or hand gestures to help children engage with the song. However, the section of this thesis that deals with folk rhymes is mainly focused on lullabies sung by parents or caregivers that help children drift off to sleep. As for the Thai lullaby, according to the central Thai official dialect, the set of songs tends to be known as *phleng klom luk* or *phleng klom dek* (songs to soothe children). However, the words change according to the regional dialect of each region and the set of songs is known as the folk lullaby or *phleng klom luk phuen ban* (songs sung by rural people to comfort babies). The details will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

In today's Thailand, remnants of many lullabies are transmitted from the traditional manuscripts compiled by Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (1862 – 1943), who was the son of King Rama IV of Chakri Dynasty (1804 – 1868) and one of the brothers of King Rama V (1853 – 1910). The manuscripts are preserved by the Thai National Library and by a few older adults and scholars. The Thai classic lullabies have been passed down to the other regions through the educational system in the same way in which Siam used educational reform as a tool to assimilate other cultures within the country. As a result of the centralisation of the educational structure lullabies came to conform to the "centre", especially during the period of Siamese administrative reform or *thesa phiban*[5] in the reign of King Rama V, when the educational structure and its curriculum, as well as central lullabies and highbrow literature, were assimilated in many rural areas (Varittha, 2008).

In academia, the studies of lullaby following the conventional analysis of grand narrative such as the works of Suwannee Thongrot (2010), Fasuay Treeod (2013), Pankaew Chai Yao (2013), Chintana Paepdip et al. (2018), and Kornchanok Nanthakanok (2020) are analytical studies of Thai lullabies in relation to content, lyrics' patterns, and the purposes and values of those songs distinguished by local provinces. Apart from these works, however, Varittha Thawarorit's *Implications of Politics and Society on Thai Lullabies* (2008) seems to be the closest research in terms of critical methodology. According to Varittha, 'social orders, mode of productions, forces of productions, and relations of productions' (sic.) (2) reflected in the written collections of central Thai lullabies imply the superiority of the Thai authorities who shape the songs' productions. Lullabies reflect not only socio-economic constraints among rural Thais, but also provide a channel for those rural people to fight back against the state authorities. Varittha's study, however, does not refer to the natural realm which has fallen under cultural control of state ideologies. Therefore, key factors such as historical, political, social, and cultural interventions that together lead to confrontations and negotiations among regional songs in relation to Nature are also rare.

[5] *Thesa phiban* is a Siamese territorial administrative management that came as part of the development of administration act in King Rama V's reign. In that period, the Siamese government implemented changes to the status of peripheral rulers by defining their duties and responsibilities to the central laws, while new educational policies had to be used to make peripheral cultures and literatures fit the project of the unification of Siam (Piyadech, 2022).

2. Beliefs in the female guardian spirits (Mae Sue[6])

In the case of the folk belief systems in the reverence of the archaic female guardian spirits (Mae Sue), Thai scholars such as Udom Rungruengsri (1999), Aphilak Kasempholkoon (2016), Narumol Silpachaisri (2018), and Sarun Makrudin (2021) address beliefs in Mae Sue as a typical practice among the rural people. The word *Mae Sue* has a neutral meaning in modern-day Thailand. However, the female guardian spirits are referred to by various other names in each region of Thailand, such as *Mae Koet* (a mother who gives birth to a baby) or *Mae Kao*, and *Mae Lang* (the late mother in previous life) (Udom, 1990: 976). For rural people, the Mae Sue is the female spirit who protects infants. The above-mentioned works of Narumol and Sarun focus on the image and beliefs of Mae Sue depicted by the centre i.e. Bangkok, in Wat Pho's painted murals, as stereotypical images of a female spirit that has been given new Brahman names. Research focusing on the *Mae Sue* story inscribed in Wat Pho's mural paintings portray a male historiography and patriarchal writing style. In contrast, a multitude of female guardian spirits in other regions – north, northeast, and south – still vividly portray feminine power in relation to Nature in their local lullabies. The study of Mae Sue by Udom and Aphilak distance their focus from the core to the peripheral states. The contents revolve around animistic belief systems held by regional local people. However, the intertextual changes in the connection with the Mae Sue context and the cultural transformations of the belief systems from animistic to state-sponsored Buddhism remain untouched. Furthermore, the aspect of natural-femininity relationships continues to be overlooked.

3. The tale of Phra Rot Meri[7]

Some research works investigate the developments of the Phra Rot Meri story in the Buddhist Paññasa Jātaka in various versions across Southeast Asia, such as the work of Nantaporn Poung-Kaew (1984), Rattanaphon Chuenka (2017), and Sutheera Satayaphan (2017). By considering this story as a collective cultural repertoire in mainland Southeast Asia, the Phra

[6] *Mae Sue* prevail in folk belief systems as female spirits. *Mae Sue* literally means a mother who makes trade, but she is essentially perceived as a guardian spirit who helps protect and sometimes harms babies. The belief in *Mae Sue* is demonstrated in the *Mae Sue* ritual performed by the midwife alongside parents of the newborn who buy babies from the spirit of *Mae Sue* with thirty-three cowries (1 cowrie = 1/6400 THB or 0.015625 satang [100 satang = 1 THB]. 33 cowries therefore are 0.515 satang in recent Thai currency) in exchange for her protection (Sathiankoset, 1962: 79 – 80).

[7] The story of Phra Rot Meri is a traditional epic poem and is categorised as a religious myth, or *jataka*, which is a series of stories about the previous lives of the Buddha. The tale of the *Phra Rot Meri Jataka* has adopted its compositional structure from the Indian *jataka* which spread into Thailand during the seventh and eighth centuries, but in contrast, *Phra Rot Meri Jataka* is unknown in India (Baker and Pasuk, 2019: xii). The storylines revolve around the tragic love between the prince (Phra Rot) and the giantess (Meri).

Rot Meri story significantly portrays sociocultural developments of the vast rural landscape into the city state. As for this aspect, there are only a few works that refer to the epic poem Phra Rot Meri of how the tale has been adopted by a different culture and transformed and what the broader sociopolitical implications of this are. Nattaya Koraneekij (2011) cites the work of *Maha Sila Viravong's Phongsawadan Lao as a Source of the History of Laos,* which reveals some particularities of the background described in the Lan Xang manuscript in relation to the Thai epic poem Phra Rot Meri. The Lan Xang manuscript depicts Putthasen and Kanri (the sounds are resonant with Rathasena and Meri in the *jātaka* tale) as the ancestors of the Lao people. The creation myth of the couple is also further explained in the Khun Borom myth. He is the son of the king god, Phraya Thèn, who is ordained as the ruler of the Tai people. At that time, the Tai ethnic people who immigrated from China displaced the existing indigenous peoples, which are referred to as Kammu ethnicity (Maha-Sila Viravong, 1997: 27). Consequently, the tragic love story between the female giantess Meri (or Kanri for Lao) and a human Rathasena (or Putthasen or Phra Rot) is interpreted as the racial mixture of the indigenous tribe with the Austroasiatic immigrants. In the studies mentioned so far, there is still room for me to expand this racial mixture revealed in the Phra Rot Meri story to the scope of ethno-spatial landscapes and the natural territorial claims by the Siamese. Siamese scholars adopted the Lao folk creation myth of Putthasen and Kanri to transform it into the *Rathasena* Buddhist Paññasa Jātaka during the formation of a strong state that demonstrated its prowess over its adjacent neighbours.

4. The story of Jao Mae Nang Non[8]

Despite the drive towards Buddhist homogeneity noted above, there are also numerous examples of cultural heterogeneity and ethnic plurality, with multiple belief systems intersecting with one another – both culturally and religiously. The case study of Jao Mae Nang Non is worth considering. The legend of Nang Non became known nationally and internationally in June and July, 2018, due to the search-and-rescue mission of the members of youth football team trapped in the Tham Luang cave complex at Chiang Rai province. The rescue of the boys, know as The Wild Boar, took eighteen arduous days (23 June – 10 July)

[8] The beliefs in Jao Mae Nang Non become a folk legend in relation to Nang Non mountain and the love story of a princess. The name Jao Mae Nang Non (which means the great reclining lady) is derived from a topography of Nang Non mountain range when seen from a distance. Nang Non mountain or Doi Nang Non is part of the Daen Lao range at the northernmost point of Chiang Rai province – which resembles a reclining princess. The well-known version of this legend centers around the tragic love between a princess of Jinghong in Xishuangbanna (a far south city in China's Yunnan province) and a stableman.

with international joint cooperation between Chiang Rai locals, the Thai government, Thai Navy SEALs, US military, and world-renowned cave divers. Eventually, the trapped football team were rescued by a pair of British cave divers (Gutman, 2018). In this incident, the notion of religion-based tradition has an impact on multiple layers of the narrative genre; superstition and rural Buddhism seem to blend together in sophisticated ways.

Anthropologist Andrew Johnson (2018) examines this phenomenon by pointing out the blended belief systems of nature spirits and Buddhism portrayed in the search-and-rescue incident. Relevant to Johnson, Edoardo Siani (2018) addresses the dynamic diversity of local superstitions and an ascetic Buddhist monk partaking in the rescue mission. For Siani, however, there appear to be political implications in relation to Thai state violence over the magico-animistic Buddhism of rural people. Even though supernatural beliefs in Jao Mae Nang Non were involved in the Wild Boars football team incident, it opens up an array of issues for both local people and for many scholars regarding its non-scientific explanations. Kanya Wattanagun stresses that the relationship between the rescue mission and supernatural beliefs deals fundamentally with "the attempt to use alternative approaches to remedy a precarious situation when technological knowledge did not yield a desired outcome" (2021: 68). Her argument, however, might not be sufficient to explain the intricate patterns of deep-rooted perceptions of mountain spirits that blends in with rural Buddhism, for the rural locals have never perceived Buddhist prayers to be "alternative approaches". The locals would have prayed regardless of any help from the outside. Rather, they feel grateful towards the mountain and the water-giving cavern system, deep down to the spiritual level.

With all these cultural phenomena, I endorse the need to take into account the concept of historical ecology, cultural contestations, and Buddhist hybridity along with ethno-ecological perspectives. The study will also examine the intertextual transformations which remain untouched in the three versions of the Jao Mae Nang Non legend obtained from the fieldwork and will discuss them along with the cultural resistance of the rural people to ascertain their position and identities.

In general, my research highlights the oppression of Nature in folk oralities consecutively implemented in stages by the hegemonies of premodern Siam, Siam, and later the Thai nation-state from the late fifteenth century onwards. Nation-building processes and cultural uniformities create false hierarchical division between the human and the nonhuman, between

Culture and Nature, and between male historiography and feminine spirituality portrayed in the Thai folktales. Nature-oriented culture thus falls into the sphere of the marginalised, and at the same time creates flashes of resistance where national and local identities clash. Institutionalising one culture as mainstream, uncontested and monolithic is therefore problematic. Cassaniti and Menon postulate this hegemonic problem as follows:

> Proclamations are too often biased towards the perspective of their own privileged group, with the result that the imposition of more powerful group's view of what that sameness looks like is taken as natural. Not attending to difference exacerbates these kinds of inequalities that too often disproportionately fall along lines of nation, class, gender, and other marks of identification that celebrate some people and marginalize others. (2017: 14)

Based on Cassaniti and Menon's statement, the far-off peripheries, folk culture, and rural-based narratives which are considered as spaces of "difference" are often drawn into the central core to be tamed and domesticated. The multi-layered practices from the hegemonic episteme of the state portrayed in Thai folk oralities therefore help contextualise the Human-Nature interrelationships through the use of interdisciplinary approaches of intertextuality, political ecology, colonial discourses, posthumanism, and Buddhist hybridity.

Research Questions

My afore-mentioned premise about the influences of the deep cultural history having been interrupted by Siamese/Thai discursive practices thus brings me to a detailed investigation of the history of natural representations and political ecology in Thai folktales. My concerns therefore revolve around the following key issues the way in which each main question will help provide substantial evidences to other ones:

1) The extent to which Thai folktales, which in this case include lullabies, the folk belief system of the female guardian spirit Mae Sue, the *Rathasena Jātaka*, and the legend of Jao Mae Nang Non, change over time, especially during the period of premodern Siam leading up to the modern Thai nation-building process.

2) The ways in which patriotic narratives and dominant religions employ colonial knowledge and create a cultural rift between rural peoples' perceptions about nature-oriented relationships through Thai reinterpretations of folk oralities.

3) The ways in which the changes have affected how the central core and local peripheries perceive Nature both in cultural and spiritual terms.

4) The extent to which - despite all the cultural and oral tradition constraints evident in Thai folktales - rural peoples' folktales produce challenging and confronting narratives to counterattack the state's conventional traditions.

Structure of the Research

To tackle this long process of state interruptions in folk culture and their narratives, I refer in Chapter 2 to a number of lullaby sources sung by parents and caregivers to explore ecological concepts among the rural people, along with in-depth interviews with the local people across the four main regions in Thailand and Laos from October 2019 – March 2022. I initially traced back to depths of folk cultural memories through folk lullabies. The investigation unearths the pivotal influences of regional biogeography and environmental sensibilities (this aligns with Bartosch's EnvironMentality, 2013) that lie within the rural peoples' cultural contexts in their poetic lullabies. The biogeographical features - such as the richness of regional plants and animals, their coexistences with waters, hills, and wild forests, and folk agricultural activities suited for the climate - have influenced folk-storytelling. This sheds light on the significance of Nature in people's daily lives and the wide array of natural nourishment precious for the rural people and particularly for the young. These folk rhymes, however, contradict the reality of rural people's lifestyles that have been changed due to modernising discourses under Thai state-led development plans. This disruption has led the natural environment into the sphere of the politicisation and the subjugation where industrialised agriculture and economic dispossession have effected environmental changes in rural forested areas.

In Chapter 3, the thesis further develops the link between women's inequality and environmental degradation by looking at the folk belief system of natural femininity in relation to the female guardian spirit of the Mae Sue. This thematic lens explores the archaic power of femininity in relation to Nature in rural-based folk lullabies. Even though feminine spirituality has linked folk oral traditions and environmental sensibilities together since the premodern matriarchal period, the nexus of nature-femininity power confronts re-articulations and re-identifications to serve Siam-sponsored Buddhism. The archaic maternity represented in the belief in Mae Sue has been placed as inferior to the Buddhist teachings, along the same lines that the Buddha defeated the Rice Goddess (see Siraporn's *Conflict and Compromise between the Indigenous Beliefs and Buddhism as Reflected in Thai Rice Myths* (2000)). In light of this

nexus, nature-femininity power comes under the state's cultural mechanisms of control and domestication.

Chapter 4 problematises the self-image of the central core revolving around hegemonic knowledge and marginalising other forms of cultural heterogeneity through an examination of central Thai lullabies. This reveals the workings of the hierarchical dualism between Nature and Culture as illustrated in Thai classical lullabies and the royal rhymes. Nature is portrayed as a mere backdrop for the aesthetics of the lullaby scheme and is sanitised to fit the state purposes of empiricism and modernisation, discarding all relations to the spiritual. Most central lullabies depict Nature in the factual sense, as we would perceive birds, rocks, and trees. In Thai culture, however, perceptions of Nature can be represented through the other "worlding" (to use Haraway's term, 2008) beyond humanity network and more-than-human entities. Haraway has her contribution to make by introducing the concept of "naturecultures" as well as Descola's "beyond nature and culture" (2013) to help us understanding the complexity of the lifeworld. These include spirits, deities, and figuratively nature-oriented characters. Nature in the central lullabies is, however, sung to silent tunes, conforming to the conventional literary style that sets Nature as a mere backdrop and ornament of the poetic expressions.

The roles of folk oralities reflect not only sociocultural phenomena, but they also have been used as a source of soft power for state institutions. As explained in Chapter 5, institutionalised religion also becomes important in the politico-historical sphere where different cultures and beliefs held by indigenous people are taken for granted in the social arena. In order to create a form of colonial knowledge about ethnic peripheral landscapes and their ethnographical cultures that is seemingly correct, many efforts have been made in the power-knowledge nexus in relation to state-sponsored Buddhism and its grand narratives in the literary contexts. Mainstream knowledge emanating from the centre/core served to confine other cultures and traditions under the aegis of Thai institutionalised Buddhism and this is reflected in the transformations of the story. I address at least five transformative versions of the story:

a. the Indian folktale "*The Son of Seven Queens*"
b. the Lao creation myth of Phra Putthasena and giantess Kanri
c. the Lanna version of the *Rathasena Buddhist jātaka* (later adopted by Siam)
d. the Ayutthaya version of *Phra Rot Khap Kap Mai*
e. *Phra Rot Nirat*, composed in early Chakri dynasty

I draw the *Rathasena Jātaka* into my discussion in order to reveal the discursive formation of the state in claiming indigenous lands and in breaking rural people's association with the Human-Nature nexus through the use of vernacular Buddhism over other animistic cultural beliefs and practices. The *Rathasena* story exemplifies the articulation of epistemological concepts and ethics that set the boundaries of humans/animals/nature onto the Siamese/Thai colonial discourses.

In Chapter 6, I further explore the folk legend of Jao Mae Nang Non in Chiang Rai mountain cave in terms of a counterattack on national cultural identity by local people. The case of Jao Mae Nang Non reveals the archaic reemergence of nature's femininity in the folk legend by having her eco-space as a contested terrain to bring into negotiation with the dominant Thai narrative. By focusing on the insights of Thai folk literature, in the broadest sense, one can see the discursive practices which are in constant flux. Nature, in this sense, becomes both the "objectified subject" and the frontier of negotiation at the same time.

Research Objectives

As a result of these deliberations and foci, my research objectives are as follows:

1) To explore the Natural-Cultural diversities of folk oralities in the specific context of folk lullabies, female guardian spirits (Mae Sue), the Buddhist tale of *Rathasena Jātaka*, and the folk legend of Jao Mae Nang Non in order to scrutinise the embodiment of land and people connection in conjuction with the rural people's ecological knowledge and cosmologies.
2) To trace the intertextual changes which have occurred, together with the sociopolitical constraints in order to identify the premodern Siam/Siam/Thai state's interventions that disrupt the opportunities for rural people to enjoy an intimate relationship with Nature.
3) To examine how folktales become a contested space for rural people to re-vocalise a sense of local identity in order to provide a narrative for sociocultural change.

Research Methodology

This thesis examines premodern Siam/Siam/Thai state's discourses on the natural-historical and sociopolitical nexus that have created a rift in folk cultures and their oralities. I therefore employ perspectives from intertextuality, political ecology, colonial discourses, posthumanism, and Buddhist hybridity in my research. However, all these frameworks are employed to help support

my in-depth interviews with provincial participants from the four main regions of Thailand and Luang Prabang, Laos, who provided me with invaluable insights into the ways in which folk oralities have been beautifully sung and told in keeping with rural-based environmental consciousness.

Conducting Fieldwork and Ethical Protocol

To ensure the study was conducted in a manner that respect the rights, well-being, and privacy of the participants, I held a strong conviction in the integrity, principles, and ethics of handling the situations and findings. To begin with, I initially observed the landscapes and the people in a respectful manner of their daily routines. The criteria for selecting fieldwork sites were as follows:

1) Provinces with ecological abundance, where rural peoples' lifestyles are closely connected to Nature.
2) Sites that have been historically influenced by mainstream Buddhism, both in premodern Siam and along the temporal path to the formation of Thai nationhood.
3) Provinces with indigenous inhabitants.

I conducted the fieldwork by planning the duration of the field research for 6 months (October 2019 – March 2020) in Thailand and Laos. The process of finding the interviwees started from the small villages of each of the 16 provinces in the four main regions and Luang Prabang; then narrowed down to the city centre in order to make the comparison between people's perceptions in the centre/core as opposed to those in rural areas in relation to their ecological consciousness/awareness. I began the conversations with some basic questions about the interviewee's life and routines, whereafter discussions concerning lullaby repertoires and folk-storytellings would gradually emerge.

I also conducted my research with full responsibility for protecting the privacy and confidentiality of my interviewees. Therefore, this included the clear consent to do the recording via my tablet[9] (cases of the folk lullabies and legends, that were not related to nature-based knowledge, were kept in the recording respository for the purpose of future research).

[9] The data and findings recorded from the interviews were transferred to my computer at the end of the day during the fieldwork. After the field research had been done across each province, my reflections and journals were kept in Microsoft Word files and had been sent to my supervisor, while all photos were also secured in the research drive in my computer.

Thereafter, clear information about the purposes, procedures, and benefits of the research were introduced to my participants that allowed them to make a decision regarding their involvement. The fact that I grew up in the south and have been working in the north of Thailand offered me benefits in terms of communication in these regions. I also used regional dialects such as northern language to converse with the northern participants, southern dialect for the southern local people, and central dialect for the central region. Some features of northeastern Thai dialect are similar to northern language, so I could communicate with northeastern local villagers without difficulties, as well as Laos people who share the cultural heritage and language family of northeast Thailand. Eventually, there were 64 participants across the regions involved in the field research and around 82 lullabies[10] delivered by the interviewees (only 17 nature-related rhymes were selected for this study's analysis in alignment with the other research related to the contexts). Approximately 15 folk-storytellings were included in the findings both related to ecological perspectives and unrelated ones that were retained for future studies.

In-depth Interviews

Explorations were made into various versions of folk lullabies, folk stories told about Mae Sue and other female spirits, the *Rathasena Jātaka*, and the folk legend of Jao Mae Nang Non both in textual and non-textual form. My approach was to firstly collect existing folk lullabies, spirit tales, multiple versions of the Rathasena-Meri story, and Nang Norn tale that are still widely retold in the folk repertoires.

My fieldwork milestones set out to seek how folk lullabies and their backstories in connection with Nature reflect cultural constraints in terms of contextual disruptions and intertextual changes that create a cultural rift in rural people's natural arena and their nature-oriented belief systems. To pursue Human-Nature interventions in Thai folktales, I start with the cultural concept of "*ban – wat - pa"* (literally, home – temple – forest). This trinity is regarded as a combination of the three main sociocultural pillars in which rural peoples' lifestyles, their religious domain, and their surrounding ecology are inseparably intertwined. For Seeger (2014), rural-style Buddhism and animistic belief are "in a harmonious marriage" (64). For people in the countryside, *ban – wat – pa* are but a syncretistic unit where secular

[10] Of the 82 lullabies collected from the fieldwork, there were 20 lullabies from the north, 6 songs from the northeast, 29 from the south, 22 from the central plain, and 5 from Luang Prabang, Laos.

doctrines cannot be separated from spiritual traditions and the sacred forest (ibid). This socio-religious complexity is also clarified by Terwiel (2012) who postulates that the Thai synchronic structure of local religion and their daily lives bridges not only locals' secular spaces but also the extra-territorial environment. Hence, to collect the research data, my "spiritual journey" started from the small rural villages surrounded by green scenery where the local temple plays a crucial spiritual role.

Fieldwork in Northern Thailand

The first trip started in the northern region of Thailand along the outskirts of Mae Hong Son, Chiang Rai, Nan, and Chiang Mai cities. The first three provinces are located near the Myanmar and Laos borders where there is a rich cultural and ethnic diversity. There, the close Human-Nature contacts are a rich source of information about the many ways in which ethnic Tai people ground their cultural identities in relation to songs, tales, and legends concerning the natural environment. Despite the fact that Chiang Rai was once a dominant kingdom in Lanna (the name is still commonly used among northern people), ruled by King Mangrai (CE 1262) before he relocated the capital city to Chiang Mai (CE 1294), conflicts between the old civilisation and Siamese/Thai influences during the formation of hegemonic state prevail. As for Chiang Mai, it is regarded as one of the biggest cities in Lanna in terms of its techno-economic and multi-cultural stature. Given the distinctive sociocultural distinctions between "*mueang*" (city) and "*chonabot*" (countryside), I collected significant amounts of information from local people's oral repertoires along with observations of their daily routines, all of which are indicative of the extent to which state intervention has affected folk narratives.

Fieldwork in the South

Having attained successful results from fieldwork in the north, I deployed the same criteria to the south, seeking a historical past and cultural memories though the folk lullabies and their tales lying deep in the dense forest on the outskirts of Nakhon Si Thammarat, Phatthalung, Songkhla, and Satun. All four provinces opened up hidden gems of song repositories among elderly people that have been preserved to the present day. In the case of the first two cities, they were once important kingdoms in the southern peninsular. Nakhon Si Thammarat was known as the major city during the Srivijaya Kingdom, from the eighth to twelfth century; and Phatthalung was one of the twelve royal cities during the Ayutthaya period. The cities are surrounded by mountain ranges where environmental spiritualities thrive alongside rural peoples' daily routines that is revealed in the songs. Songkhla also appears on my list. Apart

from being my hometown, I chose this province because of its particular cultural economic mix, linking tradition with a new and hectic atmosphere. Having talked to elderly people and exploring local museums at Songkhla, I expanded my insights to include a forest-dwelling nomadic tribe, the maniq people at Satun. This data collection foregrounded my understandings of the way in which indigenous peoples cherish the natural arena and its mystic spiritualities.

Fieldwork in the Northeast

This region, known locally as Isan, lies in a vast landscape which was once was a part of Khmer civilisation, then under Lao domination, and later part of the Siamese/Thai state. My first stop was in Khon Kaen, one of the biggest provinces in the region. It was here that I had an opportunity to meet a Theravada Buddhist monk who was glad to recall his old memories and sing me lullabies (which goes against all the rules of things he is authorised to do). His song provided me with the information of natural resources in Isan communities. I further chose Chaiyaphum city as a destination on my journey list because of the reputation it has for several forest Buddhist monks whose practices closely connect all living and non-living beings to the natural environment. The cultural concept of *ban – wat – pa* in Chiayaphum clearly reveals the interconnections that persist between rural people, syncretistic Buddhism, and forested areas in interesting ways. I further travelled to Udon Thani where I found out that there are several natural sites turn into salt cultivation, replacing environmental landscapes. This reflects in the locals' poetic rhymes. Lastly, I went to the edge of the Mekong River at Nong Khai province where local peoples were once engaged with sericulture[11], a practice albeit interrupted by modernity.

Fieldwork in the Central Plain

Lastly, my investigations became more intense in the four provinces in the central region: Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, Lopburi, and Supan Buri. What have become national practices appear to have stemmed from this area, most notably during the nineteenth century where several ancient texts surviving from the fall of Ayutthaya Kingdom (1767) were revivified and many were rewritten on Rattanakosin Island (today's Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand). The central region reveals an accumulation of the literary culture of local peripheries and a distortion of the natural sphere to fit the state's Nature-Culture stratification. Sukhothai, however, portrays

[11] Sericulture is the practice of rearing silkworms and cultivating silk. Silkworm farming involves the process of silk production, starting from the hatching of silkworm eggs to the harvesting of silk fibers.

its glorious past (since it was the first and major civilisation to settle in the Central Plain according to written history) where folk literary culture still flourished in the memories of the older generation. The dominant picture of the state over the adjacent landscapes became clearer to me with Chit Phumisak's work on the remapping of the Chaophraya Basin and its civilisations (1983). According to Chit, the history and natural landscape making it the Central Plain then and now has stretched further northwards to Sukhothai, Kamphaengphet, Phitsanulok, and Lopburi. In other words, the centre and its cultural diversity essentially expand to a vast landscape beyond the lower Chao Phraya basin and beyond the Rattanakosin Island.

Interestingly, the Central Plain of Thailand consists of many important river basins, such as the Chao Phraya, Pa Sak, Lopburi, and Tha Chin that are highly habitable and good for agricultural activities. The Central Plain, then, becomes a hub of economics, culture and transport for many nearby cities. The rise and fall of Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, and Thonburi bring Ratthanakosin Island into the interplay between preserving old memories of the glorious past and/or rebuilding a new version of patriotic narratives fostering its political stabilisation. The fast-paced cities across the Central Plain, however, vividly brings the folk literatures and beliefs to life.

Fieldwork in Luang Prabang, Laos

The main purpose of conducting fieldwork in Luang Prabang was in order to trace the Lao folk repertoire relating to Prince Rathasena and the giantess Meri which is nowadays re-articulated as one of the fifty Buddhist Paññasa Jātakas cherished in Thailand. My fieldwork revealed that the Lao myth of Rathasena-Meri was influenced by the natural landscape of Phu Thao – Phu Nang (Prince and Princess Mountains) revered by Tai-Lao ethnic people residing near the area. Hypothetically, the tale was told as a priori geographical understandings reflecting Human-Nature coexistence in Lao people's perspectives. Their folktales have a significant influence on social and political legitimacy in establishing Lao national identity and its unique traditions and cultures.

There are a number of legends and folk stories depicting the unity of the Lao Kīngdom from the fourteēnth century in King Fa Ngum era (reigned between AD1353 - 1372) onwards. My own research focuses on the comparison between the Lao's Phu Thao-Phu Nang story and the Thai *Rathasena Jātaka* in the Paññasa Jātaka. My interviews with local people, monks, and sages helped me trace many theories indicated that Tai people (including Lao people as an

Austroasiatic tribe) migrated from present-day China since time immemorial. These peoples then relocated in mainland Southeast Asia, mixing up with indigenous peoples. The Lao landscape, surrounded by rolling hills the silhouettes of which have an uncanny resemblance to sleeping giants, is regarded as once having been the dwelling place of giants. Therefore, Lao people see the mountain range in relation to the giantess Meri as their single original ancestor.

Interestingly, when the Lao story of Phu Thao-Phu Nang was assimilated into the kingdom of Siam, it became more Buddhist and was adapted into the form of a non-canonical *jātaka*. Since then, the relationship between the tale and people's daily lives have therefore been set apart to a significant degree. The assimilation of Lao myth into a pedagogical Buddhist tale in Siam tells us more about the process of the national formation of Siam where Buddhism is regarded as mainstream and the orthodox religion while other beliefs and religions are subordinated. The fieldwork in Luang Prabang was important for helping unearth the deep cultural memories in association with the landscape and also with the role of the archaic femininity that are recited in Lao lullabies.

Textual Analysis

Intertextuality

The concept of intertextuality initially emerged with Ferdinand de Saussure and was further explored by Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes and other theorists associated with French post-structuralist theory of the 1960s and 1970s (Allen, 2011). Intertextuality takes all texts as originality-free since they are usually redefined into new interpretations according to socio-political and socio-cultural structures (Worton and Still, 1990: 1). Imitation and repetition play essential roles in intertextuality. Weaving texts together is not a simple activity, but a discursive practice deeply influenced by social ideology. Literary texts are intertextual by nature (Soison, 2003). They are produced from certain language systems, retold in order to stretch messages and values for generations, and reappear in various versions based on the previous works. In the case of Thai folklore, the network of textual relations in oral traditions brings multiple layers of meanings regarding vast numbers of stories that are retold and revivified. With this characteristic of folktales as intertextual sources, they do not lead their readers/audience to a singular meaning, but rather to a network of intertextual relations that brings about the combinations of pre-Siam/Siam/Thai hegemonic discourses, intellectual elites' authority, and Buddhist percepts to the folk lullabies, their tales, and legends. The challenges to understand the messages in folk narratives are not to recognise them literally, but rather to

reconsider them in a "multi-dimensional space" (Barthes, 1977: 146-147) for which the combinations of meanings and selections of language are crucial for interpretation.

I therefore propose that intertextuality can help with an understanding of the internal mechanisms of Thai folk narratives, such as issues of how each text is constructed and reproduced within the constraints of historical, political, and sociocultural interruptions in Thailand, and how they represent Human-Nature relationships in a distinctive way. This leads to another important point of exploration in political ecology to understand the factors that create unequal power relations between the central core and peripheral polities. The trauma revealed in the rhymes exposes the consequences of the Thai state's control over the access to environmental resources.

Political Ecology

Focusing on power relations between the central core and local peripheries, it brings me to the discussion of political ecology. Political ecology deals with politico-historical profit-making, environmental degradation, socio-ecological changes, and change to indigenous landscapes at the local level. The structural forces of the state have an impact not only on the biosphere and geosphere of the natural environment, but also on the sociocultural identity of the less powerful local people in general.

Stemming from the contexts of global neoliberalism in the 1970s and 1980s, political ecology focuses on how and why capitalist states and their power relations devalue natural environments and reshape local peoples' lives in the Global South (Roberts, 2020). This philosophical approach is related to ecology under capitalism. The spectrum of political philosophy investigates the inequality of power relations between the state's capitalists and local people (Clark, 2012). The spectrum of rural peoples' constraints, regional conflicts, gender suppression, feminist political ecology, and transnational ramifications are also included in this approach.

Understanding the unequal power relations between the Thai state and rural people in relation to their environment makes the image of the modernised nation-state of Thailand, which was adopted from Western colonial knowledge, become clearer. Even though the theory is utilised in reference to contemporary times, the core idea is still relevant to the examination of the rift of folk natural embodiment conveyed in their oralities.

Colonial Discourses

The reasons that colonial discourses are relevant to environmental studies are because they relate to profound changes in landscapes, environments, feelings, and self-images. To understand how the Siamese/Thai state has driven the ontological dissociation between Nature and Culture, I bring Philippe Descola's *Beyond Nature and Culture* (2013) into my investigation. For Descola, nationalism requires modernised discourses to create an image of barbaric and uncivilised people and hence a concomitant need for that state to redefine and domesticate natural landscapes. With the state's contrasting perceptions of beings and values of places, Nature becomes objectified and systemised to a position of docility vis-à-vis state mastery. The Nature-Culture stratification promoted by the Siamese/Thai state is thus problematic since the division between the rural forested areas and urbanisation disrupts rural people and interrupts their ability to enjoy their delicate relationship with the natural environment.

The myth of Thai uniqueness has long lured many nationalist-conservative cultural studies academics into the critical arguments of what Thainess actually is. Although Siam/Thailand has a long history and has never been formally colonised by Western countries, the ruling elites employed colonial knowledge from the West to create a Culture-Nature divide which has affected local landscapes and indigenous self-images. In contrast to conservative-nationalist discourses, Thongchai Winichakul, Craig Reynolds, Andrew Turton, Rachel Harrison, Peter Jackson and others have proposed that the colonial and postcolonial approaches exemplified in several contemporary works of media and literature should be reread in order to raise up social changes and to enhance gateways of reassessing critical practice by examining politico-culture in academic works. With this, I further propose that colonial discourses could also uncover the state practices of natural oppression, the suppression of femininity, territorial expansion at the expense of adjacent neighbours and rural forested areas under the hegemonic interventions of the state. By closely reading Thai folktales, the association of texts and the natural-historical nexus could create a pivotal understanding in redefining rural peoples' resistance.

Posthumanism

I consider cultural factors as prospective approaches to unearth cultural sensibilities and cultural ecologies that lie within Thai oral folk traditions. Posthumanism then comes into focus. According to the arguments of environmental anthropologist Eduardo Kohn (2015)

posthumanism is an ontological turn in environmental issues in considering humans' and nonhumans' association in the interrelationship of cognitive sensibilities. Posthumanism criticises humanism for over-emphasising the human, leading to human exceptionalism. The questions of human subjectivity have been expanded to comprehend the attempts to divide Culture and Nature, where the latter falls under the object of human cognition (Martelli, 2020). Some posthumanists such as Donna Haraway (2008), Carey Wolfe (2009), Graham Allen (2011), and Rosi Braidotti (2013), therefore, point out that human's cognitive complexities in understanding themselves cannot be isolated from the understandings of the nonhuman realm around us. Such notions between the human world and the natural environment help shape sensibilities and cultural emotions towards environmental reading and bonding of the two worlds. Literary work therefore should not be viewed as only the container of cultural meaning in itself but also a space in which a potentially vast number of relations coalesce (Allen, 2011: 12). Within the various fields questioning the position of humans as acting individuals, superior subject, and primarily cultural beings, the concept of "almost human", "beyond humanity network" and "more-than-human" becomes the integral conceptualisation of the re-consideration of human-nature-supernature.

When looking back to Thai myths and folktales, they contain codes and underlying semiotics. Within the texts, essential aspects of folk's social institution are coupled with cultural emotions and conflicts and compromises between the realms of the supernatural and humans, animism and state-sponsored Buddhism, and conflicts between ethnicities in Thai and Tai cultures. The Thai folktales also illustrates some aspect of multi-dimensional spaces where Nature and Culture coalesce. The relationship between Nature and Culture in the folk stories, however, also reveals institutional interpenetration whereby elites have internalised appropriate cognitive codes and enacted them in the society by usurping natural power to fall under the state's control.

Buddhist Hybridity

The principle factor implicated in the change in relationship between Human-Nature in the Thai folktales is Thai Buddhist relations. Orthodox Theravada Buddhism has largely played an important role in Thai culture. Citing Pattana, Jackson states that "these everyday forms of religiosity serve as a discursive social space, in which political, economic, and cultural meanings are packaged, channeled, consumed, and contested" (2016: 826). Such a notion is in correlation with Terwiel (2012: 1-2) who postulates that Thai Buddhism "cannot be described

under a single rubric". There are several distinctive strata of religious beliefs: rural people who wholeheartedly believe in the animistic aspects of Nature/Power, Rural/Unsophisticated Buddhists, and the Buddhism of the highly educated classes. However, among rural people, their "magico-animistic" aspects revolve around the worldviews and Buddhist tenets in relation to ecology heterogeneously (ibid: 4). That is, the synchronic structure of local religion bridges the gap between sophisticated Buddhism and local religious practices. This has not occurred only within their secular spaces, but also in the extra-territorial environment. Kirsch (1997: 241) points out that the Thai religious system consists of "synchronic structural function" where several distinctive traditions have combined and "upgraded" Buddhism. Theravada Buddhism, for Kirsch, is regarded as incomplete, and instead as syncretic.

Although Theravada Buddhism is revered as a national religion in Thailand, disharmonious relationships between state-sponsored Theravada Buddhism, local Buddhist traditions, Buddhist forest traditions, and animistic practices appear significantly throughout time. Anuman Rajadhon (1968: 33) states that Thai Buddhist syncretism "intermingle in an extricable degree". However, the local religious framework that fully applies to local views and its daily routines seems a poor fit for the hierarchical authorities of Theravada Buddhism. In the religious hierarchy pointed out by Kirsch (1997: 245), state-sponsored Buddhism is always considered superior. The counterattack posed by vernacular Buddhism, forest-oriented monks, and magico-religious Buddhism in the rural context always makes itself felt, however. Therefore, the textual constraints in Thai folk literature might be clarified by taking the array of various Thai Buddhist belief systems into account.

Overall, I divide my investigation of Thai folktales into two main thematic categories: folk oral songs and folktales. Repositories of the two categories are passed on orally, in written form, or in both. Each chapter intends not to create rigid folkloristic categories but rather to create a dialogue of how the oral literary concept has been perceived from childhood to the adulthood. Furthermore, I intend to make a link between the regional folk identity and their Human-Nature interrelationship to the fore whereof the intervention of nation-state and local resistance are set out along with the narratives.

Chapter 2
Natural Portrayals in Regional Folk Lullabies and the Intervention of the Thai Nation-State

'Lullaby is the most natural form of song and had been declared to be the genesis of all songs. Lullabies reveal the existence of the folk tradition utterly independent of the literature of the time.'
(Iona and Peter Opie, 1997: 17-18)

How does the Siamese/Thai nation-state exercise discursive power over cultural-natural history and rural-based oralities, thereby disrupting folk interrelationships with Nature? Folk lullabies are the poetic rhymes that are considered to be the very beginning of folk literature related to cultural memories. In the oral literary stratum, a human's first experiences of the world are perceived through the memories of lullabies, bedtime stories, and legends. Many young children have learned about their surrounding environments, their own selves, and the ways to "become with others" in the world through rhymes (Jatuporn, 2014: 45).

In the canon of Western literary theory, eminent folklorists such as Vladimir Propp (1984), Iona and Peter Opie (1997), and Jack Zipes (2012), stress that lullabies are considered to be the fundamental verbalisation of storytelling in terms of its interconnectedness between Humans and Nature. For them, oral tales, including lullabies, manifest cultural patterns embedding the interrelationship between Humans and Nature in the most vivid of ways. This conceptualisation has the potential to understand the cultural patterns of lullabies beyond their aesthetic characteristics, and to also comprehend them from the perspectives of ecocriticism. The latter have been explored by several ecocritics, such as Cheryll Glotfelty (1996), Greg Garrard (2004), Lawrence Buell (2005), and Roman Bartosch (2013). Since the late twentieth century, Western-centric ecocriticism has opened up and engaged with a wide range of recurring debates. Among these is Morton's argument that ecocriticism, particularly in the area of Nature Writings, seems to reinforce rather than collapse the dualism of the subject (human) and object (Nature) (2007, 2016). Morton's argument hones in on environmental politics, and in particular the environmental romanticism that has tended to create a literary genre where Nature itself is silently manifested as a mere backdrop for human appreciation. Such notion has been set in contrast to global capitalism that has the tendency to create destruction and

exploitation to the natural environment (ibid). That is, nature-oriented knowledge has been put to the trope of "Nature as object" contrasting with the human subject who studies/appreciates them in general.

In light of Morton's point, I carefully examine the idea of ecocriticism proposed by the afore-mentioned western scholars, paying particular attention to the question of whether it is compatible with human-nature interactions in Siam/Thailand. Here, spiritual socio-structures are expressed in folk beliefs and oral literature. The Siamese/Thai folk relationship to Nature was not fundamentally formed in the context of the environmental depletion and global capitalism created by modernity. It is rather the connotations of the folk oralities that have been consecutively transformed to serve the state's purposes. As a consequence of this, there are therefore some limits to the applicability of ecocriticism originally articulated for the modern Western context.

However, the nature-based beliefs of rural people help link their world with the environmental turn, providing a dimension to today's ecological crisis which can be seen not only in terms of science, but also in terms of cultural beliefs. It is within this context that lullabies open up an inspirational material framework within which to understand folk environmental knowledge and their ecology in relation to their culture. In addition, folk lullabies may also bring about an understanding of Cultural-Natural history in the scope of an environmental politics imposed through the formation of the hegemonic Thai nation-state, which has created a rift between Culture and Nature. As for environmental politics, Paul Robbins (2012) notes that land-grabbing, in which the forces of capitalism and state authorities serve to remove people for their original lands, force rural people to shift their modes of production, while concurrently struggling to protect their natural environment. (ibid: 36 – 37). This has happened to rural areas that have been changed to fit the development roadmap of the Bangkok elites.

Folk lullabies make a clear distinction between urban sites (*mueang*) and rural forested areas (*pa*). For rural people, Human-Nature relationships are symbiotic, coexistence transcends dualism and the hierarchical distinction of beings. Discursive practices and power relations reinforced by the Thai state come into action at the local scale to categorise Culture as separate from Nature, to absorb natural resources from rural areas, and to redefine folklore as "authentic" only when it is under the control of a hegemonic and conventional state. The drive to establish

cultural homogeneity and the discourses of culture-nature divide as an integral part of the process of nation-building of Siam/Thailand eroded the diversities of rural-based traditions, cultures, and literatures, reducing them to mere ornaments of the nation-state. These actions disrupt the sophisticated complexities of folk interconnectedness with Nature.

I have adopted the approaches of socio-ecology and political ecology to explore the following areas of concern:

1) how central elites perceive folk lullabies and promote the dualistic Culture-Nature divide.

2) the extent to which the Thai state utilises the model of the hegemonic modern state to intervene in the rural histories and in rural people's understandings of the Culture-Nature divide.

3) how folk peripheries make meaning out of their cultures, traditions, and sensibilities through nature-oriented perspectives.

Differences Between the Typical Thai Lullaby and the Folk Lullaby

In order to address the aforementioned points, this chapter provides a brief account of the cultural perceptions held by the Bangkok elites towards folk lullabies, also known as *phleng klom luk phuen ban* (*เพลงกล่อมลูกพื้นบ้าน*). It is worth noting the differences between *phleng klom luk phuen ban* and the typical Thai lullaby or *phleng klom luk* (*เพลงกล่อมลูก*) the way in which the latter is the generic term used across modern day Thai society, especially in the central region, with soothing melodies. However, there are several unique characteristics of regional folk lullabies recited by local people in adjacent areas. To be more specific, most of the typical lullabies, especially those of the central classic rhymes follow a simple pattern of rhyming quatrains, with a regular meter of 5-6-5-6 syllables per line. Most of the central songs are recorded in central Thai written dialects and recited by the central dwellers (Varittha, 2008).

The folk lullaby (*phleng klom luk phuen ban*), on the other hand, has its distinguished patterns that start with the original phrase, for instance: *uea ja ja* (*อื่อ จา จา*) in *phleng uea* (*เพลงอื่อ*) in the north, *non sala* (*นอนสาหล่า*) in *phleng non sala* (*เพลงนอนสาหล่า*) in the northeast, and *ha hoer* (*ฮาเห้อ*) in *phleng cha nong* or *phleng rong ruea* (*เพลงชาน้อง หรือ เพลงร้องเรือ*) in the south.

All these regional phrases are meant as starting melodies to soothe the children and persuade them to sleep. The initial sounds sung in each regional song reverberate at the beginning of the songs. In each regional rhymes, they have their own unique melodies and music styles as well as specific lyrics and themes reflecting distinct cultural traditions. For instance, the northern melodies are often gentle and soothing, the northeastern ones can be lively and rhythmic, while the southern can be harsh and rough. Additionally, the prosodic features of the folk lullabies include the repetition of stressed syllables with the loosely structured stanza that comprises 5 – 9 lines each with an uneven rhythmic structure of 3-4-3-4, 5-6-5-6, 8-8-7-7, or 8-6-6-6 syllables per line.

Unlike the central lullabies of which most of have been written down in manuscripts, folk rhymes have been passed down through word of mouth. There are a few older adults in rural communities across the far-reaching peripheral regions still able to recall their traditional lullabies due to educational reform during the reign of King Rama V in the nineteenth century, as mentioned in Chapter 1. The assimilation of adjacent peripheral cultures and oral traditions was deemed an act of unification of the nation-state. The educational policy affected the perceptions of local people on the periphery in many ways (Piyadech, 2022). The textbooks, curriculums, and educational structure in general had been set out as tools meant for conformity to the central policy. As a result, the large variety of folk lullabies have been usurped and replaced by typical Thai lullabies transmitted from schools. Additionally, the educational structure did not give girls and boys equal access to education. Members of the male nobility and royalty were educated at the Royal Institution of Instruction, while boys of the common class often received education at Buddhist temples from highly educated monks (Pornpen, 2003). To set up an educational standard in the nation-making process during the reign of king Rama V, education – available to boys only - was reformed following a secular institution and centralised in Bangkok. As a result, there are a few lullaby repertiores left in each region of Thailand, specifically in the city centre.

I draw attention to the socio-political interventions that have been made by the elites to disrupt the characteristics of folk oralities. I closely examine folk cultural memories that appear in regional lullabies from the outside-in (i.e. from the periphery to the center), after which I will reverse the trajectory, taking it from inside-out (particularly in Chapter 4). That is to say, this chapter will decentralise national knowledge by focusing on folk lullabies from rural provinces

rather than on urban cities, by mean of re-vocalising subaltern contexts and cultural memories in relation to Nature.

The current chapter is based on fieldwork data relating to Thai folk lullabies collected in Thailand and Laos. I undertook fieldwork in the northern, northeastern, central, and southern provinces of Thailand; and also in Luang Prabang, Laos PDR. Overall, the current chapter focuses on a study of Thai lullabies from twelve different provinces, in addition to which lullabies collected from a further four provinces in the central region are further investigated in Chapter 4; and those from Luang Prabang, in Chapter 3. That is to say, in this chapter, Thai local lullabies from the three regions are presented along regional lines and analysed in conjunctions with documentary research on Thai local lullabies.

The Background and Limitation of Research into Thai Lullaby

Lullabies and nursery rhymes are both types of songs associated with children. While the nursery rhyme is a traditional poem or song often used to teach young children about language, culture, and history by engaging actions and hand gestures meant to be fun and educational, the lullaby, on the other hand, is a soothing song meant to lull children into drifting off to sleep (Bonnár, 2014). This rhyme section and throughout the rhyme-related chapters, however, will focus on the lullabies sung by parents and caregivers as the main exploration since singing lullabies lies at the heart of the parent-child interaction full of profound intimate occasions and teachings.

The study of lullaby has captured the interests of several educators over the past decades. For them, “the rhythmic and melodic flow of language” (Kenney, 2005: 28) of lullabies in general helps provide phonological, cognitive, physical, social and emotional, and musical development for young children (Maclean, 1987; Sullivan, 1999; Kenney, 2005; and May, 2020). The joys and pleasures the child gains from lullabies are not only imprinted in the child’s memory, but also help them to make sense of the world. Yet, deep within the mesmeric melodies and cultural memories embedded in lullabies, many tensions and struggles lie hidden. The works of Mary P. McDonald (1974), Albert Jack (2010), and Charles Nunley (2010), for example, criticise the European Mother Goose rhymes and also reveal traumatised, yet resistant memories of oppression, slavery, racism, and social inequality among rural people. As for Thai academic researchers such as Suwannee Thongrot (2010), Fasuay Treeod (2013) , Pankaew Chai Yao (2013), Chintana Paepdip et al. (2018), and Kornchanok Nanthakanok (2020), and

many more, they explore lullabies in the broad senses of aesthetic appreciation, environmental romanticism, content and linguistic patterns, and purposes and values reflecting the aesthetic aspects of Thai culture. However, the elements of memories relating to trauma and resistance are rare. I examine both the positive and negative characteristics of Thai lullabies, particularly in cases where environmental appreciation and symbiotic relationships are illustrated alongside natural scarcity, the hardships of agrarian society, resource degradation, land-grabbing, economic dispossession, and changes in environmental health. These issues and trauma revealed in the lullabies expose the consequences of the Thai state' control over the environmental accessibility.

Socio-politics and the Cultural Perceptions of the Bangkok Elites Towards Folk Lullabies

Thai local lullabies have been sung without written lyrics since premodern times in the same manner as other lullabies from around the globe. The old verses of Thai lullabies, on the one hand, are outstanding in terms of the representations of other-than-human references, surrounding environment, folk-storied ecologies, local beliefs, and didactic messages. Symbiotic relationships with animals such as hens, birds, fish, toads, cats, and buffaloes abound in lullabies. On the other hand, elements of natural ferocity, scarcity of natural supplies, and the struggle of rural life also prevail in folk lullabies, though they are less talked about in the scholarly literature. For those conventional folklore studies, the usages of environmental romanticism and aesthetic appreciation abound in their approaches. As outlined in Chapter 1, however, many Thai folk oralities reveal a process of disruptive adaptations and re-articulations by the convention of Thai narratives. Folk lullabies (*phleng klom luk phuen ban*), for Bangkokians, are regarded as a lowbrow version of folk culture, compared to "national" lullabies (*phleng klom luk khong thai*) that are more "civilised". In contrast to several Thai conventional folklorists, Varittha's (2008) work on the socio-political implications of Thai lullabies cites a letter written by Prince Narisara Nuwattiwong (one of King Rama IV's sons) that is critical of folk lullabies. In the letter, Narisara states the need for folk rhymes to be sanitised and recomposed because, in his distinctly pejorative view, many folk cultures of eating sticky rice, drinking honey and buffalo milk were fundamentally barbaric and culturally unacceptable (*lew tem thi*) (13). Such opinions expressed by a member of the Siamese/Thai royalty on the offensiveness of the material clearly demonstrates the conceptualisation of human-nature dualism that disrupts folk Culture-Nature embodiment and their environmental spirituality.

Several national lullabies that are well-known in Bangkok and other Thai big cities - such as Nakhon Pathom, Suphanburi, Chiang Mai, Udon Thani, and Songkhla, just to name just a few - depict beautiful nature in a positive way, without the harsh and hostile aspects that rural people recognise. In the view expressed by rural people, natural beauty and the ferocity of natural environment are perceived as two sides of the same coin. In stark contrast to the perspective of the rural people, the centre sings about how the baby's crib is so soft, with a delightful fragrance, birds chirping beautifully in the background, a breeze soothing the minds of newborn babies, and not an ounce of worry. The lullabies of the centre provide only a one-sided positive perspective on the world, while the harsh and destructive aspects are completely avoided. As an outcome of having been converted to serve the nation-state in the production of an illusory epistemology of Culture-Nature dualism, central lullabies are excessively romanticised. The depiction of lively and happy folk surrounded by a pastoral landscape and fruitful natural resources is commonly perceived in Bangkokian minds, yet an actual connection with agricultural labour is undermined. With the melodic flow of folk dialects in lullabies, the relationship that rural people enjoy with Nature seems, however, to be in contrast with the actual struggles of life in the natural world.

The crisis in oral traditions and local culture has had a clear effect on the wider question of environmental health. As mentioned above, environmental crises should not simply be traced back in pure scientific terms alone, to the destruction of the biosphere and the geosphere, but also in terms of the havoc wreaked upon the stories of ecology – as in the case of the folk lullabies referred to here. This form of environmental destruction should, likewise, be considered in terms of the practices and power relations that also endure in sociocultural and political contexts.

Thai folk lullabies have long been sung without written lyrics. This makes them historically untraceable until circa 1972 onwards when the collections of Thai regional melodies of lullabies slowly began to be explored (Pha-ob, 1978: 2). In other words, the regional folk lullabies which were collected from 1972 onwards are perceived as a first written evidence that has been in existence for no longer than 50 years when rural Thai lullabies began to draw attention from rural Thai scholars. The question, therefore, is how did these folk lullabies from regions become known by the centre?

Dating back before and up until the reign of King Chulalongkorn/King Rama V (1853-1910), ethnic groups such as the Tai, Mon, and Khmer residing in the adjacent Siamese bureaucracy were jointly considered as both "locals and also Others" in relation to Siamese rulers and intellectuals (Baker and Phongpaichit, 2014: 62 – 64). The centre of Siamese bureaucracy was located around the lower Chao Phraya basin. In 1893, King Rama V appointed his half-brother, Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (1862 – 1943) to become Minister of the Interior and spearhead the agenda to "bring all people under the King" (ibid: 60). According to Baker and Pasuk, Prince Damrong stated that "all these [ethnic groups residing in Siam] call themselves by different names…such as *chao sayam* [Siamese people], Lao, Shan, Lue, Ho…in fact all are Thai ethnic groups (*chon chat Thai*) (ibid). In 1920, to promote the seemingly unified Siamese state, King Rama VI with the help of Prince Damrong (who also administered Vajirayana Library, today's National Library of Thailand) pursued a mission to collect Siamese nursery rhymes and lullabies. This was initially undertaken by focusing in particular on Central Thailand around the lower Chao Phraya basin. Prince Damrong then gave an order to Luang Thammabhimon (also known as Tuuk Jitrakatuuk) (1858 – 1928), a royal official of the Vajirayana Library, to collect Siamese rhymes. Prince Damrong's masterpiece of Siamese lullabies (edited edition, 1920) consists of 167 verses mostly sung in the central region, divided into 3 series: lullabies (*bot he dek hai non, บทเห่เด็กให้นอน*), consolatory verses (*kham plop dek hai chop, คำปลอบเด็กให้ชอบ*), and singing games (*kham dek rong len, คำเด็กร้องเล่น*). All of these were represented as national lullabies *(phleng klom dek khong thai, เพลงกล่อมเด็กของไทย)* of the strong state of Siam.

As for the other adjacent regions, Siamese ideology conceptualised them as a collection of outlying peripheries attached to the central district of Bangkok, by employing the roadmaps of "western-style bureaucratic and military organizations" (Baker and Phongpaichit, 2014: 52). This administrative management is also known as *thesa phiban,* the central practice that implements the new Siamese administrative laws over the adjacent neighbours. Adopting this Western style in the hands of King Rama V and other Siamese elites, Siam categorised the North, Northeast, Central, and Southern regions as formation of "Young Siam" (ibid), thereby referring to the 'peripheral' people as junior and subordinate. Collections of folk narratives, as well as folk lullabies, have gradually been gathered from the outskirts of the Siamese bureaucratic administration from 1972 onwards, collections which have been divided and

named accordingly to each region, nowadays known in Thailand: North, Northeast, Central, and South (Pha-ob, 1978: 2).

Since their initial collection date of in the 1970s, rural/peripheral lullabies gradually came to be perceived as a significant element of the Thai national rhyme collection, having been represented in the romanticised and vivid lens of the rural pastoral. Moreover, the Thai state-run movement of peasant studies, with the support of the United States government, sent numerous academic researchers to collect folk data during the Cold War Era (1958 – 1976). During this period, and of course in the nearly ended period of the Cold War in 1972, the Thai state propagated the notion of a "modern Thai identity" by facilitating technology and development (both in concrete terms and through soft power) in rural areas as part of a wider strategy against communist expansion in Southeast Asia (Anan, 2018). The Thai state aimed to prevent rural populations from joining the communist party by reforming rural people's social structure and their culture, including their repertoires of old traditions. That is to say, folk lullabies became one of the instruments of the state through which it extended its power over rural areas (ibid). After World War II, several collections of myths, memories, and folktales had been (re)written down by nationalist elite narrators (Thongchai, 2008: 22). The drive to promote cultural homogeneity and the discourses of modernity as an integral part of the process of nation-building of Siam/Thailand disrupted the diversities of rural-based traditions, cultures, and literatures. A cluster of folk memories and their oralities have been characterised as parts of national episteme for the purpose of demonstrating an image of unified national identity. Anuman Rajadhon (1968: 50) points out that numerous classical Siamese/Thai literary works were developed from varied folk poetic works "but with further elaboration and embellishment". That is, the functions of the nation-building processes to a large extent served to subdue the authenticity of folk rhymes and literatures.

Despite this, however, regional oral traditions from the areas beyond Central Thailand, though administered by a centralising bureaucracy, still demonstrate the aesthetic and ecospirituality[12] in relation to rural surroundings. The close connection between rural people

[12] The term ecospirituality indicates the nexus between ecology and spirituality which is rooted through terms such as environmental spirituality and spiritual ecology. Ecospirituality conveys the very deep interconnections between ecology and spiritual reverence as a potential approach to environmental sustainability. The reverential and reciprocal approaches to the natural environment are in stark contrast to a vertical relationship which looks down upon Nature from a hierarchical and modernist-consumerist worldview point. (Pranab, 2009).

and surrounding Nature, which manifests itself in both constructive and destructive forms, appears to have blended. The geographical features of each region are crucial in the shaping of unique regional rhymes in which land, fields, natural surroundings and animal inhabitants are depicted along with distinctive dialects and melodies.

It is clear that at present, age-old lullabies have dramatically decreased in popularity, a victim of the fast-paced rhythms of cities and urban lifestyles. Folk lullabies are now rarely sung in the cities, and most prefer to listen to more of the central ditties via YouTube and other modern media. This retrospective study therefore tries to revive old rural memories and their cultural environment with the aim of understanding local perceptions of the symbiotic relationships between humans and Nature and aspects of local, rural identities that appear to be fading from view.

Northern Thai Lullabies

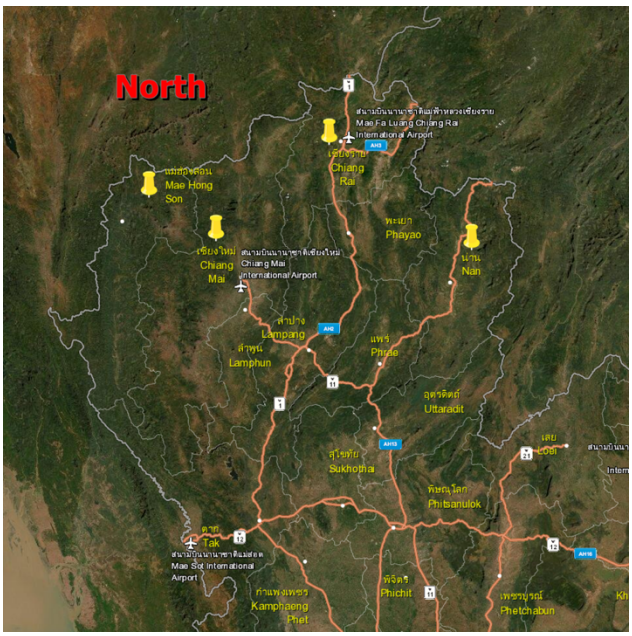
Northern Thailand is a region surrounded by several forested mountain ranges bordered by Myanmar and Laos. With its steep mountain ranges, the north boasts the important river basins of the Ping, Wang, Yom, and Nan which all flow southwards to the Chao Phraya basin in the central region. Geographically, the north is renowned for having fertile valleys and a richness of bio-diversities with refreshing breezes from the hills and natural resources from the forest. This image contrasts with reality in several areas, where modernisation has turned valleys and fields into sites of industrial agriculture. In the early months of every year, northern people suffer from smog and severe air pollution caused by the burning of industrialised crops and products grown in the hills. As Pinkaew Luangaramsri, a renowned Thai political and environmental scholar, points out, the Thai state blames the burning on the ethnic minorities residing in the hills. The environmental resolutions promoted by the state representatives completely disregard the industrialised forms of agriculture promoted by the state itself, but rather lay the blame for this critical problem at the feet of the local people's "misuse" of the land, even taking this as a pretext for banishing them from the forest (2020). Environmental insurgency between ethnic people and the Thai state has therefore become a persistently significant issue. The dispossession of rural communities from their land tends to degrade the environmental health of rural areas, and also has affected urban areas. Despite this, however, the issue has been largely swept under the rug at the political level.

The conflict between ethnic minorities and those at the central core has a deep-rooted cultural history. Historically, the region was originally known as the Lanna Kingdom (which translates as "the kingdom of a million rice fields") seven hundred years ago and was as important in politico-historical terms as the Sukhothai Kingdom. The strata of ethnic minorities, such as the Tai Yuan, Tai Yong, Tai Yai, Tai Puan, Tai Khoen, and Tai Lue in the lowlands and the Hmong, Akha, Lahu, Mien, and Karen in the highlands, render Lanna a melting pot of cultural diversities in this region since the reign of King Mangrai of Ngoenyang from 1259. The kingdom fell and became a tributary state of Burma, following invasion in 1558. It subsequently became part of the Siamese political administration during the reign of King Rama V, in 1892.

Having survived the forces of both external and internal power, northern culture has adapted to the demands of modern lifestyles at the expense of its distinctive regional arts and forms of wisdom, which have in turn been shunned by the central state as culturally inferior. During the reign of King Rama V, the north's cultural features, such as local costumes, dialects, and literary arts representing their regional identity, were not only banned under Siam's bureaucratic administration, but their home mountains and forests were also seized and placed under the control of The Royal Forestry Department (Pinkaew, 2009). Several ethnic hilltribes and those dwelling in the lowlands were moved from their homelands and urged to adapt to modern lifestyles. While these ethnic groups are dependent on natural resources, the Siamese state also had its own demands for resources and the potential of land use. Such demands have led to a further hardening of the binary division between *mueang* (urban cities) and *pa* (forests) by the state. Ethnic minority groups have been categorised as *chao ban nok* (peasants living in "external" areas) residing in the far-reaching areas away from "civilisation" (Turton, 2015: 20–22). These minority groups do, however, try to preserve their traditional forms of resistance and literary art forms within the community.

This chapter discusses four major provinces in the north - Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Nan, and Mae Hong Son - where lullaby data had been collected. While most urban dwellers seem to barely recall their lullaby repertoires, folk lullabies are still sung by ethnic minorities who have settled and made themselves at home in the new host environment. Their lullabies are aesthetically manifested in the old-fashioned manner where humans and Nature vividly coexist. Within the stressed tone of *uea ja ja* phrase at the beginging of the songs following with the

euphonious pleasing melodies, however, lie reflections of natural scarcity and changing of lifestyles which match the new environment in which these people find themselves.



[Figure 1: The northern provinces where the research data is collected.
Image downloaded from
https://map.nostramap.com/NostraMap/?@18.227172,101.061430,8/en
in May 2022]

The unique characteristics of northern Thai rhymes basically include gentle and soothing melodies, atmospheric sounds, and loosely structured stanzas. At the very beginning and in almost every stanza in the lullabies, the phrase "*uea ja ja*" (*อื่อ จา จา*) reverberates as the starting stressed tone, followed with the soft rhymes. According to Udom (1990: 1) and Jatuporn (2014: 49), the sound "*uea ja ja"* derives from the soothing sounds made by mothers in short form to calm the baby. Normally, northern lullabies comprise 5 – 9 lines in each stanza. They follow the uneven pattern of rhyming quintains, and some in rhyme royal with an uneven meter of 3 - 8 syllables per line. The songs have been sung among northern people, particularly the elderly who reside in rural areas. According to my fieldwork, and tracing back the northern singing rhymes, the songs are rarely sung among people in heavily urbanised cities such as downtown Chiang Mai or Chiang Rai. However, my field interviews in downtown Chiang Mai found the ninety-two-year-old lady who could still recall a few parts of larger lullabies, while the rest could only recall *phleng nok kha-waow* (the cuckoo song of the central lullabies). In 1914, the Lanna Kingdom underwent a modern paradigm shift, which was primarily introduced

by Chao Dararasmi, the daughter of King Intrawichinontra (“Inthanon”) who had sent her to marry King Chulalongkorn (Akins, 2010: 6 – 8). Dating from this time, the modern paradigm in the Lanna Kingdom shifted to fit Siamese modernisation. Unlike several parts of the rural northern areas far from urbanisation where I conducted my reseach, many older adults could still recall a larger variety of their regional lullabies. Hypothetically, this could explain the reasons why today’s northern city dwellers can remember only the central rhymes, while rural people still preserve their own regional rhyme repertoires.

Chiang Mai

My quest to search for well-preserved lullabies among northern locals before the establishment of the Siamese state drew me to the San Kamphaeng district, which is 15 kilometers away from downtown Chiang Mai. In this tiny village, I encountered an unspoiled traditional northern lullaby sung by the seventy-year-old Tai Khoen[13] lady (Mae Sripan, 2019).[14] She told me that the song was sung by her great grandmother who passed it on to the next generation. The song is as follows (listen to the song from the disc in The North folder, track 1):

อื่อ จา จา

หลับสองต่ำ

พอแม่มึงมาค่อยตื่น

ถ้าหลับบ่จื้น

ก็หลับแหมเน้อ

The song can be understood in central Thai dialect and in English as seen below:

อื่อ จา จา

หลับสองตา

[13] Many Tai Khoen people who recently resided in the northern region of Thailand associate themselves with Tai Lue ethnic minority who migrated from Sipsongpanna. Tai Khoen migrated from Chiang Tung, Shan State near Khoen river in Myanmar. Tai Khoen people has been qualified of being lacquerware master (*krueng khoen* in the northern dialect).

[14] Fieldwork conducted on 3 November 2019

เมื่อแม่กลับมาค่อยตื่น

ถ้าหลับไม่ชื่น (ใจ)

ก็หลับต่อนะ

Uea ja ja
Close both of your eyes,
You shall wake up when your mother comes home.
If you have not had enough rest,
Then once again go back to sleep.

Even though the above lullaby does not refer directly to human-nature interactions, it demonstrates the relationships between family members living closely together. This lullaby is clearly sung by other family members except the mother – be it father, sister, or grandparents - who persuade the baby to sleep and wake up when the mother returns home. In the old days, most families in the north were extended families where the family units consisted of parents, children, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins (Phanphen, 1989: 1). The richness of forests and natural resources provided the family's essential needs. Most of them who were still capable of working in the fields had to work hard in order to feed the family, while little children and grandparents looked after newborns (ibid). Rhythms and lullabies therefore became an effective instrument especially for grandparents to nurture young ones and the songs have evidently been transmitted to parents and members of younger generations.

The Tai Khoen lady at San Kamphaeng who sang me the above beautiful rhyme also told me how the old-style extended family had become conjugal and how villager relationships had changed, turning neighbours into strangers. Living among strangers for years, she tried hard to establish the Tai Khoen association within the village using her dilapidated home as the gathering place and public announcements for her neighbouring Tai Khoen people and other locals nearby. They have adapted their lifestyles to fit to their "new home" while continuing to preserve ethnic traditions, culture, and local wisdom inside the community at best they can. Social changes nonetheless penetrate folk relationships with family members and in their neighbourhoods, but recalling their folk poetic verse also serves to brings back strong and positive cultural memories.

Chiang Rai

The relationships between humans and Nature becomes clearer in Chiang Rai's own version of *uea ja ja.* Unsurprisingly, this traditional northern lullabies is rarely to be found in downtown Chiang Rai. It has, however, been found at Mae Sai district, bordering Myanmar, some 60 kilometers away from Chiang Rai municipality. An eighty-year-old lady (Mae Phetkaew, 2019)[15] sang me the song as follows (listen to the song from the disc in The North folder, track 2):

อื่อ จา จา

หลับสองต๋ำ

แม่ไปนานอกบ้าน

เก็บหน่วยบ่าส้านใส่ปุก

เก็บลูกนกใส่โถง

เก็บลูกนกก๋งใส่ส้า

ตั๋วหนึ่งเอาไว้ส้ากิ๋นแฮง

ตั๋วหนึ่งเอาไว้แก๋งกินงาย

ตั๋วหนึ่งเอาไว้ขายแลกเข้า

ตัวหนึ่งไว้อื่อเจ้า

อื่อน้อง หลับจาจา

The above song can be translated into central Thai dialect and in English respectively as follows:

อื่อ จา จา

หลับสองตา

[15] Fieldwork conducted on 11 December 2019

แม่ไปทำนานอกบ้าน

ไปเก็บผลไม้ป่าใส่กระปุก

เก็บลูกนกใส่ถุง

เก็บลูกก๋ง (ไว้ยิงนก) ใส่ตะกร้า

ตัวหนึ่งเอาไว้ทำยำกินตอนเย็น

ตัวหนึ่งเอาไว้แกงกินพรุ่งนี้

ตัวหนึ่งเอาไว้ขายแลกข้าว

ตัวหนึ่งไว้กล่อมเจ้า

กล่อมเจ้า หลับจาจา

Uea ja ja

Close both of your eyes,
Mother will go to the paddy field.
I will keep forest fruits in the bottle.
I will keep chicks in the bag.
I will keep sling stones in the basket.

For dinner, spicy minced chick salad,
For tomorrow, another chick for soup,
Another chick will be bartered for rice.
And, a chick to hush you,
to hush you to sleep. *ja ja.*

The above lullaby clearly illustrates the struggles of a life dependent upon natural elements, which in this case refers to chicks in the wild fields. It is not easy to gather enough food from hunting in the wild to feed the whole family. Such conditions of scarcity, therefore, shape the idea of natural resources as limited food supplies for life to subsist on, where nothing goes to waste. That is, the lullaby depicts pictures of a mother managing her food supply – a portion of chick meat to feed the family, another portion for trading to prolong their quality of

life, and another is kept as a pet for her baby. This song shows how rural people organise traditional knowledge about the environment, helping therefore to create a sense of ecological balance while some animals or plants are also left to reproduce future generations. For them, wild animals and other natural produces should not be consumed excessively since a shortage of (wild) food spells doom for their survival. The content of the song revolves around the relationships between people and local animals, and the mother's care that is referred to in the version above is presumably a remnant of the full version collected by Phanphen (1989: 14). It can be seen as follows:

อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ อื้อ จา จา จา

พ่อไปท่งบ่มา

แม่ไปนานอกบ้าน

เก็บมะส้านใส่เป๊าะ

เก็บลูกนกใส่ถง

เก็บลูกก๋งใส่ซ้า

ตัวนึ่งถ้ากินหญ้า

ตัวนึ่งถ้ากินเข้า

ตัวนึ่งกล่อมเจ้าไว้

จา จา อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ

อ้ายหลับตาหลวง

ก็เท่าหิ่งห้อย

อ้ายหลับตาหน้อย

ก็เท่าหางแมงดา

อ้ายหลับสองตา

แม่อ้ายมาค่อยตื่น

อื่อ อือ อือ

อ้ายหลับตาหลวง

ก็เท่าหิ่งห้อย

อ้ายหลับตาหน้อย

ก็เท่าแมงแคง

หลับเหียเทอะคำแพง

อี่แม่จะกล่อม

The lullabies can be translated into central Thai dialect and in English as follows:

อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ อื้อ จา จา จา

พ่อไปทุ่งยังไม่กลับมา

แม่ไปนานอกบ้าน

เก็บผลไม้ป่าใส่ตะกร้าหวาย

เก็บลูกนกใส่ถุง

เก็บลูกก๋ง (ไว้ยิงนก) ใส่ตะกร้า

ตัวหนึ่งรอกินหญ้า

ตัวหนึ่งรอกินข้าว

ตัวหนึ่งกล่อมเจ้าไว้

จา จา อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ

พี่[16]*หลับตาสนิท*

ตาก็เท่าหิ่งห้อย

[16] The word *phi* (*พี่*) is a pronoun standing for older brother or sister. It is translated from the word *aye (อ้าย)* in the above lullaby. Northern people typically call their children *phi* to reflect how eager the parents are for them to grow up quickly.

พี่หลับตานิดหน่อย

ตาก็เท่าหางแมงดา

พี่หลับสองตา

แม่พี่มาค่อยตื่น

อื่อ อือ อือ

พี่หลับตาสนิท

ตาก็เท่าหิ่งห้อย

พี่หลับตานิดหน่อย

ตาก็เท่าตัวแมงแดง (หมัด)

หลับเสียเถอะลูกรัก

แม่จะกล่อมนอน

Uea uea uea uea ja ja ja

Father is still in the field,
Mother will go to the rice paddies.
I will keep forest fruits in the woven bamboo basket.
I will gather chicks in the bag.
I will keep sling stones in the basket.
One chick waits for grass.
One waits for rice.
Another chick will be kept for hushing you.

Ja ja uea uea uea

Even if you close your eyes tightly,
They are as big as fireflies.
Even if you close your eyes just a little,
They are as big as a water bug's tail.
So, you should close both of your eyes.

You should wake up when mother's back home.

Uea uea uea,
Even if you close your eyes tightly,
They are as big as fireflies.
Even if you close your eyes just a little,
They are as big as red bugs (fleas).
Please sleep tight my beloved one.
I will sing you a lullaby.

The above contents of the *uea ja ja* song show significant traces of traditional northern lullabies sung among Tai Yong[17] or Tai Lue ethnic minorities in Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, and Lamphun provinces. The upper half stanza of the song is similar to the Chiang Rai version, while the contents in the middle resemble that of Chiang Mai, except for the use of simile phrases comparing the baby's sleeping manners to the fireflies, the giant water bug's tail, and the fleas. On the one hand, they could be metaphors for a tiny life freshly drawn to the world. On the other hand, the simile phrases might also refer to the humble ways of rural life, in which people regard themselves as insignificant agents in society, whose babies are compared to tiny insects in the big wide world. As noted earlier, a sense of cultural inferiority through the comparisons between the baby and the tiny insects is reflected in the song to portray the ethnic identity as inferior to societal structure. The aesthetics of this northern Thai lullaby nonetheless reflect local lives and their oral transmission where Nature provides for basic needs and manifests itself as first-hand experiences to the young to map the world around them.

Nan

Ethnic diversity in the northern region makes its lullabies aesthetically outstanding in both a positive and negative sense. Looking for folk lullabies in the northern region also led me to meet a Tai Lue lady at Tha Wang Pha district, 46 kilometers away from Nan municipality. Cooperating with the Municipal Department of Culture in Nan, I was brought to meet the eighty-seven-year-old Mae Janta (2019).[18] The interview competed with noises from road

[17] Tai Yong (also call themselves Tai Lue) are a Tai ethnic group who resided in Yong city in Chiang Tung district in the Shan States in Myanmar before migrating down to Lanna Kingdom in premodern period.

[18] Fieldwork conducted on 13 November 2019

construction in front of Mae Janta's house but she was nonetheless enthusiastic enough to sing me her repertoire of Tai Lue lullabies. The contents revolve around the interrelationship between people and local animals, household herbs, and a mother's care towards her young. The song, however, reflects the hectic life of local people with their frantic activities, and violence, as can be seen below (listen to the song from the disc in The North folder, track 3):

อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ

หลับก็หลับแห่เต๊อะ

กันเจ้าบ่หลับไก่หน้อยจะมาซักต๋ำ

หมาหน้อยจะมาขบก้น

คนหน้อยจะมาขบฮากไม้ไม่ช้า

กวางหน้อยจะมากิ๋นฮากไม้เดื่อ

หลับก็หลับแห่เต๊อะ

พ่อเจ้าไปนาท่งสา

แม่เจ้าไปนานอกบ้าน

ไปเก็บมะส้านซะปูกซะเปา

ไปเก็บลูกแตงลูกเต้าใส่ซ้ามาตอน

เจ้าอย่าได้ไห้หอนแม่จะเอาค้อนมาตี๋

หลับก็หลับแห่เต๊อะ

อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ อื้อ

หลับก็หลับแหเต๊อะ

The song can be understood in central Thai dialect and in English respectively as seen below:

อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ

หลับเถอะลูก

ถ้าเจ้าไม่หลับไก่น้อยจะมาจิกตา

หมาน้อยจะมากัดก้น

คนตัวเล็กจะมากินรากไม้ในไม่ช้า

กวางน้อยจะมากินรากไม้เคื่อ

หลับเถอะลูก

พ่อเจ้าไปทุ่งนา

แม่เจ้าไปนานอกบ้าน

ไปเก็บผลไม้ป่าเยอะแยะ

ไปเก็บแตงกวาใส่ตะกร้ามาตอนเย็น

เจ้าอย่าร้องไห้ไม่อย่างนั้นแม่จะเอาค้อนมาตี

หลับเถอะลูก

อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ อื้อ

หลับเถอะลูก

Uea uea uea uea,

Please go to sleep

Resisting to sleep, your eyes will be gouged out by a chick.

The puppy will bite your bottom.

A tiny person will soon eat the root.

The fawn will eat the roots of a fig tree.

Please go to sleep.

Your father is in the field.

Your mother will go to the rice paddy,

To gather various forest fruits,
And pick cucumbers, collect them in the basket, and come back home in the evening.
Don't cry, my baby, or I will hit you with a hammer.

Please go to sleep.
uea uea uea uea
Please go to sleep.

The struggle of lives dependent on natural resources are compared to the struggle of wildlife. The song depicts the natural phenomenon of animals searching for food in the same way as a mother would also hurry to gather food from the wild. With such struggles, the song reflects the violence and varieties of persuasion used to make the young go to bed. The threatening descriptions in the song are straightforward since the quicker the baby goes to sleep the sooner the mother can finish all her chores: finding food for her beloved child amidst scarcity. The local environment is vividly described as one can explore people's entire world through the lullaby. The chick, the puppy, and the fawn are drawn to create vivid images of domestic animals alongside wild animals, pointing out how their lives also contend with natural scarcity in the same way as people in the ecosystem.

Natural scarcity and busy lifestyles are emphasised in Mae Janta's daily life. Her rhymes faded away into the noise of road construction in front of her house. The new highway cut her off from the other side of the road, and from the mountain which was her source of sustenance. Left alone at her old age, she told me that hurriedly collecting enough food from the market was really challenging. Some neighbours were kind enough to buy food from the local market and have it delivered to her home. For her, there was no need to contend with deer and other wild animals, but instead a broad highway that shut her out from her food resources. The above lullaby then reflects the violence and fast-paced life that people lead amidst natural scarcity. As for the story behind the lullaby, the data reveals the changes that have occurred in Nan people's environmental landscape, occurring from a development discourse that disrupt local enmeshment in the natural environment.

Mae Hong Son

My investigation of lullaby transmissions then moved to Mae Hong Son province where many Tai Yai reside. The Tai Yai are an ethnic group who migrated from Southern China, and then relocated in Myanmar before dispersing into several areas of Northern Thailand including Mae Hong Son province due to political unrest. According to the interview with Prasert (2019)[19], Chief of Mae Hong Son Provincial Cultural Council for Tai Yai Studies, the Tai Yai ethnic group shares a certain degree of collective memory with the Lanna Kingdom, as well as Lao histories of Lan Xang Kingdom. Tai Yai people are the largest group of all Tai ethnic minorities, and their oral transmissions have been well-preserved, even though they were dominated by Myanmar from 1526 – 1776 along with those from the Lanna kingdom. Tai Yai manuscripts and books were burnt and destroyed during this period of political unrest. Their knowledge has therefore since been transmitted mostly through the memories of the elderly. As for the Tai Yai version of the lullaby (Mae Sang-oog, 2019)[20], it had been vividly sung to me as follows (listen to the song from the disc in The North folder, track 4):

อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ

น้อนหลับตาพีพี

นอนเหียเมินคนดี

น้อนนอนหลับตาพีม้อย

น้ำอ้อยหนีบคา

ลูกหมาส่องกินไล่

อย่าไปไห้คนดี

นอนก่อนนะแม่

น้อนนอนหลับตาพีพี

พ่อไปป่าน้ำต้นจง

19 Personal interview conducted on 28 October 2019

20 Fieldwork conducted on 28 October 2019

ฝนตกลมลงมาลัย

ลูกจ๋าแม่เอยอย่าไห้ นอนก่อน

น้อนนอนหลับตาพีม้อย

ลูกหมาส่องกินไล่คนดี

นอนนะแม่นาอย่าไห้

In central Thai dialect and in English, the above song can be understood as follows:

อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ

นอนหลับตาพริ้มๆ

นอนให้นานๆ เถอะคนดี

นอนหลับตาและให้ม่อยหลับไป

น้ำอ้อยหนีบมารอ

ลูกหมาจ้องจะมาแย่ง

อย่าร้องไห้นะคนดี

นอนก่อนนะลูกแม่

นอนหลับตาพริ้มๆ

พ่อไปในป่า

ฝนตกลมแรงลงมา

ลูกจ๋าอย่าร้องไห้ นอนก่อน

นอนนะลูกอย่าร้องไห้

Uea uea uea uea

You'd better close your pretty eyes.

Have a long sleep, my beloved baby.

Close your eyes and doze off.
Sugarcane juice is ready for you,
Or dogs would steal it from you.
Don't you cry.
Sleep now, my baby.

You'd better close your pretty eyes.
Father is out in the wild.
It's raining and the wind is strong there.
Don't you cry, my baby.
Please don't cry.

Mae Sang-oog's lullaby demonstrates the local strategy of urging young ones to quickly go to sleep with the use of the threatening phrase "close your eyes…or the dog would steal sugarcane from you". The song tries to soothe the child to quickly go to sleep in order to earn sugarcane juice after they get enough rest, and therefore of course there is time for the mother to finish her chores. Natural resources still play a vital role in local life, such as having sugarcane juice to quench the thirst of her child. The rural surroundings also illustrate ways of life alongside natural elements - such as rain and wind - which seem to present obstacles for the locals in their hunting and foraging activities.

The mesmeric melodies sung by Mae Sang-oog convey the difficulties posed by the natural environment – whether it be a thieving dog, or the rain and the wind. This connotes to the difficulties experienced by many Tai Yai living in Thailand more generally. That is, their cultural identities are not as highly recognised and appreciated as they should be. Mae Sang-oog told me that she decided to keep her repertoires within the family and her musical band of folk drama performance (*li-ke*) in the village. Even though folk drama performance is no longer popular among modern audiences, not to mention the shockingly low payment the group earns, the group tries to preserve their culture. Culture-Nature, for them, is inseparable.

Overall, the northern lullabies portray the life of local people in the context of the environment and thus in circumstances in which they struggle to survive. The extended family

of the northern locals (especially in the past) comes to play an essential role in raising the young, and thus helping to sustain tradition from one generation to another. The bounties of nature that locals gain from the woods and fields associate them with nature-based beliefs and also form their humble and accountable attitudes towards Nature. What they receive from nature serves only the self-sufficiency of the people themselves. However, my research into these folk rhymes sung by the northern ethnic minorities residing at far beyond the reach of urbanisation also reveals further cultural-natural constraints, such as: socio-ecological changes, natural ferocity, scarcity of resources, and the development of technology that intervenes in rural ways of life. As I have shown so far in this chapter, social changes push many northern ethnics away from their surrounding ecosystems. Many of them try to make some sort of sense of the "new modern environment" and at any rate also try to restore their storied ecology in local rhymes.

Northeastern Thai Lullabies

As with the northern region of Thailand, northeastern lullabies have mostly been sung by local people, particularly the elderly in rural areas. Lullabies are rarely found in urban areas, where modernity, technologies, and all kinds of other conveniences and facilities have overshadowed the old folksongs and traditions that revolve around human-nature mutuality and local people's life struggles. Local people's dependence on natural resources runs alongside problems of inadequate resources, environmental degradation, and land dispossession. This leads to regional tensions between local people and the Siamese/Thai state, a state of politico-cultural stress that takes clear effect during the provincial administration of Siam (1892 – 1915) under the "modernised roadmap" of the reign of King Rama V reign and which continues apace until today (Suphee, 2016).

Historically, the northeast (also known as the Isan region) shares a very long history with Chenla civilisation and with the Khmer empire since the sixth century. This vast area covers the Khorat Plateau and the Mun-Chi riverbanks. Several different ethnic minority groups, such as the Kui, Cham, Khom, Lao, and Cambodians settled in the mainland before dispersing to the Mekong basin. During the fourteenth century, Ayutthaya (the then-capital of Siam) invaded pre-Isan territories while the latter sought help from Lan Xang Kingdom (currently Vientiane, Laos) who would later take control over pre-Isan for over five hundred years (Suphee, 2016). In 1893, the Franco-Siamese War had an influence on setting national borders where Siam claimed Isan region as their territories. Siam then pushed some Laotians back to the present-day Laos and 'Thaified' the rest (Chaleaw, 2013). Most Isan locals,

however, still refer to themselves as Thai-Lao or Laotian Thais in a proud reference to their ancestral origins. They also maintain their Lao dialects as one of the Tai languages used in Southeast Asia. From the 1890s, the Isan regional administration was dominated politically and culturally by Siamese dignitaries stationed in Ubon Ratchathani province under the operation of King Rama V's provincial administration. Since that time, Isan has no longer been considered as a free state, but rather a part of the larger Siamese state.

The Siamese state made a profit from the vast lands of Isan to basically serve industrial agriculture through the use of development discourse, turning local people's lands into salt production area and silkworm farming.[21] The following section uncovers an intricate pattern of capital investment in which economic dispossession not only turns local peoples' farmland into a politicised frontier of environmental conflicts but also poses certain liabilities for them. These have been caused by the imbalance between financial loans and annual income from investment as encouraged by the state (Merchant, 2014; Naphatcharaphun et al., 2019).

Apart from the question of environmental politics, Isan's geographical features themselves also affect the life of local people in several ways. As the largest region in Thailand, the natural richness of the Isan region with its mountainous wildlife and extensive waters flourishes during the wet and monsoon seasons. It is nevertheless too infertile in the dry season due to its slow-growing forests and sandy topsoil (Poulsen, 2007: 7). With the promotion of Thai state in persuading Isan locals to have alternative income during the dry season, salt farms and silkworm farms have been introduced. Collective Isan memories of their folk lullabies capture the Cultural-Natural history and difficulties in life, as I demonstrate below.

In the northeast, lullabies are also remarkable in terms of the starting heavy tone of the phrase "*non sala*" (typically meaning "please go to sleep"). With the lively and rhythmic melodies, they follow the rhythmic structure of 7 – 8 syllables per line, with 4 – 5 lines in each stanza. The portrayals of rural lives and their cultural expressions combined with human-nature mutuality are noticeble in the rhymes. The lullabies that have perpetuated since the old-time

[21] Mulberry cultivation and silkworm rearing were first established in 1903 during the reign of King Rama V. The administration came under The Department of Sericulture whereby Nakhon Ratchasima was the first regional cooperative. The Department aimed at developing expertise and creating income distribution to those of locals in both national and international market segmentation. In 2005, it became part of Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative under Queen Sirikit.

repertoires repeat themselves through rural lifestyles and dwell at best in local people's residual consciousness. The life of local people is intertwined with the intricate network of Nature. With the research timeframes, I focused on collecting data from the northern sectors of the region (also known as *Isan nea*, *อีสานเหนือ*) - Chaiyaphum, Khon Kaen, Udon Thani, and Nong Khai provinces respectively.

[Figure 2: The northeastern provinces where the research data is collected. Image downloaded from https://map.nostramap.com/NostraMap/?@18.227172,101.061430,8/en in May 2022]

Udon Thani

In Udon Thani, their lullabies reveal the collective memories of the atmosphere of their picturesque rural life by describing the dependence of lives on natural resources and their work at mulberry cultivation and silkworm rearing. A lullaby sung by the seventy-two-year-old lady (Mae Boonsorn, 2020)[22] from Ban Dung district, around 75 kilometers away from Udon Thani municipality, explicitly depicted the amalgamation, as can be seen below (listen to the song from the disc in The Northeast folder, track 1):

22 Fieldwork conducted on 15 February 2020

อื่อ อื้อ อื้อ

นอนสาหล่าหลับตาแม่สิก่อม

นอนอู่แก้วหลับแล้วแม่สิกวย

อื่อ อื้อ อื้อ

แม่ไปไส่หมกไข่มาหา

แม่ไปนาจี่ปลามาป้อน

แม่เลี้ยงหม่อนอยู่ป่าสวนมอน

This song can be translated into central Thai and in English respectively as described below:

อื่อ อื้อ อื้อ

นอนสาหล่าหลับตาแม่จะกล่อม

นอนในอู่แก้วหลับแล้วแม่จะไกว (*เปล*)

อื่อ อื้อ อื้อ

แม่ไปไร่หมกไข่มาหา

แม่ไปนาย่างปลามาป้อน

แม่เลี้ยงหม่อนอยู่ในป่าหม่อน

Uea uea uea (soothing resonance)

Non sala (please sleep). Close your eyes and mother will sing you a lullaby.

Sleep in the precious cradle and I will rock it.

Uea uea uea

Mother will bake eggs on firewood from the fields.

Mother will grill fish caught in rice paddies to feed you.
Mother is in the mulberry plantation, in the silkworm farms.

The above lullaby has passed Isan natural wisdom on to young generations. The content revolves around the lives of local people, and how natural supplies and silkworm rearing are vital to their survival. This lullaby's contexts can be easily found in almost every beginning of Isan lullabies in other parts of the region. This rhyme depicts an example of traditional verse expressing life's dependence on Nature which modern-day generations might not be acquainted with. The seventy-two-year-old lady sung the above song from her very old repertoires, recalling the time when forests and fields were closely connected to the lives of local people and natural supplies helped sustain families.

After listening to her lullaby, I asked her more about the reference to silkworm farming made in the last sentence of the song. She told me that sericulture used to be very popular, but this peaceful trade was interrupted by capitalists and investors in the large scale commerce. Household operations, like hers, were left with no choice but to quit silkworm farming and rearing altogether. Her two sons also left the countryside to work in the city, which made it more difficult for her to maintain this once-popular occupation. On top of that, while her lullaby echoed a sense of life dependence on nature and on traditional cultural memories, she and many other ladies were spotted selling bags of salt on the highway at Ban Dung district, in a miserable state. This left me wondering whether there are no more fields left for her and the other villagers to get food and supplies, or whether modernity has driven them out from their villages, even at this old age, to earn more money for essential expenses. My inquiries revealed a combination of both circumstances affecting Ban Dung locals. Several villagers have encountered land-grabbing and economic dispossession at the hands of capitalists who turned local people's lands into areas of salt production. With excessive amounts of salt on the farms, they have turned farmland into wasteland (Merchant, 2014). The degradation of salt, according to the Department of Mineral Resources research (2006), has caused soil subsidence, hindered the growth rates of plants, and destroyed the environment in significant ways. Ban Dung salt production areas are situated near several local tributaries and the emission of salt into the water and land has damaged their alluvium beyond repair (ibid: 23). Even though there are several households who have made a living by the salt farming, the interconnection between the natural realm and the lives of the local people of Bang Dung has been broken.

Nong Khai

From Udon Thani my journey took me to Nong Khai, the northernmost city of Isan bordering by Vientiane, Laos. In search of Cultural-Natural history, I travelled further, to the westernmost point of Pha Tang subdistrict, Sangkhom district where a group of elderly ladies had gathered to make holy thread for the annual merit-making ceremony. One of the ladies, the sixty-nine-year Mae Thongma,[23] joyfully sang me her song full of details of life's dependency on Nature and with sarcastic comments about changing lifestyles when home-scale farming came to be replaced by industrial agriculture. The lyrics of her song can be seen below (listen to the song from the disc in The Northeast folder, track 2):

อื่อ ฮือ อือ ฮือ อื่อ ฮือ อือ

นอนส่าหล่าหลับตาแม่สิกล่อม

นอนอ่อมล่อม ลับแล่วแม่สิกวย

แม่ไปไส่หมกไข่มาหา

แม่ไปนาหมกปลามาป้อน

แม่เลี้ยงหม่อนอยู่ป่าสวนมอน

หม่อนบ่อเกลือ บะเขือบ่อหวาน

นกคอก้านขี้ค้านทำนา

พั้นกอกยาอยู่เถียงนาน่อย

เว้าจ้อยๆ อยู่ทุ่งนาฮี

อื่อ ฮือ อือ ฮือ อื่อ ฮือ อือ

In central Thai dialect and in English, the song can be understood as follows:

อื่อ ฮือ อือ ฮือ อื่อ ฮือ อือ

นอนซะหล่าหลับตาแม่จะกล่อม

23 Fieldwork conducted on 18 February 2020

นอนดีๆ แม่จะไกวเปลให้

แม่ไปไร่หมกไข่มาหา

แม่ไปนาหมกปลามาป้อน

แม่เลี้ยงหม่อนอยู่ในป่าหม่อน

ไม่มีใครดูแลต้นหม่อน พูดจาก็ไม่ไพเราะ (เหมือนมะเขือไม่มีรสหวาน)

เหมือนนกคอก้าน ขี้เกียจทำนา

พันยาสูบอยู่กระท่อมปลายนา

พูดเรื่อยเปื่อยอยู่ในทุ่ง

อื่อ ฮือ อือ ฮือ อื่อ ฮือ อือ

Uea uea uea uea uea uea uea

Non sala (please sleep). Close your eyes and mother will sing you a lullaby.

Sleep tightly and I will rock your cradle.

Mother will bake eggs on firewood from the fields.

Mother will bake fish caught in the rice paddies to feed you.

Mother is in the mulberry plantation in the silkworm farms.

No more tending mulberries, no more sweet words,

Like the *kor kan*[24] bird sick of rice farming,

Rolling tobacco at the edge of the rice paddy,

Talking nonsense in the field.

Uea uea uea uea uea uea uea

As seen in the lyrics, the interconnectedness between local people and Nature is referred to in the first half of the verse, while the second half reflects the sarcasm of her tone, alluding to someone who turns away from the old customs of sericulture. Mae Thongma told me that

[24] A local bird in Isan

there were fewer and fewer young people living in the village and that their lifestyle changed according to modern norms. Many came back home to the village after they could not find enough work in the city. According to her, this younger generation then became too lazy to take care of the house and parents' business. The mulberries therefore withered because there were not enough helping hands to tend them. Furthermore, Mae Thongma made a comparison between the household businesses of sericulture and rice farming to large scale industrialised practices of the same. The latter brought in more money, but the financial loan taken on was too brutal for them. The young generation hence chose to move out and look for jobs in the big cities instead. For those teenagers, coming back home was a matter of spending time relaxing in the fields and enjoying what they see as a 'beautiful and romantic' landscape. There are multifaceted perspectives here where economic dispossession plays crucial role in driving locals out from rural-based activities. Even though the Thai government, via several campaigns, supports the idea of rural people earning a secondary income, many face the problem of inadequate facilities, ineffective training, minimal budgetary support and questions of transparency in relation to land ownership (Kesinee, 1993; Naphatcharaphun, 2019; Amonrat et al., 2020). These seem to be the factors that have changed the lifestyle of local people and pushed them away from their natural environment.

Khon Kaen

In a suburb near Nam Pong stream, approximately 40 kilometers away from Khon Kaen municipality, by chance I found a longer version of an Isan lullaby beginning with similar lines to those of Udon Thani and Nong Khai. The song was sung by a Buddhist monk, and its lyrics clearly illustrate rural lives in which forests and rivers have provided pivotal resources for their cuisines. However, the sericultural practice was not mentioned during the interview. The lyrics ascribed below intricately depict the companionship and mutuality between humans and animals (Anonymous, 2020)[25] (listen to the song from the disc in The Northeast folder, track 3):

อื่อ อื้อ อื้อ

นอนสาเค้อหล่าหลับตาแม่สิกล่อม

นอนตื่นแล้วเจ้าจั่งแอ่วกินนม

25 Fieldwork conducted on 14 February 2020

แม่ไปไส่หมกไข่มาหา

แม่ไปนาจี่ปลามาป้อน

แม่เลี้ยงหม่อนอยู่ในป่าสวนมอน

นอนตะแคงกะอยู่กกไม้เนิ่ง

ฟังเสียงเอิ้นกะอ้ายบ่าวสิลา

เพิ่นไปนาจับอึ่งมาแล้ว

จับอึ่งแล้วเลี้ยงวัวเลี้ยงควาย

ควายกูเสียอีแม่กูด่า

เต้นเข้าป่าเห็นนกแจ้นแว้น

แจ้นแว้นเอยเห็นควายกูบ่อ

เห็นบ่อแท้จักว่าโต๋ได๋

อื่อ อื้อ อื่อ

In central Thai dialect and in English, the song can be understood as follows:

อื่อ อื้อ อื้อ

นอนสาเด้อหล่าหลับตาแม่จะกล่อม

นอนตื่นแล้วเจ้าจะได้กินนม

แม่ไปไร่หมกไข่มาหา

แม่ไปนาย่างปลามาป้อน

แม่เลี้ยงหม่อนอยู่ในป่าหม่อน

(นกกางเขน) นอนตะแคงอยู่บนไม้โค้งงอ

ฟังเสียงพูดของผู้ชายคนหนึ่ง

ว่าเขาไปนาจับอึ่งอ่างมาแล้ว

จับอึ่งอ่างมาแล้วจึงไปเลี้ยงวัวเลี้ยงควาย

ผู้ชายคนนี้พูดว่าควายของเขาหายแม่คงดุด่า

จึงเข้าป่าไปเจอนกกางเขน

นกกางเขนเอ๋ยเห็นควายกูไหม

เห็นแต่ไม่รู้ว่าตัวไหนเป็นของเธอ

อื่อ อื้อ อื่อ

Uea uea uea

Non sa der la (please sleep). Close your eyes and mother will sing you a lullaby.

I will fetch you milk once you wake.

Mother will bake eggs on the firewood from the fields.

Mother will grill fish caught in the rice paddies to feed you.

Mother is in the mulberry plantation in the silkworm farms.

(A magpie) lies on its side on the bended bough,

Listening to a man talking,

He has caught toads in the rice paddy,

He caught toads and then tended his buffaloes.

The man said his buffalo was lost and mother would definitely scold him.

He then ran to the forest and met the magpie.

“Dear magpie, have you come across my buffalo?”

“Yes, I have. But I can’t tell which one is yours.”

Uea uea uea

The above-mentioned lullaby can be categorised in two principal ways. While the first half of the song demonstrates a life dependence on natural resources, the latter half tells a tale within the lullaby of a man talking to a magpie, asking for its help to find his lost buffalo. This song exemplifies the ways in which the mother tries to soothe her young by expressing cultural ideologies that relate to holistic ecological dependence. Lullaby as a cultural act has constructed a world where human existence is largely connected with Nature. Bartosch states that literature

should be re-read beyond its aesthetic poles but also its interconnectedness with Nature (2013: 14 – 17). To persuade her baby to sleep quickly, lullabies depicting nature-oriented realms are beautifully employed. This song refers to nutritious foods from the fields and paddies – eggs and fish - as nutrients for the young; food from the wild provides excellent nutrition that makes lives healthy. Poulsen points out that from 1961 to 2005, the northeast social and cultural developments have steadily shifted. Most villagers from the northeast could make only very little money "by raising poultry and by producing palm sugar" (2007: 7). These practices still prevail in today's Isan society. With the scarce supplies available during the dry season, local people tend to make themselves "secure" by getting whatever is available in the wild for their survival. That is, those high protein foods previously mentioned in their lullabies imply the availability of an excellent source of nutrients that mothers save and give to their young as rewards if the baby sleeps quickly. Even though the child's cognitive abilities might not be fully developed, the ecological knowledge and cultural wisdom from mothers are nonetheless ingrained in their memories.

The second half of the above song furthermore portrays how locals perceive their surrounding environment as "companion species" (Haraway, 2008: 4). Instead of solely focusing on what humans earn from Nature, the tale of a man talking to a magpie in the song emphasises the notion of respect for other-than-human consciousness. At first, the man was looking after his buffaloes and he was then hurriedly searching for his lost buffalo. His conversation with the magpie is a common folkloric style where humans and animals can exchange their thoughts. Such a perspective views multiple species as both friendly and equal. With these horizontal visions, this lullaby has imparted a sense of "other-globalisation" (ibid) that brought about nurturing features to the world. Moreover, the magpie's reply - 'Yes, I have [seen buffaloes]. But I can't tell which one is yours – in a sense implies that there was more than one buffalo in the wild, if not an abundance of them. This richness of the environmental is vividly imprinted in the human-nature interrelationship that prevails in this Khon Kaen lullaby.

Rural life can undoubtedly be extremely tiring and physically demanding, involving the hard labour of tending the buffaloes, harvesting rice, and looking after the fields. Yet, there are rewards to be earned from hard work on the land, as shown in the following lullaby I found in the related research collected by Pitchaya Saenamontri for the Isan lullabies (2009):

นอนสาหล่าหลับตาแม่สิก่อม

เอ๋าะออมอ้อมแมวน่อยตอดหน่วยตาคำมันเค้อ

แม่ไปไส่กะสิไปหาปล่า

แม่ไป่น่าสิหาของมาฝาก

บักหมากหว่า บักม้ง บักหวาย

เอาบักไฟ บักแงว บักส่าน

แต่งค่าฮ่านสิเอามาจิ้มแจว

บักเล็บแม่วกะสิให้ลูกหล้า

คั่นได้ปลาสิเอามาต่ำปน

เข้าหน้าฝนปลาไคเต็มท่อง

แม่สิจ้องเอามาให้หนู

ได้กะปูแม่สิเอามาลาบ

นกกระจาบเข่ามาจิกกิ่นข้าว

แม่สิเอาตับมันมาปิ้ง

บักหัวลิ่งแม่สิให้กินหวาน

ยอดบักต่าลกะสิมาจิ้มแจ่ว

กลับมาแล่วสิมาอุ้มลูกหล้า

กับจากนาสิเอาควายเข้าคอก

ยอดผักหนอกเอามาจิ้มแจ่วบอง

The song can be understood in central Thai dialect and in English as follows:

นอนสาหล่าหลับตาแม่จะกล่อม

หลับให้สนิทไม่อย่างนั้นแมวน้อยจะมากินตาดำลูก

แม่ไปไร่ก็จะไปหาปลา

แม่ไปนาจะหาของมาฝาก

ลูกหว้า ลูกชะมวง ลูกต้นหวาย

เอามะไฟ ลิ้นจี่ ผลไม้ต่างๆ

จัดใส่ถาดจะเอามาจิ้มแจ่ว

หมากเล็บแมวก็จะให้ลูกหล้า

ถ้าได้ปลาจะเอามาตำ

เข้าหน้าฝนปลาไข่เต็มท้อง

แม่จะจ้องเอามาให้หนู

ถ้าได้ปูแม่จะเอามาทำลาบ

นกกระจาบเข้ามาจิกกินข้าว

แม่จะเอาตับมันมาปิ้ง

ถ้าได้มะปริงแม่จะให้กินตอนหวาน

ยอดมะพร้าวก็จะเอามาจิ้มแจ่ว

กลับมาแล้วจะมาอุ้มลูกหล้า

กับจากนาจะเอาควายเข้าคอก

ยอดใบบัวบกเอามาจิ้มแจ่วบอง

Non sala (please sleep). Close your eyes and mother will sing you a lullaby.

Sleep tightly or the kitty will puncture your pupils.

Mother will go searching for fish in the meadow.

Mother will source you treats from the paddies,

Such as Java plums, Clusiaceae berries, and Rattan fruits.

Mother will put Burmese grapes, *korlans*, and other fruits,
All arranged on a tray. Mother will have them with Isan chilli dip.
Mother will save buckthorns for you, my baby.
If I had fish, I would mash it.
There are numerous viviparous fish in the rainy season.

Mother means to bring them back to you.
If I catch a crab, I will make spicy minced crab salad.
Once the sparrows prick the rice,
I will catch and grill their livers.
Mother will give you sweet mango plums.

The bamboo shoots will go well with Isan chilli dip.
Mother will hold you, my baby, once I return.
I will shut the buffaloes in the barn when I come back.
And have *gotu kola* herbs with fermented fish chilli dip.

The variety of fruits, vegetables, and aquatic animals obtained from the rice paddies and the meadows in this lullaby reveals the lush natural supplies Isan locals depend on. In a sense, the descriptions represent the mother's enthusiasm in motivating her young child to go to sleep quickly, so she can work in the fields. The song explicitly elaborates upon the mother's activities of hunting and gathering food for her household as well. There are a plethora of natural supplies mentioned in the song whereby toddlers could learn about their local fruits, vegetables, and cuisines. Culturally, the song helps animate the child's surrounding environment where the transmission of the lists of natural products arouses their curiosity.

Chaiyaphum

Interestingly, the greater the distance between the city centre and the rural areas of the northern parts of the northeast, the more picturesque the descriptions of rural people and nature-oriented lullabies becomes. A peasant lady (Mae Janchay, 2020)[26] at Kaeng Khro District,

[26] Fieldwork conducted on 13 February 2020

approximately 50 kilometers away from Chaiyaphum city interrupted her farming to sing her version of a lullaby and to tell me her story, as follows (listen to the song from the disc in The Northeast folder, track 4):

เออเหอะเออ..เหอะเอ่อ..เหอะเออ

นอนสล่าหลับตาแม่สิก่อม

นอนอู้แจ้ว หลับแล้วแม่สิกวย

แม่ไปไฮ่ เอาไข่มาหา

แม่ไปนา เอาปลามาป้อน

แม่เลี้ยงหม่อน อยู่ในป่าสวนมอน

นอนสล่า หลับตาแม่สิก่อม

นอนอู้แจ้ว หลับแล้วแม่สิกวย

แม่ไปไฮ่ ขี่ควยเขาหล้า

แม่ไปนา ขี่ควายเขาตู้

ขานึงกู่ ขานึงเหยียดซอย

นอนสล่าหลับตาแม่สิก่อม

แม่ไปไฮ่ สิเอาไข่มาหา

แม่ไปนา สิเอาปลามาป้อน

นอนอู้แจ้ว หลับแล้วแม่สิกวย

เออเหอะเออ..เหอะเอ่อ..เหอะเออ

จับแจตาโหล ขี้นกกโผ เจ้าวัวไล่ฆ่า

ขี้นกกหว้า เจ้าน้อยไล่แทง

ขี้นกกแดง น้ำก่บ่าไล

ขี้นกกไผ่ น้ำก่ตาโหล

นอนซะเค้อ หลับตาสะเค้อ

เอ่อเหอะเออ..เหอะเอ่อ..เหอะเออ

นอนอู้แจ้ว หลับแล้วแม่สิกวย

เออเหอะเอ้อ..เหอะเออ..เหอะเออ

The above song can be translated into central Thai dialect and English respectively as follows:

เออเหอะเออ..เหอะเอ่อ..เหอะเออ

นอนสล่าหลับตาแม่จะกล่อม

นอนอู่แก้ว หลับแล้วแม่จะไกว (เปล)

แม่ไปไร่ เอาไข่มาหา

แม่ไปนา เอาปลามาป้อน

แม่เลี้ยงหม่อน อยู่ในป่าสวนมอน

นอนสล่า หลับตาแม่จะกล่อม

นอนอู่แก้ว หลับแล้วแม่จะไกว (เปล)

แม่ไปไร่ ขี่ลูกควาย

แม่ไปนา ขี่ควายโตเต็มที่

ขาหนึ่งพับคู้ ขาหนึ่งเหยียดห้อยข้างตัวควาย

นอนสล่าหลับตาแม่จะกล่อม

แม่ไปไร่ จะเอาไข่มาหา

แม่ไปนา จะเอาปลามาป้อน

นอนอู่แก้ว หลับแล้วแม่จะไกว (เปล)

เออเหอะเออ..เหอะเอ่อ..เหอะเออ

ตุ๊กแกตาตื่น หนีขึ้นกกไม้เพราะวัวจะไล่ฆ่า

ปีนขึ้นกกต้นหว้าเพราะเจ้าน้อยจะไล่แทง

ขึ้นต้นกกแดง น้ำก็ไม่ไหล

ขึ้นต้นไผ่ น้ำก็ตาโหล

นอนเสียเถอะ หลับตาสะเด้อ

เอ่อเหอะเออ..เหอะเอ่อ..เหอะเออ

นอนอู่แก้ว หลับแล้วแม่จะไกว (เปล)

เออเหอะเอ้อ..เหอะเออ..เหอะเออ

Non sala (please sleep). Close your eyes and mother will sing you a lullaby.
Sleep in the precious cradle and I will rock it.
Mother will go looking for eggs in the fields.
Mother will go searching for fish in the rice paddies.
Mother is in the mulberry plantation in the silkworm farms.

Non sala (please sleep). Close your eyes and mother will sing you a lullaby.
Sleep in the precious cradle and I will rock it.
Mother will ride the young buffalo calf to the fields.
Mother will ride the adult buffalo to the paddies.
On the buffalo's back, I squat on one foot and left the other to dangle down.

Non sala (Please sleep). Close your eyes and mother will sing you
a lullaby.
Mother will go looking for eggs in the fields.
Mother will go searching for fish in the rice paddies
Sleep in the precious cradle and mother will rock it.

A frightened gecko runs for its life to the Bodhi treetop because
the buffalo wants to kill it.
And climbs on the black plum tree because *Jao Noi* wants to kill it.
Also, to the red papyrus tree, and bamboo shoots,
With fright and anxiety.
Please sleep, tightly close your eyes.

(soothing tunes)
Sleep in the precious cradle and mother will rock it.

The above song depicts rural lives as dependent on the bounties of nature such as wild bird eggs and fish which can be found in the surrounding forests and rivers. It also portrays the Isan way of life in connection with silkworm rearing for making clothes. With the close connection to Nature, local people tend to depend on natural products and treat them as an essential part of their lives. This song, sung by a female farmer who had to take care of both her rice paddies and two buffaloes, manifests itself in a bittersweet and emotional tone. Her version of the lullaby transmitted from her grandmother to her mother preserves a nostalgic cheerful memory, albeit of a tough life. She told me that she had to do laborious work in the fields as well as help her mother look after her seven younger siblings, since she is the oldest. Not long after her mother passed away, her husband accidentally lost one of his legs in a farming accident, as a result of which all work was subsequently shouldered by her alone. The pressures and struggles of life are clearly seen in all the violence in her version of the song. A case in point is the frightened gecko who runs for life chased by the buffalo and a man (*Jao Noi*). At this point, there appears a longer version collected in Sunee Leopenwong and Kulthida Tuamsuk's work on *The Reflexes of Isan Lullabies* (2002) describing violent threats towards and escape of the gecko as it will be soon ascribed as follows.

Chaiyaphum province is considered one of the most significant upstream areas of the northeast, with the Phetchabun mountain range lying in the west. Water from the Chi and Phong rivers supplies the other nearby downstream provinces such as Khon Kaen and Nakhon Ratchasima (Soonthorn et al., 2012: 119). In these circumstances, there are further extended lines from the previous version of the lullaby found in several parts of the northern sector of the region manifesting struggles in life trying to escape and join the freshwater fish, as seen from Sunee and Kulthida's collection (2002: 81) below:

กับแกตาโตขึ้นกกโพธิ์เจ้าหัวไล่ฆ่า

ขึ้นกกหว้าจั่วน้อยไล่แทง

ขึ้นกกแดงเอาขวานมาป้ำ

แล่นลงน้ำเป็นหมู่ซาลี

ปลูกกุฏิอยู่วังป่าหว้า

ปลาฮากกล้วยเป่าปี่สีซอ

ปลาลมอเป่าแคนนำก้น

ปลาหลดหม่นขี่ควายทำบ่อ

ปลาค่อบ่อนลอยน้ำแก่งหาง

อื่อ อื่อ

In central Thai dialect and it English, it can be translated as follows:

ตุ๊กแกตาโตปีนขึ้นต้นโพธิ์เพราะพระจะไล่ฆ่า

ปีนขึ้นต้นหว้าเพราะเณรจะไล่แทง

ขึ้นต้นกกแดงจะได้ไม่ถูกขวานตี

วิ่งลงน้ำไปเป็นเพื่อนกับฝูงปลา

ปลูกกุฏิอยู่วังป่าหว้า

ปลารากกล้วยเป่าปี่สีซอ

ปลาหมอเป่าแคนนำ

ปลาหลดมุดขี้ควายทำบ่อ

ปลาช่อนลอยน้ำแกว่งหาง

อื่อ อื่อ

A wild-eyed gecko runs up the Bodhi tree because monks want to kill it.
It climbs on the black plum tree because novices want to stab it with spears.
Also, to the red papyrus tree to avoid getting hit by a hammer,
The gecko then goes into the river, living with all fish.

Building a gazebo in the black plum woods.
Horse-face loaches play flute and fiddle.
While gouramies play the reed organ.
Spiny eels duck themselves in buffalo dung.
Snakehead fish swim, wagging their caudal fins.
Uea uea

This version of the Isan lullaby still portrays violence and insecurity. The song illustrates a safe freshwater environment where a gecko can seek sanctuary. Tired of being chased by monks and novices, the gecko jumps to and fro from tree to tree and ultimately flees to live with the freshwater fish thereafter. While this rhyme seemingly helps the child to explore their surrounding environment with the local lizards and river fish, the song concurrently draws a comparison between the insecure life of a child with the gecko. Newborns are physically very fragile. Maternal love, nurturing, and protective instincts are therefore implied through the song.

The wild-eyed gecko that tries to escape monks and novices could be interpreted in an other way, through a politico-economical lens. With this, we can see local people struggling to

get away from social norms and regulations like a gecko being chased by authority figures. In Pattana's study of *Isan Becoming: Agrarian Change and the Sense of Mobile Community in Northeastern Thailand* (2014) focusing on Khamphun Bunthawi's novel *Luk Isan* firstly published in 1976, he stresses that many Isan people tend to move out from the village not only because of environmental degradation but also because of negligence from the state. There were so many rebellions staged in Isan villages regarding inequal treatment by the government, such as, for instance, the rebellion against annual tribute money, the Holyman's Rebellion, and the Farmer's Union Rebellion (Suphee, 2016). The misuse of lands, environmental exploitation, and state discrimination are only a few factors driving Isan people to confront the government. Even though the northeastern landscape offers massive profits for the state-run industrial agriculture, continued poverty prevails in Isan. There were and still are several demonstrations run by the Isan peasant movement in order to oppose the state's capitalism and cultural materialism (ibid.)

Yet, back to Sunee and Kulthida's Isan rhyme (2002) mentioned above, the second half section of the lullaby implies that there are always safe places for the child under the mother's care. As in this case of life by the waters, the upstream environment has been demonstrated to be a safe haven where many kinds of fish would be found frolicking with their young. The lifelike environment where the fish enjoy themselves with musical instruments conveys not only an entertaining atmosphere, but also explicitly depicts the activities of rural Isan lives with pan flutes (*khaen or แคน*), flutes (*pii or ปี่*), and fiddles *(saw or ซอ)* taking part in almost every aspect of life in their local music playing.

In general, the northeastern lullabies recalled from the old repertoires have contributed to Isan rural lives and their wisdom passed on to other generations. Isan local' lives are expressed through their lullabies where Nature has played a pivotal role. Isan identity as being well-adapted has blended so well with the representations of the nature-oriented rhymes. Geo-cultural features seem to sensibly moderate their lullabies' contexts with waters, fields, and meadows. Despite the companion relationship with other species, northeastern lullabies have socio-ecologically showcased wide arrays of their local fruits and dishes to the outside world.

On the other hand, the Isan lullabies as pointed out in this section also reveal factors of environmental crisis especially in relation to land-grabbing and economic dispossession caused

by the large scale commerce of silkworm farming and salt cultivation that in turn have a serious impact on local peoples' occupations. There is a wide range of examples of negative features in the stories behind these songs where economic dispossession, capitalist economics, and Cultural-Natural discrimination potentially break the intricate balance between Isan locals and their natural environment.

Southern Lullabies

Southern Thai lullabies also represent southern people' lives in connection with rice farming, palmyra palm sugar harvesting, and aquatic wildlife interdependence. The southern region is situated in part of the Malay Peninsula, bordering with the Sankalakhiri mountain ranges which separate Thailand from Malaysia. The physical geography of the south is bordered by the Andaman Sea to the west and the Gulf of Thailand to the east. The tropical rain forests and richness of marine life species along the coast lines make the south flourish with wide arrays of flora and fauna which local people depend upon on a daily basis. The "semi-evergreen rain forests" in the south are considered one of the significant "ecoregions"[27] in the Indo-Pacific (Wikramanayake et al., 2002: 178 – 279). Moreover, southern territorial biodiversity has essentially formed along the Nakhon Si Thammarat mountains (also locally known as Bantad mountains) extending north-south in the middle of the region which separates the western south from the eastern south.

Historically, the southern peninsula was once the hub of trading routes from the east and west, attracting foreign traders such as Chinese, Indo-Chinese, Indians, Arabs, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. The influences of Hinduism and Buddhism flourished in the south before the second century. Since then up to the seventh century, evidence has been collected which is now on display in the Songkhla Folklore Museum, Kho Yo sub-district, Songkhla province, pointing out that Hinduism from Indian civilisation, Mahayana Buddhism from Sri Lanka, and Malay civilisation blended well with existing indigenous beliefs. This amalgamation then became the basis of traditions and customs known as Srivijaya culture (Lak, 2018). Within the southern peninsula, several artifacts relevant to these beliefs can be found scattered across the area, including Buddha statues, Shiva and Vishnu sculptures, ancient ornaments, and

[27] Ecoregions is the term preliminarily used in an environmental management approach. The term has been employed in ecological and geographical examination of terrestrial biospheres including "land use, land surface form, potential natural vegetation, and soils" (Omernik, 1987: 118). Ecoregions tend to help understand the distinct characteristics of biodiverse communities and natural wildlife on a regional scale.

earthenware. With these multi-faceted cultural beliefs and traditions, the south has blended its customs and verbal verses in a unique pattern.

In southern Thailand, people reside in three main zones. The western south, including Ranong, Phangnga, Phuket, Krabi, Trang, and Satun, comprises southern peoples and ethnic Chinese, most of the latter migrated during the economic influx after World War II. Those in the southernmost areas bordering Malaysia (Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwas) are majority Malay-Islamic, while those in the mid-east along the Gulf coast lines are Buddhist southern locals – including Surat Thani, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Phatthalung, and Songkhla (Jory, 2020). Numbers of work from international scholars and Thai academics work on Malay-Islamic separatist insurgency in the southern border provinces, whereas the most populous provinces in the upper south which have Buddhist majorities have been overlooked. The insurgency of the southernmost region is largely caused by the development policies implemented by the domination of the Thai state, whereas the mid-east coast plays a prominent role as the "Buddhist ecumene" of Siam to control the Malay-Islamic provinces since the early sixteenth century (ibid). Although the eastern zones support the Thai nation-state religiously and culturally, their oral narratives and legends reveal a contested terrain where southern and ethno-religious identity shows a certain degree of dynamic diversity (Pichet, 2016). This contested terrain is mostly reflected in southern legends in relation to Buddhist tropes, for instance in the legend of Lady White Blood and Luang Por Thuat (see Pichet Sangthong, 2016).

In my fieldwork looking at lullabies, the role of the ethno-religious identity of southern people is not that clear, but the tendency of local people to be self-sufficient, persevering, and adaptive of Nature towards dynamic diversity is well represented. This section summarises fieldwork undertaken in the mid-east coast where locals' lives depend to a great extent on natural resources from Songkhla Lake Basin (also known as *thale sap songkhla*), the largest lake in Thailand, covering several areas of Nakhon Si Thammarat, Phatthalung, and Songkhla provinces. Their narratives in relation to natural environment describe local identity in relation to the environment. My fieldwork in the south also expands to Satun province[28] on the shores

[28] Satun is located on the shores of the Andaman Sea, setting apart from provinces in the Songkhla Lake Basin that I selected to conduct my research. It was a Malay state before coming under the domination of Nakhon Si Thammarat's governor. The province has dynamic diversity in terms of culture, ethnicity, and natural resources.

of the Andaman Sea where ethnic diversity among locals and their traditions particularly those of high-hill and forested dwellers are worth exploring.

[Figure 3: The southern provinces where the research data is collected. Image downloaded from https://map.nostramap.com/NostraMap/?@18.227172,101.061430,8/en in May 2022]

Unlike the northern and northeastern lullabies in which the soothing lines seem to be longer and melodically sweeter using a euphonious pleasing voice, the mid-east southern traditional verses have shorter lines, with a fast and explosive sound, and are rather blunt. The southern melodies include the starting phrase "*ha hoer*" (*ฮาเฮ้อ*). With rhythmic structure follows the rhyming quatrain, quintain, triolet, or loosely structured stanza and a meter of 3 – 8 syllables per line, the southern rhymes are also uniquely rough and energetic. Beyond the aesthetic dimension, the southern lullabies portray picturesque scenes of the struggle of life through their songs.

Phatthalung

Surrounded by tropical rainforest, many locals work around the clock to compete with the heat and humidity during the daytime. At the Thale Noi area in Khuan Khanun district, Phatthalung province, a sixty-year-old lady Mae Praphai (2019),[29] who had quit her routine job as a

[29] Fieldwork conducted on 19 December 2019

government officer to run her own restaurant, kindly sang me her rhyme as follows (listen to the song from the disc in The South folder, track 1):

ฮาเห้อ

ไก่เถื่อนเฮอขันเทือนทั้งบ้าน

ลูกสาวขี้คร้านนอนให้แม่ปลุก

ฉวยได้ด้ามขวานแยงวานดังผลุบ

นอนให้แม่ปลุกลูกสาวขี้คร้านเฮอ

This lullaby can be translated into central Thai and English as below:

ฮาเห้อ

ไก่ป่าขันเสียงสะเทือนลั่นบ้าน

ลูกสาวขี้เกียจยังนอนให้แม่ปลุก

แม่คว้าได้ด้ามขวานเอามาจิ้มก้น

นอนให้แม่ปลุกลูกสาวขี้เกียจเอย

Ha hoer

The wild rooster has started crowing so loudly that the house is shaking.
The lazy daughter is still sleeping and waiting for her mother to wake her up.
The mother then grabs an axe handle to poke her daughter's bottom.
Waiting for the mother's call, oh dear, my lazy daughter.

This lullaby is well known in several parts of the mid-eastern zone. It conveys reverse psychology in which the normative soothing contents should help persuade the child to sleep are absent. Rather, a mother employs the soothing song to exert her child to wake up instead of making the young one sleep. Suebpong (1996: 22) points out that this song expresses southern peoples' diligence and perseverance, whether it be in relation to their household chores or the farming activities. For many people, a rooster's crow signifies lateness since it is customary for

them, particularly mothers and daughters, to wake up even before the roosters do. Hearing the rooster crowing at the break of dawn and also lingering in bed for the mother's wake-up call are deemed inappropriate behavior for daughters. Mae Praphai[30] from the Thale Noi area told me that almost every female in the household had to wake up no later than 5am in order to prepare food for the male family members and rush to do the house chores and work the fields. Having roosters as a natural clock reflects the fact that her chores and the representation of Nature are intertwined with each other. For her, the traditional poetic verse illustrates authentic folk culture in relation to the natural environment. Culture and Nature blended with people's psyches and is handed down to Mae Praphai's daughters, her nieces, and all other relatives.

Songkhla

Whether as a result of its geographical feature as a peninsula where annual monsoons affect people' lives or due to limited resources, peoples' hardships are clearly reflected in their poetic rhymes. They are also manifested in a lullaby sung by a fifty-two-year-old female farmer (Mae Kanueng, 2020)[31] in Ranot district, Songkhla province. The rooster crowing motif from the previous lullaby is provided with further explanations as to the reasons why the daughters should wake up early as the lyric shows below (listen to the song from the disc in The South folder, track 2):

ฮาเห้อ

เหล็กขูดเฮ้อขูดพร้าวเฉียวๆ

นั่งกินคนเดียวไม่ชวนลูกเณรเรามากินบ้างฮ้า

ไชโยไชยาได้ลูกงัวมาบินหลาหางดก

ผกไว้เริ่นนอกผูกไว้เริ่นใน

เที่ยงๆ สายๆ แก้วตาลายตากไว้ตากฝน

อีเลเล่ห์มนยลยานไก่เถื่อน

ไก่เถื่อนเฮ้อขันเทือนทั้งบ้าน

30 Personal interview conducted on 19 December 2019

31 Fieldwork conducted on 6 January 2020

ลูกสาวขี้คร้านนอนให้แม่ปลุก

ฉวยได้ด้ามขวานแยงวานดังผลุบ

นอนให้แม่ปลุกลูกสาวขี้คร้านเฮอ

In central Thai dialect and in English, the above song can be understood as follows:

ฮาเห้อ

กระต่ายขูดมะพร้าวเอย ขูดมะพร้าวเสียงดัง

นั่งกินมะพร้าวคนเดียวไม่ชวนลูกเณรเรากินบ้างเหรอ?

ไชโยได้ลูกวัวมา เจ้านกบินหลาหางลาย

ผูกวัวไว้นอกบ้านและในบ้าน

ช่วงเที่ยงๆ สายๆ ตากผ้าขาวม้าไว้กลางฝนจนเปียก

ก็เลยต้องพูดถึงไก่ป่าที่ขันปลุก

ไก่ป่าเอยขันเสียงดังลั่นบ้าน

ลูกสาวขี้เกียจยังนอนให้แม่ปลุก

แม่คว้าได้ด้ามขวานเอามาจิ้มก้น

นอนให้แม่ปลุกลูกสาวขี้เกียจเอย

Ha hoer

Oh, coconut grater, shredding coconut so loudly.

Having coconut by yourself, why don't you share some with my boy, a Buddhist novice?

Oh, my little white-rumped magpie, I am very glad I've got a brand-new calf,

Tying up my calf inside and outside the house.

In the early afternoon, my line-drying loin cloth gets soaked by the rain.

Because of these workloads, we have to speak of the wild rooster.

The wild rooster starts crowing so loudly the house is shaking.
The lazy daughter is still sleeping and waiting for her mother's wake-up call.
The mother then grabs an axe handle to poke her daughter's bottom.
Waiting for the mother's call, oh dear, my lazy daughter.

The Songkhla version of this lullaby reflects rural lives, with their mixture of the rhythms and pace of life and the constant requirements of daily chores. Firstly, the picturesque lifestyle of local people starts with depiction of the coconut graters which were commonly found in almost every rural household in the old days, and some even in current times. Grated coconut flesh, its milk, and fresh coconut water are some of the staples of southern cuisine, as well as its rejuvenating medicinal properties for skin, bones, and hormones - especially for women. According to Sangamithra et al. (2013: 29), coconut is considered to be "the tree of heaven" because it provides a plethora of useful edible and inedible products. In the above lullaby, dried coconut flakes are a precious food which a mother has to ask for to give to her child. For most southerners, having a son who will be ordained as a Buddhist novice is the highest expectation of both the parents and of the wider community. This wish has therefore been transmitted through the song. Shifting away from people's nature-oriented relationship to coconuts, the content of the following line moves on to the possession of the new calf which is boasted to a white-rumped magpie. The white-rumped magpie is a local bird, roughly the size of a common sparrow, with prominently longer tail, which is rarely seen in urban areas, but rather in wild forests. The relationship between local people and magpies is blended. This companion species reflects not only the mutuality of Human-Nature relationships, but an intimacy that is deeply ingrained in the child's psyche which animates their world. After the content relating to coconuts, the calf, and the magpies, the handful of chores seem to reach their peak when the wet loin cloth (also known as a *pha khao ma*) was left unattended. At this point, some of us might be able to imagine a picture of a mother carrying out chores both indoors and outdoors, so much that the line-drying clothes were left soaking in the rain unattended. Such a busy life is seemingly so overwhelming that she has to refer to the wild rooster as the natural clock to wake her daughter up at first dawn for an extra helping hand. Nature-oriented intimacy is clearly portrayed in the above lullaby. In my view, the song blurs the distinction between

Culture and Nature in terms of the perceptions of how cultural dimensions are intertwined with environmental consciousness.

Ranot district in Songkhla province, is further known as one of the important rice mills (*u-khao u-nam*) providing large quantities of rice to local people residing near the Songkhla Lake Basin. A lullaby with multiple layers of meaning delivered by the seventy-seven-year-old mother (Mae Yupha, 2020)[32] of a village headman illustrates how precious the rice grains are, as seen below (listen to the song from the disc in The South folder, track 3):

ฮาเห้อ

ตากข้าวเห้อ

น้องตากเอาไว้ที่บนควน

ไก่แจ้หน้านวล

ชวนเพื่อนมากิน

ตัวหนึงถูกชัดกับไม้ค้อน

ตัวหนึงก็ย้อนกับก้อนดิน

ไก่แจ้ไก่ลายไม่ได้กิน

ตายสิ้นทั้งเมืองเหอ

The song can be translated into central Thai dialect and in English as follows:

ฮาเห้อ

ตากข้าวเอย

น้องตากเอาไว้ที่บนเนินเขา

ไก่แจ้หน้านวล

32 Fieldwork conducted on 6 January 2020

ชวนเพื่อนมากิน

ตัวหนึ่งถูกเขวี้ยงกับค้อน

ตัวหนึ่งถูกตีกับก้อนดิน

ไก่แจ้ไก่ลายไม่ได้กิน

ตายสิ้นทั้งเมืองเอย

Ha hoer

Oh, rice grains drying,

I had dried the rice grains up on the hillock.

A sweet-faced bantam,

Brought other fowls to eat the grains.

One of them was attacked by a hammer.

Ones was struck by clods of earth.

No bantams got the grains.

All of them died, throughout the town.

This song illustrates the ecological perceptions of the mid-easterner of the south about their rice grains, which seem to be worth more than anything else. In addition to indicating the sensibilities that locals have regarding the rice over lives of the bantams, the song also portrays aspects of rice processing. After harvesting, the rice is rinsed to dispose of dirt, stones, or other impurities before leaving it to dry, which consequently attracts nearby fowl. At this point, a negative feeling towards animals is clearly described. From here on in, the love-hate relationship between humans and bantams is noticeable in the song. Although the mutuality of human-nature relationships is commonly demonstrated in southern lullabies, love-hate relationships with Nature are also remarkable in the above rhyme. That is to say, while the two above lullabies convey a natural intimacy which the locals express towards the wild roosters and the magpies, this song otherwise represents animosity to wildlife. The complexities of

human's sensibilities towards natural entities are interesting. Many local people depend on natural resources by consuming their meat to survive, or invading natural sanctuaries to find food. The portrayals of natural intimacy could be manifested as being supportive as well as being threatening for local people. The song reveals annoyance with the bantams and other fowls since rice is regarded as being more precious than the fowl meat. Moreover, the expression of violence towards the wild roosters and the bantams reflects the hardships of a life dependent on the rice harvest; if the rice is eaten by roosters and birds, it could mean that the farmers would not have enough food for the remaining months, not to mention having anything left for trading. Looking beyond its aesthetic, the negative ambience of this song seems to be depicted as normal and mundane, in keeping with the realities of surrounding Nature, rather than romanticising it.

Nakhon Si Thammarat

Deep in the dense forest in Lan Saka district, Nakhon Si Thammarat, 25 kilometers from the municipality, I found a seventy-nine-year-old lady (Mae Boon)[33] who recalled her song repertoires about how frightening it would be if natural food from the wild were to vanish. The song is described below (listen to the song from the disc in The South folder, track 4):

ฮาเห้อ

นอนหวันฝันว่าเลมันแห้ง

ปลาเอ๋ยมันตายเหมือนถูกแช่ง

พญาแร้งมันลง เหมือนวางยา

ปลาอื่นตายกันเหม็ดเอย

ยังเหลือแต่จะเม็ดกับโลมา

แร้งเฮ้อมันลงเหมือนวางยา

หยู่เทียวช้ากลับพาไปเอย

In central Thai dialect and in English, the lyrics are as follows:

33 Fieldwork conducted on 30 January 2020.

ฮาเห้อ

นอนกลางวันฝันว่าทะเล (น้ำ) แห้ง

ปลาเอ๋ยมันตายเหมือนถูกแช่ง

พญาแร้งมันลง เหมือนวางยา

ปลาอื่นตายกันหมดเอย

เหลือแต่ปลาจะระเม็ดและโลมา

แร้งเฮ้อ (โฉบ) ลงมาเหมือนวางยา

ถ้าช้าแร้งจะกินไปหมดเอย

Ha hoer

Day-dreaming of a dried up sea,
Like being cursed, all fish are gone,
Like being poisoned by Lord Vulture hovering over,

Other fish meet mortality,
Only pomfrets and dolphins are spared,
Oh, Lord Vulture, you are poisoning us,
A tardy response would spell our doom.

The song depicts the nightmare of the sea running dry and resources being gone. Within Mae Boon's memories of the larger parts of lullabies, she recalled her old poetic repertoire to me that seemingly illustrates life in the final days. For her, the use of imagery in the song affects local peoples' perception of a careful life in a limited natural world. Residing 65 kilometers away from the Gulf of Thailand, her lullaby also expands to the edge of the sea where most southern lives depend on aquatic resources. She told me that even though the song describes an unlikely worst-case scenario far from home, the sense of gratitude towards their natural environment extends to the plants, forests, flowers, and domestic animals in her surroundings. Asking for forgiveness from plants and small animals that she or other family members might have stepped on is the typical manner that Mae Boon assumes at every conscious moment.

Human conscience and natural sensibilities, particularly among those of rural people, tend to leave room for sympathy and a sense of gratitude towards Nature, as illustrated in the song collected by Suebpong Thammachat (1996: 48) as described below:

ฮาเห้อ

ขึ้นโหนดเหอ

ขึ้นเอาโลกกา

ใสพรกลงมา

อย่าให้พ่อแม่กาเห็น

จา…แลโลกนก

ช่างมาตกรก ตกเสียทั้งเป็น

อย่าให้พ่อแม่ของกาเห็น

จำเป็นโลกนกกาเหอ

The song can be understood in central Thai dialect and in English as noted below:

ฮาเห้อ

ขึ้นต้นตาลโหนดเอย

ขึ้นไปเอาลูกนกกา

ใส่กะลามะพร้าวลงมา

อย่าให้พ่อแม่กาเห็น

อนิจจา…ดูลูกนกกา

ต้องมาตกนรก ตกตายทั้งเป็น

อย่าให้พ่อแม่ของกาเห็น

จำเป็นลูกนกกาเอย

Ha hoer

Oh, palmyra palm climbing,
Climbing to catch the crow's chicks.
Put them in the coconut shell.
Do not let the parent crows see.

Oh, look at the chicks,
Falling to hell alive.
Do not let the parent crows see.
It is necessary, oh dear crow chicks.

This lullaby expresses a mode of human survival in which lives depend on supplies that Nature has to offer –in this case, the crow chicks' meat. While mourning the chicks' lives which were taken from the palmyra palm tree, the character in the song is concerns about two things: the parent crows' feelings and human necessities. The empathy towards the parent crows seems to have shifted into sympathy towards the chicks. Regarding the crows as sentient beings, the song conveys ecological sensibilities among the locals who have been mostly taught to take only what is enough to survive, and feel grateful for animal sacrifices. Human necessities thereafter play a significant part in this lullaby. It is undeniable that to be alive means to encroach on natural resources. The meat we consume, the natural resources we exploit, the waste we dispose of at the expense of the planet, and more, will lead to catastrophe when Nature reclaims its balance if humans are not able to live in a sustainable way. The above lullaby exemplifies southerners' ecological consciousness, being thankful for natural supplies. This ecological concern is been culturally tied up in southern society through the subtle messages that appear in nursery rhymes.

Satun

In my search for the Human-Nature interrelationships in the folk lullabies, it had driven me deeper into the southern prehistoric dweller's timeline. Tracing through the historical and religious terms, the southern region adopted Srivijaya civilisation[34] into their customs and traditions and would later shape these traditions into a unique southern Thai heritage. Hinduism

[34] Srivijaya was a prominent kingdom that existed from the 7th to the 13th century. It was centered in what is now modern-day Indonesia, specifically in the Sumatra region. Srivijaya played a massive role in shaping the political, economic, and cultural landscape of Southeast Asia (Kitttisak, 2013).

and Buddhism both have extensive influences on the Southern people. However, my inquiry into how lives were before Srivijaya civilisation was introduced to this region led me to learn about cavemen residing in the area along the Sankalakhiri mountain ranges, which separate Southern Thailand from Malaysia. During my fieldwork period, I had learned that there have been two main groups of indigenous peoples living in Southern Thailand since the prehistoric era: cavemen and seafarers. While the cavemen (locally known as ngo-pa though they prefer to be called maniq or mani, meaning 'human' in their language) reside along the Southern mountain ranges in the caves near the rivers and natural resources, the seafarers on the other hand (known as moken or urak lawoi indigenous tribespeople) fish, hunt, and forage along the Southern coast lines (Kittisak, 2013). Unfortunately, my fieldwork to explore ecological concepts among the seafarers was unsuccessful due to the fact that they prefer to live as far away from any regularly accessible area as humanly possible. My fieldwork thus led me to the Satun forest-dwelling nomadic tribe: the maniq people. Their huts were a simple structure of bamboo poles and plastic sheets set along the upper reaches of the Wang Sai Thong river in La-Ngu district, deep in the forest. Both elders and children all wore necklaces made from animal bones, civet's fangs, pangolin's scales, and dried fruits as charms to fight against bad omens and disease. I was able to conduct a conversation with the tribal leader, Thao Khai or Elder Khai (2020)[35], a fifty-seven-year-old man who leads all 30 maniq family households to hunt and gather food in the forest. He sang me lullabies which revolve around the stories of animal spirits (especially those dwelling in termite mounds and beehives) – one of which is sung below (listen to the song from the disc in The South folder, track 5):

ฮัดกาไฮมูชิงาด

หัดกาไฮมูชิงาดเกี๊ยะ

ฮัดกาไฮกูฮะ บะตุ บะเตะวาด

ฮัดกาไฮยะหุ โยกกะเคียว โยกปะปานมะปวก (ปลวก)

Thao Khai sang me the maniq version of lullaby in their dialect, which can be interpreted in central Thai language and in English as follows:

35 Fieldwork conducted on 4 January 2020

อย่าร้องไห้ลูกน้อย

อย่าร้องไห้ หลับไปเสียเถอะ

จะไปขอน้ำผึ้งมาให้

อย่าไปจับจอมปลวก เพราะผีจะมาหา

Don't you cry, my baby.
Don't cry, please go to sleep.
I will fetch honey for you.
Don't touch the termite mounds or ghosts will follow you.

The maniq singing rhyme has a very straightforward message. The natural supplies from honey play a main role in this song. I learned from Thao Khai that they would normally make a plea for honey from the queen bee that they would take only what is enough for their young and let her and the rest of the swarm be. While honey is one of the most precious foods which is rich in nutrients for the young indigenous people, turtles and fish are the main resources for the mothers to accumulate enough nutrients and volume of milk for the children. Their coexistence with Nature is remarkable both in terms of their subsistence and ecological reverence at the same time. In their belief system, serows are regarded as their ancestors and bullfish their water goddess. Hunting serow and catching bullfish are therefore absolutely prohibited among this clan. Interestingly, the linguistic term used in maniq nursery songs is the mixture of Arabic and maniq language. Most of the maniq people were once converted to Islam – hence explaining the linguistic hybridity – but they would soon disaffiliate from these beliefs because some Islamic taboos (or *haram*) impeded their already difficult way of life. A case in point is provided by Thao Khai's parents who were once converted to Islam and then again to Buddhism. Religious beliefs for them only matter as something to be shown in their Thai ID cards – as required by the law – but their animistic lives, entailing self-control and a respect for Nature form the basis of their regular practices (Chawanakorn, 2019: 65, Thammarat: 2020[36]).

Overall, local perceptions of human-nature coexistence in southern lullabies manifest how lives depend significantly upon the availability of natural resources. The lullabies also

36 Personal interview conducted on 4 January 2020

portray how everyday life interactions with fowls, coconut trees, rice grains, palmyra palm trees, honey, and fisheries can be interwoven in their typical lullabies. For me, the daily life of local southern peoples is beautifully illustrated through their folk rhymes that include both positive and negative sentiments to natural environment. These rhymes reveal the struggle of life in which the sense of a love-hate relationship vividly prevails. Even though aspects of the state's intervention might not be clearly described in these traditional rhymes, the conceptualisation of folk ecology has blurred the distinctions between Culture and Nature.

The Big Picture: Reflections of Nature-oriented Relationships in Thai Folk Lullabies

This chapter has elucidated the details and nuances of human-nature coexistence reflected in Thai regional lullabies. Northern, northeastern, and southern lullabies exemplify the most relevant representations in describing ecological knowledge among regional locals, especially those living in rural areas. Adopting an interdisciplinary lens in the study of regional lullabies, drawing together ecological, political, and literary disciplinary perspectives, reveals the existence of an intricate network between ecological understandings and cultural perspectives to which rural people are accustomed.

The influence of the intervention of the hegemonic Siamese/Thai state in the classification of *mueang* and *pa* had led to a Culture-Nature divide which interrupts the relationship between the cultural life of the people and their close connection to the natural environment. As with the north, the fact that northern lullabies are rare in urban cities but are well-preserved among ethnic minorities reveals the existence of a rigid divide between culture and Nature, wherein the latter is an object to be changed, tamed, and bulldozed. For the state, land, water, mountains, and animals are but natural resources for humans to exploit and master. In contrast, the relationship between rural ethnic peoples and Nature tends to be more reciprocal, spiritual, and sophisticated for the purpose of the sustainability of natural resources. This contrast in ideologies brings about changes to rural lifestyles. The way in which the Thai state absorbs much of the natural resources by excessively promoting the development of the periphery does more harm to local cultures and to the environment at large. Both land-grabbing and economic dispossession effect changes to environmental health for most northeasterners, and is reflected in their rhymes. Capitalism and industrial agriculture create a cultural rift in home-scale agrarian society. Additionally, the actual concerns of continued rural poverty are also disregarded by the state. The hardship experienced by local people therefore prevails in their soothing songs. Within the soothing melodies of local lullabies, there lies the hardship of

life in the fields, natural scarcity, land dispossession, and changes to the environmental landscape that tear local people away from their Cultural-Natural histories.

However, the expression of environmental sensibilities among rural folks is still to be found in their folk lullabies. Bio-geographical features - such as the afore-mentioned richness of regional plants and animals, their coexistence with water, hills, and wild forests, and folk agricultural activities suited for the climate - have driven folk-storytelling to shed light onto a wide array of natural nourishment precious for rural people particularly for the young. Furthermore, the portrayals of Nature found in regional folk lullabies illustrate the mindset of local peoples in terms of their dependency on Nature, their reciprocal relationship with Nature, and their love-hate relationship with it.

Beyond their aesthetic qualities, these lullabies demonstrate the interconnectedness between Humans and Nature as Bartosch (2013: 17) emphasises the creation of a new horizon of folk literary appreciations. For Bartosch, any literary interpretations could enhance the ways to become with Others by looking beyond hermeneutic situations. For local people, Nature has not only provided values that are merely instrumental, but also spiritual. Natural supplies that are hunted and harvested from the wild have led to an overarching sense of gratitude since they have helped prolong survival. Natural foods are, as a result, regarded as a gift from hard work in the fields or waters. Furthermore, the conversations that take place between characters and sentient beings in the lullabies indicate the great reverence the locals have towards other-than-human entities and their companion animals. People's sensibilities, and experiences, and the symbiosis with Nature have therefore inspired them to compose folk lullabies that are passed down from generation to generation. The soothing utterances found in regional lullabies have still been ingrained into the psyches of the next generation although there is only a few left to be recalled. The importance of ecological sensibilities reflected in rural people' oral traditions and culture, however, prevails. These mentally imprinted processes are relevant to the statements made by a renowned socio-narratologist, Arthur W. Frank (2010: 75). Frank pointed out that everyone has their own stories but the ones which have been claimed "worthy" are those that are capable of narrating virtues. Natural elements have thus played important roles in folk rhymes because they have been proven to be worth passing on. For Frank (ibid: 77), stories have not been created in order to persuade people to march like troops into action, but rather to motivate people to march – in a sense of the changes of perceptions that helping make some sort of sense with the world and society. The natural elements that are fundamental to

Thai folk lullabies therefore embody cultural understandings in their portrayal of human and natural realms which are deeply interlaced with each other.

Chapter 3
Nature and the Archaic Power of the Feminine
in the Beliefs of Mae Sue (Female Guardian Spirits) in Thai Folk Lullabies

"Stories are medicine...[they enable us to understand]
how many women's teaching tales about sex, love, marriage,
birthing, death and transformation were lost
It is how fairy tales and myths that explicate
ancient women's mysteries have been covered over too."
(Clarissa Pinkola Estés, 2008: 14)

A political ecologist, Paul Robbins argues that environmental degradation is caused by both global capitalism and national intervention by state-led development plans (2012). The problems of economic dispossession, industrial-scale agricultural practices, and capitalist resource management, as discussed in Chapter 1, have negatively impacted environmental health, ontology, and epistemology at the local level.

These impacts have also affected cultural ecology, as defined by Julian Steward (1955), as when the link between human cultures and the environment has shifted the human engagement with total environment around them. The term cultural ecology explores the adaptive responses of a culture to a specific environment which includes the subsistence activities that necessitate the long-term sustainability of natural resources and a distinctive way of human cultural features. This constellation of features includes the concept of the cultural cores which are the sociocultural, political, or religious features that help creating the interrelationships between humans and the physical world. One of Julian Steward's cultural cores examples mentions human actions towards Nature as a determination of humans the ways in which it has been closely connected with the natural environment in alignement with the performances of ceremonial behaviour (Helms, 1978). That is to say, the human practices and their ontological views towards Nature have a potential to inform and instruct humans how to construct sustainably epistemological ways of life through nature-related veneration. This also brings about the worshipping rituals and activities humans perform to make nature-related reverence an effective characteristic on the sustainability of the natural resources – which in turn brings about human distinctive modes of life. On the one hand, if the cultural cores are changed, the environment changes. On the other hand, when the Nature is secured, human

cultures also become coterminous. In other words, cultural and natural areas could not separate out from one another because the culture represents an adjustment to the particular environment. Therefore, the notion of naturecultures, introduced by Donna Haraway (2003) has made a massive contribution to this aspect.

Naturecultures is a synthesis of Nature and Culture, introduced by Donna Haraway (2003). This conceptual theory has emerged from the interrogation of dualism between Nature and Culture, humans and nonhuman. The divide as Haraway argues, would create boundaries between Nature and Culture that lead to the human exceptionalism. That says, the dissociation between the two categories would bring about the change of humans' lives and the shift of value of the environmental culture. Within the various fields questioning the positions of humans as acting individuals, superior subjects, and primarily cultural beings, the concept of "almost human", "beyond humanity network" and "more-than-human" becomes the integral conceptualisation of the re-consideration of humans, Nature, and also supernatural entities (Martelli, 2020). For Haraway, reality is a matter of worlding and inhabiting wherein Nature and more-than-human entities are a representational conception that weaves together the human cognition and the natural environment. The ceremonial knowledge of worshipping spirits and natural forces, hence, is an effective exemplary case that has drawn the interactive coexistence and co-evolution between human cultures and the larger environment. This conception lies within the ancient cultures that represents the archaic female communities in relations to land, bodies, and sensibilities in the environmental-cultural activities.

Femininity and Nature

In the primal epoch - when human societies were still young and when natural forces (unknown spheres) were mostly personified in the form of spirits, matriarchal cults dominated through myths, memories, and rituals. The manifestations of shared innate personalities and the intrinsic mysteries of the connections between femininity and wild nature have been found the world over since time immemorial. For decades in Western academia, Neumann (1963), King (1993), Hrdy (1999), Warren (2000), Plumwood (2003), Estés (2008), Mies and Shiva (2014), and many more, have pointed out how the archaic power of the feminine is spiritually entangled with natural power. With the shared characteristics between Nature and femininity, the association between the two domains is still in the relatively current debate. For a Western literature scholar, Alison Sharrock (2020), she argues that the classification between the (male) forces/reasons and (female) bodiliness/passive nature is deemed to create the segregated

conditions which we sought to oppose. Natural environment has been feminised due to the patriarchal nature of society. Nature has been seen as the embodiment of female characteristics whether it be the sublimity, beneficent, and destructive. For Vanda Zajko (2006), both women and the wild nature connote life, love, birth, death, nourishment, and the transformations of both link essential characteristics to the world. The mystical characteristics of the land and its surroundings denote them as "Mother Nature" or "Mother Earth", which has roots in premodern psyches in many parts of the world. The elemental character of Nature and femininity somehow share related instinctual forces in nursing all beings as mothers would their young, and sometimes being ruthless when things need to be controlled - as Nature is in her ferocious call for balance. Additionally, going back to "Mother Earth" represents a return to the maternal womb where life goes back to its origins. The relationship between females and wild nature is incorporated into shared traits of natural nourishing and destructive principles.[37] Ceremonial practices in relationship to goddesses in many ancient societies reflect the nature-based beliefs of the way in which life-creating and life-nourishing matters are one of the subsistence elements of the long-term environmental conditions (Farrar, 1996: 13).

In the Western world of the 1980s, environmental management under the domination of capitalism was portrayed as a practice of patriarchy (King, 1993). From this perspective, the discipline of feminist political ecology (which stems from ecofeminism and political ecology) emerged, dealing with the oppression of Nature and femininity on a sociopolitical scale. Moreover, it stresses how female communities tackle environmental problems both spiritually and institutionally. Several feminist political ecologists such as Wolf (1972), Warren (2009), Elmhirst (2015), and Sundberg (2017) propose the idea that masculinity and Western mindsets always position science as an absolute reality and define Nature and femininity as a passive, non-agent, and non-subject. The supposed inferiority of Nature, which is associated with femininity, is subsumed under the dualistic episteme that projects rigid separations of Culture vs Nature, Human vs Nonhuman, Logic vs Sentiment, and Male vs Female, to name just a few. Such notions promote dualistic accounts of otherness and deny the intersectionality of entities, knowledge, and gender where their dependency can intersect with one another. This dualistic paradigm runs deep in the nature-oriented knowledge management of modern societies.

---

[37] In several parts of the world according to archeological excavations, the statuette of "The Great Mother" such as Venus of Willendorf in lower Austria near the town of Krems, the Island Figurine near Sparta in Greece, and the Figure of Isis in Egypt manifest the worship of The Great Mother Goddesses constellating in the human psyche from the primordial era (Nuemann, 1963: 96 – 100).

Maternity and Spiritualist Perceptions of Nature in Thailand

In Thailand, the dualistic association between male as culture and female nature can also be experienced in animism conveyed in female spirit stories in contrast to the male-biased institutional Buddhism. This aspect catches my attention in relation to Thai folk lullabies. For many rural people in Thailand, Nature and humans seem to bind with one another. Natural spiritualities representing the archaic qualities of the feminine lie beneath people's consciousness to respect and embrace other-than-human realm in their dependency on animistic beliefs in conjunction to ecology. Maternity and spiritualist perceptions of Nature were intertwined as Pranee Wongtet (2006), Pornpen Hantrakool (2003), and Santita Ganjanapan (2011) have shown that matriarchal power and spiritual sphere were a Thai cultural pattern embedding since the early fourteenth century in the Ayutthaya Kingdom. It reflected the dependency between Nature and the conventional cultures in female communities. Traditions, rituals, productions, and reproduction gave rights to women in terms of social management, economic arrangements, and matrilineal kinship principles respectively, as marked in The Three Seals Law[38] (Pornpen, 2003: 252).

In reality, however, femininity and spiritualistic Nature relationships were exploited by Siamese elites and intellectuals who regarded females and Nature as objects subordinate within a patriarchal structure. Pinkaew Laungaramsi's *Wombs of the Nation: Disciplining Reproduction and the History of State and Women's Sexuality in Thailand* (2020) emphasises that Thai state intervention controls women's bodies and their reproductivity by means of a material logic in controlling women's reproduction to create labour stability to the nation, as well as in controlling women's moral order. For Pinkaew, the politics of the womb has been in oscillation since the formation of the modern Thai nation-state. However, the economic stability of the nation has been attached to the regulations over rights of women' production and reproduction, pushing women's bodies to be a mere asset of the nation-state. Although the feminine-nature relationships are not the focus of her piece, Pinkaew addresses the long historical processes by which the state controlled women's wombs and sexual rights in certain

[38] The Three Seals Law or the Three Seals Code (*kotmai tra samduang*) is a traditional law of Thailand compiled in 1805 by the order of King Rama I (1782 – 1809). The importance of The Three Seals Law lies in the fact that it was the existing legal texts survived from the war that Ayutthaya had with Burma in 1767. In a Royal Decree issued in 1794, It is stated that only ninth or tenth of the Ayutthayan code of laws survived the catastrophe due to the Siamese-Burmese war, one of them was *kotmai tra samduang*. This led King Rama I to order a prompt "cleansing" (*kan chamra*) of the corpus of laws. Each volume of the corpus is stamped with all three official seals of the ministries of Mahatthai (north), Kalahom (south), and Phrakhlang (treasury), hence the name of the compilation (Pornpen, 2003).

contexts. In practical terms, the feminine-nature oppression from Ayutthaya period was transmitted to the Rattanakosin episteme (in the late eighteenth century) during the period of state formation by the Chakri Dynasty. Motherlands (*mathuphum*) were gradually transformed into Fatherlands (*phithuphum*) (Thanes, 2013).

Discussing gender and historical change in Thailand, several Thai scholars focus on the influence of the making of modern Siamese state in the nineteenth century starting from reign of King Rama V (1868-1910). Chanokporn (2015), for example, stresses that the patriarchal system was introduced into an existing premodern matrilineal society by Victorian sexual discourses (in the nineteenth century) and subsequent American influences (1960s – 1970s) and Japanese business interests (1980s), all of which introduced a male-oriented system to the land (ibid). Within this intervention, Chanokporn postulates the results of a drastic change towards gender relations which suppress womanhood to make way for a modernised Siamese nationhood led by patriarchy from the nineteenth century onwards. I, however, argue that sociocultural interventions resulting in the oppression of feminine spiritualities and the natural realm appears long before that era, dating back to the formation of the Rattanakosin Kingdom in the eighteenth century. While there are many studies of the historical, political, and cultural aspects powering the creation of the modern Siamese state, the socioculture and historical environment of the earlier period, the late Ayutthaya civilisation up until the early formation of Rattanakosin domination, has received little attention. The nature-oriented knowledge left from the fall of the Ayutthaya civilisation (circa 1767) reveals crucial changes in relation to the archaic power of femininity, as will demonstrated at length in this chapter.

The Beliefs in Mae Sue

This section therefore brings me to an exploration of beliefs in Mae Sue (literally meaning a "mother who makes trade"), or guardian spirit. The belief in Mae Sue is demonstrated in the Mae Sue ritual performed by the midwife alongside parents of the newborn who buy babies with thirty-three cowries[39] from the spirit of Mae Sue in exchange for her protection. To appease Mae Sue, her spiritual forces can help nurse newborns (and sometimes harm them as well) (Sathiankoset, 1962: 79 – 80).

[39] 1 cowrie = 1/6400 THB or 0.015625 satang (100 satang = 1 THB). 33 cowries therefore are 0.515 satang in recent Thai currency.

In my research and fieldwork, Mae Sue[40] or Mae Wee (a mother who fans and takes care of the baby) are mainly referred to by central Siamese/Thai intellectuals and people from urban areas, as well as the southerners. But, in the north and northeast, locals would refer to this guardian spirit as Mae Koet (a mother who gives birth to a baby) or Mae Kao, Mae Lang (former mother in the spiritual world) (Udom, 1990: 976). Mae Sue in Thai repertoires were initially referred to in the palm leaf manuscript *Phra khamphi pathom jinda* (Treatise of Siamese Traditional Medicine), presumably accumulated and wrote during the late Ayutthaya period (Aphiluk, 2016: 73). Mae Sue's background story - from a folk belief system - appeared in descriptions of maternal and child health diseases in Siamese traditional medicine as the first written manuscript. Compiled and recomposed by an Ayutthaya monk, Phra Mahataenjao Thumyair (*พระมหาเถรเจ้าตำแย*) (Suchat, 2013), the Mae Sue story displays a patriarchal writing style and a reinterpretation which suppresses motherhood rather than promoting its nurturing and mysterious aspects. Such distortions of matriarchal conceptions seem to be the first step in causing the Mae Sue content to eventually almost fade away.

The absence of Mae Sue not only occurs in Thai society in general, but also in the context of Thai lullabies. According to my fieldwork into the link between folk lullabies and the power of Nature, the findings uncovered the absence of Mae Sue (as the reverence and worship to her convey the mystic characteristics of Nature bound to mothers and babies), specifically in the central Thai lullabies. On the contrary, a multitude of female guardian spirits in other regions - north, northeast, and south - still vividly portray feminine power in relation to mysterious Nature in regional folk rhymes. Today's Thai regional lullabies probably adopted Mae Sue beliefs from the old manuscripts and murals collected and left by Siamese/Thai elites. However, the folk regional versions of lullabies, which promote maternal instincts along with supernatural entities, seem to contest the dominant central narrative. The regional versions do this by seamlessly interweaving archaic femininity and nature-oriented knowledge with one another in a syncretistic pattern.

This chapter will discuss Mae Sue in several Thai regional lullabies. However, it should be pointed out that Mae Sue is referred to by different names. My attempts to explore Mae Sue conceptions start with Siamese intellectuals' perceptions from the late Ayutthaya period.

[40] The word "Mae Sue" is neutrally used in this chapter, except in other regions of Thailand where female guardian spirits are called by other varied names.

Religious constraints, the limitation of Mae Sue beliefs, and the footprints of female power left within central Thai psyches will be explored through some of the central lullabies. After that, I will elaborate on a comparison of images of folk female guardian spirits from other regional areas: the north, northeast, and south through Thai folk lullabies. Mae Yoe beliefs in Laotian lullabies which share similar concept with Mae Sue will also be analysed. My hypothesis is based on how cultural constraints and intertextual transformations in connection to the Mae Sue content have changed the regional beliefs in Mae Sue to serve the Siamese/Thai state's hegemony.

The Background of Mae Sue Beliefs and the Footprint of the Archaic Feminine in Central Siam/Thailand

In the folklore of premodern Siam, ghosts kneaded dirt to create humans. The custom was to call newborn infants by unattractive names such as *Thong dam* (Black Gold), *Thong men* (Stinky Gold), *E Dam* (Black Girl), or *E Daeng* (Red Girl) in order to avoid being taken back to the realm of the ghosts (Sathiankoset, 1960: 81). Within three days of the baby being born, the mother and her relatives would perform a ritual serviced by the midwife by placing the baby in a threshing basket, and providing offerings along with the thirty-three cowries for the Mae Sue in exchange for the protection of the baby (National Museum, 2015: 95). However, the Mae Sue is not always benevolent towards the baby, and sometimes also causes babies to have ailments (Aphiluk, 2016: 73). If an infant smiles or giggles at something invisible to parents' eyes, people believe that Mae Sue is playing with the babies. If babies looked frightened or were ill, they would say that it was because of threats from Mae Sue.

As referred to above, the beliefs in Mae Sue in Thailand presupposedly were compiled in the palm leaf manuscript *Phra khampee pathom jinda* (Treatise of Siamese Traditional Medicine) as the first written manuscript that we have so far, which was accumulated from folk beliefs and recomposed by *Phra Mahataenjao Thumyair* during the late Ayutthaya period. The Treatise focuses on maternal and child health and diseases. According to the manuscript, several illnesses occurring in the newborn child were believed to be caused by the mother's disqualify of milk and by the animosity of Mae Sue (also called *rok Mae Sue*, or *Mae Sue* disease) (National Archives Committee Thailand, 1999: 226). Although *Mae Sue* disease is not mentioned in detail in the Treatise, the ailments of newborn babies were attributed to mother's characteristics relating to her lactation. For those poor mothers who were condemned for

possessing “maleficent milk” (*namnomchuua*) that causes *rok Mae Sue* in children, they are defined as follows (Thai Herbal Learning Site, 2020):

- Women with bad odour, red eyes, white-yellow skin colour, sagging breasts, tiny nipples, hoarseness, long limbs, long nose, sagging eyelids, gluttony, and high lust – were named yakkhini (ogress)
- Women with a masculine odour, red eyes, white skin color, small breasts, round lips, strong voice, big feet, loquaciousness, clumsiness, and lustfulness – were named hatsadi (Elephant)

Mothers who were stratified as having “excellent milk” (*namnomdee*) for her newborn child, on the contrary, were described as below (ibid):

- Women with an orchid fragrance, wide shoulders, a slim waist, small body size, clear cheeks, fine limbs, blossom-like breasts, and reddish skin colour – were named benja kanlayani (the one who possesses five beauties)
- Women with a lotus fragrance, clear voice, wide shoulders, a slim waist, fine limbs, blossom-like breasts, and yellow skin colour
- Women with a neutral smell, round waist, curved eyelashes, and round breasts and nipples
- Women with a spicy smell, clear voice, hog-deer eyes, wide hips, a beautiful forehead, skinny abdomen, and blossom-like breasts

Even though the above maternal traits seem to have nothing to do literally with Mae Sue, they generally ascribe “maleficent traits” as *Mae Sue* disease, which are part of babies ’ illnesses. Apart from that, the above descriptions of a mother’s characteristics regarding her qualities of lactation reveal how the male writer (Phra Mahataenjao Thumyair) interpreted and exercises power over women’s bodies and places females as objects to be gazed upon and classified. Although the Treatise conveys old beliefs as undoubtedly lacking in modern science, the ways in which patriarchal pre-conceptions place their stress on femininity are unjust since female body size or breast shape are unrelated to the volume of milk production (Hrdy, 1999). With these unjustified conceptions of motherhood, the Mae Sue context ascribed in “*Feminine*

Deities of Buddhism, Hinduism and Indigenous Cults in Thailand" by Fine Arts Department (2015: 100 – 101) describes parts of the Treatise hidden Mae Sue inside the content as follows:

> *อปิจ อนึ่งโสค ถ้าแลกุมารกุมารีผู้ใดเกิดวันอาทิตย์ กำเนิดแม่ซื้อ กุมารผู้นั้นสถิตอยู่บนจอมปลวก ถ้าจะฝังรกให้ไปฝังที่จอมปลวกจึ่งจะดี ถ้ากุมารกุมารีผู้ใดเกิดวันจันทร์ กำเนิดแม่ซื้อกุมารผู้นั้นสถิตย์อยู่บ่อน้ำ ถ้าจะฝังรกให้ไปฝังที่บ่อน้ำจึ่งจะดี อนึ่งโสดถ้าแลกุมารกุมารีผู้ใดเกิดวันอังคาร กำเนิดแม่ซื้อกุมารผู้นั้นสถิตศาลเทพารักษ์ ถ้าจะฝังรกให้ไปฝังที่ศาลเทพารักษ์จึ่งจะดี ถ้าแลกุมารกุมารีผู้ใดเกิดวันพุฒ กำเนิดแม่ซื้อกุมารผู้นั้นสถิตผู้ที่ต้นพระศรีมหาโพธิ์ ถ้าจะฝังรกให้ไปฝังที่ต้นพระศรีมหาโพธิ์จึ่งจะดี ถ้าแลกุมารกุมารีผู้ใดเกิดวันพฤหัศบดี กำเนิดแม่ซื้อกุมารผู้นั้นสถิตอยู่ที่สระน้ำหรือบ่อน้ำใหญ่ ถ้าจะฝังรกให้ไปฝังที่สระน้ำแลบ่อน้ำใหญ่จึ่งจะดี ถ้าแลกุมารกุมารีผู้ใดเกิดวันสุกร์ กำเนิดแม่ซื้อกุมารผู้นั้นสถิตอยู่ที่ต้นไทรใหญ่ ถ้าจะฝังรกให้ฝังที่ต้นไทรใหญ่จึ่งจะดี ถ้าแลกุมารกุมารีผู้ใดเกิดวันวันเสาร์ กำเนิดแม่ซื้อกุมารผู้นั้นสถิตย์อยู่ที่ศาลพระภูมิ์ ถ้าจะฝังรกให้ไปฝังที่ศาลพระภูมิ์จึ่งจะดี ถ้าแลบุคคลผู้ใดจะฝังรกกุมารสืบไปเบื้องน่านั้น ให้ทำตามตำราซึ่งท่านกำหนดไว้ในคัมภีร์ปฐมจินดาร์ กุมารกุมารีจึ่งจะอยู่เย็นเปนศุขทุกประการ ดุจดังพระอาจารย์เจ้าท่านกล่าวไว้นี้เถิด*

The above Mae Sue context could be translated in English as below:

> Besides, if any babies were born on Sunday, their Mae Sue of the day would be situated on termite hills. It is good to bury the baby's placenta there. If babies were born on Monday, their Mae Sue would be situated in a well. It is good to bury the baby's placenta there. If babies were born on Tuesday, their Mae Sue would live in a guardian shrine. It is good to bury the baby's placenta there. If babies were born on Wednesday, their Mae Sue would be located in a big Bodhi tree. It is good to bury the baby's placenta there. If babies were born on Thursday, their Mae Sue would be in a pond or a big well. It is good to bury the baby's placenta there. If babies were born on Friday, their Mae Sue would live in a mighty Banyan tree. It is good to bury the baby's placenta there. If babies were born on Saturday, their Mae Sue

would live in a shrine. It is good to bury the baby's placenta there. If one conforms to the practices of the *khamphi pathom jinda*, the babies will be granted happiness as the master stated so."

This part of the Mae Sue content in the *khamphi pathom jinda* reveals certain spiritual perceptions of feminine-nature mutuality. That is, the locations of the Mae Sue for each day are to be found among natural and sacred places – termite hills, wells, ponds, Bodhi and Banyan trees, and shrines. The complete stage of the babies 'existence is when their placenta (*rok*) is embedded in the locations where the spirit of the Mae Sue is situated. A tight bond appears to exist between children and natural surroundings that Thai word "*rok rak*" (root) is originated from this practice (Aphiluk, 2016: 73). This emphasises the age-old belief that Mae Sue plays a vital role in the early stage of life in defining how the relationships between the newborns and landscape are intertwined.

Up to this point, the Mae Sue in the *khamphi pathom jinda* was still portrayed as an abstract conception. Mae Sue appeared as a definite entity in the reign of King Nangklao (King Rama III, 1788 – 1851), under his order to promote the spiritualistic dimension of Mae Sue beliefs in mural painting along with descriptions of her which are referred to as "*Ongkan Mae Sue*" (The Decree of Mae Sue) (or *Ongkan saladet*) at Wat Phra Chetiphon Wimon Mangkhalaram Rajwaramahawihan (also locally known as Wat Pho). This grand temple is regarded as the oldest historical estate since the reign of King Phetracha of the late Ayutthaya kingdom (1688 – 1703) before being denoted as King Rama I's royal temple. During the reign of King Rama III up to King Rama IV (1804 – 1868), there were several challenges raised by the Western world demanding Siam become "modern". One was from Dr Dan Beach Bradley (1804 – 1873), an American Protestant missionary who helped to embed modern knowledge and empirical science in Siam. In 1865, Bradley's work of *Siamese Theory and Practice of Medicine* was published in the first Thai language newspaper named "*The Bangkok Recorder*" (*nangsue chotmaihet bangkok recorder*)[41] where he affirmed supernatural beliefs and practices to be nonsense, wrote that the child's placenta could be left anywhere, and that Mae Sue rituals

[41] The Bangkok Recorder was the first Thai language newspaper that was published by Dr. Dan Beach Bradley, who was the owner and editor. Sixteen issues of the Bangkok Recorder were monthly published from July 1844 to October 1845 during the reign of King Rama III (1788 – 1851). In the reign of King Rama IV (1851 – 1868), the Bangkok Recorder was published fortnightly, with a total of 48 issues, from March 1865 to February 1867. The content featured medical and medicinal knowledge, science, technology, and European history (Sureerut, 2005).

along with lying near the fire after childbirth (*kan yufai*) should be banned (Fine Arts Department, 2020: 114 – 115).

Controversies between the court and commoners increased after Bradley's critical comments. King Rama IV followed King Rama III's concern and thus appointed numerous artisans and intellectuals to collect more examples of traditional knowledge such as Siamese history, traditional medicine, customs and cultures, and Buddhism alongside examples of the "modern episteme" of that time and to display them (Culture, Sports, Tourism Department of Thailand, 2012: 20 – 21). The content of spiritual beliefs in Mae Sue, inscribed since King Rama III ,therefore, was further elaborated alongside murals of Chinese acupuncture in the traditional medicine pavilion at Wat Pho.

[Figure 4: Inscription and mural painting of Mae Sue at Mae Sue pavilion, Wat Pho. Image downloaded fromhttp://www.oknation.net/blog/home/user_data/file_data/201206/11/49819ed95.jpg in June 2022]

Mae Sue's manifestation in The Decree of Mae Sue at Wat Pho appears to be half-human, half-animal according to the days of the week, as can be seen below (Sathiankoset, 1962: 78 – 79):

Mae Sue of Sunday was named Vijitnawan (*วิจิตรนาวัน*), a lion-headed human with red skin colour.

Mae Sue of Monday was named Wannanongkran (*วัฒฌานงคราญ*), a half-horse, half-human with ivory skin colour.

Mae Sue of Tuesday was named Nang yak borisut (*นางยักษ์บริสุทธิ์*), a half-buffalo, half-human with pink skin colour.

Mae Sue of Wednesday was named Nang samonthat (*นางสามลทัศ*), a half-elephant, half-human with green skin colour.

Mae Sue of Thursday was named Nang khalothok (*นางกาโลทก*), a half-doe, half-human with light-yellow skin colour.

Mae Sue of Friday was named Nang yak nongyao (*นางยักษ์นงเยาว์*), a half-cow, half-human with light-blue skin colour.

Mae Sue of Saturday was named Nang Ekalai (*นางเอกาไลย*), a half-tigress, half-human with black skin colour.

The names and appearances of Mae Sue indicate the influences of Brahmanism and Hinduism adopted from India along with Buddhism introduced into Siam in the third century B.C. by the Emperor Asoka (Kapur-Fic, 1998: 20-21). Such an idea is relevant to Suwit's claim (1980: 77) that Mae Sue was created by Mahadeva or the Great God Shiva in Hinduism. Mae Sue's skin colours also strengthen the idea that they were parts of Indian beliefs in the science of traditional medicine stated in classical Ayurvedic texts (Indian *khamphi phrawet*) (Forret, 2007). Each colour of the day represents a Hindu God's skin colour as they were the protectors of the days (Olesen, 2020). At this point, Mae Sue(s) as the expression of a former belief in animistic guardian spirits (representing animistic beliefs) are instead revered as Brahman deities. The clash between animism and Brahmanism which Siamese elites championed (Anuman Rajadhon, 1968: 83) are noteworthy here. Animistic Mae Sue has now been reinvented with further embellishments.

In addition, animistic vitality represented through the entity of Mae Sue seems to have dramatically collided with institutionalised religion as in the case of Buddhism which was also

promoted by Siamese scholars at this point. This can be seen in the excerpt from The Decree of Mae Sue at Wat Pho as studied by Sathiankoset (1962: 80) below:

> *ขอเชิญไปลงบัตร กินให้สวัสดิ์พร้อมญาติ และจงประลาตคลาไคล ชมรูปไปต่างตน จง เป็นมงคลเจริญศรี อย่ามีใจบีฑาวิหิงษาแก่กุลบุตร อันกำเนิดเป็นมนุษย์ใช่วิสัย ไปอยู่ต้นไม้ใหญ่ตามเพศ อันมีในหิมเวศเถื่อนถ้ำ เหวผาน้ำบึงบาง พงป่ารวกป่ารัง ริมฝั่งธารถ้ำเขา ริมลำเนาแนวเนิน ริมป่าเถินป่าทุ่ง ริมป่ายูงป่ายาง ริมท่าทางคนไปมา ริมศาลาอาราม กินแล้วตามแต่จะไป อย่าช้าในบัดนี้...ขอให้สืบศาสนาอย่าเปล่าดาย เป็นชายจะได้เป็นสงฆ์ เป็นหญิงคงจะได้เป็นชี รักษาศีลมีเมตตาจิต ให้ตั้งใจอุทิศไปถึงกุศลกึ่งกับมารดา*

The above can be translated in English as follows:

> Please be thou invited; To jovially dine together with thy kin; Then please quickly dart; To each espy the subject; To be graciously blessed; Without ill-intentions towards the child; Who has been born as human; Then go dwell by gender in trees; In cavernous wilderness; On lands of cliffs, chasms and watery bores; In dense bushes and forests; Near banks, burrows and bluffs; Near undulating hills; Near woodlands and meadows; Near grown oaks and elms; Near well-travelled piers and paths; Near wayside rest-houses and homes; Do go wherever after dining; And please do move with haste now…So religions are relished and relayed; For males thou shall be monks; For females thou may be nuns; To proceed to observe moral precepts and compassion; Dedicating well-wishes earnestly to all mother figures. (Wiwat, 2020)[42]

In the afore-mentioned excerpt of The Decree of Mae Sue at Wat Pho, the description of murals displays the invitation to Mae Sue who was summoned to enjoy the offerings and to grant good fortunes to the newborn child. The mark of feminine power in relation to spiritual Nature is clearly reflected at this point. A matriarchal cult - where female spirits are entwined with Nature - presents itself through the closeness, dependence, community, and belonging

[42] The excerpt was translated by Wiwat Sutiwipakorn, a former lecturer at Department of Civil Engineer, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand.

between femininity and spiritualistic Nature. Mae Sue dwells in trees, caves, cliffs, and paths. She is everywhere in the wilderness. The maternal track thereafter seems to be replaced by state-sponsored Buddhism. Although the Mae Sue decree gives a sense of requesting female deities for the protection of their babies, it implies the dichotomy of animism and superior Buddhism whose precepts are more alluring. That is so say, "merited deeds" projected by Mae Sue in looking after babies would be only acceptable in a Buddhist scheme. Being a member of the *sangha* or a nun will provide a reward for Mae Sue in her next life.

Elements of Mae Sue in Central Thai Lullabies

When the religious constraints that pertain between animism and Buddhism appeared in the Siamese social fabric, cultures from certain accounts show disharmonious layers of beliefs and the limitations of the Mae Sue cult in lullabies. Most locally known central lullabies comprise images of a harmonious way of life, reinterpretations of highbrow literature, and allegories of animals in relation to individual lifestyles. These will be explicitly discussed in the next chapter. Yet, Mae Sue content in central Thai lullabies is still very rare. The more my exploration reached urbanised central Thailand, the less Mae Sue appeared in lullabies, regardless of the fact that these contexts were adopted from Brahmanism which Siamese elites championed. The spiritual sphere of Mae Sue seems to have been eradicated from urban central Thai lullabies but preserved only at Wat Pho. Mae Sue's seven skin colours for each day, adopted from Hindu Ayurvedic beliefs, have been reduced to a mere colour-of-the-day song among Thai children in my observation, without reference to Mae Sue anymore.

The layer of the Mae Sue cult which seems to have faded from the central Thai socio-cultural fabric, still leaves some remains, however, in the outlying towns of the central urbanised perimeter. According to my fieldwork, there are only two lullabies left in central Thailand portraying the role of Mae Sue: 1) Sukhothai's *Yon yaow oey* song (*เพลงโยนยาวเอย*) and 2) the *Jan jao* song (*เพลงจันทร์เจ้า*).

1) Sukhothai's *Yon yaow oey* song

Sukhothai province is located 427 kilometers north of Bangkok. The north of Sukhothai is a plateau with steep mountains, connecting to Lampang province and passing through Thung Saliam district and Si Satchanalai district. The south is a plain area where rice paddies and sugarcane fields are abundant. The Yom River passes through the middle of the land. With the

prosperities of the land and water resources, and also the fact that it is an important early kingdom, Sukhothai (1238 – 1438 AD) has been recognised as one of the UNESCO World Heritage cities. In the past, Sukhothai was a trading centre and a part of Lavo Kingdom (present day Lopburi), which was under the domination of Khmer Empire. Influenced by Khmer architecture and traditions, its heyday is reflected in a vast number of historical sites and temple ruins. Intermingled beliefs between ancient spirits, Brahmanism and Buddhism abound.

My journey in search of Sukhothai's lullabies brought me no clues in the city centre. However, after the conversations with some elderly people in downtown market, it led me to Ban Thap Phueng sub-district, Sri Samrong district, which is 16 kilometers north of Sukhothai municipality. Kanokwan Phromduang and her group of female farmers (2019)[43] willingly stopped looking after their children and sang me a song named "*โยนยาวเอย - Yon yaow oey*" as seen below (listen to the song from the disc in the Central folder, track 1):

โยนยาวเอย

ค้างคาวกินกล้วย

มารับน้องด้วย

มาช่วยกันโยนยาว

The song can be translated into English as below:

Yon yaow oey (Rock-a-bye baby),
Bats are eating bananas.
Please come and help me take the child,
To your care and we will cradle the baby together.

This song reflects not only the relationships between humans and Nature (bats and bananas), but also the element of the Mae Sue who is believed to "come and help [mother] take [care of] the child" as implied in the lines of the second half. Although Mae Sue was not named in the song, my informants confirmed their understanding that it was referred to Mae Sue, not

[43] Fieldwork conducted on 28 November 2019

someone else to take care of the child. I later found out that the *Yon yaow oey* song spreads throughout the rural districts of Sukhothai. The song helps define Sukhothai's spiritual beliefs of reverence. Even though Sukhothai is considered to be an example of an early historical Siamese dynasty during King Si Inthrathit era (1238 – 1270), the reverence for the archaic power of the Mae Sue is still compellingly present in this context. With the northern region as its close neighbour, the spirit of Mae Sue has thus permeated deeply into this land. Sadly, my further journey from Sukhothai down to Phitsanulok province (approximately sixty kilometers apart) could not track aspects of beliefs in Mae Sue anymore since it is much closer to the urban areas of central Thailand.

Interestingly, the above melodic lyric of Sukhothai's *Yon yaow oey* song is similar to the well-known Bangkok song I could recall, "*โยกเยกเอย – Yok yek oey*", as can be seen below:

โยกเยกเอย
น้ำท่วมเมฆ
กระต่ายลอยคอ
หมาหางงอ
กอดคอโยกเยก

The above song could be translated into English as follows:

Yok yek oey (Rock-a-bye baby),
The clouds are flooded.
The rabbit is floating his head.
A dog with a crooked tail,
They hug each other and rock-a-bye.

As for the *Yok yek oey* song, whose rhythm is not very different from Sukhothai's *Yon yaow oey* song, it seems that the lyrics have been changed from Human-Nature coexistence and beliefs in spiritualistic Mae Sue into an imaginative and surreal song instead.

However, when considering Sukhothai's *Yon yaow oey* with Sukhothai traditions and artworks, particularly that which are exhibited in the Ramkhamhaeng National Museum, strongly held beliefs in the convergence of female guardian spirits and Nature are present. Local people told me that all the townspeople and visitors would come to Phra Mae Ya shrines, which can be found all over the town, to pay respect to Phra Mae Ya (King Ramkhamhaeng's mother). Mae Ya's main shrine is located in the centre of the town, where many local people and tourists would bring bananas, dried betel slices, flowers, and shawls as offerings. Local people believe that worshipping Phra Mae Ya would bring both prosperity and rain to the land. Therefore, a Mae Ya festival is held annually at the beginning of February. This can be an exemplary case where the pre-existing animist tradition has been assimilated into a royalist narrative. The dichotomy between animism and the high-cultured narration clearly comes to the play.

Moreover, the worship of female statues (Mother Earth) can be seen in museums (both the Ramkhamhaeng National Museum and Si Satchanalai Historical Park) where many female figurines can be seen holding their child in a breast-feeding posture. Sathiankoset stresses that the female statuettes represent the Mae Sue cult that permeated in the ancient belief system (also locally known as *tukkata sia kaban* (decapitated dolls) (1962: 82). *Tukkata sia kaban* is believed to depict animistic beliefs rooted in premodern Siam. The dolls would be moulded in a whole-body form, before some were decapitated in an exorcism ritual. According to the old beliefs, the dolls were the representatives of maleficent ghosts who wanted to harm babies. Cutting the dolls' heads is a form of sacrificial ritual where the dolls would receive misfortunes in lieu of the babies, so the maleficent ghosts would be at ease (The Support Arts and Crafts International Center of Thailand, 2020). The ritual of decapitating dolls points directly to the fact that they represent Mae Sue spirits.

2) *Jan jao* song

Supernatural dimensions concerning the moon (which is believed to grant good fortune) and Mae Sue content can be seen in the *Jan jao* song. This song, collected by Phaob Posakrisana (1978: 64), is well-known not only for central Thais, but also among regional Thais. Its lyrics can be seen below:

จันทร์เจ้า

ขอเข้า (ข้าว) ขอแกง

ขอแหวนทองแดง

ผูกมือน้องข้า

ขอช้างขอม้า

ให้น้องข้าขี่

ขอเก้าอี้

ให้น้องข้านั่ง

ขอเตียงตั้ง

ให้น้องข้านอน

ขอลคร

ให้น้องข้าดู

ขอยายชู

เลี้ยงน้องข้าเถิด

ขอยายเกิด

เลี้ยงตัวข้าเอง

It can be translated into English as follows:

Dear Moon,
I beg you for rice and soup.
I beg you for brass rings,
To bind my sister's wrist.

I beg you for elephants and horses,
For my sister to ride on.

I beg you for a stool.
For my sister to sit on.

I beg you for a bed.
For my sister to sleep on.
I beg you for plays.
So my sister can watch them.

I beg you, Yay Chu.
Please take care of my sister.
I beg you, Yay Koet,
To look after me.

Known among Thais, *Jan jao* song implies the beliefs in Mae Sue though she was not directly mentioned in the lullaby, but the names Yay Chu and Yay Koet (grandmother named Chu and Koet) are relevant to the larger names of Mae Sue known for the regional people such as Mae Koet (mother who gave birth) for the northern locals. Observing the *Jan jao* song through an optimistic lens, this song seems to convey a sense of good will that a sister craves for her younger sister and herself. In-depth study, however, suggests that the song reflects the struggles of Siamese peasants who wished for several "rare" and "high-class" objects such as rice, rings, elephants, horses, stools, beds, and theatrical performances they could not at all possess in this life. These objects referred to in the song were regarded as "unattainable items" for numerous underprivileged people in the then Siam. This song was composed during the Ayutthaya period (Phaob, 1978). Considering the reasons why the song was sung together with the analysis of the context of social class and ancient laws during the Ayutthaya period from works by Phonphen (2003) and Varrittha (2008) respectively reveals that the possession of these objects was limited to Siamese royals and members of the elite (also known as *jao-khun mun-nai*) in the Ayutthaya era. According to Siam's social stratifications, people were ranked according to the feudal system (or *sakdina*, "rights to possess farmlands"). Peasants were at the bottom of the pyramid, with merchants, artisans, noblemen, and royal family respectively above them (Phonphen, 2003). Peasant farmers, at the lowest rank of the *sakdina* system also had to

participate in the corvée system[44] in which every freeman had to be registered as *phrai* (servants/commoners) (Varittha, 2008: 49 – 51). One of the *phrai* classes was that of *phrai luang* (servants who were forced labourers for public deeds). They worked hard as public labourers for six months without pay and without rice provided from the state (ibid: 59), and the male peasants depended on their wives and daughters to find food and earn a living for the households before these male farmers returned to continue tending their small farms for the remaining six months. This was also known in Ayutthaya law as "*khao duean ok duean*" (meaning to work for a month and leave for a month for a year) (ibid).

The life struggles of Ayutthaya peasants is thus described in the *Jan jao* song when daughters of the house had to beg for rice since they had not enough rice to feed stay-at-home family members and fathers and brothers who worked unpaid for the state. The yearning for having rings conveys the desire to possess precious ornaments like the upper classes. Elephants and horses were preserved only for Siamese elites. Having opportunities to sit on stools or sleep on beds were only dreams. Theatrical performances which were divided into royal plays (*lakon nai*) and public plays (*lakon nok*) only reflected the enormous differences that existed between the social hierarchies of Siam (Varittha, 2008: 59 – 67). These "unreachable dreams" are therefore transferred to the unfulfilled wishes towards the moon and the Mae Sue represented as Yay Chu and Yay Koet.

Before the Mae Sue was upgraded to become the seven Brahman deities at Wat Pho, she was revered as an "ordinary" guardian spirit known in adjacent regions as Mae Koet (mother who gave birth), or Mae Kao (a former mother in spiritual realm). The Mae Sue's traditional names – Yay Chu and Yay Koet – reflect the footprints of the archaic power of matriarchy rooted in the land over centuries before the modern Siamese regime took control. These supernatural entities conveyed in the *Jan jao* song reveal a glimpse of the archaic consolidation that local lives cannot live without in times of difficulty both for the mothers in her stages of labour and delivery and for the earliest stage of the newborn babies.

[44] Under Siam' corvée system, phrai was stratified into four groups: phrai luang (servants who were forced labourers for official deeds, working for six months in public works and six months for their own), phrai som (servants worked for the landlords), phrai suay (servants who paid state tax or goods), and that (slaves who could sell themselves to attractive lords) (Varittha, 2008: 49 – 51)

Evidence from traditional Ayutthayan medical manuscripts and mural painting at Wat Pho regarding the Mae Sue indicate how Central Thai norms identify and manipulate interreligious cultural features in Siam/Thailand. Animism has been permeated by state-sponsored Buddhism and Brahminism where the latter affirms its superiority (Thongchai, 2015: 76). As Harrison points out, premodern culture has been devalued while sophisticated Buddhism is claimed to be the essence of national and cultural identities by censoring animistic spiritualities (2011: 659). Beliefs in Mae Sue are thus subjugated by mainstream Brahmanism-Buddhism. As a result, this leaves only small traces of local "magico-animistic" (Terwiel, 2012: 4) aspects in central lullabies. The intensive pursuits of materialism in the central Siamese/Thai social fabric together with empirical science have reduced multiple spiritualistic forms and subjugated the worship of Nature.

Archaic Feminine and Spiritual Nature Shared Between the Central Plain and the Southern Region of Thailand

Southerners' beliefs in relation to childbirth are also permeated by the archaic maternity of the Mae Sue. Going back to the Ayutthaya period, the geographical aspects and maritime trading of the south made Nakhon Si Thammarat one of the most important cities supporting Ayutthaya. According to Pichet (2016: 175), the southern region centered on today's Nakhon Si Thammarat province and flourished as a result of intrastate and interstate commerce. Adjacent neighbours such as Patthalung and Songkhla provinces, and areas of the Songkhla Lake Basin were subordinated to Nakhon Si Thammarat. The natural richness of bamboo, ivory, spices, leather, and plant root and seed trading with Ayutthaya and with foreign traders led to socio-economic stability as well as rich cultural transmission into the region. Even though trading between Nakhon Si Thammrat and Ayutthaya flourished at the time, the distance between the two regions helped preserve certain cultural roots and animistic elements in the south. In a sense, southerners accepted the power of the outlying Kingdom of Ayutthaya and concurrently retained their beliefs in the mystical power of Nature (ibid: 62).

As for Mae Sue, southerners venerate her as the Great God Indra's daughter (Suwit, 1980: 77). She is regarded as both ghost/spirit (*phi*) and a divine figure (*thewada*), without differentiation between the two. It is interesting to note that there seems to have been no hierarchical order in southerners' perceptions of spirits since both ghosts and the divine are natural forces residing alongside the world of humans. This differs from the perceptions of the central elites, whereby the Mae Sue as an archaic embodiment of natural forces has been

upgraded from mere ghost into Hindu goddess in order to fit into the Bangkok elites' hierarchical order.

There are four entities of Mae Sue in the south mentioned in a southern black-paper palm leaf manuscript studied by Suwit Thongsriked (1980: 78) as seen below:

> *"…แม่ซื้อแปลงสถาน สี่องค์นงคราญ ตามเดือนตามวัน จึ่งชื่อพัลลิกะ สนทรีย์ คนธรรมพ์ พสิสะหนึ่งนั้นเป็นอันดับมา…"*

This can be translated into English as follows:

> "…Mae Sue's body morphs; As four beautiful ladies; According to month and day; Thus named: *Phlanlikha*, *Sontree*, *Khonthan*; And *Pasisa* another in sequential order…"[45]

Four of the above-mentioned Mae Sue are relevant to Nakhon Sri Thammarat's version of a lullaby sung by a locally well-known seventy-nine-year old[46] Buddhist patron at Muang Thong village, Lan Saka district (approximately 40 kilometers from Nakhon Si Thammarat municipality). Her lullaby can be seen below (Boon Kaewwilad, 2020) (listen to the song from the disc in the South folder, track 6):

เอ้าฮาเอย

น้อนเสี่ยเทิดเจ่านอนเฮอ

ว่าน้อนห้ายมั่นลับดี

แม่เซ้อของเจ้าทั่งสีแม่ม่าช้วยพิทักษ์เคว้ารักษา

แม่อาบน่ำแลป้อนข้าวเฮอ

[45] Translation by Wiwat Sutiwipakorn

[46] Fieldwork conducted on 31 January 2020

แม่ม่ารักษาเจ้าทุ่กเว่ลา

ย่ามลับแม่จะเว

ย่ามเข้เปลแม่จะชา

นางเอื้อย นางอีเอย พระแม่ศรีชาดา

ห้อมเขี้ยว ไข่ก่า แม่นุ้งผ่าสี่ซ่มพู

ส้องข้นแม่ยู่นา

ส้องข้นแม่ยู่หลัง

มาหรั่บช่านออยร้อยชั่ง

กุมารขายังน่อนเปลเฮอ

The song can be understood in central Thai dialect as follows:

เอ้าฮาเอย

นอนเสียเถอะเจ้านอนเฮอ

ว่านอนให้มันหลับดี

แม่ซื้อของเจ้าทั้งสี่แม่มาช่วยพิทักษ์เฝ้ารักษา

แม่อาบน้ำและป้อนข้าวเฮอ

แม่มารักษาเจ้าทุกเวลา

ยามหลับแม่จะไกวเปล

ยามอยู่ในเปลแม่จะกล่อม

นางเอื้อย นางอีเอย พระแม่ศรีชาดา

หอมเขียว ไข่กา แม่นุ่งผ้าสีชมพู

สองคนแม่อยู่หน้า (เปล)

สองคนแม่อยู่หลัง (เปล)

มารับชานอ้อยร้อยชั่ง

กุมารลูกยังนอนเปลเฮอ

In English, it can be translated as ascribed below:

Ha hoer
Please sleep, my child.
Sleep well and tight.
Your four *Mae Sue* are coming to guard you.
She gives you a bath and feed you rice.

She is tending you all the time.
She rocks your cradle while you are sleeping.
She sings you lullabies while you are in the cradle.
Nang Ueay, Nang E, and *Phra Mae Srichada*,
They wear olive-coloured, crow's egg-colored, and pink clothes.

Two of them are in front of the cradle.
Another two are at the back.
Come and take sugar cane worth a hundred *chang.*[47]
My dear child is still sleeping.

In this lullaby, there are three names given to Mae Sue (s): *Nang Ueay, Nang E, and Phra Mae Srichada* illustrated in the fourth line of the second stanza. Their roles in giving the child a bath, feeding, singing lullabies, and looking after the child while sleeping signifies the timeless roles of motherhood and a sense of community. Their nursing senses lie beyond time even in their afterlife and four of them help tend the young in a communal way of life. The Mae Sue's psychological role in nurturing the babies across their spiritual world is heartwarming.

[47] A hundred *chang* is equivalent to today's eighty Thai baht.

Their duties are vividly expressed along with their dress, in olive, green, and pink costumes. In this song, the Mae Sue are portrayed as typical caring mothers and as divine. The worldly mother even offers the Mae Sue valuable sugarcane in return for their favour. This gives us a clear illustration of the archaic power of the feminine as healers and protectors in the same way that Nature nurtures humans. The tangled bond between children at their early stage of lives and spiritual maternities helps ground the interrelationship that southerners feel towards their lands as animated spiritualities.

At Thale Noi wetland in Phatthalung province, a seventy-two-year-old lady discussed with me the importance of female spirits in their areas (Jamrat, 2019).[48] For her, the unpredictable circumstances to which young ones were exposed from an early stage led her and other neighbouring people to pay tribute to Mae Sue. Mae Sue connects the local people with the greater natural force on which lives depend spiritually. These perceptions aligned with the implication of the risk management strategies among the mothers are collectively a stronger potion than actual magic. Whether they be the spiritually tangled senses that people have towards Mae Sue or risk management strategies, the ritual of singing Mae Sue lullabies is emotionally intertwined in the child's conceptualisation towards self and surrounding nature. The Phatthalung version of a Mae Sue lullaby is as follows (listen to the song from the disc in the South folder, track 7):

น้องนอนเสย

น้อนใหล่ลับๆ

จุดได้ม่ารับ

จุดเทียนม่าส้ง

เอาผ้ามาโผกเปล

แม่ซื้อทั้งเสนั่งเวียนวง

จุดได้ม่ารับ

[48] Fieldwork conducted on 19 December 2019.

จุดเทียนม่าส้ง

ให้นั่งในเวียนวงแหว้น

The above lullaby can be interpreted in central Thai dialect as follows:

น้องนอนเอย

นอนให้หลับๆ

จุดไต้มารับ

จุดเทียนมาส่ง

เอาผ้ามาผูกเปล

แม่ซื้อทั้งสี่นั่งเวียนวง

จุดไต้มารับ

จุดเทียนมาส่ง

ให้นั่งในเวียนวงแหวน

It can be translated into English as seen below:

My dear child,
Sleep tight.
I light up the torch to pick you up.
I light up the candle to send you off.

I tie the cradle with cloth.
Four Mae Sue circling around you.
I light up the torch to pick you up.
I light up the candle to send you off.
(Mae Sue), please sit in the ring

This song reflects the way people summon the Mae Sue spirits to guard their young. It is fascinating to see how the human and spirit world come into such close contact with each other. The picturesque scene displays the mother picking her child up and handing to it to the Mae Sue "to send you off" to sleep. The mother also converses with the Mae Sue in the final line of the song, pleading them to sit in a ring to tend the child. These give-and-take scenarios illustrate the interchangeable relationship between humans and female guardian spirits. Considering Mae Sue as a natural force, human's dependence onto Nature and the larger-than-human realm is highly noticeable in the lullaby.

Apart from the above lullaby, the names of Mae Sue according to an eighty-five-year-old Phatthalung lady (Mae Suem, 2019)[49] depict local people's beliefs in female guardian spirits. The lady referred to Mae Sue in great detail, noting four female guardian spirits whose names and responsibilities are as follows:

1) *E Ae – pon khao* (feed rice)
2) *E Pao – mae nom* (feed milk)
3) *E Dam – sak pha-om* (wash nappies)
4) *E Pom – way plae* (rock the cradle)

The way in which Mae Sue permeate these southern perceptions not only reflects a belief in the supernatural, but also illustrates the essential roles of maternity beyond space and time. The conception of Mae Sue as nurturing, healing, and sometimes threatening agents to babies has a significant impact on the ways in which local people perceive their own lives and their surroundings. Their dependence on natural forces and their veneration of archaic femininity have built up southern peoples' identities. The aforementioned lullaby sung by Mae Jamrat (2019) with details added by Mae Suem (2019) could have been transmitted for well over a hundred years, judging from their current ages (72 and 85 years old respectively), and they all informed that they had memorised the lullaby and details from their grandmothers that passed down the verses to their mothers. These oral repertoires continue to echo in local people's way of life: living humbly in the mystical surroundings of Nature.

[49] Fieldwork conducted on 20 December 2019.

References to Mae Sue can also be seen in central Thai collections of lullabies, for example in Pratueng's book about local verses (1985: 15). Pratueng collected Thai lullabies focusing on central lullabies with some insertions of other regional lullabies. In his book, it is obvious that southern lullabies are by far the most prominent in the expression of Mae Sue as, for instance, in the song illustrated below:

เชิญนอนเถิดเจ้านอน
กล่อมให้เจ้านอนสบาย
แม่ซื้อทั้งหลาย
อย่าได้หยิกหยอกหลอกหลอน

ขึ้นน้ำลงท่า
ช่วยพิทักษ์รักษาทรามบังอร
อย่าหยอกหลอกหลอน
กล่อมให้เจ้านอนเปลเอย

The above lullaby can be translated as follows:

Please sleep, my dear child.
I will lull you to have good sleep.
Mae Sue (s),
Do not prick or scare the child.

Off the water or down the dock,
Do protect and take care of my young girl.
Do not tease or frighten her,
I will sing and put you (the child) in the cradle."

The song refers to several Mae Sue, pointing to the importance of the theme of maternity in the community. Their maternal roles are, however, portrayed as both tricksters and

protectors. These two sides of the same coin of the Mae Sue's manifestation are, once again, reminiscent of typical mothers who are always loving and caring but can sometimes be threatening. When mothers feed their children with the best and most nutritious food she can get, yet the children seem to be picky or slow eaters, feelings of love, frustration, and anger intermingle. This same concept is shared with natural forces as well. Nurturing and loving nature can also be untamed and ferocious, for instance, the ocean in both peaceful and wild manifestations. Even though the above lullaby version is less vivid compared to earlier lullabies, strong beliefs in Mae Sue do pervade the South.

Portrayals of Mae Sue in Northern Lullabies

In the Lanna region, covering all parts of today's northern Thailand, people believe that Mae Sue and other spirits roam the land. According to the Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University, Thailand (2020), many northern scholars express the beliefs of Lanna people that hold their folk myth about babies who were conceived by the will of Pu Thaen – Ya Thaen (Heaven God and Goddess). Unlike central Siamese beliefs that ghosts have moulded humans from clays, northerners revere Pu Thaen and Ya Thaen, as both ghosts and deities from the sky, as their tutelaries. Pu Thaen – Ya Thaen are also called Pho Koet - Mae Koet (Father and Mother of the Spiritual Realm).

During the first month after the babies are born, Lanna traditional wisdom believes that they are all well protected by Pho Koet and Mae Koet. These guardian spirits protect the newborn babies but at the same time want to take them back to the spiritual realm. Babies ' crying and ailments were thus believed to be caused by Pho Koet – Mae Koet wanting to reclaim them. Parents in the real world would therefore prepare a set of offerings consisting of bananas, sugarcane, betel nut, betel leaf, red flowers, and a clay model of the baby in bamboo basket to venerate Pho Koet – Mae Koet in the spirit retrieving ceremony or "*phithi su-khwan"* ritual (Sanan, 2016: 65 - 70). The belief in *khwan* is widespread in Southeast Asia. While humans have physical bodies, they also have *khwan* - intangible and spiritual essences - within them as well. Suchit (2019) and Siripoj (2022) point out that beliefs in *khwan* reflect the animism that has been rooted in Southeast Asia since the prehistoric era. Physical bodies constitute the human being as a vehicle for spiritual essence: *khwan*. That is to say, human body will disintegrate after physical death, but *khwan* is believed to be able to separate at any given time. The spirit retrieving ceremony or *phithi su-khwan* is then held in almost every pivotal transitional stage of life, from birth, ordination as a monk, marriage, and even being promoted in one's job

(Premvit, 2014: 24). That is, the *khwan* leaves humans at any time of difficulty, causing illness, anxiety, and bad fortune. Nowadays, the *phithi su-khwan* still becomes a very important ritual for addressing difficulties and mitigating anxieties for most Lanna locals.

The names of Pho Koet are not found in any of the documents I conducted my research By contrast, however, a variety of names are given to Mae Koet. Sanan (2016: 67 - 68) refers to a manuscript written about Mae Koet, where there are twelve Mae Koet classified by the Chinese zodiac. Their names can be seen below:

Animal Zodiac Signs	**Northern Dialects for Each Year**	**Names of Mae Koet**
Rat	Jai (*ใจ้*)	Nang Aoey Ariya (*นางเอ้ยอริยา*)
Ox	Pao (*เป้า*)	Nang Sahot (*นางสาหด*)
Tiger	Yi (*ยี*)	Nang Phudsadee (*นางผุสดี*)
Rabbit	Mao (*เหม้า*)	Nang Angranee (*นางอังระณี*)
Dragon	Si (*สี*)	Nang Oummawadee (*นางอุมมาวดี*)
Snake	Sai (*ใส*)	Nang Sriwaiyaka (*นางสีไวยะกา*)
Horse	Sa-nga (*สะง้า*)	Nang Norfar (*นางหน่อฟ้า*)
Goat	Met (*เม็ด*)	Nang Mala (*นางมาลา*)
Monkey	San (*สัน*)	Nang Dokmai (*นางดอกไม้*)
Rooster	Rao *(เร้า)*	Nang Kaison *(นางไกสร)*

Dog	Set (*เส็ด*)	Nang Amon (*นางอมร*)
Pig	Kai (*ไก๊*)	Nang Benjamata (*นางปัญจะมาตา*)

Aphiluk (2016: 81) also points to another ten Mae Koet names written in palm-leaf manuscripts preserved at Wat Phra Sing, Mueang district, Chiang Mai province, as noted follows:

"…ถ้าลูกอ่อนเกิดมาได้วัน 1 เดือน 1 ปี 1 ก็ดี แม่เกิดชื่อว่า เมนกะ มากระทำให้เจ็บไข้ได้ป่วย ไม่อยากกินข้าว กินนม ให้เอาข้าวสาร 3 กำมือไปแช่น้ำ แล้วตำเป็นฟองแป้ง ปั้นเป็นรูปลูกอ่อน…"

"…ถ้าลูกอ่อนเกิดมาได้ 2 วัน 2 คืน 2 เดือน 2 ปีนั้น แม่เกิดผู้ชื่อว่า สุนันทะ มากระทำร้ายจนเกิดอาการขบเขี้ยวเคี้ยวลิ้น กัดนิ้วมือ ร้องไห้ทั้งกลางวันเมื่อคืน ร้องอยู่เหมือนหิวข้าวอยากน้ำ ให้เอาข้าวสาร 1 กำมือ แช่น้ำตำเป็นฟองแป้ง แล้วปั้นเป็นรูปเด็กใส่กระทง…"

The above excerpt from manuscript can be translated as follows:

"…For the first year of the child's life, their Mae Koet is Menka. She may cause sickness to the child such as losing appetite for rice and milk. If this happens, one should soak three handfuls of rice in water, then mill them into flour and mold them into shape of the child…"

"…In the second year of the child's life their Mae Koet is Sunantha. She may cause the child to clench its teeth, tongue, fingers, and cry, both in the afternoon and the evening, as if the child is hungry and thirsty. If this happens, one should soak a handful of rice in water and mill it into flour, then mold it into shape of the child to be placed on a banana leaf vessel…"

The names of Mae Koet's referred to in the Wat Phra Sing manuscript are Menka (*เมนกะ*), Sunantha (*สุนันทะ*), Puthra (*บุตระ*), Padathat (*ผดะตัด*), Pamassa (*ภะมัสสะ*), Akanisa (*อัคคนิสสะ*), Kiladlaodee (*กิลาดเลาดี*), Timlaka (*ติมลากะ*), Namathana (*นมะธนา*), Renaphannang (*เรณะปันนัง*) respectively (Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University, 2020). The varied and ordinary names of Mae Koet in the Lanna manuscript reflect maternal forces rooted in the belief systems of the Lanna Kingdom. In the premodern north, many males were breadwinners outside the home, while females exercised their power in the home. The importance of the feminine can be described as follows: firstly, maternal biology and her ability to give birth. Secondly, their roles in attentively taking care of household chores make them practical financial managers of the houses. Lastly, matrilineal descent traced through women is a system entrenched in Lanna social structure (Phonphen, 2003: 252 - 256). Female power has thus been rooted in social systems here since time immemorial, with femininity encompassing both rational and emotional expression. The reverence of female guardian spirits has therefore been boosted and vocalised in their lullabies as can be seen in parts of Premchit's research (2014: 39) ascribed below:

อื่อ อื่อ จา จา หลับเสีย (สายติ่งติ้ว)

หลับค็มาหลับเสียเทอะตา

นอนค็มานอนเสียเทอะหนาคิ้ว

สายติ่งติ้วพ่อจักมาอื่อนายชา

แถมสักบึดนึ่งแม่สุชาดาจักมารอดแล้ว

จักมาไกวอู่แก้วว่า อื่อ อื่อ จา จา

แถมสักบึดนึ่งแม่สุธัมมาจักมานั่งแฝง

แม่สีนวลแพงจักมานั่งเฝ้า

จักมาไกวอู่เจ้าพ่อ

ว่าอย่าไพท้วนติงคิงเนอ

พรหมมาเน้อลูกแก้ว

พ่ออื่อเจ้าแล้วจุ่งค่อยม่อยหลับไพก่อนเทอะ

The song can be understood in central Thai dialect as follows:

อื่อ อื่อ จา จา หลับเสีย (สายใจอันเป็นที่รัก)

หลับก็มาหลับเสียเถอะหนา

นอนก็มานอนเสียเถอะหนา

สายใจของพ่อพ่อจะมาอื่อน้องน้อง

อีกซักพักแม่สุชาดาก็จะมาหาแล้ว

จะมาไกวเปลแก้ว มาอื่อ อื่อ จา จา

อีกซักพักแม่สุธัมมาก็จะมานั่งด้วยแล้ว

แม่สีนวลแพงก็จะมานั่งเฝ้า

จะมาไกวเปลให้เจ้า

พ่อว่าจะไปดื้อกับพวกเธอนะ

พระพรหมมารักษานะลูกแก้ว

พ่อกล่อมลูกแล้วจึงค่อยม่อยหลับไปก่อนเถอะ

The song can be translated into English as follows:

Uea uea ja ja, please sleep (my darling).
Please sleep if you wish.
Sleep, please sleep, my dear.
My darling, father will coo you to sleep.

Soon, Mae Suchada will come.
She will rock your cradle, *uea uea ja ja.*
Soon, Mae Suthamma will take my seat.
Mae Srinuanphaeng will look after you.

She will rock your cradle.
Father says do not misbehave (to Mae Sue).
Brahma is protecting you, my dear child.
Father will coo to you, then you should doze off."

This song is clearly sung by a father who pleads with his baby to go to sleep. The summoning of the Mae Koet, whether it be Mae Suchada, Mae Suthamma, or Mae Srinuanphaeng reflects the belief in archaic female tutelaries that help tend the newborn child. For fathers, these maternal forces of Mae Koet seem to prevail in his subconscious mind where archaic motherhood from the spiritual realm could offer an extra helping hand. Mae Koet is portrayed as "The Great Mother" who always helps rock the cradle and take care of the babies, even in her spiritual realm. Female guardian spirits encompass the forces of supernatural beings that lie within rural folk beliefs, and drive northern peoples to place animistic and spiritualistic relationships at the core of their local cultural belief systems. Brahma, the creator god in Hinduism, is mentioned in the last line of the lullaby. It clearly shows layers of local religions in which female spirits play their part alongside the Hindu God, but in distinctive roles. Unlike the Mae Sue described on the central Wat Pho wall where she has already been integrated into the pantheon of Hindu Goddesses, the northern Mae Koet is still preserved in her own space and time.

For newborn children, their guardian spirits, Por Koet – Mae Koet, are revered alongside Phi Pu Dam – Ya Dam (black grandparent spirits). In the old times, almost every household in the north had rice steamer pots, and Phi Pu Dam – Ya Dam were believed to reside there. Rice steamers would be placed on a charcoal stove, and the ashes left from cooking would be smeared on the child's forehead in order to be protected by the grandparent spirits. A betel nut and a betel leaf along with a lump of sticky rice and a ripe banana would be provided as offerings (Sanan, 2016: 55). This demonstrates the importance of human existence in relation to guardian spirits, rice, and the natural environment. The bond between children and superstitious beliefs is moulded alongside natural significance, which in this case is represented

by ashes from burned charcoal after cooking rice. Again, archaic power for northern peoples is portrayed through this belief, and is transmitted to children at an early stage of lives. That is, human souls were initially given life by Pu Thian – Ya Thian or Pho Koet – Mae Koet which help remind local people of their origins from the sky (spiritual realm). Ashes smeared on the babies 'foreheads also illustrate that their existence partially depends on rice steamers where Phi Pu Dam and Ya Dam reside. Life since then has been attached to the rice they have been eating; all of which is made possible by the rice steamers. Moreover, every rice grain is also believed to be handed down by the Rice Goddess (Mae Phosop). The belief in Mae Phosop also comes into play in the daily meal and local traditions in showing gratitude to the divine. Siripoj (2022: 152) addresses this animistic belief in Mae Phosop as an aspect of premodern culture reflecting interconnectedness between human existence and supernatural boundaries intermingled as a whole. Spiritual entities have therefore left room for humans to ponder their relationship with supernatural power.

Chiang Rai

Looking back at the belief in a spirit retrieving ceremony for newborn babies (*phithi su -khwan)* held by northerners, this can also be seen in local lullabies. One of these lullabies, sung by an eighty-year-old female traditional dancer (Phetkaew, 2019)[50] in Mae Sai district, Chiang Rai province, vividly depicts details of a *phithi su-khwan* sung for the newborns in their birth ritual. It can be seen as follows (listen to the song from the disc in the North folder, track 5):

ขวัญของเจ้ากิ๋นข้าวอิ่มแล้ว

หื้อมากิ๋นยังน้ำบ่อแก้วอันใสรัตนาถเจียงจิน

อั๋นเกิดจากครกหินปัจจุกรรมปัจจิราขวัญใหญ่

เนื้อปี๊ดใหญ่สมั่นปี๊ดใสขันใจ๋จา

ใต้ฮ่มฟ้าบ่มีสังปิ๋น มีรสหวานใสสะอาด

คนไดเป๋นพยาธิเอาไปกินก็หาย

แม้นจะตั๋กไปขายบ่มีใครคดค่าน้ำนี้ได้

50 Fieldwork conducted on 12 December 2019.

ไข้เรื้อนรากบ่จุ๊

มี๋สองหูหักคริ่ง

เนื้อบ่ตึ๋งเต็มตั๋น

ต๋าบ่หันบ่มืด

อั้นว่าเอาน้ำนี้ไปฮดไปหล่อก็จะได้ยินเสียงพูดเสียงจ๋า

เหตุนี้แลหนา

จุ่งมาผูกสามสิบสองขวัญแห่งเจ้า

บ่หื้อไปอยู่ป่า

บ่หื้อไปล่าเดินดง

หื้อประสงค์แอ่วเล่น

บ่หื้อไปติ่งเต้นแลตั้งไกล๋

ข้าจักเอาเจื้อกพรรณรายมาผูกไว้สามสิบสองขวัญ เจ้าแก่นไช้จุ่งอยู่ที่แลตีนคา

In central Thai dialect and in English, the song can be ascribed as follows:

ขวัญของเจ้ากินข้าวอิ่มแล้ว

ให้มาดื่มยังน้ำบ่อแก้วที่ใสสะอาด

ซึ่งได้มาจากครกหินที่ได้ทำพิธีกรรมมาแล้ว

ปริมาณน้ำทิพย์มีเยอะเอาไว้ใส่ในขัน

ใต้ร่มฟ้าไม่มีน้ำใดเทียม มีรสหวานใสสะอาด

คนใดเป็นพยาธิเอาไปดื่มก็หาย

แม้จะตักไปขายก็ไม่มีใครทดแทนน้ำนี้ได้

เป็นโรคเรื้อน

มีหูพิการ

เนื้อหนังไม่ตึงเต็มที่

ตามองไม่เห็นพร่ามัว

เขาว่าเอาน้ำนี้ไปก็จะได้ยินเสียงพูดเสียงจา

เหตุนี้แลหนา

จึงมาผูกสามสิบสองขวัญของเจ้า

อย่าให้ขวัญไปอยู่ตามป่า

ไม่ให้ไปอยู่ตามดอยดง

หรือไปเที่ยวเล่น

ไม่ให้ขวัญหนีไปอยู่ที่ไกล

ข้าจะเอาเชือกพรรณรายมาผูกเจ้าไว้ทั้งสามสิบสองขวัญ เจ้าแก่นไธ้จงอยู่ที่นี่แล

When your *khwan* is full of food,
It should come drinking this crystal clear water.
Gained from the sacred mortar,
The holy water is plenty to fill the bowl.

No other waters could compare with its sweetness,
It repels any parasites.
I still have more even though it is sold.

For healing leprosy,
For curing deafness,
For dimpled skin,

For blurred vision,
Having this water would cure them all.

For all these reasons,
I am performing a 32 spirits retrieving ceremony.

Don't get lost in the woods,
Don't be in the wilderness.
Stop roaming around,
Stop journeying so far.
I will bind you with the holy thread,
I command your spirit and soul to be here.

Mae Phetkaew sang me the above song with modest melodies to imitate the times when babies were sick. She told me that this lullaby would be sung when babies were around a month old. The attributes of the sacred water described in this *su-khwan* lullaby would play an important role alongside the pouring gesture of a glass of plain water offered to the babies while the spirit-retrieving song is being performed. This ritual is believed to ease parents 'minds and to appease the guardian spirits. The sacred water from the sacred mortar is claimed to have various beneficial effects such as killing tapeworms, curing leprosy, and healing otolaryngological conditions. Even though this practice has no scientific proof, plain water is conceived of as sacred and the song may have a placebo effect. The separated *khwan* is then believed to return from its wandering in the wilderness back to the babies. Mothers then would bind the babies 'wrist with holy thread. All of these things are believed to bring back babies to a state of good health.

The baby-mother-supernatural relationship is integrated into holistic bonding. Superstition helps guard the newborn children. Mothers - whether they be earthly mothers or former mothers in the spiritual sphere - also nurture the young ones. Archaic motherhood and supernatural beliefs blend into Lanna wisdom circulating in human psyches.

In summary, both supernatural and maternal forces are syncretically presented in northern folk wisdom, belief systems and hence also reflected in some of their folk rhymes. The conceptualisation of archaic female spirits renders local animistic beliefs in unembellished

styles. Mae Koet is in some senses perceived in the same way as Mae Sue in the central Thai episteme. Their authentic characteristics are revealed in the song collected by Premchit (2014) and the *su-khwan* lullaby sung by Mae Phetkaew (2019) as the examples referred to the beliefs in Mae Sue and supernatural entities. Additionally, superstition and belief in ghosts also include the expression of elements of natural forces in the songs. The nourishment by Pho Koet – Mae Koet and Phi Pu Dam - Ya Dam projected towards newborn babies can also, however, be the cause of illness and disease. Nature and supernatural forces can be concurrently tame and perilous. Northern lullabies are thus well placed to shed light on the human-nature interrelationship.

The Archaic Power of the Feminine in Northeastern Thai Lullabies

The roles of the female guardian spirit in the northeastern region are of special importance in local perceptions. In the early stages of life, newborn Isan babies would have undergone the bamboo threshing basket[51] ritual (*phithi-ron-kradong*) (Aphiluk, 2016: 84). Babies would be placed on an upside-down threshing basket which would then be lifted up in the air by the midwife who would then say "*กูหูก กูหูก กูกกูกกู แม่นลูกสูมาเอาสามื่อนี้ กายมื้อนี้ เมือหน้าลูกกู*" (Thatsanee, 1999: 16). This can be translated into English as "Hoot, hoot, hoot (owl hooting sound); if it is certain this is your child today, take him/her at once; if not, the baby will be mine." One of the baby's cousins would then reply "*ลูกข้อย เอามา*" ("mine; send him/her to me") (ibid). This ritual posits a give-and-take process revolving around conversations between humans and nonhuman entities, each claiming the child as theirs. It seems that the ritual helps connect the babies with the unknown realms where they are from. Such an unknown spiritual realm can also imply the uncertainty of life. The female guardian spirit has thus come to play her part in readmitting her life-nourishing and life-taking roles as nature does to the world. The interconnectedness between the spiritual environment and the corporeal existences of the newborns coincides in the child's spiritual development.

I have previously mentioned a few Isan lullabies in Chapter 2. Songs describing mothers looking for fish, fruits, eggs, and local vegetables, for example, could be repeatedly seen in Isan lullabies. In my fieldwork, however, I found only one Isan lullaby out of 6 songs directly

[51] A bamboo threshing basket is a flat and round bamboo-woven basket. It has a dual usage: carrying objects and filtering foreign objects out of rice grains.

illustrating Mae Kaew as an equivalent to Mae Koet (or as Mae Sue for central and southern Thais), in a monk's description from Khon Kaen province. He preferred anonymity. His career before being a Buddhist monk, however, is very interesting. He graduated from the Sociology and Anthropology Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mahasarakham University. He then started his career as a lecturer at Nakhon Phanom University with expertise in northeastern palm leaf manuscripts before being ordaining. Having conversations with him along with many local elders who helped weave spiderweb-like flags for Magha Puja Day[52] portrays the very powerful presence of the communal ways of life. Spiderweb-like flags are considered to be animistic charms to expel unwanted spirits. All of the flag weavers were females aged around 60 – 80 years old. The monk himself was well-respected by these ladies. I was surprised when he sang me a lullaby reflecting animistic beliefs and the mutual relationship between Isan people and the former spiritual mother through the song noted below (Anonymous, 2020)[53] (listen to the song from the disc in the Northeast folder, track 5):

เอ่อเหอะเออ..เหอะเอ่อ..เหอะเออ

นอนสล่าหลับตาแม่สิก่อม

นอนอ่อมล่อมอยู่ผ่าอู้ไหม

แม่ไปไฮ่ ได้ไข่มาหา

แม่ไปนา เอาปลามาป้อน

แม่เลี้ยงหม่อน ให้ลูกได่ไซ

เอ่อเหอะเออ..เหอะเอ่อ..เหอะเออ

นอนซะแม่เยอ น้อนนอนซะแม่เยอ

นอนหลับแล้ว แม่แก้วสิมา

เอ่อเหอะเออ..เหอะเอ่อ..เหอะเออ

ถ้าบ่นอนแมวโพง สิกินตา

52 Magha Puja Day is a Buddhist ceremony to celebrate the full moon day of the third lunar month. The celebration relates to the gathering between the Buddha and the 1,250 of his first disciples.

53 Fieldwork conducted on 14 February 2020.

ถ้าบ่หลับแมวโพง สิกินไส้

เอ่อเหอะเออ..เหอะเอ่อ..เหอะเออ

The lullaby can be understood in central dialect as follows:

เอ่อเหอะเออ..เหอะเอ่อ..เหอะเออ

นอนสล่าหลับตาแม่จะกล่อม

นอนดีๆ อยู่บนผ้าผูกเปลผืนใหม่

แม่ไปไร่ ได้ไข่มาหา

แม่ไปนา เอาปลามาป้อน

แม่เลี้ยงหม่อน ให้ลูกได้ใส่

เอ่อเหอะเออ..เหอะเอ่อ..เหอะเออ

นอนซะแม่เยอ นอนนอนซะแม่เยอ

นอนหลับแล้ว แม่แก้วจะมา

เอ่อเหอะเออ..เหอะเอ่อ..เหอะเออ

ถ้าไม่นอนแมวโพง จะกินตา

ถ้าไม่หลับแมวโพง จะกินไส้

เอ่อเหอะเออ..เหอะเอ่อ..เหอะเออ

The above song can be translated into English as follows:

Non sala (Please sleep). Close your eyes and mother will sing you a lullaby.
Please sleep well in your new clothed cradle.
Mother will go looking for eggs in the fields for you.
Mother will go looking for fish in the rice paddies.

Mother will do sericulture and make clothes for you.

Please do sleep tight, Mae Yoe[54].
If you slept well, Mae Kaew (the guardian spirit) will certainly come.
But, if you don't sleep now, wild cats will gulp down your eyes.
And, the wild cats will also eat your intestines.

The portrayals of the guardian spirits (Mae Kaew) and Mae Yoe from the above song firstly illustrate the importance of matriarchy in Thailand and the adjacent neighbour such as the belief in Mae Yoe in Laos. According to Pranee Wongtet (2006: 3), matriarchy has permeated into most mainland Southeast Asian social structures. As mentioned, females play important roles as household financial managers, keepers of matrilineality, and religious matronages. Secondly, they also ascribe superstitious beliefs in spirit entities in taking care of the babies, as portrayed in the above song.

The concept of the spirit entities of "Phi Mae Mai" (widow ghosts)[55] is also to be found in the Isan belief system. The transformation of gender relations shifts archaic feminine power into bewitching women. The transformation of Mae Mai before bewitching, however, could be traced back into another Isan rhyme called "*Mae Mai klom luk*"[56] (Widow cooing a baby) collected by Fasuay (2013: 56), as can be seen as follows:

นอนส่าเด้อหล้าหลับตาแม่สิก่อม

ลูกกำพ้าอนาถาบ่มีพ่อ

หาแพและผ่าผืนสิตุ้มห่มหนาว

ขั่นว่าอาวไห่แพวาเคี๋ยวพอได้ตุ้มแตน้องโต๋เอ๋ย

[54] *Mae Yoe* is a Lao ancestor who together cut the woody vines with her husband (*Pu Yoe*) connecting the realms of the Sky God and humans.
[55] The widow ghost is primarily a folkloric figure deeply rooted in Isan culture and superstition. The widow ghost or *phi mae mai* is believed to be the spirit of a woman who died with deep sadness and resentment due to the tragic and untimely death of her husband.
[56] *Mae mai klom luk* (widow cooing a baby) is a typical and distinguished melody found in Isan. According to Sunee and Kulthida's *The Reflexes of Isan Lullabies* (2002: 82 – 83), the theme of *Mae mai klom luk* represents the shift of gender relations as male villagers tended to work outside the village. Some died far away from home and their children were left fatherless.

กะอยู่เปื่อยเปื่อยกะเปื่อย

ฝนแฮงตกฟ้าแฮงฮ้อง กะบองไต้กะบ่มี

ไห่เจ้านอนสาเด้อหล่านอนสาอย่าสิอ้อนอู่

ขั่นแม่นลูกพู่สู้ นอนแล้วอย่าแอ่ววอน

ไห่เจ้านอนสาเด้อหล่า นอนสาอย่า

สิแอ่วแนวเฮาเป็นกำพ้า ลุงป้าเพ

The song can be understood in central Thai dialect and English respectively, as follows:

นอนสาหล่าหลับตาแม่จะกล่อม

ลูกกำพร้าอนาถาไม่มีพ่อ

หาผ้าแพรและผ้าผืนจะมาห่มให้คลายหนาว

ถ้าจะเอาจะได้แค่ผ้าแพรวาเดียวพอให้น้องเล็ก

ส่วนพี่สาว (คนเอื้อย) ก็อยู่เปื่อยๆ เปียกๆ

ฝนตกหนักฟ้าร้องดัง ตะเกียงก็ไม่มี

ให้เจ้านอนสาเด้อหล่าอย่ามาอ้อนงอแง

ถ้าลูกฟังรู้ความ นอนแล้วอย่างอแง

ให้เจ้านอนส่าเด้อหล่า นอนซะ

นอนนะอย่างอแงเพราะลูกเป็นกำพร้า ลุงป้าเพ (ที่เลี้ยง)

Non sala (Please sleep), close your eyes and mother will sing you a lullaby.

Without a father, you are a destitute orphan.

I will find you satin and a blanket to ward off the cold,

But having only one sheet for the younger one,

While the elder sister has to endure the wet and cold.

Harsh rain and loud thunder, we live without lanterns.
Please try to sleep, please don't whine.
If you could catch any words, please don't whine.
Please sleep, please sleep,
Don't cry. you are an orphan, having only an uncle and aunt to raise you.

The *Mae Mai klom luk* song depicts the life of a widow who tends her baby in difficulties. Without a father to help with the labours, all work falls on the widow's shoulders, from finding food, firewood, and blankets for her children. Her miserable life is reinterpreted into the nursery rhymes of a widow seeking a partner. At this point, the struggling widow transforms into a demonic character. Mary Beth Mills '*Attack of the Widow Ghosts: Gender, Death, and Modernity in Northeast Thailand* (1995) postulates a modernisation-driven transformation of gender relations that pushes unmarried male youths to become wage workers far from their home villages. As a result, the decrease in family members where some pass away while working away from home affects the lives of females who have to take care of both household chores and outside labour. For Mills, the shift of gender relations causes a "sense of rural distress" (245) where the widows are unfortunately caught up in a blame game. Made into a scapegoat, the miserable widows are condemned as life-takers of male villagers the reason for whose deaths is unidentified. Up until today in Isan communities, the sudden death of male villagers is believed to be caused by widow ghosts. The case of Phi Mae Mai reflects the intervention of modernity and the shift of gender relations in Isan villages that has an effect on the portrayals of archaic femininity. The above song is only a remnant of the portrayal of a widow before it has been changed into the contents of a widow seeking a partner in several Isan lullabies prevail nowadays.

Beliefs in Mae Yoe in Luang Prabang, Laos

The shared history between Tai people, in this particular case Thai and Lao locals, is reflected through the belief in Mae Yoe who receives great worship from Lao people. In my fieldwork at Luang Prabang, Lao lullabies also refer to Pu Yoe Ya Yoe, who made their great sacrifice during the battle between the Sky God (Phraya Thian) and Khun Borohm. This incident caused

a drought to the land. However, it was with Pu Yoe's and Ya Yoe's act of cutting the woody vines which brought back waters to the Lao land at the cost of their lives. Lao people would then refer to Pu Yoe and Ya Yoe in most of their daily actions to demonstrate their great respect and gratitude.

Political and sociocultural relations between Siam/Thailand and Lan Xang (today's Laos PDR) share interesting features, especially in terms of Isan-Lao relations. The civil war in Lan Xang kingdom which was then divided into three independent regions - Luang Prabang, Vientiane, and Champasak during the reign of King Fa Ngum in 1354 (Burke, 2007: 255) – had driven many Laotians to migrate to Siam. Even though there appeared to be attempts by Siam to oppress Lao cultures and customs, Isan locals of Lao descent continued their Isan-Lao relations through their lifestyles, beliefs, and practices.

Following my intention to research shared cultural values between Thailand and Laos in literary contexts, I travelled to Luang Prabang province in northern Laos where it is closer to Chiang Mai province, Thailand, which was my base. The plan was to drive east from Chiang Mai to Nan, which is closest to Luang Prabang by road. Along the way, I crossed Huai Kon on the Thai-Laos border at Chaloem Phrakiat district in Nan province to reach Luang Prabang. Situated in a valley embracing the Mekong and the Nam Kan rivers, Luang Prabang has a wealth of ecological abundance and instances of oral cultures. My fieldwork in Luang Prabang, tracing Lao lullabies, reveals amazing soothing songs sung by elderly locals. The deep-rooted reverence for Mae Yoe still echoes through Lao lifestyles, whether it be during mealtimes, during times of travel, or at night. Lao people retain their sense of worship for Mae Yoe by saying *kin yoe* (let's eat), *pai yoe* (let's go), and *non-yoe* (let's sleep) respectively. Reminiscences about Mae Yoe abound in the Luang Prabang version of the lullaby, as follows (Mae Srida, 2019)[57](listen to the song from the disc in the Luang Prabang folder, track 1):

อื้อ อื่อ

น้อยนอนซะเยอ

น้องนอน นอนซะเย้อ

57 Fieldwork conducted on 18 November 2019.

ถ่าบ่นอนไก่น้อยสิตอดตา

แมงดาสิม่าตอดก้น

น้อยนอยน่อยนอยน้อยนอย

Lao linguistic terms are similar to those of the Tai language family (in which northern Thai dialect is included), and the verse can be rephrased in central Thai as follows:

อื้อ อื่อ

ลูกน้อยนอนเสียเยอ

น้องนอน นอนเสียเยอ

ถ้าไม่นอนไก่น้อยจะจิกตา

แมงดาจะมากัดก้น

น้อยนอยน่อยนอยน้อยนอย

In English, the song can be translated as follows:

Uea uea

Please sleep, my baby, *yoe.*[58]

Sleep, please do sleep, *yoe*.

Resisting sleep, your eyes will be gouged out by chicks.

The water bugs will bite your bottom.

Noi, noi noi, noi, noi, noi (rhythmic soothing sound)

The feminine power of Mae Yoe emphasises locals' supernatural beliefs in Luang Prabang. Females (who mostly singing rhymes) live at peace with themselves, and between humans and spiritual realm. The ecological culture of Luang Prabang shows no doubt that their beliefs, attitudes, and practices are connected to Nature. Such practices bring about the worship of Mae Yoe as a female spirit who shares her vales with the natural environment. One of the

[58] *Yoe*, as in Mae Yoe, is referred as a particle in the last syllable.

Luang Prabang tour guides told me that the myths of her country told how Khun Borohm and his offspring integrated animism and Buddhism into the land since the reign of King Fa Ngum during the fourteenth century (Somjit, 2019). Buddhist culture has almost always existed side by side with spiritual worship, according to local people. Natural bounties in Laos have created spiritualistic complexities in Lao ecological conceptions. Nature and archaic femininity are also interwoven in another lullaby sung by a Lao-born Tai Lue lady aged 65, as seen below (Mae Janti, 2019)[59] (listen to the song from the disc in the Luang Prabang folder, track 2):

อื้อ อื้อ

ลับแสเยอ

น้อนแสเยอ

อี้ป้อไปไส่ตุ่งช้าง

อี้แมไป้น้ำตุ่งเซว

เอาบักเหี่ยวม้าฮา

เอาบักสี่คามาตอน

อ้อนน่อยเอยฟั่งกำ

กั้นบ่ลับไกน่อยจิม่าจ้กตา

มาน่อยอิม่าเลก่น

อื้อ อื่อ

ลับแสเยอ

น้อนแสเยอ

อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ

59 Fieldwork conducted on 19 November 2019.

The above lullaby can be rendered in central dialect as follows:

อื้อ อื้อ

หลับเสียเยอ

นอนเสียเยอ

อีพ่อไปไร่ทุ่งช้าง

อีแม่ไปนาทุ่งแซว

เอาผลไม้มาหา

เอาผลฝรั่งมาป้อน

ลูกอ่อนน้อยเอยฟังเถอะ

ถ้าไม่ยอมหลับไก่น้อยจะมาจิกตา

หมาน้อยจะมาเลียก้น

อื้อ อื่อ

หลับเสียเยอ

นอนเสียเยอ

อื่อ อื่อ อื่อ

In English, the song can be translated as follows:

Uea uea

Please sleep, *yoe*.

Please do sleep, *yoe*.

Father goes to *thung* Chang field.
Mother goes to *thung* Saew rice paddy.
We will bring you fruit.
We will feed you guavas.

My dear little baby, please listen.
If you do not sleep, chicks will gouge out your eyes.
The puppy will lick your bottom.

Uea uea
Please sleep, *yoe*.
Go to sleep, *yoe*.
Uea uea uea"

Mae Yoe who has been considered a Lao royal deity along with Pu Yoe, manifests archaic feminine power in local people's daily lives. Content referring to Mae Yoe is repeatedly reproduced. Lives in the fields and rice paddies show locals 'dependency on natural resources, such as wild fruit and guavas. The mutual relationship between local people and female guardian spirits is intertwined in the development of Lao children and deep-rooted in their inner selves.

Other Lullabies Related to Supernatural Beings

The worship of female guardian spirits in the Isan region and Laos, as in the case of Mae Kaew and Mae Yoe along with the spirit of the Phi Mae Mai, relates to ecological spiritual beliefs in connection with the land. Unlike the masculine and elite culture of Siam/Thailand where femininity (such as the Mae Sue in the traditional medicine manuscript and at Wat Pho's murals) has been noted as a mere background to a masculine culture of reason, Isan communities, along with those of northern and southern Thailand, reveal embodiments of natural sentient beings, female spirits, emotions, and compassion as key elements of human identity. The human-nature-supernatural is a holistic and interdependent entity, offering mutual support. The Lao also live and learn the inter-dependency of these things. When mothers teach their children about the nourishing and mild aspects of nature through Mae Kaew's/Mae Yoe's nurturing qualities, they pass on their respect for the non-human realm to their offspring. In addition to this, the ecological dimensions of wild, forceful, and ferocious nonhuman Nature

are also emphasised. A lullaby collected by Pratueng Klaysubun (1985: 42) which tells of female ghosts lurking at night is still sung to prepare children for the unexpected and violent circumstances of the world, described as follows:

นอนสาเด้อหล่า นอนสาแมสิกอม

ผัดวาอย่างสั้นเด๋หละ

อะซะไห่ก๋างคำ ย่านผีพ้าย

อะซะไห่ย้ามง้าย ย่านผีเป้า

เจ้าบมี้พอเลี่ยง กิ๋นแล่วให้เลาน้อน

วาสั้นเด๋

In central Thai dialect, the above song can be understood as follows:

นอนเสียลูกน้อย นอนเสียแม่จะกล่อม

ถ้าว่าอย่างนั้นแหละ

อย่าร้องไห้กลางคืน กลัวผีพราย

อย่าร้องไห้ ยามเช้ากลัวผีกระสือ

ลูกไม่มีพ่อช่วยเลี้ยง กินแล้วให้รีบนอน

ว่าอย่างนั้นนะ

The lullaby can be translated into English, as described below:

Please sleep, my little baby. Please go to sleep, and mother will lull you.
If you don't, people say,
Do not cry at night. Be afraid of Phi Phrai.[60]

[60] Phi Phrai is a kind of female water spirit.

Do not cry in the day. Be afraid of Krasue.[61]
You are fatherless.[62] Eat and hurriedly go to sleep.
People have said so.

Females in the aforementioned lullaby are represented in the form of malevolent apparitions lurking in the water, and feasting on filth at night. Emotional dimensions, whether they be caring and/or aggressive, are reflected as female characteristics, which links several female spirits with a sense of uncontrollable and uncontrolled Nature. Maternal roles in raising children to prepare themselves for the unexpected wildness of Nature, are figuratively signified in the form of ghosts and spirits roaming in the dark. Mysterious nonhuman nature is represented as an uncontrollable, untamable agent in this Isan song. These ghosts and the unexpected misfortunes they bring have been implanted in the children's psyches to understand the Human-Nature coexistence beyond the realm of rational thought but rather residing in unsettling emotions and encouraging respect towards nature.

From the Oppression of Femininity and Nature in Siamese/Thai Hierarchical Schemes to the Foregrounding of Feminine Power in Regional Lullabies

To summarise, the archaic power of femininity in Thai literary contexts reveals a hidden wisdom of the belief systems held by regional local people - mostly residing in all other regions but the central region. In regional rhymes, portrayals of Mae Sue, Mae Koet, Mae Kaow, Mae Kaew, or Mae Yoe, are not re-emerging but rather have always been there in locals' folklore. Nowadays, we might be able to witness many young children in Thailand wearing amulets and/or brooches such as Buddha necklaces (*soi-phra*), tiny, rolled metal items (*takrut*), or holy thread (*saisin*) to their shirts in order to ward off ghosts and misfortunes. Even though the majority of Thais are identified as Buddhist, their strong beliefs in animism stay side by side harmoniously, if not inseparably. For many Thais, animism and Buddhism "have no built-in contradictions and conflicts. To them it is one" (Siripoj, 2022: 74). Orthodox Buddhism has been attuned to spiritualism and nature-based beliefs.

Though Mae Sue normally appears in oral literature, I also looked into the evidence shown in the central Siamese traditional medicine manuscript (*phra khamphi pathom jinda*),

[61] Krasue is believed as a young and beautiful female spirits with internal organ hanging down from her floating head.
[62] See the reference of *Mae Mai klom luk* in the afore-mentioned footnotes 55 and 56

dating from Ayutthaya period – the oldest record of its kind. The Mae Sue was circumscribed in patriarchal thinking, ranging from good to evil. In the mural painting at Wat Pho, the Mae Sue have been marked out as entities subordinated to "Brahman-Buddhism" and "empirical science". Seven of the Mae Sue seen on Wat Pho have obviously been rearticulated and refashioned into Brahman Goddesses. Classifications and hierarchical order from masculine conceptions of gender held by Siamese elites bring about the constructions of dualism to the society. Males thus have been encoded as forceful and reasonable agents, while females are thought to be sensitive, tender, and self-sacrificing.

Local people from all other regions except central Thailand, on the other hand, project their belief system of female spirituality in relation to Nature in syncretistic patterns. For them, lives are inevitably associated with natural necessities which are also represented through the ceremonial behaviour towards the veneration of the archaic power of femininity. The relationships between people's day to day lives and ecological culture sets out other levels of interdependence, interactivity, and sacredness between humans and nonhuman Nature. Local people's archaic Mae Sue represents the holistic aspect and the association between Cultural and Natural spheres where the spiritual world lives alongside human cultures. There are no stratifications between ghosts and deities (*thewada*). There are no elegant names for their female guardian spirits but instead rather ordinary ones. The horizon of spiritual understandings for local people emphasises the way in which wholeness and the interrelationship between natural spiritualism are their crucial pathways of lives.

The shared qualities of maternity and the natural environment produce a local understanding of realities where everything has upsides and downsides. Nature represents fertility but also death for all living beings. Mother Earth, female guardian spirits, and female ghosts also share the natural characteristics of being life-creating and life-taking agents, being both womb and tomb (Farrar,1996: 13). Femininity is not solely passive, tender, and always nurturing; but also active, untamable, and ferocious as well. Mae Sue helps nourish newborns and also threatens them. These cultural beliefs are still handed down through regional lullabies. In several of the examples of lullabies presented in this chapter, parents or caregivers would ask Mae Sue for her help to raise young ones and at the same time beg her not to harm them. This creates two main perceptions of archaic femininity. Mae Sue is still standing her ground amidst her long-vanished culture in the rhymes of lullabies. For many rural people in Thailand, Nature and humans thus cannot separate out from one another. Natural spiritualities

representing the archaic qualities of the feminine lie beneath people's consciousness to respect and embrace other-than-human realm in their dependency on animistic belief system in relation to ecology.

Chapter 4
The Otherness of Nature in Central and Royal Lullabies

"*Considering young children as "barbarians" ("chon chat pa thuean"),*
collections of Siamese lullabies
would enlighten them with state's civilized pedagogy
the same way as other developed countries do."
(Fine Art Department, 1935: d)

In chapters 2 and 3, the repertoires of each regional rhymes - especially those of northern, northeastern, and southern lullabies - show how rural lives have been physically and spiritually entangled with Nature to a great extent. Neither humans nor Nature possess dominant or submissive roles, but rather there exists a Human-Nature coexistence in regional lullabies - apart from within the central region (which I will discuss later on in this chapter). The essential forces of Nature and the human-nature relationships portrayed in the northern, Isan, and southern folk lullabies emphasise both horizontal and vertical perspectives: as predators and prey, as life, survival and death, as mastery and mystery, and vice versa. Albeit following more of the horizontal cohabitaiton with more-than-human entities, encroaching on Nature for survival needs conveys a sense of vertical transcendence in the control of Nature for human needs. Such local identities represent how locals perceive Nature and harmoniously manage their daily lives in relation to the surrounding Nature – whether it be represented in literal or figurative forms. Portrayals of rural lives in agricultural activities, with wild and/or domestic creatures, and with other-than-human entities are bound to one another inseparably. With such Human-Nature interrelationships, rural lullabies help to carry on essential messages for children to learn how to manage and assimilate their future lives alongside the surrounding environments.

Based on my field research, the remnants of folk lullabies become implicit knowledge which predominantly preoccupy the children in their early stage of life. As for the children, they are regarded as naïve and pure, somehow able to retain the long-forgotten verses in their memories aesthetically and affectively towards Nature. Messages implied in the north, northeast, and southern lullabies show the spiritual interchangeable interconnectedness of human lives and the environment. Unfortunately, this interchangeable relation fundamentally portrayed in the previous chapters regarding folk lullabies nevertheless seems to be obscure in

central lullabies – particularly those being represented by Prince Damrong Rajanubhab's lullaby collection (1920).

Human-Nature interrelationships in adjacent regions contrast with top-down and radically vertical relationships in the control of Nature in the central plain. According to the above aphorism by the Siamese Fine Arts Department[63] (1935), the emphasis on hierarchical stratification between "barbaric" children and "civilised" adults is an intimidating expression by central Siamese intellectuals towards younger generations. A combination of didacticism and power are deployed to endorse certain acceptable forms of cultural and national knowledge through lullabies. Binary opposition has been ongoing in Siamese/Thai socio-cultural fabrics for eras; this has resulted in an understanding of intellectuals as superior to the local people, civilised urban development as superior over uncivilised/untouched rural societies, Siamese/central Thai unifying nationalism over collective identities, Spiritual Guardian of Siam (*Siam Devadhiraj*) over local spirits, highbrow literature over rural oralities, and Hinduism and state Buddhism over animism and rural Buddhism propel Siamese/Thai social history. For Craig J. Reynolds (2006), Siam/Thailand has employed colonised knowledge from the Western hemisphere to promote the ideal of a nation-state by excluding oral discourses of the past. These "oral discourses of the past" tend to lie within those of "underprivileged, barbarians, and rural people" (7 – 9) who have firmly held on to their local oralities before myths of the nation. The interruptions to political ecological history and socio-cultural elements in the process of state modernisation, state-sponsored religious belief systems, and the subsequent ethnocentrism of Siam, later Thailand, are keys factors in breaking the interconnection between humans and Nature in Thai folktales.

As for this chapter, I am narrowing down my attention from each regional lullabies analysed in the previous chapters to the central core of Thailand. The more I have studied central lullabies by closely concentrating on Thai state centralisation, the clearer the dichotomy between rural and urban, Nature and Culture, and rural oralities and highbrow lullabies becomes. This chapter focuses on my field research in the central plain of Thailand (Sukhothai, Suphanburi, Lopburi, and Ayutthaya provinces) from 26 – 29 November 2019 and 16 – 24

[63] Before 1939, today's Thailand is known as Siam. Since 1939, Siam has become Thailand under the promotion of the Prime Minister, Field Marshall Plaek Phibulsongkram. He tried to form Thai nationalism in order to be a modernized country. One of which is by reforming The Fine Arts Department established in 1911 during King Vajiravudh reign and re-centering it in The Ministry of Education. Cultural memories and histories have been rearticulated to fit Siamese pedagogies, strengthening Thai nationhood.

January 2020. There were 11 informants involved in this fieldwork section out of the larger number of my 64 participants across the region. There comprised 22 folk-storytellings out of 82 that were analysed along with relevant documentary analysis obtained from the related central provinces as shown on the map below:

[Figure 5: The central provinces where the research data is collected.
Image downloaded from
https://map.nostramap.com/NostraMap/?@18.227172,101.061430,8/en in June 2022]

Central Plain Topography and Its Lullabies

The central plain of Thailand consists of many important river basins such as Chao Phraya, Boraphet, Pa Sak, Lopburi, and Tha Chin. Geographically, central Thailand was found beneficial to inhabit and exercise agricultural activities. During the fourteenth century, Ayutthaya province was established and ruled by King U-Thong, also known as Phra Ramathibodi I (1350 – 1369 BC). Ayutthaya became the first “entitled” capital city of Siam before falling under the Burmese regime in 1767. The capital city of Ayutthaya then moved to Thonburi, Ratthanakosin Island, and Bangkok later on in the eighteenth century. With several streams and canals (constructed predominantly during the King Rama V era) connecting to the Gulf of Thailand, the central plain has become a convenient delta for local and international trades and transportations. The hustle of cities across the central plain therefore vividly brings folk literatures and beliefs to life.

In 1920 under the sixth monarch of Siam, King Vajiravudh (ruling between 1910 – 1925), the collection of national lullabies (*phleng klom dek khong thai*) directed by Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (1862 – 1943), one of King Rama IV's sons, became predominantly national masterpieces pertaining to Siamese literature. Prince Damrong gave an order to Luang Thammabhimon (also known as Tuuk Jitrakatuuk) (1858 – 1928), a royal official of Vajirayana Library (today's National Library of Thailand) to collect Siamese lullabies. Prince Damrong's piece of Siamese lullabies (edited edition, 1920), which was regarded as the classic version, consists of 167 verses divided into 3 series: lullabies (*bot he dek hai non*), consolatory verses (*kham plop dek hai chop*), and singing games (*kham dek rong len*). This collection recorded remnants of children's folk songs sung mainly in Bangkok (early known as Phra Nakhon), Thonburi[64] (west of Chao Phraya River), Nonthaburi (northwest of Bangkok), Pathum Thani (north of Bangkok), and Samut Prakan (just south of Bangkok) (Pha-ob, 1978: 37). All of these provinces are centred in the Lower Chao Phraya Basin. The collection had become the central representatives who produced the collection of national lullabies *(phleng klom dek khong thai)* to the rest of the country. As mentioned earlier, the educational reform period during the reign of King Rama V (1868 – 1910) changed the adjacent regions of the north, northeast, and south in terms of administrative laws, policies, and cultures. Textbooks, curriculums, and literary cultures were sent out from the central power for the purpose of unification of the nation-state (Piyadech, 2022). Central knowledge and education were also preserved for the male intellectuals and elites both from the centre and the adjacent neighbours. As a result, the collection of national lullabies was transmitted and assimilated to each region, replacing the regional folk rhymes.

Prince Damrong's assembling of national lullabies within the areas of the Lower Chao Phraya Basin also reveals how Prince Damrong mapped the central territorial boundaries. At this point, it is relevant to mention Thongchai Wanitchakul's "geo-body" (1994) which points out the "arbitrariness of the Siamese nation" (ix). By having Prince Damrong as one of the "intellectual protectionists" (Harrison, 2014: xvi), Damrong had constructed a "geo-body" of Siam over adjacent neighbors. That said, the geo-body of central Siam/Bangkok influenced by Prince Damrong thus has been circulated around Bangkok in a radius not further than 50 kilometers. He collected a "national lullaby masterpiece" from each province that he visited.

[64] Thonburi was the second Siamese capital kingdom since the fall of Ayutthaya kingdom by Burmese troops in 1767. The city of Thonburi has been emerged into one of the fifty districts of Bangkok in 1971.

The geo-political and socio-cultural embodiment of the nation radiated throughout the central plain, with Ratthanakosin Island (where Bangkok is located) at the centre, spreading its power outwards in a thorough fashion. Knowledge production emphasising "Thai nationalism" has set Thai bureaucracies apart from neighboring countries and other regions that share cultural similarities with Thailand (Harrison, 2014: xviii). For Pramool (1977: 43), "the people of Thailand recognise themselves as belonging to a unified culture, of which the religious, political, social, and economic capital is Bangkok".

A few essential questions should be asked at this point: What about other adjacent areas farther than 50 kilometers from Bangkok where people have shared history and culture with the valley of Chao Phraya Basin before the emergence of Ayutthaya Kingdom and Ratthanakosin reign? Are there different perceptions towards humans and Nature reflecting on intertextual lullabies? If there are, to what extent do ecological perceptions affect the lives of the people of the central plain? The answers to these questions served as my milestones in searching for the "hidden oral discourses of the past" and "Siamese/Thai state's discursive formation of knowledge-power" signified in central lullabies. I further ask, how they rip apart the harmonious management between humans and Nature.

Siamese/Bangkok Cultural Concepts and the State's Nationalistic Senses Over Central Plain Lullabies

The above questions have driven me to a work titled *"Thai Society on Chao Phraya Basin in Pre-Ayutthaya Era"* (1983) written by Chit Phumisak, a renowned Thai philologist, historian, and revolutionary. The book was gathered after Chit died in 1965, when he was shot dead in the Communist Party headquarters of Thailand due to his progressive anti-nationalism. According to Chit (1983: 93), central Thai history did not start from 1350 AD during the early era of Ayutthaya civilisation, as ascribed in *Pongsawadarn Krungsri Ayutthaya* (Krungsri Ayutthaya Chronicle). Pre-Ayutthaya civilisation in fact flourished further up north from today's Ayutthaya province along "Boraphet tributaries" (one of the main tributaries within Chao Phraya Basin) which Ping, Wang, and Nan rivers gathering from the northern region flow collectively down towards. Pre-Ayutthaya civilisation consisted of several significant kingdoms: Sukhothai, Ayotthaya (not to be confused with Ayutthaya, with a *u*), Thepnakhon, and Ram Kingdoms, just to name a few (ibid).

I would like to draw attention to the Ayotthaya civilisation which flourished alongside Sukhothai reign. The prior was ascribed in ancient manuscripts, such as in a northern *Singhana Watthikuman* manuscript (*ตำนานสิงหนวัติกุมาร*) and Sukhothai inscription No. 38 (*ศิลาจารึกหลักที่ 38*) mentioning a greatly significant kingdom named "Ayotthaya Sriram Thepnakhon" (Divine City of Flourished Ram Family named Ayotthaya) (Chit, 1983: 145 – 152). Adhering to an ancient tradition of naming the important kingdoms, they basically combined territorial subordinated kingdoms into one flourished kingdom. "Ayotthaya Sriram Thepnakhon" was the result of combining the following three neighboring cities into a major kingdom (aiming to express how great they were to the outer cities): Ayotthaya (which was the major city), Ram, and Thepnakhon (ibid: 127). The Ram family is associated with "Thao Saen Pom", the ancestor of King U-Thong[65] who later migrated south to what is today's Lopburi province, approximately 60 kilometers north of Ayutthaya province (ibid: 245 – 246). The political economy and cultural richness of "Ayotthaya Sriram Thepnakhon" had often drawn Sukhothai intellectuals to learn Theravada Buddhism with Ayotthaya monks (ibid: 256).

Following traces from Chit's research thus helps me to locate "Ayotthaya Sriram Thepnakhon" within today's Thailand. Chit (1983: 124) elucidates that "Ayotthaya Sriram Thepnakhon" kingdom covers what is now Trai Trueng subdistrict, Kamphaeng Phet district in Kamphaeng Phet province (located approximately 263 kilometers north from today's Ayutthaya province) and a part of Chai Nat province (around 120 kilometers from Ayutthaya). Unfortunately, I have not yet found any relevant research on Chai Nat's lullabies and thus would like to scope out more on Trai Trueng's rhymes. As a result, the study of Suwannee's "*An Analytical Study of Lullabies in Tambon Trai – treung Mueang District, Kampheangphet Province*" (2010) reveals several of Trai Trueng's song contents are very similar to those of Prince Damrong's. I am not, however, trying to judge which version between the two is the original, but rather attempting to trace the intertextual changes of the lullabies in comparison. Moreover, I would like to mainly pay attention to the ecological elements appearing in the lullabies, as they are my main focus.

[65] In Ayutthaya synoptic No. 64 (1936), King U-Thong (or King Ramathibodi I) is mentioned as the first king of Ayutthaya Kingdom (1350 – 1767). He is presumably the descendent of King Mangrai of the kingdom of Lanna, today's northern region of Thailand.

Intertextual Changes between Trai Trueng's and Prince Damrong's Lullabies

Anthony D. Smith's *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (1999: 71) postulates that "yet, deep within what appears to the outside as a unifying myth, are hidden many tensions and contradictions, which parallel and illuminate the social contradictions within most communities". Smith's statement is similar to Thongchai's comment that consolidates Thai history and national literature as "moments of confrontation and displacement of discourses" (1994: x). This confrontation and displacement can be traced within the resulting collection of lullabies from Trai Treung and Prince Damrong, as I will demonstrate in this section.

As noted earlier, Trai Trueng, a subdistrict of Kamphaeng Phet district in Kamphaeng Phet province, was once a part of "Ayotthaya Sriram Thepnakhon", one of the important kingdoms in the pre-Ayutthaya period alongside Sukhothai civilisation. It is located approximately 263 kilometers up north from today's Ayutthaya province and around 100 kilometers down from Sukhothai. Trai Trueng's motto according to Ratchaneewan's study (2014: 2) is locally known as follows:

> *"เจดีย์เจ็ดยอดงามสม ท้าวแสนปมนามกระเดื่อง วัดพระธาตุฟูเฟื่อง เลื่องลือไกลไตรตรึงษ์"*

This could be translated in English as follows (Wiwat, 2020)[66]:

> "Seven-crown pagoda beauty abounds, 'Tao Saen Pom' nom de guerre renowned, Phra Tat temple oh so aglow, Throughout Trai Trueng"

According to Trai Trueng's motto, the essential message implies substantial influences from Sukhothai civilisation's arts and cultures, reflected in the architecture of the "seven-crown pagoda" (*chedi jet yot*). This reflects close connections between the two kingdoms to a certain extent. Furthermore, knowing among locals that Tao Sean Pom (King U-Thong's ancestor, the first king of Ayutthaya regime) had relocated his new kingdom to today's Trai Trueng subdistrict, the (probably) good relationship between Trai Trueng and Ayutthaya kingdom is clear.

[66] A formerly senior lecturer at Department of Civil Engineering, Prince of Songkhla University.

A research titled "*An Analytical Study of Lullabies in Tambon Trai – treung Mueang District, Kampheangphet Province*" by Suwannee Thongrot (2010), as in the above-mention, cites The Thailand Research Fund (2005) which illustrates that "Thai lullabies have been rarely found in child raising process, particularly in Bangkok. If they have been found, those lullabies are considered not the traditional versions of central rhymes because the changes of lullabies' contents." (5)[67] Such a notion reveals "the displacement of discourses"; traditional central plain lullabies seem to span farther than the central territorial boundaries that Prince Damrong created. Suwannee's collection of Trai Trueng's lullabies spanned from 1981 to 2010 through examining early research. A remnant song named " *phleng klong chang*" (*The elephant round-up* song) depicts the local activity of an elephant round-up. Its lyrics can be seen below (2010: 9):

เอ..เฮ้ย วันเอ๋ยวันนี้เอย

แม่ว่าเอย...จะไปคล้องช้าง

ข้ามห้วยบึงบาง

ข้ามเขาพนมทอง

คล้องช้างนี่มาได้เอย

แม่ใส่ไว้เอย...ที่ในซอง

เกี่ยวหญ้านี่มากองเอย

ช้างน้อยเอ๋ย...ก็ไม่กิน

ยกเอยงวงขึ้นพาดงาเอย

น้ำตาก็ไหลเอ๋ย...อยู่ริน...ริน

ช้างน้อยก็ไม่กินเอย

[67] The quotation is highlighted by the researcher.

เพราะคิดถึงถิ่นเอย...มารดา

The above song could be translated as follows:

Ae..hoei, today, oh! today,

Mother is going to round-up an elephant.

Across several streams,

Over the Panomthong mountains,

I eventually caught this calf.

Mother then kept it in elephant stall.

I gathered grass and piled it up.

Dear elephant calf, he did not gulp.

He lifted his trunk, leaving it on his ivory.

His tear ran down unstoppably.

Dear calf, he did not eat.

Because he missed his motherland.

The above Trai Trueng's *phleng klong chang* illustrates an ancient ritual commonly practiced within the Chao Phraya Basin. Siri (1982: 12 – 14) states that the elephant round-up ritual was influenced by an Indian ritual, and adopted by the Suwannabhum land (mainland Southeast Asia). *Thamra Kotchasat* (Science of Elephant manuscript) from India had been assimilated to Lua ethnicities who had earlier resided in the central plain alongside Khom ethnic people. As for Lua indigenous people, they are believed to have migrated from China and the Lan Xang kingdom (Laos). The elephant round-up ritual is presumably a male activity whereby the chief of the ritual – called a *mo thao* (aged doctor) or *preuthiphat* (ibid: 12) - would perform magical chants before lassoing elephants in the wilderness. Elephants in the ancient time were used to drag logs and help locals with the fields.

The above lullaby was obviously sung by female locals because of the use of the pronoun "*mae*" (means mother in Thai). The highlight of this song, for me, is the descriptions of the mother who plans to catch elephants: she catches an elephant calf who happens to reject eating the grass provided for him because he was heartbroken from being separated from his family and home in the wild. The song expresses human's sympathy towards the calf. Instead of emphasising how the locals would capitalise on the caught elephants for labour, half of the song expresses how the "human mother" tries to tend the calf and how traumatised the calf is. Behavioural reactions and the feelings of the calf have therefore been gradually drawn by the mother who portrays close-up pictures of the miserable calf to her young listeners. Rejected by its human captors, the calf does not eat, but only cries unstoppably, for he is yearning to go back home; this is heartbreaking. Witnessing the calf's behaviours, this Trai Trueng lullaby somehow conveys to the babies the extent to which the calf would suffer after being taken away from his herd in the forests, and certainly his mother. Once again, Human-Nature interconnectedness and companionship come to light in this poetic context. Apart from learning about the existence of this traditional culture of Trai Trueng's elephant round-up, the children also build up sympathy towards wild animals and Nature as a whole. Additionally, the miserable calf's scenario in the lullaby somehow echoes the human's difficulties in life. Having sympathy towards wildlife might help prepare the younger generations to encounter their whole wild world with understandings towards others.

Trai Trueng's *phleng klong chang* and the Twist and Turn

Centralisation under the operations of the Siamese/Bangkok patriotic intellectuals imposes a national narrative through educational systems and cultural practices (Harrison, 2014: 8). Entrenching "Thainess" by compiling "national" lullabies within a radius of 50 kilometers from Bangkok by Prince Damrong is regarded as just a tiny scope to present Thai nationhood. Prince Damrong's following national rhyme, "*phleng ja pai khlong chang*" (Going to elephant round-up song", which has been wildly spread in central region) reveals intertextual constraints and the displacement of discourses to a significant degree. The theme of ecological perceptions towards elephants seems to have faded away from the song, as in the lyrics seen below (1920: 12):

วันเอ๋ยวันนี้

พี่จะไปคล้องช้าง

ข้ามทุ่งเหวบาง

ข้ามเขามะโนรมย์

ข้ามเขินเนินไศล

ข้ามไม้ไพรพนม

ปากพี่ก็ร้องชม

มือก็ไขว่ชลอมพลาง

มือข้างโน้นจะไขว่ถี่
มือข้างนี้จะไขว่หาง

เก็บได้ใส่หลังช้าง

มาฝากเอวบางอุแม่นา

The song above could be translated in English as follows (Wiwat: 2020):

Oh! today, today,

Rounding up elephant I may.

Across fields and vales.

Over hills and dales.

Onto sloping rocky plains,

Or unto bushy terrains.

Praising the Lord I smile,

Fiddling wickerwork on the while.

One hand weaves the narrow,

Another broadens the follow.

Packing on the elephant's back part,

Gifts to my dearest sweetheart.

This lullaby "*phleng ja pai khlong chang*" is noticeably sang by males (instead of the female voice in the previous Trai Trueng's *phleng khlong chang),* as reflected by the pronoun "*phi, พี่*" shown in the first line. The song depicts an elephant round-up activity in the wilderness, across the fields and over the hills. Interestingly, the second half of the song seems to be shift and portray only the instrumental value of an elephant as merely a beast of burden. Pleased by "my dearest sweetheart" or not, the elephant is set solely as a background vehicle.

Perceptions towards elephants during the Ayutthaya era reveal different sets of consciences comparing to ecological messages left in Kampaeng Phet's aforementioned lullaby. Siri (1982: 16 – 17) points out that the inheritance of the elephant round-up ritual from an Indian tradition was firstly adopted by Lua ethnics who predominantly resided since pre-Ayutthaya dynasty. During the reign of King Maha Chakkraphat of Ayutthaya kingdom (1548 – 1569), rounding-up elephants was once again promoted by the king, who used elephants for warfare and as an expression of an almighty reign. The department of Phra Kochaban (or Department of Elephant Affairs) played a great role as a 'tamable wildlife troop' in the Ayutthaya dynasty. The spiritual milieu between humans and elephants is hence detracted from Prince Damrong's national lullaby and sympathy towards the elephant calf is reduced to romance between humans instead.

When the role of elephants had only become a background orality in the national lullaby collected by Prince Damrong, the more sentimental parts of the elephant are eventually usurped by elements of romance. The elephant round-up later on is mostly implied as a flirtatious activity in which males would select "dearest" females in the same way as the humans were earlier seen lassoing the elephants. One of the adult game-songs collected from Suphanburi song repertoire compiled by Buapan Suphanyot (2018: 77) ascribes the male flirting activity through the following song under the same name "*phleng khlong chang*".

คล้องไหนคล้องลง

คล้องไหนคล้องลง

สูงละลิ่วคิ้วก่ง

คล้องให้กรงเถิดเอย

คล้องไหนคล้องซี

คล้องไหนคล้องซี

ถัดที่สองรองที่สี่

คล้องเอาที่รักเอย

The song could be translated as seen below:

Rope is lassoing,

Rope is lassoing,

To a tall, arched eyebrow lady,

Go catching her immediately.

Which lasso, oh come on!

Which one, oh come on!

Next to the second, before the fourth,

Go catch my dear sweetheart.

The relationship between humans and elephants is replaced by man's interests in selecting their companioning females. By endorsing *phleng khlong chang*'s contexts from national lullabies, modern central locals have repeated the song that is twisted and turned into an allegory for mating in modern popular culture. Anek Nawikamul, a Thai historian and folklorist, stresses that several central Thai game-songs including *phleng khlong chang* are meant to be performed during rice harvesting ceremonies wherein young males and females have chances for intimacy (2007: 367). Songs have been sung for entertainment representing

folk pop culture in the agricultural period of the central plain. That is to say, Nature and Culture in these senses convey binary contradictions which were initially imposed by Siamese/central Thai elites. Their arbitrariness to create a modernised/civilised nation becomes the nation-state's epistemology. The representations of superior culture and the natural spiritualities, therefore, show clear contrasts. A lullaby that originally mentioned the elephant then loses the elephant, fading into thin air.

The intertextual changes in these three versions of "*phleng khlong chang*" are traced to show how cultural practices and narrative discourses have been vigorously imposed by Siam/Bangkok intellectuals. State ideologies of promoting the ideal of an almighty nation have pushed nature-oriented oralities aside. The afore-mentioned little calf from Trai Trueng's lullaby becomes just a shadow, if not eliminated. The attempts of Siamese/Thai centralisation towards lullabies somehow displays binary oppositions between Nature and Culture in substantial account.

Intertextual Constraints Between the Grand Narratives and Folk Oralities

As seen in the previous analysis of Trai Trueng's lullaby, elements of Nature (as represented through the elephant calf) are rearticulated to communicate the very human affair of finding a female companion. The latter version has become widespread nowadays among central locals. Although the aesthetic independence of each version is prevalent in their styles, intertextual constraints between human and Nature are obvious. Val Plumwood, an Australian ecofeminist and philosopher, states that "human-nature dualism separates reasons to be the essential characteristic of humans and situates human life outside and above an interiorised and manipulable nature" (2001: 4). In the case of central Thai poetic rhymes, the priori knowledge of nature-oriented aspects in folk lullabies since the premodern epoch is considered backwards and under-developed in the eyes of the Siamese/Thai dualistic mindset and its cultural bodies. Such ideologies push Nature beneath the demands of human culture; in Plumwood's terms this phenomenon correlates to the denial of human dependency on Nature (ibid). Human-Nature dualism deploys reason and reductionism to draw nonhuman entities back to human contexts (egocentrism).

Additionally, looking through a socio-narratological lens, narrative structures are part of social and cultural activities which are always in constant flux (Frank, 2010: 3). That is to say, folk lullabies have been shared across areas of inhabitants, and concurrently, they also

framed subtle meanings among people inhabiting the same space. In other words, lullabies have been distributed to the other nearby locations, while simultaneously confining their subtle means and values inside a community to set certain identities within respective clans. Sets of stories therefore could not be claimed to belong entirely to a single community, but rather spread throughout many areas which have been later divided, distinguished, and developed into separate sets of national and cultural artifacts (Harrison, 2020). We might be able to say that stories and other forms of orality mobilise social and cultural bodies as a whole. However, when the narrative structures are set and distinguished into separate cultural artifacts, the heterogeneous sense of the narratives are discarded, and left to form a uniformity of the narratives. As a result, this phenomenon becomes problematic. That is to say, national and cultural artifacts that have been centralised in, and revolved around, central Siamese/Thai elites' conceptions become grand and dominant narratives. Folk oralities thus have been diminished to their oral origins, if not completely usurped. That is to say that, in this sense, nation building in Siam/Thailand has created binary oppositions between locals' nature-oriented oralities and highbrow literatures which to a certain extent have a shared origin.

Jonathan Culler (1975: 5) states that human actions and productions always have underlying systems to make sense of meanings. With structural conventions in folktales, we might say that they comprise of social epistemology, concealment, resistances, and semiotics to make their meanings possible and convincing according to the contexts of a particular time. As for central lullabies, I am going to further exemplify the portrayals of local episteme, concealment, and conflicts which will be further unfolded.

Phitsanulok's *phleng wat bot* and Prince Damrong's Classic Rhyme

Previously, I started my exploration on intertextual constraints between the Trai Treung, Kamphaeng Phet version of a lullaby and Prince Damrong's collection of central rhymes through *phleng khlong chang*. Approximately 200 kilometers east of Kamphaeng Phet, another pre-Ayutthaya prominent city called Phitsanulok province is worthy of discussion, especially the ecological aspects in its folk lullabies. Prasert Na Nakorn (1992: 2 – 4) highlights that Phitsanulok (also known as *song khwae*[68] kingdom since 1219 AD) was one of the major kingdoms in the Chao Phraya Basin. During its glory, King Sri Nownumthom ruled Phitsanulok

[68] "*song*" means the number two in Thai and "*khwae*" means tributary. This old name refers to two rivers: Nan and Yom rivers, accumulating from northern Thailand.

alongside Sukhothai kingdom (AD 1238 – 1438). Situated along the Nan and Yom rivers, Phitsanulok kingdom had become prominent in transporting agricultural products to its people and peripheral cities. Moreover, it was considered as a politically strategic kingdom since it is situated at the crossroad between northern and central Siam, which brought massive benefits to the vassal of the Chao Phraya Basin particularly during wartime (Samran, 2022: 127). Even after being defeated by the Ayutthaya kingdom, the importance of Phitsanulok city has still prevailed. For a period, it had been granted as a major military stronghold for the Ayutthaya kingdom as both of the great kings, King Borommatrailokkanat (1448 – 1488) and King Naresuan (1590 – 1605) resided there. In 1894, King Rama V of the Ratthanakosin reign conducted a great reform of provincial administration so that Phitsanulok once again had become an important administrative subdivision of Siam/Thailand, dominating over Phichit, Sukhothai, Sawankhalok, and Uttaradit provinces before the Siamese revolution in 1932 (Pranee, 1999: 28).

With the afore-mentioned Phitsanulok's history and its beneficial geography since pre-Ayutthaya period, cultures and literary arts of Phitsanulok have left a remnant of coexistence between the natural environment and human locals. One example of this is in a lullaby named *phleng wat bot* (Temple Bot song) which was collected by Saneha (2002: 27). The song reveals the ecological embodiment of Phitsanulok locals. The lyrics of the song can be seen as follows:

วัดเอ๋ยวัดโบสถ์

ปลูกข้าวโพดสาลี

พี่มาปลูกฟักปลูกแฟงปลูกแตงน้ำเต้า

เผือกมันมะพร้าว มะเฟืองสองไพ...

The above lullaby can be translated in English as described below:

Dear temple, *Wat Bot*,

Planting wheat (*khaopot sali*)[69].

[69] In Simon de la Loubère's Du Royaum de Siam (AD 1687), mentioned "*khaopot sali*" as an imported wheat from India (Santhi, 2020). Simon de la Loubère is a French diplomat sent by Louis XIV to Siam under La Loubère-Céberet mission. Name of "*khaopot sali*" may also be understood as maize and wheat in combining lexicon. However, "*khaopot sali*" is also called by northern locals.

Brother (*phi*[70]) is planting white gourds, winter gourds, and bottle gourds.

I will also sow taros, potatoes, coconuts, and star fruits worth two

coins…"

Images of a rich bounty of vegetables and fruits can be clearly seen in the above song. Along two tributaries - Nan and Yom rivers - Phitsanulok province has contributed lots of agricultural products to the people of the Chao Phraya Basin since very early times. Phisanulok's natural abundances had been confirmed by King Rama V who wrote a letter to Prince Devawongse Varoprakar, one of the 82 children of King Rama IV, during his royal journey to Phitsanulok in 1901. Phitsanulok's socioeconomic values had been elaborated in King Rama V's letter which describes how the locals along the two rivers earned their living by sowing varieties of fruits and vegetables such as corn, sugarcane, pomelo, and tobacco (Prasert, 1992: 48), all of which made the King feel very impressed with locals' way of life. In the Phitsanulok version of the *wat bot* song, the picturesque scene of a male farmer is firmly embedded in the song. The image of the hardworking male farmer represents a larger rural atmosphere closely associated with agricultural Nature. Within pictures of a man sowing seeds to the land, the hope that natural bounties would ripen for him and his lover to enjoy sustainability are vividly portrayed.

The Twist and Turn

Intertextual features of Phitsanulok's *wat bot* song also appear in Prince Damrong's rhymes collection, but with more domesticated senses between the son-in-law and mother-in-law with her daughter. The name of the song has been changed into *phleng wat tanot* (Temple Tanot song) as seen below (1920: 31):

วัดเอ๋ยวัดโตนด

มีต้นเข้าโภชสาลี

เจ้าลูกเขยตกยาก

[70] *Phi* is a Thai pronoun referring to the ones who are older than the others. In the above song, *phi* refers to a man planting all seeds to his lover.

แม่ยายก็พรากลูกสาวหนี

ต้นเข้าโภชสาลี

ตั้งแต่นี้จะโรยราเอย

In English, the song can be understood as ascribed below:

Dear temple, *Wat Tanot*,

Having wheat.

Son-in-law is ill-fated,

Mother-in-law then has taken her daughter away.

Oh, the wheat,

The wheat is going to be withered.

From the afore-mentioned classic *wat tanot* lullaby, a household conflict between the son-in-law and the mother-in-law exemplifies the way in which the song has been shifted to circulate around human affairs. Once again, the work of the *wat tanot* lullaby was built from codes established by the previous work of Phitsanulok's *wat bot* song. The name used for "*เข้าโภชสาลี* or *khaopot sali*" in *wat thanot* song reveals the endorsement of the Pali language into priori folk repertoire. This practice had commonly been employed by Siamese intellectual elites to refashion old oral origins into more embellished styles of narrative. Contexts of natural bounties appearing in the previous version of the *wat bo*t song have been transformed to fit centralised urbanisation where financial status has instead become a prominent factor in a successful marriage. The ill-fated son-in-law suffers the state of poverty, whether it be caused by his health problems that deter him from working in the field, or other unknown issues; financial status is inevitably referred to. Pictures of the intimate relationship between husband (*phi*) and his lover in Phitsanulok's lullaby version have been transformed into marriage conflicts in which the intervention of a mother-in-law has been inserted.

The portrayals of farming activities have become a backdrop in the aforementioned *wat tanot* lullaby. The poverty of the son-in-law referred to in the song could be understood as the emergent property of the central state under the imposition of a capitalistic system. In other words, capitalism and urbanisation are strongly associated with cash flow and concurrently with financial shortage resulting in income inequality and limited access to resources and opportunities. With the structural factors contributing to inequality and discrimination, these could cause changes in the Human-Nature relationship into distinguished dualism. That is to say, ecological abundance and environmental knowledge that were once significant in life might have been relegated to secondary and subordinated parameters. In a way, *khaopot sali* could signify that the locals once depended upon natural products. They and their ecological perceptions had been left withering amidst the hustle and bustle of urbanisation in which a dependency upon Nature is denied. That is, the reflections of ecocentrism are dramatically transformed into egocentricism in this rhyme.

Human-Nature Dualism in Lullabies Sang in The Children's Home of H.M. Queen Sudhasininat, King Rama V Era

Intertextual conflicts occur not only between locals and Prince Damrong's lullaby collection, but also within the environment of the elites themselves. The analyses of Phaob Posakritsana's *The Sixteen Central Lullabies* (1978) and Anek Nawikamul's *Beyond the Centuries of Central folksongs* (2007: 477) mentions a name "Paysayan[71] Morah" (a paymaster sergeant named Morah during King Rama V, also known as Pay Morah in short). Having a close connection with Prince Damrong, Pay Morah composed his version of central Siamese lullaby series known as *chan yaowapot* (Children poetries) in 1884 which was inspired by Prince Damrong's interest in lullabies. Even though the well-known national lullaby collection by Prince Damrong was published in 1920 (which was later than Pay Morah's 1884 version), the intimacy of the assimilated knowledge of central folk lullabies between Prince Damrong and Morah was evidentially occurring earlier in the court. Moreover, Pay Morah had sent out his inspiration to several intellectuals at that time. In 1890, numerous intellectuals helped to compose new versions of central lullabies to serve The Children's Home of H.M. Queen Sudhasininat, one of King Rama V's wives who established care homes for the poor children and orphanages. This collection of lullabies had been sung throughout Bangkok (previously known as Phra Nakhon). The lullaby named *phleng jan jao*[72] or as I mentioned in the Chapter 3 as *jan jao* song, revolving

[71] "*Paysayan*" is derived from a transliterated English word "paymaster sergeant" as the title of Mr.Morah.
[72] For full version of classic *jan jao* song, it can be read in chapter 3.

around the moon, and wishes of an elder sister to her younger one, was transformed to "dialectical reasoning" by a Ministry of Education's official in King Rama V, Tad Parean. He composed his *jan jao* lullaby version as contained in Prince Damrong's collection of national lullabies (1929: 24) as can be seen below:

จันทร์เอยจันทร์เจ้า

ใครขอเข้าขอแกงท้องแห้งหนอ

ร้องจนเสียงแห้งแหบถึงแสบคอ

จันทร์จะรอให้เราก็เปล่าดาย

ยืมจมูกท่านหายใจเห็นไม่คล่อง

จงหาช่องเลี้ยงตนเร่งขวนขวาย

แม้นเป็นคนเกียจคร้านพานกรีดกราย

ไปมัวหมายจันทร์เจ้าอดข้าวเอย

The song can be translated in English as follows:

Oh! Moon, Heavenly Deity,

Begging its blessing then go hungry.

Beseech it till throat sounds sore.

Alone you'll be, it'll leave you bore.

Tough respiring through other's nostrils,
Better work hard on your own will.

If wander aimlessly and lazy,

Moon would render you hungrily crazy.[73]

From the above song, the notions of human independency and perseverance can be noticeably seen, whereas supernatural beliefs of the moon seem to be quizzical. Natural spiritualities the locals used to hold on are now being challenged. Mind/body, emotion/reason, human/nature, ignorance/literacy have been once again repeatedly reproduced as dualistic oppositions in this context. This lullaby, sang in the royal residential care for children, manifests the ruling class' cultural practices of dualistic dynamics where wholeness and an integrated sphere of supernaturalism are discarded. Folk cultures at this point - according to Thongchai's terms - are "localised, re-articulated, and transited to sophisticated national narratives" (1994). Perceptions of natural dependencies are taken out from the modernised paths of central Siamese/Thai rulers. Such a dichotomy of Nature and "civilised" culture again plays around in this poetic interface where the constructions of intellectual identity are situated as "outside" Nature.

Although the narrative conflicts in the *jan jao* lullaby implicitly express clashes between the folk and the royal segments, Prince Damrong's version (the most widespread version) emphasises the important roles of the moon and the human dependency on spiritualistic characteristics of Nature. It therefore still expresses a good grasp of naturalistic concepts in its central lullaby phrases. Folk lullabies in central Siam/Thailand shift through time, as noted by Poramin (2004: 6), whose work suggests that conflicts and compromises in folk narratives convey cultural dynamics in terms of human-environment relations, identities, and cultural beliefs.

The Problematic Faculties Between Nature-Culture Separation and the Crossroads of the Two

The focus here follows the notions of Siamese/Bangkok Human-Nature-Culture divisions that seem to be embedded in classic central lullabies. This division reflects rigid dualistic separations through the use of the intertextual methodology that transforms nature-oriented contexts into the more "civilised culture" contexts by pushing the Nature itself aside. For Siamese intellectual paradigms, the dichotomies of natural bodies and "proper" culture have set folk repertoires (being closely related to Nature) as subordinate to the "courtly grand narratives"

[73] Translated by Wiwat Sutiwipakorn, a formerly senior lecturer, Department of Civil Engineering, Prince of Songkhla University.

(being considered as more civilised in cultural ideologies), despite the fact that their texts share the same roots. That is to say, Trai Treung's and Phitsanolok's lullabies - which have previously been analysed in comparison with Prince Damrong's classic collection - reveal textual constraints and concurrently manifest the shared collective remnants of literary cultures. As in Damrong's collection, the discursive practices could be seen in the operation of transitional ideologies in order to fit into the "proper culture" of nationalism. Prince Narisara Nuwattiwong (1803 – 1947), a son of King Mongkut or King Rama IV, once criticised folk contexts in central lullabies - which represent day-to-day life associated with natural resources such as sticky rice, honey from beehives, and buffalo milk consumed by locals - as "*lew*" (viciousness) (cited by Varittha, 2008: 13). Prince Narisara therefore suggested that folk contexts should have been changed to suit high classed culture. This criticism later seemed to re-articulate the royal version of lullabies accordingly to the 'proper high classed culture'. Varittha [cites Kaseam Boonsri (1975)] indicates in her work on *Implications of Politics and Society on Thai Lullabies* (2008: 6) that folk lullabies were presumably transmitted into intellectual society where folk wisdom seems to leave its footprint in elite literary culture in a greater or lesser proximity. The rigid division between human and Nature therefore might not be as it seems and might invite further exploration.

From the interrogation thus far, folk contexts related to ecological elements are not entirely erased from central rhymes. Natural imagery is still attached to classic central lullabies to some extent, but operates only as a means of refashioning and rearticulating to fit into orthodox conceptions, and of course the aesthetic criterion of the state. These processes, however, reveal significant transitional operations which run in a state of continuum between Natural and Cultural bodies. The unbridgeable gap between Natural and Cultural dualism demonstrated in previous examinations dramatically opens up new clues to the sphere of embodiment between Nature and Culture. The inquiries on rigid binary opposition between Nature and Culture in Thai folk lullabies lead me once again to examine an ecocriticism approach.

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, ecocriticism is a young approach introduced in the late twentieth century in America and the UK. Several ecocriticists such as Cheryll Glotfelty (1996), Glen A. Love (2003), Greg Garrard (2004, 2014), and Lawrence Buell (2005) agree on the linkage between the human and the non-human, so that Nature exists as one whole microorganism and as part of a coexistence in shared landscapes. Writings about the natural

world, or nature-oriented old literature, have thus been categorised and examined in the genre of "Nature Writing". This genre, however, has had its own flaws detected by Jonathan Bate (1991) and Timothy Morton (2007) who argue that paradoxical methodology still works with the rigidity of Human-Nature-Culture separation. In Morton's *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, he points out that those writings about the natural world have no connection with Nature, but rather a new phrase thriving from Romanticism that appeared in Europe and Euro-America in the Romantic Age of the late eighteenth century (Morton, 2007:2; Deming and Savoy, 2011: 5). For Morton's senses against ecocriticism, Nature-Culture separation in ecocriticism has noticeably limited the investigation of Human-Nature complexity in the phenomenal world. That is, the intensive highlight on Nature has tamed Nature itself and has also discarded with the human culture that stemmed from the phenomenal world per se. This critical notion from Morton, therefore, has driven me to carefully look at the possibilities of the intersection of Nature and Culture.

The above examination leads me farther onto the intersection of Nature-Culture and mind-body imposed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908 – 1961), a French phenomenological philosopher who wrote on embodied consciousness (1964, 2012). For Merleau-Ponty, perception and embodiment are the starting point that bridges mind-body, Nature-Culture, and the phenomenologically-experienced world all together. As opposed to Descartes's objective knowledge and Foucault's construction of subjectivity as an objectified subject, Merleau-Ponty states that human existence bears close connection to the vision of the embodied mind as well as Nature. Sentiments towards the phenomenal world work in and through culture. An example can be seen in the Zoroastrian tradition dating back to 2000 BCE in ancient Iranian Empires. For Zoroastrianism, water and fire were revered as mediums to purify evil spirits and to bring back spiritual insights and wisdoms. Their Avesta texts focus on the protection of venerable ecology because it represents the supreme wisdom territories of God. (Boyce, 1984). Such Zoroastrian beliefs intricately explain how the perception and embodiment of Nature-Culture work in and through a culture of human existence. To consider Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological embodiments one more time, it can be understood that humans create stories derived from their natural surroundings with cognitive apparatus that is not wholly distinct from our bodies and our feelings. These processes then make linkage with "being-in-the-world", intersecting with and creating affective environmental humanities (Bladow and Ladino, 2018: 2; Cassaniti and Menon, 2017: 15; Couper, 2018: 289). This shows the ways in which emotional

reactions and affections towards boundaries of lands, environment, and nonhuman species could help explore natural positioning in Thai literary culture, as in this case of Thai lullabies.

The Unheard Sound of Nature in Classic Central Lullabies

The afore-mentioned considerations thus shine light upon the linkage of human perception and affections towards natural elements as represented in classic central lullabies. The problem here is that even though natural themes are still prevalent in the lullabies, natural values in classic Thai nursery memories tend to be set as a backdrop of human experiences and marginalised in the nursery framework. That is to say, although the distinction between the Nature-Culture faculties seems very blurry, environmental portrayals - which have been represented towards the cognitive domain of the human mind - seem to be romanticised, localised, and juxtaposed with human hierarchical orders. Nature is still a place apart from the human, and humans through the representation in central lullabies reveal no interaction with natural ecology.

One of the lullabies included within Prince Damrong's collection (1920) entitled "*phleng nok khao"* (Spotted dove song) might be a good starting point to exemplify the natural alienation in the central Thai perception in accordance with the above examination. *Phleng nok khao* is still echoing in several parts of the central plain basin. My field research at the Chao Phraya Basin brought me to Suphan Buri province. There, I had a chance to meet Kwanjit Sriprajan at her 73 years of splendor (2020).[74] She is one of the renowned Thai national artists (1995) or *sinlapin haeng chat*, a title given annually by the Office of the National Culture Commission of Thailand. She is well-known for her *"lae* music" (a type of music played traditionally during religious ceremonies) and she has later become one of the prominent artists representing central music and central people's local wisdoms through her songs. Among the numerous central lullabies of her choice, Mae Kwanjit picked up Spotted dove song to sing for me first. Its lyrics are seen below (listen to the song from the disc in the Central folder, track 2):

เจ้านกเขาเอย

ขันแต่เช้าจนเย็น

ขันไปเถิดแม่จะฟังเสียงเล่น

[74] The fieldwork conducted on 19 January 2020.

เสียงเย็นๆ นะแม่คุณเอย

The song could be translated in English as described below:

Oh! dear spotted doves,
You coo from dust till dawn.

Keep on cooing, I'll listen to my baby's clucking song.

Oh, my euphonious sounded dove.

There is evidence that the references to a baby in central Thai lullabies would be regularly denoted as *jao nuea yen* (cool-skinned child), *jao nuea lamun* (smooth-skinned baby), and *jao nuea num* (soft-skinned infant), just to name a few (Pratueng, 1985). The above song is one of the picturesque examples in which Nature, represented as spotted doves, is set as the backdrop of human existence. The song that at first has a tendency to appreciate the sound made by the doves, then shifts its attention towards a human baby's activities. In this sense, the natural sounds produced by the the doves are treated as mere insignificant noise.

The trajectory of the hierarchical Human-Nature distinction that is exemplified in *phleng nok khao* emphasises the position that central people place Nature in their cognitive perceptions. Unlike folk rhymes from the adjacent regions beyond Siamese/Bangkok bureaucracies - where the portrayals of human life can be seen thriving alongside plants, forest fruits, and wild animals - humans in the *nok khao* lullaby are situated "outside" Nature. In the peripheral regions, Nature might not always have been standing in the foreground of locals' experiences, but thriving alongside one another. These regional folks position themselves as parts of a larger ecosystem and this conception has been enlarged through their ecologically and spiritually oriented poetic knowledge. The illustrations of regional locals' way of life (through their lullabies) represent locals' horizontal cohabitation with Nature: as rice paddies and wild chicks are to northern locals; as eggs in firewood from the fields, grilled fish from paddies, and conversations with magpies are to Isan environments; and as coconuts, rice grains, and aquatic lives are to the southern cuisine. This intricate interplay of human and natural space beautifully manifests traditional ecological knowledge among local wisdoms residing on the outskirts of the conventional Siamese/Thai state.

When the ecological perception amongst regional folk wisdoms turns around to the central Thai conventional state, the representations of natural phenomena reveal a paradigm shift. According to Thongchai Winichakul's *The Other Within: Travel and Ethno-Spatial Differentiation of Siamese Subjects 1885 – 1910* (2015), "*pa*" (wilderness), with the connotations of natural wildlife and forests, is considered as a "marginal space" according to Siamese ethnographical ideology (48). In 1930, the Siamese state imposed the idea of a "Pan-Thai commonality" to present the political and sociocultural expansions of Siam towards the adjacent neighbors (Turton, 2015: 5). Later, the term "*chao pa*" (forest-dwelling people, particularly those who resided in today's northern parts of Thailand towards Luang Prabang and Myanmar [Damrong, 1919]) had been adopted to describe the pluralistic cultures and belief systems among the indigenous/non-Buddhist/primitive societies in an attempt to fit their cultural richness into the new monoculture of Siamese "normality" (ibid). A book entitled "*waduai chao pa chat tangtang"* (On the forest races) composed by Chaophraya Surasakmontri examines *chao pa* and "their" *pa* as uncivilised and untamable entities (Thongchai, 2015: 48). Unlike the perceptions of hilltribe peoples (such as kha, khamu, lue, lua residing in Siam/Thailand) and rural people, *pa* is treated as their relative. *Pa* represents beauty and values in itself. However, when *chao pa* and their *pa* have been examined through Siamese elites' worldviews, *pa* becomes an exotic place that most travellers would use as a background for their individual love-separation poetry.

Ecology without Nature in a Nirat-like Lullaby

Nirat, lyrical poetry dealing with love-separation, flourished among Kings and the courts of Siam, especially during the reign of King Rama V who loved to compose nirat at his leisure (Manas, 1974: 138). Although the "travelogue" (Thongchai, 2015) would aesthetically describe natural appreciation, it also seems to convey ecology without Nature – but rather, allegories and individualistic conceptions. Again, Human-Nature interconnectedness that seems to be in a seamless faculty reveals layers of hierarchical classification among modern Siamese elites towards the phenomenal world.

A lullaby named "*duean ngai*" (Waxing moon song) in the following poetic rhyme collected by Prince Damrong's national nursery collection (1920: 12) illustrates a journey that culminates in an appreciation for the waxing moon, which is more or less similar to nirat genre in its depictions of Nature. The lyrics can be seen below:

เดือนเอ๋ยเดือนหงาย

ดาวกระจายทรงกลด

อุ้มเจ้าขึ้นใส่รถ

ว่าจะพาไปชมเดือน

พิศแลดูดาวไป

ดาวก็ไม่งามเหมือน

พิศแลดูเดือน

เหมือนนวลอุแม่นา

The song could be understood in English as follows (Wiwat: 2020).

Waxing moon shining afar,

Halo glow and twinkling stars,

Cradling you up carriage,

To adore the sky visage.

Searching the stars to compare,

Your beauty is beyond theirs.

Gorgeous vista of the moon,

That is more like you, a boon.

The above song opens the scene with the appearance of the moon. Different phases of the moon have always allured and adorned humans since premodern times. “Time was first reckoned by lunations, and every important ceremony took place at a certain phase of the moon” (Graves, 1960). Therefore, the moon plays a significant spiritual role in many ways.

Additionally, orbiting around our planet, the moon contributes to many natural phenomena to the world such as tides, coral reproduction, and bright night for nocturnal animals (Jabr and Magazine: 2017). Gazing up to the sky at night to appreciate the mysterious phases of the moon seems to be a normal activity among most humans.

The portrayal of the moon in the *duean ngai* song, however, rapidly shifts from the essential significance of the celestial beauty of the moon to an allegorical travelogue "by carriage" in order to appreciate the waxing moon. With this mark of travelogue by carriage, the lullaby seems to reveal that the scene has been circulated around bourgeois society in the epoch of the modernised Siam, which happened rigorously during the reign of King Rama V. Journeys by carriage at that time were a privilege reserved for kings, the court administrative officials, and rich merchants; this was beyond the reach of "common folks" (Thanet, 2020). However, if the song points towards a Siamese bourgeois atmosphere, their perception towards the moon solely revolves around allegory and self-interest, since the moon is illustrated less charmingly compared to the female counterpart: "searching the stars to compare, your beauty is beyond theirs". Such conceptions of the moon (and other natural surroundings) as a personification of beloved ones unquestionably relates to highbrow nirat genre. Surprisingly, it appears that Prince Damrong once criticised the journey to the wilderness as a means of comparing the individual loves with Nature as "*mai mi kaen san*" (nonsense) (cited by Thanes, 2020). The journey to marvel at the wilderness (as in this case the moon) thus merely represents "an eye-opening trip to the world's metropolis, or an entertaining tour", eventually referring to the beloved ones (Thongchai, 2015: 43).

Beyond Nature and Culture

It is undeniable that the notion of a "Pan-Thai commonality" (Turton, 2015: 5) and the attempts to define *pa* as well as other natural phenomena which rigorously happened between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, are operated under the concept of the modernised Siam. The portrayal of the relationship between humans and Nature still plays around sociopolitical and cultural contexts. Yet, Nature is also a sphere that must be tamed. Modern and hierarchical relations between humans and Nature have been widely explored by a French anthropologist, Philippe Descola. His work on *Beyond Nature and Culture* (2013) argues that classifications between humans as the spectators of phenomena and natural landscape start from "an arbitrary point" (59).

> Subjective impression serves as the starting point for the rationalization of the world of experience in which the phenomenal space of perception is transposed into a mathematical space…Objectification [towards nature] of the subjective produce a twofold effect: it creates a distance between man and the world by making the autonomy of things depend upon man; and it systematizes and stabilizes the external universe even as it confers upon the subject absolute mastery over the organization of this newly conquered exteriority. (Descola, 2013: 59)

For Descola, Nature is seen as "a place resistant to all attempts to tame it" (2013: 32). Nature instead inspires human arbitrary culture. In a way, the hierarchical orders between the natural boundaries and human culture imply the linear perspective of human cognitive abilities to understand cultural processes (ibid: 59). That is, humans try to identify their existence in contrast with the "outside world", as the others – things that are different to us. Clashes between human sameness and "others" of deep differences become a problematic conception in which the concept of celebrating human power and marginalising others is the imposition (Cassaniti and Menon, 2017: 14). Such distinctive ideologies have pushed the natural sphere to merely a "ventriloquist's dummy, of which man could make himself, as it were, the lord and master" (Descola, 2013: 61).

The otherness of Nature is also illustrated through several other lullabies in central folk memories such as *phleng nok khao khan* (Cooing dove song), *phleng nok iang* (Starling bird song), *phleng nok kathung* (Spot-billed pelican song), just to name a few. All of which are manifested as a background of human individual daily activities. In other words, instead of being considered as an organism alongside human existence, Nature is illustrated as merely an ornament to the conventional narrative of the Siam state. This connotation exists in opposition with Donna Haraway's posthumanist perspective (2008). Haraway points out that the interaction between human and nonhuman companions as well as the association between Nature and Culture would help reassess human practices and conceptions of the natural world. Thinking about the companion species or other natural phenomena in a "horizontal vision" against a "vertical transcendence", might help humans rethink and see themselves as part of the fragile biosphere and, indeed, amaze themselves to the mysterious Nature.

Few Surviving Gems in Central Plain Poetic Memories: Interrelationship of Feeling and Mystical Experiences towards Central Lullabies

Central lullabies do not completely constellate taxonomies of Human-Nature-Culture bodies. As far as my investigation goes, it is fortunate that there are two remaining lullabies - *phleng nok khawao* (Koel song) and *phleng nok khamin* (Oriole song). Both of these songs convey human-nature interrelations appeared in the central collection of national lullabies– in which natural entities are portrayed at the forefront of folk orality. These natural entities also have enough space to unfurl their mysterious elements to the literary world.

Starting with *phleng nok khawao*, the song seems to be the only surviving folk lullaby that considers the lives of birdie koels (as one of the cuckoo kin) and crows as individual organisms bound to a human's struggling life. My field research on January 16 – 24, 2020, within the central region reveals that *phleng nok khawao* has been widely sung among the folk peoples in Ayutthaya, Lopburi, Suphanburi, and Sukhothai provinces. This song I had collected from the fieldwork was beautifully sung by the Assisstant Professor Buaphan Suphanyot from the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce. Its lyrics could be seen as follows (listen to the song from the disc in the Central folder, track 3):

เจ้านกกาเหว่าเอย

ไข่ไว้ให้แม่กาฟัก

แม่กาก็หลงรัก

คิดว่าลูกในอุทร

คาบเอาเข้ามาเผื่อ

ไปคาบเอาเหยื่อมาป้อน

ถนอมไว้ในรังนอน

ซ่อนเหยื่อมาให้กิน

ปีกเจ้ายังอ่อนคลอแคล

ท้อแท้จะสอนบิน

พาลูกออกไปกิน

ที่ปากน้ำพระคงคา

ตีนเจ้าเหยียบสาหร่าย

ปากก็ไซร้หาปลา

กินกุ้งแลกินกั้ง

กินหอยกระพั้งแมงดา

กินแล้วก็โผมา

จับที่ต้นหว้าโพธิ์ทอง

ยังมีนายพราน

เที่ยวเยี่ยมๆ มองๆ

ยกเอาปืนขึ้นส่อง

จ้องถูกเอาแม่กาดำ

ตัวหนึ่งนั้นจะต้ม

อีกตัวหนึ่งนั้นจะยำ

กินนางแม่กาดำ

ค่ำวันนี้อุแม่นา

The above lullaby can be understood in English as below (Wiwat: 2020):

Cuckoo, some do know,
Laid eggs hatched by crow,
Mistakenly, love's grown,
Crow thinks it's her own,

Seeking food to feed,
Scavenging worm and seed,
Birdies warmed in nest,
Food stowed for the fest,

Young wings are feeble,
Teach till capable,
Leading them outdoor,
To estuary they soar,

Stomping on the weed,
Pecking among the reed,
Shrimp, prawn are dishes,
Crustaceans, crayfishes,
After feasting search,
Bhothi tree they perch,

Then came a shooter,
Stealthily his wander,
Set target and aimed,
At the crows he claimed,

One’s set to be braised,
Other grilled and dressed,
Though recipe yummy,
His evening happy.

The afore-mentioned song firstly illustrates a crow’s life who mistakenly - yet unquestionably - loves the freshly hatched koel chick. Abandoned by its actual koel mother, the crow loves the koel chick as if it were her own child. The mother crow gradually builds her love-bound with the chick and teaches it to look after itself. Unfortunately, she is then captured and eaten by a shooter at the end of the song. All of my central participants across the 4 central provinces from the field research sang this song using the same lyrics and a mourning tone as if it was the reference of their own bitter lives - whether it be, for example, due to the loss of a

child or the mother's tragic experiences. These sentiments touched and moved me greatly, as if there were mutually emotional responses lingering in the atmosphere. The song reflects on the uncertainty of life, a common occurrence in the natural world.

Another central lullaby titled *phleng nok khamin* (*Oriole* song) compiled in Prince Damrong's collection (1920: 5) demonstrates the oriole's efforts in searching for a nest in which to sleep. Its lyrics can be seen below:

เจ้านกขมิ้นเหลืองอ่อนเอย

ค่ำแล้วจะนอนที่ตรงไหน

จะนอนไหนก็นอนได้

สุมทุมพุ่มไม้ก็เคยนอน

ลมพระพายชายพัดอ่อนๆ

เจ้าเคยจรมานอนรัง เอย

The song could be understood in English as follows (Wiwat, 2020):

Oh! golden orioles,

Where'll you sleep tonight?

Wherever you rest's your might.

In bushes or shrubs – you've tried.

Oh! breeze permeates atmosphere,

Back to your nest, my dear.

This song, with its elaborate details of the oriole's nesting behaviors, had been widely sung. This well-known lullaby was echoed in The Children's Home of H.M. Queen

Sudhasininat, one of King Rama V's wives who established a care home for poor children and orphanages in 1890. According to the book *The Legend of Care Home for Children in the Children's Home of H.M. Queen Sudhasininat* (1929: 17), it states that the song was sung among Phra Nakhon locals up until fifty years ago. The song portraying the orioles' perseverance serves as a good example for human ethical matters. Its lyrics can be described as follows:

ปักเอยปักษิณ

นกขมิ้นเรือเรืองเหลืองอ่อน

ถึงเวลาหากินก็บินจร

ครั้นสายัณห์ผันร่อนมานอนรัง

ความเคยคุ้นสกุณาอุตสาหะ

ไม่เลยละพุ่มไม้ที่ใจหวัง

เพราะพากเพียรชอบที่มีกำลัง

เป็นที่ตั้งตนรอดตลอดเอย

In English, the song can be translated as below (Wiwat, 2020):

Ah! Avian pal, old soul,

Yellowish golden orioles,

At dawn, to thrive – you fly.

At dusk, to rest – you lie.

Habitually away you strive.

Returning always to bush life.

Strenuously you persevere,

Safely ever, oh! bird dear.

As previously mentioned, this version of the *Oriole* song was derived from folk memories' *phleng nok khamin*. For this version, Khun Pakdee-arsa (1835 – 1917) composed the song in an allegorical genre (Damrong, 1929), wherein the "avian pal" is fighting for its life. Human speculations towards the life of orioles noticeably inspired the nursery works once again; the behavior of the orioles can teach lessons about the mutual relationship between us and Nature. Orioles' strenuous perseverance is observed and revered by humans. It is jolly to consider this song along with the natural portrayal which is set as a parable to human culture and our ethical matters. However, according to Pauline Couper, a geographer who studies the embodied spatialities of being in Nature (2018), argues that there is an unbridgeable gap between the language of the world and the language of the word (286). In using a language of reasoning alone, we can never capture the experiences of the whole world, which encapsulate so much more. She thus suggests that we adopt a more sentimental language. At this point, I am not quite certain to what extent humans could appreciate Nature alone by using less language of the word – i.e. by not conveying our appreciation into words, except using non-representative language such as onomatopoeia. What would human literary culture be like? I nevertheless do agree that we should listen to natural language with emotional responses and understandings. To convey an appreciation of Nature by using human language might be the best starting point. However, to affectionately add a more ecological understanding to human cultural artifacts would help reassess our part in this mysterious and magical environment.

In this chapter, therefore, I have captured some of the key central lullabies (as discussed above) in which the portrayals of natural bodies are clearly shown: how Nature is illustrated, and what the interactions between humans and Nature are like. There are remaining folk lullabies dealing with wars and tragic military expeditions, under the same name as Phisanulok's "*phleng wat bot*" which portrays an Ayutthayan hero named Khun Thong at the forefront. This song has become well-known because it reflects on the sacrifices and brave deeds of the hero, Jao Khun Thong (*jao* is a pronoun for ordinary locals) (Pha-ob:1978, 108 – 109), who risks his life to rescue Siamese comrades captured by Myanmar soldiers during the Ayutthaya wartime. On the one hand, his death brought condolences to the nation. On the other, it flamed national pride and encouraged Siamese people to be fearless like the martyr in the song. Moreover, lullabies related to central folk belief systems, traditions and cultures, and classic highbrow literatures can be found in the richness of central lullabies.

Natural Representation in Royal Lullabies

Poetic memories of lullabies circulate not only among folk peoples, but also among the royal family of the Siamese state. "*bot he klom phrajao lukteu"* (*The Royal Highness Princes' and Princesses' Lullabies*) was composed by Sunthorn Phu, one of the greatest royal poets during the reign of King Rama II up until that of King Rama IV. This royal lullaby consists of five main contents: *bot he* (*บทเห่*, introduction), *he rueang jap rabam* (*เห่เรื่องจับระบำ*), *he rueang kaki* (*เห่เรื่องกากี*), *he rueang phra aphaimani* (*เห่เรื่องพระอภัยมณี*), and *he rueang khobut* (*เห่เรื่องโคบุตร*) (Pha-ob, 1978). In this section, I will solely examine *bot he* (the introduction) at some parts in the royal lullabies. At the start of royal lullabies, the royal heirs are described as being descended from the heavenly sphere and tended by several royal babysitters and wet nurses. Some example lyrics can be seen below (Vajirayana Library, 1926; Pha-ob, 1978: 9):

"เห่เอยพระหน่อนาถ *พระเยาวราชอดิศร*

หน่อเนื้อพระชินวร *จำเริญสวัสดิมงคล*

เทพเชิญเจริญพักตร์ *พระยอดรักมาปฏิสนธ์*

ฝูงญาติและฝูงชน *ก็ชื่นชมและสมปอง*

หมายถึงพระเดชา *อยู่ในใต้ฝ่าธุลีสนอง*

เชิญเสด็จลงอู่ทอง *ไสยาสน์สำราญพระวรกาย*

พี่เลี้ยงและนางนม *บังคมบาทกล่อมถวาย*

พร้อมเพรียงอยู่เรียงราย *บำเรอพระราชเยาวพา*

บ้างก็เข้าประคองซ้าย *บ้างก็ย้ายประคองขวา*

ดังเดือนดาวในเวหา *มาแวดล้อมพระจันทร"*

The above excerpt can be understood in English as seen below (Wiwat, 2020):

"Croon tune Your Noble Baby,	Oh! Babe blue blood O' Mighty.
Descendant of Deity Great,	Please be pleasantly blessed.
Angelic creation you are,	Destined and born a star.
Your kin, subjects, and peasants,	Are elated at your presence.
O' Great Might and Power,	That we all are under.
Do enjoy the golden crib.	Have a good slumber at lib.
Nannies and wet nurses,	Will croon soothing verses.
All are readily surround,	To please your young crown.
At left some will serve,	At right some will swerve.
Like stellar bodies up sky,	Around the moon they ply."

The royal lullaby above portrays high praises and blessings to the royal newborns, descended from the Mighty Divine sphere. The song mentions two words at the beginning: "*adison*" (*อดิศร*) (denotes the Hindu deity Shiva, god of creation, destruction, and recreation in the world) and "*chinnawon*" (*ชินวร*) (meaning the Great and Undefeatable Buddha (Puueng, 1979)). The interplay of Hinduism and Buddhism manifests the sophisticated royal epistemology in relation to human existence and human surroundings by placing the monarchy as a supreme being above and beyond any other individuals. The reference to the god Shiva as well as the Buddha compares the royal heirs which in some degree reflect the hierarchical order of Nature. Both prominent Deities are believed to contribute great benevolence to the human world in a superior fashion to the surrounding Nature. That is, they are, to a certain extent, the representatives of natural forces but also situated as the master – the dictators of all other natural beings. The notion of royal supremacy is relevant to the perceptions in the Thai/Siamese monarch because of beliefs pertaining to *dhewaraja* (King of the Gods) and sometimes

bodhissatta (auspicious persons on the path of Buddhahood). This great reverence by and large reveals a conception of kingship as a "perfect entity" or "meritorious prestige" as Patrick Jory, a historical and philosophical scholar expert in Southeast Asian Studies, understands them as "*barami*" (2016: 16). *Barami* of the monarch has been portrayed far beyond the political domain, but also in the "arbitrary culture" of literary works. The above royal nursery rhyme thus has demonstrated the concept of authority which is culturally embedded in Thai society.

Moreover, the relationship between the young crowns and the natural surroundings or any superstitious beliefs are clearly in distinctive facets. Downward into the second half of the song, it mentions the plea of a caretaker who would like His/Her Royal Highness Princes and Princesses to go to bed properly and peacefully. Interestingly, this reveals the descriptions of royal nannies (*พี่เลี้ยง*) and wet nurses (*นางนม*) who appear both at the right- and left-hand sides of the baby. At this point, the portrayal of caretakers reminds me of the northern, Isan, and southern lullabies depicting Mae Sue (Guardian spirit), who would characteristically sit aside the newborns in the same way that royal babysitters and wet nurses do in the royal lullaby. The establishment of this conventional environment presumably has set common folks' nature-oriented beliefs aside by rearticulating and engraving the caretaker subjectivities to replace folks' Mae Sue. This high-court discursive practice therefore manifests a royal hierarchical order of Nature to a certain extent.

Apart from the above excerpt, there appears elements of the Moon and the constellations orbiting around Siamese elites' psyches. The poetic verse is remarkably and undoubtedly vivid and beautiful in endorsing celestial bodies into conventional descriptions. However, it also reflects the positioning of scientific values towards the natural celestial sphere to a significant degree as ascribed in the lyrics collected by Phaob (1978: 11 – 12) as seen below:

"เห่เอยวันเพ็ง *พระจันทร์ก็เปล่งปลั่งลอย*

เหลืองแฉล้มแช่มช้อย *เคลื่อนคล้อยลอยลม*

แจ่มแจ้งแสงส่อง *สว่างห้องพระบรรทม*

น้ำค้างลงพร่างพรม *ชำเลืองชมพระจันทรา*

ที่กลางเดือนเหมือนกระต่าย

ลอยเลื่อนเคลื่อนคลา

ดาวดวงช่วงโชติ

ร่อนเร่ในเมฆี

แสนรักจักใคร่ได้

เรียงรายพรายพร้อย

ที่ดวงเด่นเป็นเอก

ดาวสำเภาเสาใบ

ดาวเต่าดาวจระเข้

ดาวธงอยู่ตรงหน้า

โชติช่วงดวงเด่น

ดาวไถก่งโง้งงอน

ปักษาการเวก

ร่อนร้องซ้องเสียง

ไก่สวรรค์ขันเอ็ก

ดังเทวัญบรรเลง

เสียงจิ้งหรีดกรีดกริ่ง

คล้ายคล้ายยายกับตา

ทุกเพลาราตรี

รุ่งโรจน์รัศมี

จรลีเลื่อนลอย

ไม่มีใครจะช่วยสอย

น้ำค้างย้อยเย็นใจ

ดั้นเมฆอยู่ไรไร

ลอยอยู่ในนภา

ขึ้นร่อนเร่ในเวหา

ดาวพระยาอัศดร

ดังจะเผ่นโผนจร

ขึ้นลอยร่อนรายเรียง

แฝงเมฆมองเมียง

สำเนียงเสนาะเพราะเพรง

แว่ววิเวกวังเวง

ซอเจ้งจับใจ

หริ่งหริ่งเรไร

ดังดนตรีปี่ไฉน *มากล่อมให้ไสยา*

รวยรินกลิ่นกลั่น *จวงจันทน์กฤษณา*

ลมเชยรำเพยมา *ให้ไสยาเย็น เอย*”

In English, the song can be understood as follows (Wiwat, 2020):

“Full moon soon lofty, Floats and shines brightly.

Yellowishly so sweet, Breezy winds come greet.

Radiating bon beams bright, Lighting the bedroom night.

Sprinkling dewy sprays, Glance and grace moon’s rays.

Moon features alike hare, Akin grannies there.

Slowingly orbiting, Deep into the evening.

Sprite and brightly shine, Radiating beams divine.

Ambulating through the cloud, Elegantly plodding proud.

Yearning you down, indeed, But lack help to proceed.

Celestial bodies galore, Dewy love drips outdoor.

Major constellations, Beyond cloud processions.

All do set sail by, High up in the sky.

Orion, Big Dipper, Traverse and wander.

Taurus’s horn up high, Pegasus wallowing by.

Sparkle and twinkle, Galloping comparable.

Orion's belt curvaceous, Dotting there vivacious.

Cygnus the swan, Behind clouds beyond,

Swan songs sing the sound, Melodiously all around.

Pleiades, the chicks, too, Sound forlorn, they coo.

Rendering angelic orchestra, A heartfelt melodrama.

Crickets chirp and sing, Cicadas join the fling.

Orchestrating lullaby, Sleep so, Oh! Sweet Pie.

Mild fragrance and odors, From agarwood, and others,

Permeate the atmosphere, Soothing slumber, Dear."

The afore-mentioned royal lullaby describes a natural celestial sphere using scientific rationalism. In some accounts, literary culture from highbrow lullabies seems to establish scientific knowledge that can define and redefine natural phenomena to fit conventional forms of literature. The aesthetics of this poetic lullaby functions to relate the royal newborns with all constellations. The description presents vivid and animated constellations, whether they be the perceivable star clusters of Orion, the Big Dipper, Pleiades or the mythical creature of Pegasus, along with a natural atmosphere with singing insects and the fragrance of woods. The essence of the croon later boils down to celebrate Her Royal Highness Princesses as lyrics obtained from Phaob's study (1978: 12) as seen below:

"ดวงเดือนช่างเหมือนพักตร์ นรลักษณ์พระองค์หญิง

พริ้งเพริศประเสริฐยิ่ง น่าประวิงใจ เอยฯ"

It can be translated into English as seen below (Wiwat, 2020):

"Resembling moon face, Oh! Lovely Princess.

More than great delight, Held to heart so tight."

Ultimately, the song only conjures this lifelike celestial sky and natural atmosphere to celebrate the young crowns. At this point, Nature, again, is marginalised from the ecological conception of the monarchy, and instead made into an ornament to show scientific observation without involving subjectivity into its ecology.

The royal lullabies therefore leave a crucial trace to understand the Siamese/Thai discourses on ecological conceptions. Natural phenomena are circulated around highbrow poetic narratives, but in a distinctly hierarchical order wherein all integration of Nature and Culture is dictated to stabilise royal supremacy over "the other" - those in different cultures and of nonhuman entities. To establish a firm "geo-body", scientific knowledge and authoritarian, conventional discourses among Siamese intellectuals are entrenched, and taming the natural sphere has been included in the roadmap. Siamese elites then re-define natural sphere in their conventional aesthetic "standards" and set them in higher layers to subdue natural entities that share biocultural similarities with us. Moreover, the absence of any Human-Nature interaction is clearly shown in the royal rhymes.

Conclusion

In central lullabies, the consideration of the interrelationship between humans and Nature reveals multi-faceted dimensions. Firstly, an in-depth examination reveals the nature-oriented layers hidden in the folk lullabies sang in adjacent cities in the Chao Phraya Basin which appear to share a common political history alongside Ayutthaya civilisation. The attempts to re-articulate folk repertoires and localise them into conventional connotations of civilised and modernised Siam demonstrate the conception of authority and its efforts to establish a monocultural society in the name of defining 'arbitrary Thainess'. This process exacerbates the dualistic separation of humans and Nature dramatically. Smith (1999: 71) states that "within what appears to the outside as a unifying [narratives], are hidden many tensions and contradictions, which parallel are illuminate the social contradictions within most communities". The intertextual changes happening to Trai Treung's and Phisanulok's lullabies provide just some of the substantial evidence which reflect "moments of confrontation and displacement of discourses" (Thongchai, 1994: x).

Secondly, with the usage of an interdisciplinary approach, such as intertextuality, socionarratology, phenomenology, and posthumanist perspectives, there appear to be some Human-Nature bonds in central lullabies as well. Natural phenomena have been commonly

referred to in several central lullabies. Yet, instead of being viewed as fellow organisms alongside human existences, Nature has been situated as the backdrop and ornament to human subjectivity. Moreover, the natural understandings circulated among central folk people have shifted the conception of "*pa*" (wilderness) and other nonhuman entities to a tamed object. The notions of wilderness and the natural environment thus have been set as a place apart from humans where hierarchical classification of "things" has been deployed.

Even though there are still a few remnants of central nursery memories which manifest Human-Nature cohabitation, they are merely rare gems among others, whereas Nature sings its silent songs. This scenario is also connoted in royal lullabies where the kingship is regarded as the supreme being, superior to all other natural beings in this shared landscape. Nature itself has been conjured to represent the elites' conceptions of authority through Siamese young crowns. These conceptions therefore have created the "Otherness of Nature" within the shared sphere of the symbiotic, Human-Nature world.

Chapter 5

Journeys of *Phra Rot Meri Jātaka*: The Shift of Environmental Values

"...the fate of the jātakas in Thailand resembles that of the Thai monarchy itself:
A premodern institution that has superficially adapted itself to a modern world
shaped by another more powerful civilisation, but whose original essence
can be discerned not far below the surface."
(Patrick Jory, 2016: 3)

Folk oralities have entertained and permeated the values of folk people through the range of young children's lullabies to adult tales. The more they grow up, the more complex folk stories become. A socio-narratologist, Arthur Frank, said that "human life depends on the stories we tell: the sense of self that those stories impart, the relationship constructed around shared stories, and the sense of purpose that stories both propose and foreclose" (2010: 3). Lines of enquiry appear to me from this: what factors cause the retelling of a timeless tale across generations? Does a tale always genuinely impart sociocultural perspectives of a society? For the first question, the answer might lie in how mesmeric the tales are in general: captivating narratives, exciting adventures, or inspiring characters. Or, another answer might be that the stories share certain values of a wide range of societies. The tale could also be narrated with numerous viewpoints that can be juggled around. Whatever the reasons are, according to James Phelan (1951: 4), an American writer and literary scholar, most literature is justified by a particular approach and is regarded as a mere 'narrative of rhetoric'. One explanation is that the narrator operates the story from a particular viewpoint and disseminates messages to specific audiences. That is to say, most narratives use their tales as expressions to convince people for certain purposes. Elements of stories are purposefully selected, emphasised, altered, or ignored. Relevant to Phelan, Jonathan Culler (1975: 5) states that human actions and productions always have underlying systems to make sense of meanings. There is no single meaning but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of semiotics blend. With structural conventions in folktales, we might say that they comprise social epistemology, concealment, resistances, and semiotics to make their meanings possible and convincing according to the contexts of a particular time. The underlying concealment, confrontation, and negotiation in the tales might help to answer my second inquiry. This can also be seen in myths and folktales in the Thai context as Thongchai (2014) refers to oral literature as an "ahistorical past" which at a certain point has been localised, re-articulated, and processed under the nation-making formation (257).

In this chapter, I examine a folktale named "*Phra Rot Meri"* which is widely known among Thais. For them, the tale is categorised as a "religious myth", or *jātaka*, which is a series of stories about the previous lives of the Buddha. *Jātaka* is claimed to be a set of stories talking about the Buddha's ability to recall his past lives, such as a king, a merchant, and even as animals to name a few, by means of preaching dhamma. The tale of *Phra Rot Meri Jātaka* has adopted its compositional structure from the Indian *jātaka* which spread into contemporary Thailand during the seventh and eighth centuries, but in contrast, *Phra Rot Meri Jataka* is basically unknown in India (Baker and Pasuk, 2019: xii). By the fifteenth century, Chiang Mai monks had composed a new collection of "fifty apocryphal birth-stories" of the Buddha by mixing the Pali and Lanna languages (Thai northern dialect) and called it "Paññasa Jataka". As time went on, in 1920 Prince Damrong Rajanubhab ordered it to be translated into the central Thai dialect under the operation of The Thailand National Library (ibid: xi). Among the fifty Paññasa Jātaka, the Phra Rot Meri story (also known as *Rathasena Jataka*) is one of the most well-known - being recited at religious occasions and adapted into several literary genres until the modern day. With its popularity, the story is widely known under various names: *Phra Rot – Meri* for central Thailand, *Nang Sip Song* (The Twelve Sisters) and *Buddhasenaka* for the north, *Phra Buddhasena – Nang Kanri* for the northeast, and *Phra Rothasena - Nang Kanree* for the south.

Growing up in Thailand, Phra Rot Meri story is highly familiar as it has been recently retold in oral traditions, engraved in ancient written texts, and displayed in numerous modern artworks. The more I look into the tale, the more it reveals shared plotlines among another peripheral regions nearby such as India, Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia. The transmission of the Phra Rot Meri story into Siam allows me to trace its journey back to its origin - presumably starting from an Indian folktale, to a Laotian creation myth, then to a Siamese *Rathasena Jataka*, and into modern adaptations. So, despite being a folktale shared with other mainland Southeast Asian countries, why does the story keep on reappearing and re-articulating over periods of time in Thai contexts?

Here, my aim is to investigate the tale's journey in order to find out the narratological operation within each version of the tale in relation to environmental values. I sift through them historically and metaphorically by endorsing the theoretical lens of functionalism-structuralism along with historical ecology. The study also examines the plot, themes, and motifs in a broad sense from the following versions of the Phra Rot Meri tale - Indian, Laotian, *Rathasena Jataka*,

Phra Rothasen Khap Kap Mai, *Rothasen Nirat*, and modern-day adaptations of Phra Rot Meri southern performances to places related to the tale - in order to see how humans and Nature are represented and how they interact with one another across each version. My hypothesis is that since most oral narratives are more likely to have underlying messages and values to propose or foreclose, the transmission of the Phra Rot Meri story might also convey a certain degree of the shift in values, politically and environmentally, to society, for certain audiences, and in a certain time.

When examining Thai myths and folktales, it is clear that they contain codes and underlying semiotics of external reality. Within the texts, there appears essential aspects of folk's social institutions coupled with cultural emotions and conflicts and compromises between the realms of the supernatural and humans, animism and state-sponsored Buddhism, and conflicts among ethnicities in Thai and Tai cultures as seen in the previous chapters of this thesis. In the case of the Phra Rot Meri story which bears timeless significance to Siam/Thai literary culture, the tale illustrates some aspects of multi-dimensional spaces wherein Natural and Cultural relations coalesce. Nature and Culture relating in the story reveals institutional interpenetration where elites have internalised appropriate cognitive codes and enacted them upon society by usurping natural power to become under the state's control. This operation is pointed out in Thongchai Winichakul's *The Others Within: Travel and Ethno-Spatial Differentiation of Siam Subjects 1885 – 1910* (2015) as "concepts of taxonomy between indigenous/non-Buddhist/primitive and colonial discourses of tribes and peasants were mixed…to become a hybrid knowledge of a reworking of national geo-body towards nature and ethnographic categories within the state" (41- 55). That is to say, this hybrid knowledge of a reworking of the nation-state enhances Nature to become part of highbrow culture and its grand (Buddhist) narratives by creating intense pedagogy. One of these is dictated in Thai religious texts and tales which is *Ratasena Paññasa Jātaka* that inserts dhamma teachings and enhances emotions to preach the law of khama and impermanence to a certain extent. Yet, deep within the intense pedagogy in the *jātaka* lies a long journey and Bangkok elites' discursive practices to mix and adapt the original essence to comply with the nation-state's ethnographical knowledge.

Brief Story of the Thai Well-Known Phra Rot Meri

Once upon a time, a millionaire and his wife ask the Buddha for their baby to be conceived. Soon after, the wife gives birth to twelve baby girls. The couple then suffers financial crisis and

thus decides to abandon their children in the forest. They are then rescued by a giantess Santamarn (Meri's mother), who has transformed herself into a beautiful lady. However, she accidentally reveals her giantess form, and the frightened twelve sisters thus escape into the kingdom of King Ronsitthiraj with the help of a hermit, tree spirits, and animals in the forest. The king then appoints them as his queens. The anguished Santamarn follows the twelve sisters to his kingdom and magically disguises herself as a beautiful lady. Then the giantess casts a charming spell on the king, and he in turn appoints the giantess as his new queen. Driven by the spell, the king orders his guards to lock the twelve sisters in a tunnel, where the giantess takes out their eyes. The blinded sisters live miserable lives in the tunnel and resort to cannibalising their own babies to survive.

Of all of those unfortunate babies, Phra Rot (Bodhisatta born Rathasena) is the only one who survives. He is blessed with talents by God Indra. Once he learns the story of his mother and aunts, he then meets with his father King Ronsitthiraj, and the two happily reunite. Out of jealousy, the giantess Santamarn, still disguised as a beautiful lady, pretends to be seriously ill and asks Phra Rot to carry a letter to the city of giants to ask for medicine. The message is meant to tell the giantess's daughter Meri to devour Phra Rot immediately. Fortunately, a passing hermit instead magically changes the message for Meri to marry Phra Rot, since the hermit knows that both Phra Rot and Meri are soulmates from their past lives. The romance between the two binds them for 7 years before Phra Rot's horse urges him to return to his mother. Before departing Meri gets drunk because of Phra Rot's trick and he steals several packets of Meri's magical medicine: one is capable of healing his mother's and aunts' eyes, and others can create mountains, forests, wind, clouds, rains, and rivers. He also takes magical lime *manaoho*, which symbolises Meri's city tree. Grieved by her lover's departure, Meri follows Phra Rot, but he throws the magical packets to the land which then miraculously sprouts landscapes of mountains and rivers, separating him from his heartbroken wife. Exhausted from chasing Phra Rot, Meri then casts a bitter curse: 'I doom this life of mine in following you, let you follow me in our next lives'. Meri, thereafter, lies dead and morphs into a mountain (Luang SriAmornyan, 1976: 30 - 51).

The Initial Inspiration of Phra Rot Meri Story from an Indian Folktale "*The Son of Seven Queens*"

In *A Comparative Study of Various Versions* of *Phra Rot-Meri* by Nantaporn Poungkaew (1984), she states that plot and several similar motifs in the Thai version of Phra Rot Meri may

derive from an Indian folktale titled "*The Son of Seven Queens*" (329). This folktale was firstly collected along with other Indian folktales by an American folklorist, Flora Annie Steel in her book named *Tales of the Punjab* (1894). The collection is praised as the Indian Grimm (Jacobs, 1912). According to Jacobs, the collection was supposedly written during the Crusades war between 1096 – 1271 A.D. (1912).

The tale focuses on a spellbound king who at first lives happily with his seven queens. One day, the king embarks on a hunting journey into the forest and his queens beg him to avoid the northern forest as they had foreboding visions of the king's peril in their dreams. Challenged, the king breaks his promise and heads to the "forbidden forest" where he meets a wicked white hind disguised as a beautiful woman. Astonished by her beauty, the king asks her to be his wife, but she demands the king's seven queens' eyes in exchange. The king therefore rushes back to the palace, gouges his former seven queens' eyes out, and rides back to the wicked hind who then asks her mother to safeguard the eyeballs. The blind queens then are sent to the dungeon to live out their miserable lives.

After a while, a baby is born to the youngest of the imprisoned queens. He grows up to be a merry and bright young boy, and his aunts love him as if he was their own son. Having a slim body, the boy sneaks out from the prison to beg for villagers' rice, sweetmeat, and griddlecakes for his mother and aunts. As time passes, the boy becomes a handsome and cheerful young man. One day, he sets out from the dungeon to search for food. He sees some pigeons fluttering over the king's palace, and proceeds to shoot them down. The wicked queen sees the young prince at once and knows that he is the king's son. Jealous, she invites the prince to the palace and pretends to inquire about the still-alive seven queens. The wicked witch thus tricks the prince to set out on a journey to see her mother in the forest by promising him he will find the eyeballs from a witch in the forest (the wicked queen does not tell him that the old witch is her mother). The queen writes down a few letters onto potsherd: "kill the bearer at once, and sprinkle his blood like water". Being illiterate, the prince takes the potsherd and sets out to the forest where he meets a young princess along the way who dreams of getting married to a young man that has seven mothers. After the prince tells her about his journey and shows her the letter, the princess helps by changing the text to "take care of this lad, and give him all he desires". The prince promises to return to marry the princess after fulfilling his quest. He then sets out to the old witch's cottage where she confusingly gives him the seven queens' eyes. The prince is tricked a few more times by the wicked hind, who now feels frustrated as she

knows her mother got the wrong message. Every time the princess helps the prince by changing the message, and every time the old witch grants him a magical cow that produces infinite milk and million-folded rice.

As for the final quest, the prince is tempted to pluck out a rose. But after plucking the rose, his body turns into a heap of ash. While the mother witch is feeling uneasy at her cottage, she hears a sweet voice telling her that "his blood shall be as your blood". She then understands the fate of the young prince and rushes to rescue him, ordering the prince "don't you disobey orders again". Returning back to life, the prince brings back all of the magical items to his mother and aunts. His journey to prove his gratitude comes to an end when he gets married to the princess, his mother and aunts recover from the blindness, and the king has the wicked hind executed (Steel, 1894).

This version is an example of the folktale genre containing a magical hind, heroic deeds, a prince and princess. The roles of females both in the supernatural realm and the human world are notable as seen in the illustration of the intuitive warning of the seven queens, the demanding and vengeful wicked hind, the problem-solving young princess, and the loving and caring mother witch who possesses all of the natural and magical resources needed to sustain lives. Despite the portrayal of polygamous society in India, the conflicts and compromises between Mother Nature (as represented through the wicked hind and the caring mother witch) and humans collide with one another. As for the wicked hind, she reflects a mystic and unpredictable Nature – tempting and simultaneously dangerous. On the contrary, the mother witch is portrayed through the nurturing and caring angles of Mother Nature. In the human realm, the seven queens and the princess seem to be in tune with magical scenarios – i.e. the seven queens can intuitively read the king's danger from their dreams, and the princess can read and change the messages from the wicked witch. All of the females in the earthly world reveal the fact that they belong to the two worlds and try to bridge both worlds to the male characters.

The intimate bond between humans and Nature noticeably boils down to the scene where the prince turns into ash and the mother witch hears the mysterious voice that tells her that "his blood shall be as your blood". That is to say, the prince has become one with Nature and his coming back to life represents his realisation that he must be part of Nature from birth to death, and to undergo rebirth in accordance with core Buddhist precepts. This moral is restated by the old witch who tells the prince "don't you disobey orders again".

If we consider the main conflict of this story, one might focus on the wicked hind who in a way represents archaic femininity as being powerful, authoritarian, and troublesome. Her true appearance, however, is ascribed as a white hind with golden horns and silver hoofs (Steel, 1894) which reminds the reader of a natural manifestation of beauty and mysticism. Interestingly, in the orthodox Buddhist context such as *jātaka*, the hind seems to represent the Buddha's saviour in many cases. The hind also signifies harmony, serenity, and mindfulness expressed in Buddhist teachings (Igunma, 2016). However, this Indian folktale changes the white hind. Her natural power can grant both positive and negative outcomes to those who seek them. That says, Nature as portrayed in *The Son of Seven Queens* has been navigates through the multi-dimensional and relational to the human characters. The ontological refrain is that humans are enabled to become with other, not only just humans but of course with all sort of nonhuman being.

The Mythologisation of Phra Rot Meri story as Tai ancestral myth among Laotian people (Late Fourteenth Century)

I would like to set the Indian "*The Son of Seven Queens*" aside for the time being, and shed some light on Lan Xang (Lan Chang) manuscript (*phongsawadan Lan Chang*) composed during the late fourteenth century of Lao kingdom (today's "Lao People's Democratic Republic", Lao PDR) (Piyachat, 1996: 10). Laotian people are regarded as part of the Tai ethnic people who migrated from south China (Guangxi) between the eighth and tenth centuries, heading southwest to Sipsongpanna in Yunnan, Tai Khûn capital in Chiang Tung, the Indian state of Assam, Laos, and northern and northeastern Thailand (Hundius, 2004). As for the diaspora of Tai ethnicity in the Lao kingdom, the Laotian settlers tried to associate their social group with the new landscape. Thus, the creation myth has played a pivotal role. During his reign, King Fa Ngum (1353 – 1373/74), (which concurrently occurred alongside the masterpiece of the Lan Chang manuscript), aimed to unify Laotian political unrest into a strong state along the middle of Mekong River (Grabowsky, 2015: 193). Such political attempts to create solidarity among different ethnic groups brought about mythologised explanations of the unified social group and cosmic order in Laotian perceptions.

In the Lan Chang manuscript, the two main characters, a human Buddhasena (rhyming with the name Phra Rothasena) and a giantess Kanri (comparable to Meri*)* firstly appeared to serve these purposes. Their part ascribed by Fine Art Department (2009: 1) can be seen in the manuscript from excerpt below:

“อันนี้จักจารึกด้วยวงศา อันเป็นพระยายักษ์ผุดแต่เมืองลังกา มาเป็นใหญ่ในนครศรีสัตนาคนหุตนี้แต่ปฐมหัวที ยังมีพระยายักษ์ตนหนึ่งชื่อว่านันทา เมียชื่อพระมหาเทวี ลูกชื่อนางกางรี (คือเมรี) เขาเจ้าผัวนางตายก่อนเมีย จึงไปเป็นพระยาอินทปัตเกิดลูกชื่อเจ้าพุทธเสน (พระรถ) มาเอานางกางรีเป็นเมีย มีลูกชายผู้หนึ่งชื่อว่าท้าวพิศี มีลูกหญิงผู้หนึ่งชื่อว่านางพิไสย เขาเจ้าเอากันเป็นผัวเมียกัน… เขาฝูงนั้นหากเป็นวงศานันทามหาเทวีแต่นางกางรีพู้นมาแล”

The above excerpt relays that Laotian people were the descendants of an early giant family which emerged from Lanka and settled in Srisatthanaganahuta (also known as Srisatthanaganahuta Lan Chang Hòm Khao: Land of the Million Elephants and the White Parasol). The father giant named Nanta had the giantess Mahadevi as his wife. Their daughter was named Kanri (Meri). Nanta died and was reincarnated as a human king named Inthaphat whose son was Buddhasena (Phra Rot). Human Buddhasena got married to Kanri and had one son (Prince Phisri), and one daughter (Princess Phisai). They had an incestuous relationship within their own family members and made Laotian offspring.

At this stage, the incestuous relationship appeared in Laotian ancestral myth and followed relationships in common myths such as in Greek, Egyptian, and Indian mythologies. The incestuous tangle of parents and children, according to Forbes (2020), signifies the concept that a certain race is purer and more superior than others. Nevertheless, sexual relationships between family members prevail only within either humans or gods, without crossing races especially in the Western myths. As for Buddhasena and Kanri, however, their relationship is a hybrid between human and giant which interestingly suggests how the diasporic Laotians assimilate themselves with indigenous people (the giant race) and how well they associate themselves with historical ecology and the landscape in particular way. This situation of race crossing relationship also abounds in the Thai creation myth where human and Naga (The Great Snake) or human and crocodile have an intimacy. These are some evidences lead to the understanding where humans associate themselves with natural entities to help create the syncretic societal system.

Concepts of human-giants interrelationships in the case of Buddhasena and Kanri can be considered as a symbolic meanings of the link between humans and the more-than-human entities. Also, the link appears with supernatural entities, nature-oriented beings, primitive thoughts, and indigenous people residing for long periods in the lands such as the Greek Titans, Norse Ymir, and Ramayana Ravana, just to name a few. In India and Southeast Asia, giants are regarded as gods of fertility and prosperousness (Chonticha, 2009: 10). As for Poramin (2004), giants represent primitive spirits and indigenous people who would later shift from animism to Buddhism. In the case of the giantess Kanri, according to my exploration, she has been portrayed as an archaic animist and part of an indigenous tribe who gets married and lives in peace with her human husband, Buddhasena, before the ill-fated situation happened.

My exploration is relatively coherent with Maha Sila Weerawong (1997: 28 - 29), a Laotian historian and literary scholar, who mentions the "*krom*" indigenous tribe (also known as the Kanri Phiseu tribe) that have harmoniously resided on the Lao mountain range since the pre-historic era. They peacefully lived with Nature and had no agricultural knowledge. Hunting and foraging became their sustenance. Many of their tribal members got married to the Khamu or Kha ethnic group (Austroasiatic family) who migrated from China. Maha Sila's claim explicitly reveals the relationship between indigenous tribes (being represented through Kanri) and diasporic Khamu to today's Laos (being portrayed through Buddhasena). Louis Finot (1917), a French archeologist and researcher of Southeast Asia, also mentions Khamu in his study as the ethnic group in northern Laos who immigrated from China and ruled over the land of Lan Chang (recently Laos) and Lanna (today's northern Thailand). These evidences therefore manifest the non-boundaries of ethnic pluralities, as well as the mutual relationship between the diasporal settlers and the indigenous tribe subsisted on the nature-related knowledge. In Duangduean's *Laotian Identities and Traditions towards Tao Hung Tao Jueang Myth* (1997: 26 – 27), she cites Georges Coedes, a French archeologist and historian of Southeast Asia, who says that Tai ethnic people who migrated to Laos are considered as a "very special tribe because they are well-adapted with shades of vast sky and all tributaries they migrate to, and still strongly retain their vivid identities and language until recent day." This connotes the ways the diasporic Laos perceive of Nature as part of their life.

During the reign of King Potisararat (1520 – 1550), Laotian myths and literatures abounded in the land. At that time, King Potisararat asked the Chiang Mai monks to have an audience with him in Luang Prabang, the former capital city, in order to exchange literary works

among Lan Chang and Lanna (which have been regionally known as sister cities). There are two main factors that helped facilitate the exchange of literary episteme (Hundius, 2004):

1) Both cities have very strong beliefs in Buddhism derived from India and Lanka. Their scripts are called "*tham*" (dhamma) which are sacred to the monasteries and Buddhist locals.
2) There is a close linguistic relationship between the Lao and Lanna dialects.

These reasons are among the sociocultural factors enabling the shared stories and the reworking of Buddhasena and Kanri creation myth as one of the fifty apocryphal birth-stories (Paññasa Jātaka*).* Inspired by one of the afore-mentioned Laotian myths, the Chiang Mai monks preliminarily re-articulated the tale and composed the Paññasa Jataka in the fifteenth century. Since then, *Rathasena Jataka* became one of the fifty stories flourishing in the Lan Chang kingdom. Buddhasena - Kanri ancestral myth therefore has become less popular, whereas the *Rathasena Jataka* has been recited among Laotians instead.

The tale of *Rathasena Jataka* has been embedded in Laotian religious myth and enlarged local imagination towards sacred sites such as Phu Thao - Phu Nang (the Lord and Lady mountains), and Pha Tad Ke Botanic Garden (Rishi, the Massage-Shifter Garden) in Luang Prabang. Their tragic romance has been mythologised and ritualised as mountains, animals, and plants to become manifestations of spiritual power roaming in the land. According to my fieldwork at Luang Prabang (2019), the reverence of Buddhasena and Kanri are still ritually held every year at the mountains. Kanri is also believed to transfer her spirit to the deer (hind) living in the mountains. That is to say, her archaic power as Mother Nature, represented by the deer, reveals the cosmic order Laotian people hold onto. The image of the deer in this Laotian myth is different from the Indian wicked hind in as the latter it is portrayed as malevolent and brutal. On the other hand, Kanri as the deer is revered in a sacred-mystic sense. Several Laotian elders residing at the foot of Phu Nang told me that every time the deer make noises, the locals take them as warnings and avoid entering the forests. For them, their social group is an organ in the larger organism, which is the landscape as a whole. Most of them thrive alongside the mountains and animals, while leaving some space for the landscape to exercise its mysticism and rejuvenate itself. Such historical ecology combined with folk myth seems to help prolong ecological entities in a significant way. Their myth has been echoed along the mountains, Mekong River, and winds which are regarded as mysterious and sacred until today.

[Figure 6: Phu Thao Phu Nang in Luang Prabang. Image was taken on 19 November 2019]

A Previous Life of the Buddha as an Unintentionally Fictional Coloniser of the "Uncivilised" Wilderness of Indigenous Territories in the *Rathasena Jātaka* (Fifteenth to Seventeenth Centuries)

Rathasena Jātaka features in story number 47 in the most widely known Thai noncanonical fifty stories of Buddhist Paññasa Jataka, circulating in many regions of mainland Southeast Asia: *Nang Sip Song* (The Twelve Sisters) of Meaung Nai in Myanmar, *Buddhasena* and *Kanri* of Luang Prabang in Laos, and *Niaeng Kang Rei* of Kampong Chhnang in Cambodia. This Buddhist *jataka* is greatly associated with Luang Prabang's Phra Rot Meri myth and the Indian folktale "*The Son of Seven Queens*".

Rathasena Jātaka begins with the tale of *Nang Sip Song*, depicting the story of twelve sisters being abandoned in a forest and rescued by the giantess Sandhamara. They escape from the giant city and all become queens to King Rathasiddha. The jealous giant disguises herself as a beautiful lady named Sandhamara and tricks the king to appoint her as the primary queen. She then orders the twelve sisters' eyes to be plucked out. Lord Sakka, the king of all gods, asks the Bodhisata to be born as Rathasena in the human world. After reincarnation, Rathasena proves his gratitude to his suffering mother and aunts by going on a quest to the giant city to retrieve magical medicine. He ends up marrying the giantess Meri, stealing her holy packets of medicine, and leaving her heartbroken into seven pieces. The didactic moral of the story in the end is conveyed by the Buddha: "O monks, in the past when I am a bodhisata, I showed gratitude to my mother and kinfolk." (Baker and Pasuk, 2019: 16).

Considering the historical notion of time, the story has clearly adopted the plotline, motif, and structure of Pali canonical *jātaka* from India mixed with Laotian main characters – Buddhasena and the giantess Kanri. Harald Hundius (2004), a Pali scholar in Southeast Asia studies, expresses the close connection between Lanna and Lao kingdoms during the fourteenth century. Lanna, with Chiang Mai as the capital of the kingdom, emerged as the center of Buddhist learning as influenced by India and Lanka. "The Pali School of Chiang Mai" spread Buddhist teachings and literatures over nearby kingdoms such as Lao and Chiang Tung along its tributaries (1). Therefore, these have undoubtedly driven the transmission of the story's plot and structure to modern Thailand.

Paññasa Jātaka (also known as *chadok nok nibat*) is a collection of noncanonical Buddhist texts written during the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries in Lanna kingdom, according to the claim of Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, who administered the *jātaka* translation project in 1924. According to the translation by Baker and Pasuk in the book *From the Fifty Jataka: Selections from the Thai Pannasa Jataka* (2019: xii), Prince Damrong states that:

> The Fifty Jataka is a collection of fifty tales told in Siam from olden times. A Chiang Mai monk collected and composed them as jataka tales in Pali around 2000-2200 BE [1457 – 1657 CE]. This was an era when the monks of that country had learned from Sri Lanka. They knew Pali well…They intended to make the religion strong and permanent and to create texts that were weighty because they were in the same language as the Tipitaka.

There are a few points worth discussing here:

1) In the mid-fifteenth century, Lanna kingdom was not yet part of Siam – this only happened in 1884 under King Chulalongkorn's Reform of Provincial Administration. To lay c̄laim that Paññasa Jataka was told in olden Siam during that period of time is controversial.
2) According to Niyada's *Paññasa Jātaka: Its Genesis and Significance to Thai Poetic Works* (2015), the fifty *jātaka* must have been composed before 1808 BE (1265 CE) based on early literary works that mention some individual stories in the *jataka.* These literary works include the *Chiang Mai Chronical* in 1288/89 and the cosmological text *Traiphum Phra Ruang* in 1345 (30 – 32).

3) To consider Paññasa J̄ataka as being collected and composed by a single author (a Chiang Mai monk) seems to be unrealistic if one is to analyse "the multiple origin of the stories and the diversity of the contents of the different collections" (Skilling, 2006: 145 – 146).

That is to say, there appears to be mismatched information provided by Prince Damrong. The ideological image of Prince Damrong in the Siamese perspective has conveyed Siamese bureaucratic administration to "bring all people under the King…all different people are all Thai ethnic groups [*chon chat* Thai]" (Baker and Pasuk, 2014: 60), not to mention the re-articulation of neighboring literary works into their own. Such a notion of sociocultural hegemony seems to neglect the multifaceted cultural space that each individual story has its early origin from various parts of the land both outside and inside modern Thailand. In other words, Paññasa Jaṯaka has become a tool to justify political discourse. As a result of this, several individual stories and their plots and messages have been transformed and changed to fit with the state-sponsored motto of creating a unified nation-state.

At this point, a few questions should have been asked:

A) How the *Rathasena J̄ātaka*, Nature, and the nation-state formation became interwoven in the context of the Human-Nature relationship.
B) How the employment of Buddhist *jātaka* helps us to understand Nature.

In trying to answer these questions, I discuss two main perspectives as follows:

1) The *Rathasena J̄ātaka* and the natural understanding (dhamma)
2) The *Rathasena J̄ātaka* and the justification in forming the nation-state

1) The *Rathasena J̄āṯaka* and the natural understanding (dhamma)

Within the first perspective, *Rathasena Jataka* is per̄ceived by Khemananda, a renowned Thai scholar and poet, as having a spiritual structure showing the inward journey of Bodhisata to his enlightenment. Elements of attachments, desires, and ignorance have been portrayed through the giantess Santhamara, Meri, and the twelve sisters respectively. To overcome *tathata* (the law of causation or *paticcasamup-pada*), the Blessed One should have realised its "suchness" and prove himself benevolent (1984: 35 – 37). Such higher knowled̄ge would free the Blessed One from fetters and samsara (the indefinite cycle of suffering). That is, symbols and personifications represented in the *Rathasena Jataka* have been used as didactic instruments to

aim for otherworldly happiness – supramundane realism (*lokudharatham*), whereas worldly happiness (*lokiyatham*) is wicked and ignorant (*avijja*) (ibid).

Within Khemananda's ideologies of the Nature of life (dhamma), his notion relates to King Chulalongkorn's *Essays on the Jatākas* written in 1904 (See Patrick Jory, 2016: 128). For King Chulalongkorn, *jataka* tales should be perceived as parables for those who enjoy listening to the stories that contain dhamma (ibid: 132). Again, Buddhism promoted by the king and the national poet is considered through a doctrinal lens, having Pali as monastic authorities in interpretations of noncanonical *jataka* deriving from other neighboring lands. Dhamma, which refers to "Nature" or *thammachat* (Skilling, 2006), seems to scope its explanation in the supramundane stage, rather than from multifaceted real-life experiences.

The inward journey Rathasena (as the Buddha-to-be) has taken is perceived as "spiritual wakefulness" (Khemananda, 1984: 24) which helps unlock human attachments and sensual pleasures. Rathasena thus becomes a figurative character carrying great messages to the world and discarding pure love and loyalty in marriage behind. This is shown in the scene where Rathasena, who spent seven years with Meri, decides to leave her. Although Meri laments over her husband's departure, Rathasena instead replies that:

> *"Fair Kanri, don't worry. I shall attain enlightenment as a Buddha*
> *And provide release for all beings. I am suffering because of my beloved mother.*
> *I wish to attain full enlightenment. O Kanri,*
> *Anyone who does not pine for their mother and kin as their refuge is lost.*
> *Henceforth you must follow me like a mother cow following a calf."*
> (Baker and Pasuk, 2019: 73)

The above scene portrays layers of winner and loser in which the one holding dhamma firmly unleashes new spheres of enlightenment whereas the worldly Nature of life is condemned to succumb to suffering. Such *tathata* (suchness) implies conformity to Buddhist didacticism. The *Rathasena Jataka*, in this sense, has repeated its orthodoxy of sophisticated Buddhism to a certain degree.

2) The *Rathasena Jātaka* and the justification to form nation-state

In Buddhist idealism, to understand Nature, one should consider the elements of life as a "training ground" to reach the supramundane level (Seeger, 2014: 47). However, Nature itself could also mean natural surroundings: forests, mountains, rivers, animals, and otherworldly entities. Perceptions towards these natural spheres also reflect political discourses which intersect with Buddhism. In *Politics and Thai Literature* (1999: 43), Manas argues that politics and religions are interwoven, and literature is one of the effective canons to enhance political ideologies and religious belief. The following discussion attempts to understand the aforementioned second question.

Focusing on Meri's city, she and her folks live in a faraway land as described in the scene when Rathasena mounts the horse and travels "one yojana to the end of the way, and then flew a further four yojana, five yojana…ten yojana" (Baker and Pasuk, 2019: 67). The flora and fauna illustrated in Meri's city (such as ironwood, teak, elephant's tail herb, sugar, and many more) reflect life closely associating with Nature. Additionally, after getting married, Meri tells her husband Rathasena the hidden place of holy medicine as ascribed below:

> *"There is a packet of holy medicine for treating eyes hanging there too. Another packet when empties out becomes a mountain. Another becomes a forest. Another, the wind. Another, fire. Another, rain. Another, clouds. Another, the ocean."* (ibid: 72)

All of the holy packets of medicine imply that the giantess Meri, the nonhuman entity, has power in creating cosmologies on her own. The supernatural power to formulate natural surroundings explicitly follows types and patterns of myth according to Levi-Strauss (1978) who points out that myth relates to natural elements as materials for humans to understand the universe where all beings inhabit with one another. In the *Rathasena Jātaka*, however, natural elements are seized and give more power to Rathasena (Gutama Buddha) to destroy Meri and separate her world from his – the natural realm from the human world.

> "*The Great Being empties a packet of medicine, which turned Into a mountain covered with trees. She still kept following him. He scattered Another packet, which became a forest. She still followed him. He scattered another packet, which became fire, and another which became wind…*

She halted. She looked at him from afar and could not hold back her tears."
(Baker and Pasuk, 2019: 72)

The tale represents the supernatural power of a certain group of people (indigenous people), residing earlier in the land and are capable of creating their supernatural efficacies. However, they become alienated by the more "civilised" authority. Forests (*pa*), ethnicities, and non-Buddhist people are marginalised, if not victimised. Hence, the *Rathasena Jataka* can be rēgarded as not only a Buddhist literary work, but also as colonial historiography – firstly in Lanna kingdom and then Siam.

Niyada[75] (2015) concludes that Paññasa Jātaka was composed before 1265 CE by Chiang Mai monks, which is relevant to Hundius (2004) who postulates that Chiang Mai was once a center of Buddhist learning and was considered to be the capital city of the Lanna kingdom around that time. With such a historical notion of time, therefore, the text should originate during the reign of King Mangrai. Migrating from Sipsongpanna (Yunnan), King Mangrai, whose mother was a Tai Lue princess from Sipsongpanna, deployed diplomacy and military leadership to consolidate several Tai ethnic groups into a unified kingdom. Unlike King Fa Ngum of Laos who made use of historical ecology and a cultural past to bind indigenous peoples and immigrants as one big family, King Mangrai used Buddhist pedagogy as soft power. By conquering the kingdom of Hariphunchai (Lumphun and Lampang), and areas of the Lua ethnic people, King Mangrai expanded his stronghold from Chiang Rai to Chiang Mai. He finally settled his new city at Wieng Khumkham (or Khumkham city) before moving to an area near the Suthep mountain (Doi Suthep), since its mountain range was considered as the residence of ancestor's spirits. The auspicious signs and good omens in settling the new kingdom near a sacred mountain reflects not only a purely physical perception but also the spiritual dimension of King Mangrai. At this point, Lanna Buddhist *jataka* including the *Rathasena Jataka* seems to provide perfect legitimacy for the King to rule over other Tai ethnicities within a proper landscape, using a strong military and orthodox Buddhism.

For the *Rathasena Jātaka*, combining the structures of the Indian folktale "*The Son of Seven Queens*" along with the ancestral myth of Laotians attests to the power of King Mangrai to run the Lanna kingdom during this time. The *Rathasena Jātaka* thus seems to be valued as

[75] See Niyada's *Paññasa Jataka: Its Genesis and Significance to Thai Poetic Works* (2015: 30 – 32)

the soft power of the King Mangrai's state to declare its Buddhist region over the unorthodoxies such as Lua, Tai Khûn, and the Mon ethnic groups.

Until the 1920s, when the *Rathasena Jātaka* and other forty-nine Paññasa Jatakas started circulating in Siam, its glory had been repeated and attained justification and legitimacy for intervention in all aspects of life in a pedagogical sense. Having Rathasena as a fictional character and the Buddha-to-be enlarges the idea of the Perfect Man – the Blessed One who conquers heroic deeds to become enlightened. This idea has marginalised other experiences of being alive with errors and flaws which are also parts of life. Psychologically speaking, the *Rathasena Jātaka* fails to weave together the multifaceted experiences of real life. It is not only the imperfect self of Phra Rot that is distorted, but also the association with the landscape and local flora and fauna. The effect of this dissociation is to minimise the significance of the natural world as a key character in its own right.

Starting from the Indian folk narrative to Laotian myth then to noncanonical Pali *jātaka*, the *Rathasena Jātaka* has gone through the state's canonical construction and has become a widely known tale with countless adaptations (I will discuss them in the following sections). For the *Rathasena Jātaka*, Human-Nature interrelation reveals two layers of interpretations: 1) Nature is regarded as dhamma in attaining supramundane enlightenment according to mainstream Buddhism, and 2) Nature as an untamed sphere containing non-Buddhist and ethnic people who need to be controlled. In my exploration within this section, however, the *Rathasena Jātaka* has been employed to emphasise the pedagogical codes and conventions in laying claim over the adjacent landscape where the indigenous people and their Nature have been considered as primitive, obsolete, and untamed.

A Powerful State: The Adaptation of *Phra Rothasen Khap Kap Mai* (During the Ayutthaya Kingdom, A.D. 1350 – 1767)

The Phra Rot Meri story has journeyed from an Indian folktale to tribal myth then to a Buddhist *jataka*, until it reached the Siamese royal court during the Ayutthaya civilisation. The Fine Arts Department of Thailand (2009) along with some Phra Rot Meri experts such as Boonteun Srivorapot (2017) and Ratthanaphon Chuenka (2018), hypothesise that Phra Rot Meri entered central Siam in the early formation of the Ayutthaya Kingdom before King Narai's reign (1656 – 1688). The story has been adapted into a Thai royal poem called *Phra Rothasen Khap Kap Mai*. This *Khap Kap Mai* features eight main episodes: *Phra Rothasen*'s *Coronation* (*khuen*

reuoen luang), *The Twelve Ladies-in-Waiting* (*sipsong phra kamnan*), *The Royal Wedding Ceremony* (*sompot aphisek*), *The Intimate Episode* (*sompas*), *The Botanic Garden* (*detkruk*), *The Magical Potions Interrogation* (*tamya*), *The Horse's Persuasion* (*machuan*), and the unnamed last episode. Each episode of *Phra Rothasen Khap Kap Mai* begins with "*klong kap mai"* which starts with a four line verse following *khap kap mai* which consists of separated sections within one episode. In each section, there are thirty-six syllables divided into nine stanzas with four syllables each (Boonteun, 2017: 28). Prince Damrong (cited by The Fine Arts Department, 2009: 59) explains that *Phra Rothasen Khap Kap Mai* was restricted to be performed solely in royal ceremonies such as the King's and His/Her Royal Highness's coronations. With traditional musical instruments, *Phra Rothasen Khap Kap Mai* features one preacher, a traditional bowed fiddler, and a drummer in the enthronement ceremony. The *Kap Mai* ceremony has presumably been influenced by the Khmer civilisation which is considered as a supreme genre in Thai poetry (Duangmon and Suchitra, 1990: 574).

The *Phra Rothasen Khap Kap Mai* reveals Nature-Culture relationships relating to Siamese politics. With the intention to recite this poem during the kings' and the royal members' coronations in the Ayutthaya period, the selection of genre known as *Kap Mai* and the opening narration signify the multi-faceted symbolic acts of Siam in claiming neighboring territories by means of political supremacy. That is to say, the usage of the supreme genre according to conceptual royal literature highlights the aesthetic delicacy of royal poets over the other lands nearby. Additionally, the beginning episode "*khuen reuoen luang"* (*Phra* Rothasen's Coronation) spotlights Phra Rot's coronation ceremony at Meri's city with the welcoming performed by Meri's townsfolk which is noticeable in the scene below (Fine Arts Department, 2009: 63, English translation by Wiwat: 2021):

ขึ้น	*เกยแก้วเก้าสิ่ง*	*เสวยสวัสดิ์*	'Up' greeted by nine types O' crystal
ตั่ง	*สุพรรณรายรัตน์*	*เพริศแพร้ว*	'Throne' of gleaming gold regal
นั่ง	*ในวรเสวตรฉัตร*	*เฉลิมโลกย์*	'Reign' under great white tiered-umbrella
เมือง	*บพิตรพระแก้ว*	*แต่นี้จักเกษมฯ*	'Realm' eternally happy and VIVA!

ขึ้นตั่งนั่งเมือง	*แท่นทองรองเรือง*	*สุขศรีปรีดิ์เปรม*	*เมืองกว้างช้างหลาย*
ลูกขุนมุลนาย	*อยู่เย็นเป็นเกษม*	*ยินดีปรีดิ์เปรม*	*วิโรจโอชเอม* *ทังหลายถวายกร ฯ*

Up throne reign super; Gleaming golds glitter; Jubilation all around;
Vast land, elephants abound; Royal subjects surround; All happily reside;
Delightfully they abide; Plentiful food stockpile; Revering the Mighty One.

บัดนั้นภูบาล จึงทรงพญาสาร บรรทับเกยกุญชร นักเทศขันที
กำนัลนารี เฝ้าท้าวเธอสลอน ก้มเกล้าถวายกร เชิญพระภูธร เสด็จขึ้นเกยลา ฯ

Thus then the rising son; Strides over as done; To seat on the pachyderm;
Preachers, eunuchs affirm; Ladies-in-waiting term; Await His Highness preside;
Prostrating bow and guide; Prompt assist the ride; Royal elephant fanfare.

เสด็จเหนือเกยมาศ นางจูงลินลาศ นำท้าวลินลา พระหัตถ์ถือมือนางพระทัยไม่วาง
คะนึงในเสนหา ยูรยาตรนาดกรไกลคลา สองม่ายเมียงตา ระลุงลานสมร ฯ

While they all are at there; Ladies-in-care; Lead him with touching hands;
But though this looks so grand; His thought is bland; His mind is but about her;
Striding forward so blurred; Glinting as were; Looking for his lover's soul.

นางรดพระบาท กุมคนทีมาศ มาท่าพระภูธร เสด็จขึ้นเรือนทองย่าง
พระบาทเหยียบม้อง นางชำระบทจร ก้มเกล้าถวายพร พิศโฉมภูธร ผู้จะมาครองสีมา ฯ

Girls-in-waiting take role; Ewers they hold; Ready to wait Bhumi;
Up golden pavilion feet free; On Gong to be; Washed up His feet and dried;
Prostrate again thereby; Scrutinizing face Sire; Who will come reign supreme.

The scene delicately conveys the charisma of the future-king (Phra Rothasen) who is greeted by Meri's townspeople. The above poem portrays Phra Rot as a supreme being with immense '*barami*' (perfection). Jory (2016: 16) states that the notion of *barami* is commonly referred to in the Thai premodern political context which points to the king as sovereign. This contextual understanding seems to unfold the political implications of Ayutthaya's socio-politics in the early state formation - of which neighboring regions such as Yuan kingdom, Lanna, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia are in the extended territorial roadmaps. These adjacent regions seem to be subsumed in early Siamese formation and are enhanced in literature implemented for exercising the power of Siamese kings.

In the *Kap Mai*, the landscapes and natural resources of other regions - in this case Meri's region - are displayed as untamed, untrammeled, and conquerable to the colonisers and the new settlers. After Phra Rot's enthronement ceremony, he and Meri travelled to Meri's Botanic Garden as described in the garden episode (*detkruk*). Phra Rot attempts several times to pluck flowers and shrubs, only to be prevented by Meri. Phra Rot's eagerness to claim ownership of Nature is narrowed down to a holy shrub tree, the city's magical tree which signifies the wealth of nation. The scene illustrates Phra Rot's curiosities over the holy tree. Meri replies to her husband as in excerpt below (Fine Arts Department, 2009: 75, English translation by Wiwat: 2021):

ไม้นี้เสื้อเมือง ครั้นหล่นครั้นเหลือง แต่ละใบสองใบ เกิดโกลาหล

ราษฎรร้อนรน ดุจเมืองประไลย เกิดยุคคือไฟ ฟ้าเหลืองเมืองไข้ จินจนอัศจรรย์ ฯ

This sacred shrub tree; If leaves wither and fall, Gee!; Be it just one or two; Chaos would ensue; And melee too; As though world is ending;
Inferno raging; Epidemic spreading; Incredulous nightmare!

It is noticeable that, for Meri and the townsfolk, the sacred tree spiritually represents the well-being of the nation. Without it, the state would not stand a chance of survival lest it succumb to the raging inferno. The reverence of the holy tree (*mai suea mueang*) can be seen in animistic beliefs of premodern Siam before shifting to the reverence of the Supreme Guardian Spirits of the nation (*phra suea mueang*), as influenced by Hindu-Buddhist deities (*thewada*). Although the absence of the tree signifies the fall of the state, Phra Rot eventually steals it without a second thought. This symbolic act of seizing the sacred tree implies Siam's successful colonisation of the neighboring city.

The political enforcement of Siam over adjacent regions as part of an attempt to create a sense of righteousness in conquering other lands also extends to other territorial and cosmological claims. This is portrayed in the episode of medicine interrogation (*tamya*). In this scene, the acts of Phra Rot - who creates landscapes, rivers, mountains, and wild animals - reiterates the exercise of authorities to create natural diversity. The excerpt below conveys the answers Meri gives to Phra Rot (who, in my interpretation, represents the Siam state authority)

over his inquiries of Meri's magical potions (Fine Arts Department, 2009: 77, English translation by Wiwat: 2021):

สิ่งนี้ยาผง ครั้นจับโปรยลง ก็มืดคลุ้มเป็นควัน กลับกลายเป็นไฟลุกลามตามไหม้
ประดุจเพียงไฟกัลป์ เป็นขวากกรดเรียงรัน ฟูนเป็นตาวขันท เห็นเขาเสือกสน ฯ

This drug powder; If sprinkled over; Billowing smokes would churn;
Morphing into fire turn; Scorching lasting burn; Akin to Hades' Fire;
Generating much acidic ire; A cauldron empire; Great suffering unseen.

ยาสิ่งนี้เล่า จับปรายโปรยเป่า ก็เป็นลมเป็นฝน มากมีบรรพต
ใหญ่สูงปรากฏ ห้วยเหวทุกตำบล แรดช้างเสือกสน เสือสีห์หมีปน ต่อแยงศัตรู ฯ

As for this medicine; If blown would mean; Stormy tempests appear;
Myriad tors then would rear; Gigantic tiers; All over every land;
Rising pachyderms of grand; Huge felines, bears brand;
Would repel adversaries all.

ยาสิ่งหนึ่งนั้น ทอดลงหมายมั่น ก็พูนเป็นสินธู มีจระเข้เหรา
ฉลามโลมา พิมทองราหู ช้างน้ำเงือกงู เสือน้ำเคียงคู่ ยิ่งยงบีฑา ฯ

Another potion if called; Thrown down in pall;Erupt raging flood streams; Teeming crocs, gators teams; Mystical shark breams; Abominable ogres galore; Walrus, serpents and more; Marine beast carnivores; Ferocious troops they are.

เภตราสำเภา พาณิชเที่ยวเทา ทุกประเทศนานา มีระลอกฟูมฟอง
ลมพยุพัดต้อง ก็กลม ณ ท้องคงคา ศัตรูใดมา เห็นฤทธิ์กำลังยา ก็พ่ายแพ้แต่ไกล ฯ

Seafaring vessel from afar; Commercial, or par; Abroad from any other land; Facing livid fluid ban; Turbulence at hand; Would sink in a frothing scene;
Any enemies if been; Against the medicine; Would not stand a chance first time.

พระรถชวนสนิท ล่อลวงให้ชิด ให้เชื่อ บ สงสัย กล่าวเกลี้ยงเลี่ยงถาม
ดุจศิลป์พระราม เทพนั้นชื่อใด ดูหลากแก่ใจ เชิญแก้วบอกกูไว้ จงแจ้งจำหมาย ฯ

Phra Rot maintains his calm; Exercise his charm; To dispel suspicions away;
Gliding and glibly say; Rama's art way; To seek the deity's name;
Prying the heart of the Dame; To reveal to his aim; And utter the ushered desire.

The above poem in the *tamya* episode describes the power the medicine could grant to the land, and the ability to create all beings and entities. Tors, tiers, streams, and wild animals are featured in Meri's nation to create a holistic Nature. After learning about the power of this medicine, Phra Rot later steals her medicine packets, and intentionally casts the potions to create a landscape and wilderness to separate Meri's world from his. Instead of considering Nature and humans as one organism, Phra Rot separates them. The mystical and untrammeled natural world is turned against the rightful owner. Nature is manifested as a controllable object. The shift of ecological perspective between Meri and Phra Rot seems to be in juxtaposition. It can be understood that while Meri regards Nature as her fulfilled cosmological term and a food source for her people, Phra Rot takes Nature as a weapon to assert colonial legitimacy over other lands. It can be understood that, to secure a sophisticated culture, Phra Rot chooses to establish his cultural stronghold away from Nature and the land beyond his creation of natural boundaries. People from the land beyond Phra Rot's mountain ranges and rivers are considered as the other.

The closer we examine *Phra Rothasen Khap Kap Mai,* the less we are convinced that all of these deeds have been projected by the Buddha-to-be, Phra Rothasen*,* from the *jātaka*. If Ayutthaya kings and their royal family embrace this poetry by looking closely at the contents, more questions should be raised from the hidden scenarios during the early Ayutthaya period. To attain *bodhisatta*, should one need to create such great miseries to people who are regarded as "wild and different"? Phra Rot, who can foresee that he will be the future-Buddha in his next lives, does not only claim the other land as his, but also attaches it to the physical appearance of Meri instead of her intrinsic benevolence as a loyal and devoted wife. In the last episode of *Kap Mai*, Phra Rot shows all his secular desires towards his lamentation from departing Meri as seen below (Fine Arts Department, 2009: 84, English translation by Wiwat: 2021):

พิศเนื้อเนื้อเกลี้ยง พิศนมนมเพียง เต่งเต้าตรึงตรา

พิศชงฆ์ชงฆ์แก้วกูงามนวย พิศพระกรสระสวย ประดุจงวงไอยรา

พิศพักตร์พักตร์คือจันทรโสภา พิศกรกัลยา ประดุจกลีบบัวทอง ฯ

Ogling skin – unblemished; Ogling bust - alluringly rich; Ecstatic to espy; Ogling legs - tantalising thighs; Ogling arms - aesthetically styled;
Majestic trunks, limbs are; Ogling face - shining moon star;
Ogling hands - beyond par; Golden lotus leaves akin.

พิศครานคือเฉลา พิศไรพริ้มเพรา คอกลมลำยอง พิศคิ้วคิ้วก่งคือวงเกาทันฑ์

พิศตาตามัน ประดุจตาทรายทอง พิศแก้มแก้มคือปรางทอง พิศโอษฐ์หญ้วน้องคือตำลึงสุกใส ฯ

Ogling hair - downy silk satin; Hairline groomed in; A long neck elegantly round; Ogling eyebrows - archer bound; Ogling eyes - Wow! Wow!;
Akin doe's eyes deer adore; Ogling cheeks - golden candor; Ogling lips – amour; Akin bright red cherry plum.

พิศแห่งใดงามสม ยิ่งพิศน่าชม สมบูรณ์บัวใคร พิศรูปแก้วกูรางชาง

พิศเอวเอวบาง น่าพึงพอใจ ละเมียดละไม ละม่อมจริงนะอรไทใต้ฟ้าใครปาน ฯ

Ogling anywhere any sum; The more ho hum; Perfection is but come real; Ogling your body appeal; Slender waist to heel; Satisfaction brims ears; Intricacy so clear; Sensibility sincere; Incomparable under sky.

If one recalls the *Rathasena Jātaka* previously examined in the earlier section, Rathasen was one life within the fifty reincarnations of *bodhisatta* before the birth of the Buddha who focuses on inner peace, moderation, mindfulness, and enlightenment. The image of Phra Rot in *Khap Kap Mai,* on the contrary, manifests Phra Rot as a king who has secular desires similar to ordinary people. This unsurprisingly reflects the symbolic acts of *Kap Mai* genre for the means of praising the king of early formation of Ayutthaya. According to Pattama (2004), the images of Thai kings in the literature of the Ayutthaya period regards the kings as noble people born into prestigious families, having meritorious virtues and being wise, and good looking (1). All of these qualities fit with Phra Rot's background and characteristics as an heir to the throne full of benevolences. This narrative has thus re-fashioned the *Rathasena Jataka* as a manifestation of Ayutthaya's sovereign kings, not the Gautama Buddha. Such an implication points to all of the attachments and desires that the Buddha-to-be should get rid of, but not the worldly kings.

The shift of genre from noncanonical Buddhist *jātaka* to royal ritual literature helps strengthen the portrayals of Ayutthaya kings as lords and warriors. There are many words in *Kap Mai* referring to various pronouns of King Phra Rot for example: *bhubarn, bhutorn, aoktao, rajah*. These are known in general as '*phra jao pandin*" (Lord of the Earth) who is the warrior and conqueror of the earth. Phra Rot's act of claiming ownership over the holy tree, the magical medicine, and also Meri who represents femininity as Mother Earth, connotes the king's right to possess Nature and the wilderness. *Phra Rot Khap Kap Mai* therefore serves the political purposes of the Ayutthaya era where Nature and nation cannot be separated out.

Love and Loss: Highbrow Ecstasy over the Peril of Meri and Nature in *Phra Rot Nirat* Composed during the Early of Rattanakosin Period (Eighteenth Century)

Among countless traditional literatures of Siam/Thailand, the repetition of the Phra Rot Meri story emphasises the tragic love between Phra Rathasena and the giantess Meri in the Thai sociocultural fabric. Phra Rot Meri's intertextuality portrays the separation of the lovers as one of the unforgettable social memories of the nation. In terms of social memory, Astrid Erll (2011), a German scholar of cultural memory studies - who pioneers memory studies relating to narratology, literary history, and sociocultural dimensions of remembering - stresses retrospective memories as artifactual formations of the past (1). In other words, memories of the past, whether they are glories or traumas, can be re-articulated via historiography, literary intertextuality, and other forms of media. If we take Erll's framework as a platform to understand the Phra Rot Meri story, its literary text is indeed a medium of cultural memory. It is interesting to comprehend why this story has been memorised and reproduced until it reached the early state of the Rattanakosin period (from the eighteenth century up to the present).

Historically, after the great fall of the Ayutthaya civilisation (A.D 1767), the rest of the royal families, key military commanders, and townsfolk surviving from the war with Burma (today's Myanmar) took refuge in Thonburi (1767 - 1782) and Rattanakosin (1782 – present) Kingdoms respectively. Within the chaos of war, Luang Yokkrabat[76] (who is later Ramathibodi I) was enthroned as the first monarch of the Chakri dynasty. During his reign, royal poets tried to restore numerous Ayutthaya literatures and artifacts to the new kingdom. The re-embellishment of the Phra Rot Meri story from the former period hence helped the emergence

[76] Luang Yokkrabat was born Thongduang (1736 – 1809). His long-lined family served in the royal court in the Ayutthaya Kingdom. After defeating King Taksin of Thonburi, he ascended the throne as the founder of the Rattanakosin civilization.

of *Phra Rot Nirat* as one of the remnants of past glory. The representations of the tale convey not only the aesthetic ecstasy of long-gone literature, but also the justification of Siamese elites to continue exercising their authority over neighboring regions and the natural environment.

Phra Rot Nirat features nirat, a poetic genre that deals with the intensified emotions of a poet during long journeys. Prince Pitthayalongkorn (cited by Manas, 1974: 5-6) analyses the term "nirat" as Sanskrit derivation from '*nir*' and '*asa*' which together mean "without hope and desire." That is, the poet would write a nirat poem to express strong feelings towards his loved one as he departed, including the yearning for an affectionate reunion by comparing the natural environment to the physical beauty of the beloved woman along the journey (ibid: 7). In the case of *Phra Rot Nirat*, the love-separation theme and intensified feelings referring to the stage of being without hope and desire are conveyed in the poem sporadically in such terms as "*nirat rang*" (separation) or "*nirat saward"* (without desire), but there is no "real" journey in the text. While the themes of love longing and separation govern all nirat poems, Manas distinguishes that there are two styles of narration: a theme with chronological progression, and a theme with an imaginary journey (18). *Phra Rot Nirat* is hence a nirat poem with its imaginary journey. The questions here are what is the significance of *Phra Rot Nirat* in stylistically taking the nirat genre into this composition? Could *Phra Rot Nirat* represent the political implications of "the imaginary journey" from the traumatised fall of the Ayutthaya Kingdom to the establishment of the new kingdom of the Chakri dynasty where ruling righteousness must prevail? If so, to what extent does *Phra Rot Nirat* portray Nature and human interrelationship? Does it reiterate alienated Nature and natural exploitation conducted by human culture? Or does the poem try to re-write a new agenda of a mutual relationship between Nature and Culture, since the nirat genre deals with natural phenomena? I will try to answer these inquiries in this section.

There are at least seven versions of *Phra Rot Nirat*, but the most renowned version was collected by Lom Phengkaew, a Thai historian, literary scholar, and philologist. His collection was presumably copied from the original manuscript composed during the period between Thonburi Kingdom to King Rama I's reign. According to Lom (1984: 11), the version of *Phra Rot Nirat* that he collected from Phetchaburi's manuscript was theoretically composed by Jao Phraya Phraklang (Hon Bunlong), an early Rattanakosin royal poet. Hon Bunlong had a close connection with both King Taksin of the Thonburi Kingdom and King Rama I of the Chakri dynasty. Kusuma Raksamani (1990: 641), a well-known Thai linguist and literary scholar, points out that most royal poets of early Rattanakosin period would compose their poems and

literatures to heighten the king's justification and legitimate '*barami*' of the kings. As for Jao Phraya Phraklang (Hon), several of his literatures and literary translations such as *Lilith Phrayuhayatra Phetphuang*, *Kaki Kamklon*, *Rajahthiraj*, and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sam Kok*), evidently aim to praise the Rattanakosin kings.

Phra Rot Nirat features 412 poetic verses starting with a scene where Meri wakes up from her drunken slumber after being tricked into inebriation by Phra Rathasena. After realising Phra Rot's departure, Meri rides a serow to follow her husband. Realising this, Phra Rathasena casts all of her magical potions to create natural landscapes as obstacles between the two, and eventually escapes from his heartbroken wife Meri. The poems aesthetically depict both Meri's and Phra Rot's melancholy in comparison to natural phenomena in accordance with the nirat genre. For example, in this scene Meri expresses her bittersweet sadness by comparing her grief to the flora as below (Fine Arts Department, 2009: 513, English translation by Wiwat: 2021):

"…ชมชวนเหมือนพระชวนให้ชมเถื่อน นางแย้มเหมือนพระเยื้อนสโมสร
นางกวักเหมือนพระกวักให้เมียจร ขอนดอกเหมือนพระเด็ดให้เมียดม
ลำดวนเหมือนพระด่วนสวาทว้าง เต่าร้างเหมือนพระร้างนิราสม
ส้มลมเหมือนหลงด้วยเล่ห์ลม สุกรมกรมจิตเพราะตายใจ…"

"…'Azalea' reminds me of your zealous invitation.
'Magnolia' reminds me of your magnanimous oration.
'Buddha's hand' reminds me of your beckoning gesture.
'Pluck plant' reminds me of you plucking me a flower.
'Melodorum' reminds me of your melodramatic cold heart.
'Fishtail palm' reminds me of your fishy depart.
'Orange plum' reminds me of your plum-like charm.
'Shorea' reminds gullible me of your showing no qualm…"

Meri's sadness and melancholic expression is vividly illustrated through the descriptions of flora that could be found in her city. At this point, the intensified moods in this genre seem to bind Meri and Nature together, but as victims of loss and love. Phra Rot's grief

is also linked to Nature as in the poem below (Fine Arts Department, 2009: 539, English translation by Wiwat: 2021):

“…พระเห็นนกจากคู่ระเห็จระเหิน สำเนียงเกริ่นหาคู่พิศมัย
เหมือนเรียมเดียวเปลี่ยวองค์อาลัย มาร่ำไรเรียกร้องกลางพนม…”

“Gazing at a bird looking forlornly, Chirping to find her lost dearie,
Up a scene of a lone lass in the wilderness, Sobbing for lost lover in the forest..”

It is clear that their love separation in relation to the natural environment artistically pivots on *Phra Rot Nirat*. Conversely, the parts that are well remembered by Thai audiences are the love-separation story, and especially how Meri is portrayed as a bad woman, for example: Meri the drunkard (*Meri kimao*), or a malevolent woman so vicious she was abandoned by her husband (*ying chua phua rang*). These two examples derive from *Phra Rot Nirat*. Phra Rot’s lamentation tends to earn more sympathy from audiences. By scrutinising Meri’s actions of pursuing her husband, a series of questions ensue: what if Meri chose not to follow? Would she still be condemned as a “*ying chua*” (bad woman)? Her ending might go same way as those of other tales such as Phra Lor’s Laksanawadee, Phra Aphimani’s mermaid, or Vessantara’s Matsi. All of the female characters in these stories are deserted by their husbands, and they choose to lament in silence. On the contrary, Meri chooses to follow her desires and call her beloved husband back to the kingdom. The demise of Meri is thus dictated by her own circumstances because she refuses to conform to Phra Rot’s demands – to obediently go back to her realm. This notion reveals another theme of conflict between female desire (represented as chaos towards Meri) and male domination (through rigid order of Phra Rot). That is, female desire represents chaos that needs to be tamed by male rigidity and command. In Thai cultural contexts, women are taught not to be outspoken and to hide their desires. They are also taught to be successful, but not too successful lest they overshadow men. The resistance to conform to male domination that seeks control over female voices and existence transforms women into beasts, giantesses, ghosts, and other deformed creatures as far as males can imagine. This oppression enlarges male understandings towards the natural environment as well as the chaotic, untamed, and untrammeled spheres that must be also controlled.

Furthermore, the natural setting in *Phra Rot Nirat* is portrayed through Meri's natural pathways in comparison to that of Phra Rot's. That is, while depictions of the natural surroundings that Meri has taken represent obstacles, Phra Rot's Nature displays support and empathy towards him. To compare these natural descriptions, let us inspect how Meri is treated by Nature as in the following scene (Fine Arts Department, 2009: 514, English translation by Wiwat: 2021):

"…แต่จดย่องจ้องบาทไม่อาจย่าง *ในแนวทางโขดเขินเนินไศล*
บาทาพองรองช้ำโลหิตใน *หนามไหน่เกี่ยวยับระยำเยิน…"*

"…Every stride every step hesitant,
Treacherous rocky trail unpleasant,
Swollen feet much bruised and bloodied,
Scraped and scarred by vines thorny…"

In contrast, Phra Rot's pathways are portrayed as friendly and orderly. With every stride and step he takes, chaotic atmospheres are placed under control. He earns much commiseration from animals along his way as the poem expresses below (Fine Arts Department, 2009: 535, English translation by Wiwat: 2021):

"…พยัคฆ์มุ่งมองกวางที่ทางพบ *ก็กัดขบคาบคอนขึ้นใส่หลัง*
ครั้งยินเสียงพ่างเพียงหัวอกพัง *ก็ยืนยั้งงงงวยไม่อยากกิน*
แต่บรรดาสัตว์ร้ายที่หมายกัน *ก็ละเมินเหินหันไปหมดสิ้น*
ให้งวยงงสงสารพระภูมินทร์ *ก็เหงาเงียบเพรียบสิ้นทั้งไพรวัลย์…"*

"…The tiger preyed on the deer it found, With its fangs the poor soul was swung around.
But to the melancholic sound it heard, It went stunned and lost appetite so absurd.
And so were all other antagonistic beasts, Prowling and growling they ceased,

Condoling empathy to His Highness, Silence fell throughout the forest…"

From these two poems, the theme of chaos and order can be clearly seen. Although Phra Rot and Meri are struggling in the same forest (the outskirts of Meri's city), the natural depictions are not the same. Again, Meri, who does not cease in pursuing her desires, is illustrated as vicious. Her natural environment therefore is manifested as punitive. Over her own cause, Meri is victimised in the same way Nature has been. This *Phra Rot Nirat* reiterates the Nature-Culture dichotomy in hierarchical order the same as the Ayutthaya version of *Phra Rot Khap Kap Mai*.

The usage of the nirat genre, furthermore, does not dismiss the fact that Phra Rot also plunders natural/magical potions from Meri. Although this version does not directly mention the scene where Phra Rot takes Meri's potions but instead highlights Phra Rot's lamentation of being parted from Meri, the loot has is still reiterated by Meri herself about his betrayal of her love. There is a saying when entering a natural space: "leave only footprints and take only memories". Phra Rot indeed left his footprints as a culprit and also took all of the natural potions as souvenirs. His cold-heartedness left traumatised memories for Meri as she laments in the scene below (Fine Arts Department, 2009: 523, English translation by Wiwat: 2021):

"…วันเมื่อชมสวนพระชวนน้อง ไปเที่ยวท่องชมพรรณพฤกษา
แล้วเสแสร้งแกล้งถามนามผลา ที่ผ่านฟ้าต้องประสงค์จำนงปอง
หักได้มะม่วงหาวมะนาวโห่ อันภิญโญยิ่งล้ำสำคัญของ
น้องคิดว่าพระเคยคะนองลอง มิรู้ต้องประสงค์จำนงนาน…"

"..The day you asked me to roam the garden,
To enjoy the botanical heaven,
Pretending you wanted to learn flora names,
Highness was seeking one you could claim.
Carissa carandas, as is called,
The most precious shrub of all,

I thought you accidentally broke a branch,
Alas! You longed to own it at a chance…"

Carandas plums are once again portrayed as the most precious shrub in Meri's land. In *Phra Rot Khap Kap Mai*, this holy shrub signifies the wealth of a nation. Some versions explain that the giantess Santhamara (Meri's mother) tricked Phra Rot to take the carandas plums in order to cure her sickness. In Tai Puan's version, *carissa carandas* is the most sacred shrub signifying the spiritual dimension among the tribe.[77] With such various explanations, one thing in common in the plum's benefit is that they are herbal medicines for digestion, constipation, acidity, and infected wounds, just to name a few, according to Singh's *A Review on Carissa Carandas rooted on Indian Ayurveda* (2015: 123). Natural entities with numerous benefits in Meri's land reflect opportunities for Phra Rot to exploit them. Phra Rot's acts of tricking Meri to tell him the medicine's secrets and then stealing the shrubs is morally unacceptable. If instead he had asked Meri for just enough medicine for only his mother's and aunts' eyeballs, it would still be logically and morally acceptable. Instead, he shamelessly loots all of Meri's cosmological medicines. Again, patriarchy asserts power over Meri. Her fragility conveys the loss of Nature. The contested terrain between civilisation (*mueang*) and the wilderness (*pa*) once again comes into the theme of Human-Nature dissociation. Nature is portrayed as a mere object for humans to use to achieve their goals whether for state's formation, urbanisation or modernisation. The natural environment becomes "the land of opportunity" that Phra Rot took opportunity to harvest.

In my interpretation, the narration of *Phra Rot Nirat* also implies a departure from the former kingdom (Ayutthaya) to the new era of Rattanakosin civilisation. Phra Rot and Meri's love-separation journey are shown as the forestage, whereas the dichotomy between state centralisation and rural spaces pivots on the backstage. If one recalls the reasons why Phra Rot Meri story appears and reappears in Thai literary memory, we might notice that the story represents the Siamese/Thai kings as *Buddharajah* (the Buddha-like king) as influenced by *Rathasena Jātaka* since the fifteenth century onwards. Phra Rot Meri's imaginary journey to the Rattanakosin period, thus signifying the *barami* of King Rama I whose literature helps enhance his political power and legitimacy over the new kingdom and his settling dynasty. Several epic poems and court literature such as *Sangthong*, *Inao*, *Ramayana*, and nirat(s) had

[77] Personal interview conducted in 22 – 23 January 2020.

been conducted under the collaboration between the King and the court to strengthen the prowess in literature and mediate colonial knowledge into the land. In this nirat, though Phra Rot is no longer portrayed as the *thewarajah* (divine king) as in the Ayutthaya version of *Khap Kap Mai*, he is instead illustrated as a benevolent king (*dhammarajah*) who is deemed as having a justifiable rule over the land. As King Rama I did not have a royal family from Ayutthaya, literary works such as *Phra Rot Meri* come in handy for his jurisdiction. There is one scene where Meri describes Phra Rot as such while he rules her kingdom, as seen below: (Fine Arts Department, 2009: 512, English translation by Wiwat: 2021):

“…พระเดชานุภาพก็แผ่เผื่อ *ทั้งใต้เหนือนบนิ้วประณมไสว*
มหรสพตรลบทั้งกรุงไกร *ดังมีใน ฉ ชั้นสวรรยา*
ทั่วประเทศเขตมารไม่เดือดร้อน *ราษฎรได้สุขทุกถ้วนหน้า*
ก็ลือเลื่องดังเมืองอมรา *ในพื้นมหาชมพูไม่เปรียบปาน…”*

“…Grandeur virtue swell far flung, Salutes from all lands and among,
Prevalent, feisty, jubilations, Much like angelic celebrations.
All realms serenely peaceful, Peasants all smile, delightful,
Fames fanned afar it a heaven, Likened to Shangrila so happened…”

According to this excerpt, Phra Rot’s *barami* could be also referred to as King Rama I whose family served the royal court in the Kingdom of Ayutthaya. This past glory is embedded in early Thai cultural memory and has been transferred into the re-articulation of *Phra Rot Nirat* under the same political ideology: to take control over natural spaces by justifying state power. Therefore, this poem also implies the King’s past glory and his rightfulness to rule the new kingdom. Being the first monarch, literature plays an important part in enlarging his *barami* whereas the natural environment has to orbit around his territorial roadmap as tamed spaces.

Phra Rot Nirat not only conveys highbrow ecstasy towards the fictional love-separation journey, but also opened up new understanding of the environmental values portrayed in the poem. Although Nature and its natural phenomena are specifically drawn into the love and separation themes, the natural relationship between Meri as the Mother Earth and Phra Rot as the state authority is not in the horizontal layers. The imaginary journey Jao Phraya Phraklang

(Hon) as represented through this *Phra Rot Nirat* emphasises the journey of the ruling class to the new kingdom where Nature needs to be subsumed under state rigidity and authority.

The Re-establishment of Phra Rot Meri Story as Local Spiritual Performance and Origin of Place-names

The Phra Rot Meri story has undergone discursive practices in functioning as natural folktales adopted from India, to Laotian regional myth, then to Paññasa Jataka, and the institutional legitimacy of Siam. The journeys of the tale reveal political and sociocultural structures in which a literary folk work has become the dominant narrative of the state. Ecological networks which entangle all of the components of lives whether they be humans or nonhumans have been disentangled by highbrow narration. The great division between Nature and the more civilised Culture, according to Descola (2013: 59), all starts from "arbitrary rationalisation" wherein phenomenon spaces have been subordinated. When literature becomes a symbolic act and discursive practices of arbitrary perceptions, it transforms into a harness of classification revealing the mobilisation of state ideologies in which vast spaces of untamed Nature need to be domesticated.

The discursive power of literature, however, uncovers a new sphere of contested characteristics wherein the influential state epistemology cannot entirely suppress local beliefs and their practices. For those rural people, local religious beliefs and customs run alongside multi-rubrics of adaptation, negotiation and confrontation with the spiritual dimensions. Justin Thomas McDaniel (2011), a scholar of Lao, Thai, Pali, and Sanskrit literatures who also studies the infamous story of Thai ghost *Mae Nak Phra Khanong*, explores Buddhist thoughts and ritual practices among rural Thai people through magic and multiple cultural configurations. He points out that the orthodoxical conceptions of the central Thai government cannot suppress local religious practices, but rather build up transmissive venues between rural Buddhism and local animism (6). The blended characteristics of rural people's sophisticated religious belief systems, therefore, are promising.

Looking into the Phra Rot Meri story in the modern-day practices, its spiritual elements still echo in lullabies especially among the Southerners. Although the contents of those lullabies repeat the terrible things Phra Rot does to Meri such as getting her drunk to learn about the hidden magical medicine before looting and abandoning her, those lullabies are mostly sung by

mothers to psychologically and spiritually warn their children to be prepared for the dangers of the wild world in the future (Nantaporn, 1984: 9).

Phra Rot Meri Story in the Nohra Performance

The Phra Rot Meri story also plays a pivotal part in the Southern nohra performance wherein the syncretism of rural Buddhism and magic has been embraced among rural people. I had the chance to meet Professor Thammanit Nikhomrat, the director of Southern nohra performing art (2020).[78] He told me that nohra performance deals with Buddhist practices and animistic beliefs. Annually held in June, the purpose of the art is to venerate the nohra ancestors and family ancestral spirits, so they can grant blessings and cure the sicknesses of the attendants during the ritual. Children at transitional ages – for example, from a boy to a young adult – are encouraged to take part in the nohra ritual, in which dhamma codes (concepts of karma, gratitude, and reincarnation) would be involved. Individuals with minor sicknesses would also pay respect to nohra mediums performing in the ritual since they are believed to be able to cast their illness and misfortunes away. The ritual is held for three days. The first day is called "*beog rong*" (the opening ritual), where several nohra performers call for the spirits of nohra ancestors to attend the ritual and possess nohra mediums. The ritual "*wai kru*" (paying homage to nohra ancestors) is to be performed in the second day. On this day, the participants have to give nohra mediums offerings, and those who want to cast away sickness offer their performance as a gesture of gratitude and respect. As for the third day "*long rong*" (full performance of nohra mediums), both participants and nohra mediums join the performance. Colorful ornaments from head to toe are placed on the participants which signify a welcome to the nohra family (Somboon, 2019: 4). Professor Thammanit also told me that selected traditional Thai literature such as *Sangthong*, *Kawee*, *Phra Aphimani*, *Sudhana-Manohara*, and *Phra Rot Meri* play a significant part in the rituals since the texts have been adapted to suit nohra performance in order to reflect the love story and karma to the attendants. As for the Phra Rot Meri's text, the tale is performed to manifest the witness of Phra Ratthasena Boddhisatta via Nohra mediums in the ritual as a completed process (Karakkada, 2017: 246).

[78] Fieldwork conducted on 10 January 2020.

[Figure 7: Nohra Performance: Image downloaded from https://www.komchadluek.net/news/497169 in May 2022]

In terms of the rural level of understanding, the Phra Rot Meri story has significant spiritual influence over their perceptions. Although the plot and motifs in the Phra Rot Meri story remain unchanged, they reveal how rural people resist state-Buddhist discourse and re-establish their own rural beliefs and rituals towards the voices of folk narrators. Nature represented through Meri remains subsumed under the textual grand narrative asserted from the state, but nohra practices have opened a new sphere of rural negotiation towards this contested terrain.

Origin of Place-names

The Phra Rot Meri story is also strongly associated with several places in modern Thailand. For example, there is a cave aptly named "Nang Sipsong" in Phanat Nikhom, Chonburi province, which the locals believe to be the exact cave where Nang Sipsong resided (The Twelve Sisters – one of them is Phra Rot's mother). Interestingly there is another Nang Sipsong cave at Ban Mung in Phitsanulok province. The Phra Rot Meri story also has massive influence on local beliefs in Patthalung province in Southern Thailand. Nowadays, there are seven places in the city relating to the Phra Rot Meri story (Karakkada, 2017: 250 – 260):

1) Khao Daeng village refers to traces of Phra Rot's cockfighting ring
2) Khuan Thop to the location of carandas plums
3) Khuan San to the place where the message-shifting rashi undid Santamara's message
4) Phra Kerd to Meri's city

5) Khuan Panangtung and Ban Suntara to the place of giantess Santamara's demise

6) Khuan Maphrao to Phra Rot's city

These places scatter all around Patthalung province. They reveal how concepts of historical ecology, natural spaces, and landscapes revolve around the entanglement with places which local folks associate their memories with the story. For them, these places are not just wastelands with insignificant rocks and cave complexes, but historical landscapes relevant to their literary memories. Hence, this literary work not only contains rigid meanings from the state but is also a space in which the domain of the wilderness is highly socialised according to rural practices. Nature and Culture have been once again embodied and created a new sphere of the symbiotic relationship between humans and the landscapes.

Conclusion

This chapter draws human-literature-environment into one dimension in the study of the environmental literary work of Phra Rot Meri. Beyond its traditional aesthetics, Thai culture is perceived through the noncanonical Buddhist *Rathasena Jataka*, to highbrow literary genre and to national classical folktale, the journeys of Phra Rot Meri story unfolds greater proximity to the natural environment that has been taken to help establish states' sociopolitical ideologies, whether it be Laos, Lanna, or Siam itself.

The plot and motifs of the Phra Rot Meri story date back to the Indian folktale "*The Son of Seven Queens*", circa tenth century. In this version, the tale manifests environmental perspectives among Indian folks in which Nature is considered as both sacred and brutal concurrently - each represented by the old witch and the wicked hind respectively. The characters of Phra Rathasena and Meri gradually formed in Laotian creation mythology. This can be seen as the indigenous people (giantess Kanri) and the new settler (Phra Buddhasena) are but one love companion. In their myth, it portrays not only the intimate relationship between primitive and migrated people, but also ecological worldviews towards the mountains and animals in the domain of ecological systems. Phra Rot Meri was then transformed into a didactic tale via the *Rathasena Jataka* thāt fits into Lanna political configurations in the fifteenth century. This literary work thereafter has caught Siamese attention since the early formation of the Ayutthaya Kingdom. By taking the tale as a harness to create a statement of civilised and monocultural nation, state ideologies of colonisation over the ethnographical territories and their natural resources is obviously reflected in *Phra Rot Khap Kap Mai.* Such rigidity and

discursive episteme have deemed cultural heterogeneity and natural diversity that helps refine holistic cosmology among the indigenous tribes into mere instrumental values. The Phra Rot Meri story, again, pivots its "geo-body" towards *Phra Rot Nirat* where the imaginary journey helped the first monarch of Chakri dynasty to make jurisdiction as a benevolent ruler of the new era of Rattanakosin.

With these afore-mentioned notions of the state epistemologies enhanced by the intertextualisation of the Phra Rot Meri story, the long journeys of the tale reveal literary practices as state-formation discourses which indigenous people, their natural environment, and feminine spirituality have been torn apart from ecological relations. Thongchai Winichakul (2008: 22) postulates that literature has undergone discursive practices in functioning as institutional legitimacy which influences certain groups of people, if not dictating them. When this discourse becomes a grand narrative, it establishes ontological views of hegemony and social epistemology articulating the propensity of classification. As in my case study of Phra Rot Meri, it unfolds the classification between civilised Culture and wild Nature that needs to be domesticated.

By focusing further on the contested terrains between humans and Nature in the modern-day narration of Phra Rot Meri, however, they reveal the affection and spiritual dimension towards local Buddhist practices, rural landscapes, and natural boundaries in multi-layers of rural power relations. Localities, rural practices, and their folk narratology are not always inferior to those of highbrow ecstasy. Their spiritual beliefs and practices open new arrays of negotiation through the nohra performing art and the places related to the Phra Rot Meri story. Rural spiritual rootedness, along with their rural Buddhism, enrich oral literature that takes Nature not as a place apart from human conceptualisation but as multiple layers of rural people's belief systems.

Chapter 6
Re-narrating the Folk Legend of 'Jao Mae Nang Non': Human-Nature Contact between Rural Ecological Spiritualities and Buddhist Hybridity

"Ultimately, any particular national identity entails a leap of faith, acceptance of the fundamental givenness of premises about who belongs to the community sharing the same national heritage. It is in this sense that nationalism is in essence religious." (Charles F. Keyes et al.1994)

As discussed in the antecedent chapters, the case studies of Thai folk literature in this research have essentially undergone sociopolitical contextualisation and adaptations moderated by the Thai nation-state in order to achieve nationalist revitalisation. Rachel Harrison (2011: 5) stresses that "adaptation is not simply a case of replication, but of reinvention and reinterpretation". Political implications at this stage can be clearly seen both in the contexts of Thai lullabies and various reinterpretations of the Phra Rot Meri story mentioned in the early chapters.

Thai elites and conservative scholars take pride in the fact that their nation has never once gone through formal colonisation by the imperial Western world. Under its "long pedigree" and "noble past", Thai nationhood legitimises national-cultural identity which is uncontested and monolithic (Reynolds, 2006: 5). Starting from the late fifteenth century, premodern Siam developed a strong sense of nationhood over adjacent neighbors such as Myanmar, Laos, the Khmer, and the Lanna Kingdom (the latter is known as the former northern civilisation in premodern epoch before falling under Siamese colonisation in the eighteenth century). After the late eighteenth century, the influences of colonialism and industrialisation from Western culture have projected rigid separations, if not polar contrasts: Culture vs Nature, Human vs Nonhuman, Logic vs Sentiment, and Male vs Female, to name a few. With the Western-centric account, the Siamese elites adopted the hierarchical dualism that suppressed folk cultures by promoting state-supported high culture and highbrow literature over other forms of rural literary traditions and beliefs. As a result of such practices, conventional narrative styles were utilised to conceal the cultural pluralism that lies in folk oralities.

In *Seditious Histories: Contesting Thai and Southeast Asian Pasts* (2006), Craig Reynolds scrutinises Siamese/Thai historiography which nationalists used to employ colonial knowledge and cultural homogeneity, against the fact that Thailand and other Southeast Asian geo-spaces are instead ones of great cultural heterogeneity and ethnic plurality (Turton, 2015; Ryan, 2018; and Chi Pham, 2019) whose environmental culture is a part of them. Such a notion then pushes cultures of "the Other" into hierarchical relations by means of modernisation wherein cityscapes are more important than the natural sphere. Rural eco-space has also been classified as hostile and untamed in comparison to city-spaces in central cores which are under supervision and more civilised. In the lullabies illustrated in the regional folk lullaby sections, depictions of Nature for conventional narratives employ one-sided portrayals of natural phenomena under a romantic lens or tamed parameter. This cultural dominance grows in size with the nation state's power. Folk nature-oriented traditions and storytelling from other ethnic groups residing in the Thai state have been marginalised as cultures of "the Other". Currently, many folktales and myths are localised to serve dominant narratives and are utilised to promote a unified national identity in which the gloriousness of the state has been entailed in the folks' ahistorical past for the making of the modern nation-state.

The re-narration and suppression of folk cultures, their narratives, and eco-spaces leads to insurgency and resistance. In my case study, they lie in the tale of Jao Mae Nang Non. The folk legend of a mountainous local spirit "Jao Mae Nang Non" in Chiang Rai province and vernacular Buddhist tenets are worth scrutinising since the notion of intertextuality stretches out to multi-layers of narrative genre; superstition and rural Buddhism blend together sophisticatedly.

The legend of Jao Mae Nang Non has become known nationally and internationally since June and July, 2018, due to the search-and-rescue mission of the members of youth football team trapped in the Tham Luang cave complex. The rescue of the boys, know as The Wild Boars, took eighteen arduous days (23 June – 10 July) with international joint cooperation between locals, the Thai government, Thai Navy SEALs, US military, and world-renowned cave divers. Eventually, the trapped football team were located on a tiny beach inside the cave complex called Nern Nom Sao (lady's bosoms) by a pair of British cave divers (Gutman, 2018). Interestingly, and according to the fieldwork data along with an observation from a humanist

researcher, Sarawanee Sukumwada (2019)[79], the rural locals believed that the Princess's bosom, which is regarded as a source of vitality, helped the Wild Boars survive the ordeal.

Moreover, the legend interestingly reveals the resistance of ethnic groups residing near the mountain against conventional Buddhism in a substantial account. This legend thus encompasses cultural contact zones and mutinies, true to Peluso and Vandergeest's statement: "jungles are associated with insurgency and thus became violent versions of political forests" (2011: 218).

The legend of Jao Mae Nang Non is a notable case as its numerous versions vary according to the time period in which the tales are told. The dissemination of this legend seemingly began around the late thirteenth century. Since then, it has been retold to present a wide array of cultural-natural deep history at the local level alongside ethno-ecological perspectives on the animated mountain. The legend has not been solely re-narrated to emphasise shared values relative to the Tham Luang - Khun Nam Nang Non cave complex in Chiang Rai province, Thailand. Each version I collected from my fieldwork in December 2019 reveals how the legend has become an intertext which is emphasised and altered for interpretation. The varied versions of the tale reveal that the notion of locals' spiritual connections with Jao Mae Nang Non is strong as it is associated with insurgency among Tai Yai ethnic people who migrated from Shan state, Myanmar. Many of them reside near Nang Non mountain, bordering Mae Sai district in Chiang Rai, Thailand, and Tachilek town in Myanmar. Tai Yai is the largest ethnic group of all Tai ethnic minorities, who mostly reside in northern Thailand where they share collective memories with Lanna people. Their oral traditions have been well-preserved even though they were dominated by Myanmar during 1526 – 1776 before migrating to Thailand (Prasert, 2019).[80] During the political unrest, Tai Yai's manuscripts and books were burned. Therefore, their knowledge has since been transmitted mostly through the memories of the elderly that somehow blended in with northern myths and landscapes. That is to say, socio-ecological relations and Tai Yai's shared memories in the new host environment have blended to create a dynamic diversity to Tham Luang cave complex, and her legend. Yet, Tai Yai's oral traditions and memories are overlooked and often fall into subaltern voices. For the Thai state,

[79] Personal Interview conducted on 10 December 2019.
[80] Personal Interview conducted on 28 October 2019.

many of the Tai Yai are regarded as migrated workers who help Thailand's economic development.

Having said this, Thailand deals with cultural heterogeneity and ethnic plurality, as there are multiple belief systems intersecting with one another both culturally and religiously. The notion of religion-based tradition stretches out to multi-layers of narrative genre; superstition and rural Buddhism blend together. Andrew Johnson (2018), a professor of Anthropology, examines this phenomenon by pointing out the blended belief systems of Nature spirits and Buddhism are portrayed in the search-and-rescue incident of The Wild Boars. Relevant to Johnson, Edoardo Siani (2018) addresses the dynamic diversity of local superstitions and an ascetic Buddhist monk partaking in the rescue mission. For Siani, however, there appears to be political implications of the Thai state's violence over the magico-animistic Buddhism of rural folks. Although the supernatural belief of Jao Mae Nang Non was involved in this incident, it opens up an array of discussion among locals and scholars on its non-scientific explanations. Kanya Wattanagun stresses that the relationship between the rescue mission and supernatural beliefs deals with "the attempt to use alternative approaches to remedy a precarious situation when technological knowledge did not yield a desired outcome" (2021: 68). Her argument, however, is not sufficient to explain the intricate patterns of deep-rooted perceptions on the mountain spirits that blends in with rural Buddhism, for the locals have never perceived Buddhist prayers to be "alternative approaches." According to the fieldwork data, the locals would have prayed regardless of receiving any help from the outside. Rather, they feel grateful towards the mountain and the water-giving cavern system, down to a spiritual level. With all these cultural phenomena, I take the concept of historical ecology and cultural contestations into account along with ethno-ecological perspectives. The study will examine the three versions of the legend of Jao Mae Nang Non obtained from the fieldwork and elaborate on them alongside the cultural insurgency of rural folks.

Legend of Jao Mae Nang Non

The name Jao Mae Nang Non (which means the great reclining lady) is derived from a geographical feature of Doi Nang Non when seen from a distance - a mountain range, which is part of the Daen Lao range at the northernmost point of Chiang Rai province – which resembles a reclining princess. The mountain range stretches from the north to the south along the border between Mae Sai district in Chiang Rai and Tachilek town in Myanmar. It rises to an elevation of 2,555 feet and is approximately 10.3 kilometers deep. Doi Nang Norn is thus recognized as

the fourth largest cave in Thailand (Department of National Parks, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation, 2018). With countless limestone cave complexes, the mountain range features numerous stalactites and stalagmites which attract tourists from around the world each year. The mountain area consists of two forest types: mixed deciduous forest and evergreen forest. Many of my interview participants (2019) reported that the mountain is abundant with natural bounties such as bamboos, konjacs, mushrooms, and small animals like frogs, toads, tree shrews, and snakes. For them, the mountain is considered to be a foodbank and supernatural beings guard its resources. Keeping the spirits content brings about abundance, which in turn benefits the rural folks' wellbeing. As the folks' lives thrive on the natural environment of the mountain, they are respectful to Mother Nature animating the landscape.

The currently well-known legend of Jao Mae Nang Non has been expressed as a tragic love story between a princess of Jinghong in Xishuangbanna (a far south city in China's Yunnan province and a prehistoric capital of Tai ethnicities) and a lowly stableman of unknown origin. With their difference in status, the king forbids their marriage. The couple thus ran away from the kingdom while the princess was pregnant. Exhausted, the princess rested near Mekong riverbank while the stableman went to search for food. She waited for her lover until dawn without knowing that he had already been killed by the king's soldiers, who followed them since they left the kingdom. After finally learning about her husband's demise, she fatally stabbed her head with a hairpin. Locals believe that her blood has since become Mae Sai River. Her body laying from the north to the south has morphed into Doi Nang Non, while her womb is Tham Luang. Her pregnant belly has transformed into Doi Tung, her head Doi Chong, and her breasts Doi Mae Ya (Department of National Parks, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation, 2018).

Nang Non's legend and landscape stretch back to early times. The legend reveals how myth and folktale function as geographical explanations and historical ecology of early people's mentalities. The historical ecology of Nang Non's mountain range, coupled with the site-based legend and rural Buddhism play pivotal roles in shaping people's emotions towards the landscape. Affection towards Jao Mae Nang Non reflects the embodiment of landscape and local spiritualities rooted among the locals in Mae Sai district and Tai ethnic people, particularly those of Tai Yai from Shan state whose relationship has been closely tied with the northern

locals through migration and intermarriage (Por Luang Bunma, 2019).[81] Tai Yai ethno-ecological perspectives on the mountain link to traumatised memories of being dispersed from their homeland to a new host environment, and their ecological perceptions towards Nature.

[Figure 8: The Geographical feature of Doi Nang Norn. Image downloaded from https://thai.tourismthailand.org/Attraction in June 2022]

Hidden Cultural Contestation in Jao Mae Nang Non's Legend(s)

After my fieldwork on December 2019 and the further excavation through Jao Mae Nang Non's legend, there appear threefold transitional phases that show the ways in which elements of socioecology, transnational paradigms, and magico-animistic Buddhist narratives have been intricately developed and entwined.

Story 1: Ecological Agenda of Jao Mae Nang Non's Legend (late Thirteenth Century)

The tale of Jao Mae Nang Non can be traced to before the period of Siam – let alone modern Thailand – where ecological manifestation reveals substantial concerns towards the mountain range, which is regarded as sacred and mysterious. According to Sisak Wanliphodom (2018), a renowned Thai archeologist and historian, Doi Nang Norn was initially known among ethnic settlers as "Phu Sam Sao" (the three stones mountains) where Doi Tung was the main residence of the Lua lord (*phu jao lao chok*), Doi Pu Tao (also known as Doi Mae Ya) was for the Lua queen, and Doi Chong for their child. Sisak further explains his study by referring to Yonok

[81] Personal Interview conducted on 13 December 2019.

Chronical (*phongsawadan yonok*) discussing Lua ethnic people (also known as the *phu jao lao chok* race) as one of the first inhabitants on the range before migrating down to Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai. A descendant of Lua rulers, King Mangrai (1238-1311) later established the city of Ngoenyang (1261 – 1292) and then the Lanna Kingdom (1292-1311) respectively. The spirits of Phu Sam Sao, for the Lua ethnicity, were believed to animate the landscape and protect upstream rivers for the locals and neighborhoods.

Sisak's claim is relevant to the repertoires of the eighty-six-year-old former spiritual liaison (Ta Inkam Najai) who I met at Ban Chong village, Mai Sai district, Chiang Rai on December 2019. Unfortunately, due to his health, he could no longer speak, but his caretaker brought me to a dilapidated basement where several gypsum boards were abandoned on the dusted ground. There I found Ta Inkam's writings on the gypsum boards which describe how the villagers excavated wells and shared water resources provided by the Nang Non cave systems.

I also interviewed several local elders; one is a former headman named Por Luang Bunma of Ban Chong village (the northernmost part of Doi Nang Norn) who explained to me the intimate relationship between the legend and their day-to-day lives. For them, all of the legends of Phu Sam Sao, Doi Nang Non, and Mae Nang Non's tragic love with the stableman, remain influential in their memories. In almost every household, there are water wells collecting plenty of water from Doi Nang Non which locals still draw from even today. In every dry season of each year, the locals organise a ritual to pay homage to the spirits of the cave. Interestingly, offerings made in the ritual are those of Brahman tradition, such as bananas, coconuts, eggs, pig's heads, and new women's clothes. For them, the great cave represents Mae Nang Non's womb where all lives subsist and rely on her for water, food, and shelter. There are two rivers emerging from the cave: the clear one can be used for everyday consumption and household usage; and the red-tinted one is forbidden for any kind of usage, lest bad omens prevail, as the locals believe it to be Mae Nang Non's menstruation blood (2019). This socioecological agenda lies alongside the locals' and the late Lua's spiritualities towards the mountain range. Such spiritual rootedness undeniably makes the area culturally rich to a certain degree. Having Doi Nang Non as a sacred eco-space which Chiang Rai local people subsist on has shaped locals' attitudes and manners towards the mountainous areas up to the current day. The mountain has also inspired other folks who move to the area to hold on to this ecological perception which passes the story on to younger generations.

Story 2: Tai Yai's Positionality as Transnational Workers Represented in the Legend of Jao Mae Nang Non

In the mid 1980s, Thailand's economic growth was influenced by labour migration in an unprecedented exponential degree due to national industrialisation. Migrated workers from Myanmar become joined other foreign workers in contributing to Thailand's economic development (Martin, 2007). Alongside workers from Cambodia and Laos, about 75% of registered laborers are from Myanmar (ibid), and around a hundred thousand of them live and work in upper northern Thailand (Foreign Workers Administration Office, 2021). What motivates the laborers to migrate to the north, according to Sirirat's *The Mobility of Burmese Labors in the Upper Part of Northern Thailand* (2014), is stable income, higher wages, and a safe haven from Myanmar regime's oppression. The latter has driven me to investigate the interlinkage between Tai Yai's perspectives on Jao Mae Nang Non and Myanmar's political unrest.

At the end of the World War II in 1950s, Myanmar (or Burma at that time) survived the British ruler over the territories (1824 – 1948). The modern concept of borders had transformed the border-crossing perspectives between Tai and Thai into the clear-cut borderline. That says, Tai Yai ethnic family, mostly lived in the Shan state located in northeast Myanmar, dispersed themselves overtime, due to the socio-economic relations, throughout Assam in eastern India, southwestern China, northern Thailand, northern Laos, and some parts of northern Vietnam (Ropharat, 2020). With the geographical assimilation, Tai Yai people had adjusted and transformed their identity to the Thai cultural norm. Those of Tai Yai people have associated shared Tai and Thai ethnic heritage in order to ensure their working life in Thailand. In 1980s, the ongoing fighting regarding Myanmar's independence, several ethnicities had been forced to live in the political instability due to the changes of environmental landscapes, having transformed into large-scale teak logging – not to mention the rigid borderline between Thailand and Myanmar became tense. Following these stressed situations, the Myanmar military forced more than 300,000 of Tai Yai people from the 1,400 villagers in the Shan state from their rural habitats to the central areas of the Shan state (ibid). The Myanmar military government has not only exploited the traditional-environmental system, but also has enforced those of Tai Yai ethnic family to relocate into the other countries. Hence, one of the Tai Yai people's relocation communities is in the northern Thailand where identity adjustment and hardworking are the only options to secure their daily lives abroad.

When considering back into the well-known story of Jao Mae Nang Non, it is essential to focus on the king's soldiers who do their jobs according to the king's command. For many Tai Yai who shared their reactions with me in relation to the legend, those soldiers fall into the domain of culprits (2019). Status differences between the princess and the stableman are indeed a huge obstacle, but without the assassination scheme, the couple might have made it through together. The conflict between locals and military administration at this point have been included in the legend. An anthropologist, Holly High (2010), who researches the crisis of Laotian socio-politics and culture towards myths and belief systems, ascribes similar scenarios where rural Laotian tales of "*Si Mueang*" reveal the confrontation and contested terrains against the Lao state. Such implications open up new perceptions of Jao Mae Nang Non's legend in layers of contestation between the Tai Yai ethnic group and Myanmar's military that lies in the sociohistorical constraints since 1980s onward. According to the interviews, Tai Yai people liken themselves to the characters in the legend of Jao Mae Nang Non who are forced to leave oppression in their homeland.

The tragic fate of these migrated workers seems to be compatible with Jao Mae Nang Non's unsuccessful love. It can be said that once these workers evacuate into the new state, associations of self, landscape, and local legend would have been intermixed and re-articulated. This version of Jao Mae Nang Non's legend then functions as a psychological and emotional expression to vent the distress and frustrations of the Tai Yai.

The spirits of Doi Nang Non still pivot on Tai Yai's mentalities and those of the Chiang Rai locals. Reverence for the cave spirit has intensified since the football players got trapped in the cave. One third of the football players and the coach are of the Tai Yai ethnic group. The parents and other locals reconciled their hope with the Jao Mae spirit by making a plethora of offerings such as incense, fresh coconuts, mangoes, papayas, rice cakes, carbonated beverages, and fruit juices to plea for her to spare the young men (Gutman, 2018: 63). The search-and-rescue mission where skilled cave divers, hundreds of troops, and world-class technology worked around the clock, shows that Tham Nang Non still holds power over her mystic realm until today.

Story 3: The Emergence of Phra Kruva Boonchum: Buddhist and Cultural Revival among Migrated Workers and Thai State

As discussed, from the mid 1980s onward, Thailand's rapid economic growth spurred on modernisation and substantial development which in turn brought drastic changes to both the cityscape and the countryside. Migrated workers mobilised beyond the nation's borders, providing massive services which helped grow Thailand's economy. Legal immigrants centered around Bangkok, and the illegal ones throughout Thailand. Urban and rural contact zones however were stratified: Bangkok is the destination of modernisation, while rural areas have "barbarian backwardness" (Janit, 2014: 113). The countryside is regarded as a place of market production, forking out raw materials and labourers to the city (ibid).

As the Tai Yai migrated workers receive the same attitudes from Bangkokians, the lack of dignity and certainty pushes them to seek sources of protection: such as the folk legend of Jao Mae Nang Non. Since the Wild Boars' incident, rumors of the angry Nang Non spread beyond the Mae Sai district. The spirit's personification and her mysticism intricately fit into Tai Yai and local mentalities which perceive caves and the wilderness to be in a spiritual sphere. Some of the Wild Boars' parents got emotionally involved in the rescue and the collective despair, to the point of condemning the curse of Jao Mae Nang Non. Then, Phra Kruva Boonchum, who has been locally regarded as Jao Mae Nang Non's lover in a previous life, appeared at the rescue scene. Some believed that the powerful desire of Nang Non to meet her former lover was one of the factors causing the incident. Reuniting with her lover would lead to a successful mission. Although Phra Kruva Boonchum was born in Chiang Rai, he originally grew up in a Shan-speaking family, which dispersed from Myanmar. His reputation is well-known among the Tai Yai people - both in Myanmar and Thailand. Ascetic practices, retreats and solitary meditation are greatly revered by the Tai Yai who religiously follow the teachings of Kruva Sivichai, one of the founders of northern forest tradition. Apart from the support from world-class spelunkers and technology in this mission, many locals believe that the actual reason why the Wild Boars were safely rescued is mainly because of Kruva Boonchum. In his meditative state, Kruva claimed to have conversed with Jao Mae Nang Non and promised the children's parents that they would safely return home within a few days. Miraculously, Kruva's prediction came true – coincidentally or not. The tragic past of the couple and an unborn child brought about the successful retrieval of the reborn football team.

After eighteen days of the arduous mission, the legend of Jao Mae Nang Non resolved into a ghost folkloric genre interlinked with magico-animistic Buddhism. In contrast to many ghost novels and films in which the central Buddhist monks fix the "chaos", this version of Buddhist-folkloric legend combines a local prestigious monk into this eco-scape. Again, we come to the notion of insurgency wherein the wilderness has been oppressed by the Buddhist monks. However, it should be noted that Kruva was not summoned by the central state, but rather by a local forest monk wanting to help of his own accord. This fact manifests new arenas of negotiation and religion-oriented hybridity. This intertextual transformation of the legend returns to the relationship between locals (especially Tai Yai) and the Thai state, in which the locals push to have their local narratives compete against the grand narrative of the state. The emergence of Phra Kruva Boonchum helps posit those of Tai Yai religion-oriented perspectives into the spotlight of "civilisation." They hold strong magico-animistic Buddhist doctrines which turn into practicalities. That is, amid all the confusion, the football coach led the boys to practice meditation in the pitch-black cave, while the renowned Kruva Boonchum worked outside. These Buddhist tenets and the ghostly legend therefore blend together and turn into a historical and cultural revival among the Tai Yai and the state.

Considering the legend of Jao Mae Nang Non as a base for the locals to re-vocalise their relationship with the central core, the thematic transformation from ecological conservation into a socio-political negotiation of the latest legend coincides with what Arnika Fuhrmann stresses as "Buddhist Melancholia" (2016) in her Ghostly Desire study. To repair socio-political wounds, Arnika points out that Buddhist-folkloric ghost stories come in handy for a "…reexamination of past injustices and possibly lead to reparation" (64). In the case of Jao Mae Nang Non, by using Fuhrmann's framework, the desire of Nang Non to meet her former lover and the stableman reincarnating as Kruva Boonchum links the tragic past to the positive outcome of the rescue mission. The implication reveals how the legend of Nang Non interplays with a reparation of unsuccessful love in this domain.

Today's Jao Mae Nang Non

There are two arenas of the belief of Jao Mae Nang Non since June and July 2018 from the local and Thai state perspectives. To the locals residing nearby Tham Luang area, the mountain crest still holds its mysticism and harbors nonhuman actors. What strikes me however, is the British cave diver Vern Unsworth who married a Mae Sai local lady and has surveyed Tham Luang countless times. In 2013, he explored the cave and created a map in further annotations

(Gutman, 2018: 30). At a first glimpse, Unsworth explains his feeling of the cave as "the scooping booty", a place beyond reach for treasure hunting where he is the only person who can reach the untouched Nature. This notion gives me an uneasy reaction in the sense of a natural conqueror (from the West) who disrupts and disrespects the wilderness[82]. A year after the incident, BBC journalist Matthew Price (2019) interviewed Unsworth. This time, his interview surprisingly reveals a significant change of attitude towards Tham Luang. In his expression, he said "since the rescue mission, every time he enters the cave, flowers would be made as offerings to Jao Mae; after returning to the upperworld, he utters '*khop khun'* (thank you) to the spirit of the cave who grants protection for his return". This is a drastic change as a Western mind now understands Southeast Asians' more deeply.

As for the Thai government, The Department of Provincial Administration published a headline granting nationality to the four football players who were once "stateless" since their birth (BBC, 2018). To look at how Thai state operates this situation, we can say that this is also a part of historical reparations. However, it should be noted that there are still a vast majority of Tai Yai who have yet to receive their nationality, and that the Wild Boars are considered as lucky to gain the state's attention. It could be said that if the Wild Boars did not make international news, they would still be ignored. According to Edoardo Siani (2018), Jao Mae Nang Non's legend manifests as political implications of state violence. In 2019, the Thai government elevated the status of Doi Nang Non Forest Park into that of a National Park; and in 2020, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment concluded a plan to turn Tham Luang into an Asian Heritage Park. Recently, the cave complex and its ecological diversity became a tourist attraction as the local legend has been marketised and commodified. Sisak Wanliphodom (2018) expresses that this practice endangers wildlife animals in the mountains, water resources, and the forest. The spirit of the cave herself is once again facing unprecedented catastrophe.

[82] In Colonial Desire by Robert Young (1995), he points out that the idea of understanding our own culture and identity is by comparing ours to other cultures. With this gesture, the other cultures have been fallen upon the differences - the Oriental, of which these differences of peripheries must have been drawn into the center in order to serve colonial desire. Given the Prime Meridian, the Longitude Zero at the Old Royal Observatory, Greenwich, London as an example, Young demonstrates how an Occidental and an Oriental intersect. Taking Young's criticism of the Western views towards "the other" into account related to environmental violence and the conquering of natural territories, Nature has been fallen into scheme of the uprootedness. In Kim Taplin's Tongues in Trees (1989), many woods and trees were brought down in 1987 particularly in the south of England "parade [ing] across our hills like occupying armies" (p. 18) by all means of urbanisation and the progress of science and technology.

Jao Mae Nang Non's Negotiation Frontier: The Narrative of Diaspora and Cultural Hybridity

Attitudes of valuing Nature and seeing it as divine lead the locals to genuinely respect Nature. As in the case of Jao Mae Nang Non's legend, native people and transnational workers in Chiang Rai try to identify their cultural identities within the environmental arena. For them, the mountains and forests are not only inhabited by supernatural entities and spiritual efficacies, but are also the "beyond boundary" where cultural values and local identities come into the negotiation in the "in-between" arena with the Thai state. The concept of a diaspora, as Barker cited Brah (2016; 2000: 305), deals with a space of conflict where "the questions of who travels where, when, how, and under what circumstances" are greatly debated. For Brah, "diaspora space is the site where the native is as much as diasporian as the diasporian is a native" (ibid). Diaspora space within the "dominant tradition" thus tends to be blurred; then entangled to form cultural hybridity. At this point, a work of Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (2004; 1994), strengthens the notion of "the in-between space" and "cultural hybridity" perfectly. Bhabha's in-between spaces comparably refer to a liminal space between two places that mobilise in temporal dimension (53). In this space, cultural differences are hybridised and construct "the ambivalent process, destroy[ing] mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, and expanding code" (54). Bhabha also mentions a theory of Fanon's "culture-as-political-struggle" (55) in the way in which the cultural reinterpretation produces "the discontinuous time of translation and negotiation where the cultural authority of the continuities and 'nationalist tradition' are destroyed (ibid). Urging the need to think beyond narratives of singularity from the hegemonic sphere and focus more on "the interstices", Bhabha explains this as the disruptive cultural enunciation against orthodox practices and authoritative hierarchy. Cultural hybridity theorised by Bhabha thus establishes new possibilities and social spaces where inequalities, minorities, and cultural differentiation can be heard and discussed.

> To see the cultural not as the source of conflict – different cultures – but as the effect of discriminatory practices – the production of cultural differentiation as signs of authority – changes its value and its rules of recognition. Hybridity intervenes in the exercise of authority not merely to indicate the impossibility of its identity but to represent the unpredictability of its presence. (ibid: 163)

It could be said that the in-between space can be used to counter mainstream culture, religions, and identity as representations and binary opposition are deconstructed. Trained through the lens of colonialism, Bhabha investigates colonial discourses where the colonist takes control and influences the cultural identities of the locals. However, in the in-between space, not only does the colonised disrupt cultural purity, but also makes the colonist a subject of "mimicry" (ibid: 123). This process creates the third space where locals' cultural re-interpretations are used for bargaining cultural authority by putting "the colonial subject as a partial presence" (ibid). This process of mimicry helps relocate cultural spaces and diaspora identities in the area of "the ambivalent other" – the mixing identities that is almost the same, but different.

Looking back to Jao Mae Nang Non's legend, the third version of the tale with Phra Kruva Boonchum reflects Bhabha's mimicry. In normative narratives, elite Buddhist monks would be summoned by the central state to help rural people exorcise evil spirits or give blessings. This is seen in the classic Thai horror movie "Nang Nak" directed by Nonzee Nimibutr (1999), where a centralised Buddhist monk Somdej To was summoned to exorcise the vengeful, jealous spirit Nak in the early Rattanakosin period. The exorcist portrayed in this tale is always violent and oppressive towards Nak which is a shocking contrast to the Buddhist teachings of forgiveness, mercy, and peace. To put Nang Nak under control, Somdej To cuts off part of Nak's frontal cranium and keeps it as a charm. Phra Kruva Boonchum, the representative of a local forest monk on the contrary, strode into the cave crevices to converse calmly with the spirit of Nang Non in a reconciliatory manner. The myth and magic of Kruva Boonchum's tale becomes the subject of the legend where local spiritualities have been boosted and prevail. The tale of Jao Mae Nang Non then reverses the formal process of a hegemonic narrative. It also reveals historical trauma where locals' cultural/religious differentiation was considered unorthodox and uncivilised. The re-imaging of Buddhist monks therefore manifests the new meanings of Buddhist hybridity between state-sponsored monks and forest monks.

Additionally, for those of Tai Yai ethnicity, this negotiation frontier bonding with the legend provides a paradoxical boundary between home and the world at large – it is what Bhabha calls "the unhomeliness" (2004; 1994: 6). The unhomely space creates "the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations" (13). As a result, the grand scenery of Jao Mae Nang Non mountain ranges becomes part of the extra-territory and the beyond barrier of cultural differentiation.

Within these confrontations and reinterpretations of local cultural narratives, images of local identities represented in Jao Mae Nang Non's legend unfold cultural integration. The portrayal of locals' religious beliefs in folktales are vividly manifested as evidence of how rural people assimilate, adapt, and negotiate their positionalities within dominant narrative tradition. This complies with what Yongyutha Chuven, a renowned Thai historian, calls "local liberation from Thai state's domination" (2019: 138). The latter forms monocultural traditions throughout the nation by suppressing "other cultures" under their hierarchy.

Images of Nature and Forest Buddhist Monks in Thailand

Orthodox Theravada Buddhism has largely played important roles in Thai culture. Citing Pattana, Peter Jackson states that "these everyday forms of religiosity serve as a discursive social space, in which political, economic, and cultural meanings are packaged, channeled, consumed, and contested" (2016: 826). Such a notion is in correlation with Terwiel (2012: 1-2) who postulates that Thai Buddhism "cannot be described under a single rubric". There are several distinctive strata of religious beliefs: animist folks who wholeheartedly believe in natural power, rural/unsophisticated Buddhists, and highly educated Buddhists. However, among rural people, their "magio-animistic" aspects circulate around their worldviews and Buddhist tenets in relation to ecology heterogeneously (ibid: 4). That is, the synchronic structure of local religion bridges sophisticated Buddhism into local religious practices. This has not occurred only within secular spaces, but also the extra-territorial environment. Kirsch (1997: 241) points out that the Thai religious system consists of "synchronic structural function" wherein several distinctive traditions have combined and "upgraded" Buddhism. Theravada Buddhism, for Kirsch, is regarded as incomplete and a syncretic situation.

Since the 1900s, Prince Mongkut (who would later become King Rama IV) tried to build up the centralisation of state-sponsored Buddhism within Bangkok by setting up Dhammayut sect and reforming the Sangha order. This movement is also known as the pivotal reformation of Buddhism in Thailand. The operation was later run by King Rama V and his half-brother Prince Wachirayan. This Dhammayut movement caused the emergence of centralised, bureaucratic, and hierarchical religion whose monks emphasise Pali-scriptural texts (*vinaya*) and systemic Dhamma exams (*nak-tham*) (Subrahmanyan, 2019: 182). Among them, there are monks revered for their ascetic philosophy: Phra Ajarn Man Phurithatto (1870 – 1949), Luang Puu Waen Sujinno (1888 – 1985), Luang Puu Cha Suphattho (1918 – 1992), and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906 – 1993), just to name a few. These monks are also known as

kammathana forest monks whose "walking in the wilderness, meeting many kinds of villagers, spending nights beneath a tree or a cave, and contending with all sorts of mental and physical challenges" practices are the path to the enlightenment (Kamala, 1997: 2). Unfortunately, these wandering and meditation-oriented monks are more likely considered as "anomalous, unconventional, and heretical" according to Siamese intellectuals (ibid). Though they are from the Dhammayut sect, their practices and traditions are rarely accepted in the Bangkok Theravada perspective. For Kamala, King Mongkut considered meditation as mystical and a waste of time (7). Such incompatible views between Bangkok Buddhist elites and forest monks thus leave massive contestation within Thai perceptions, as Arjun Surahmanyan, a Southeast Asian historian, says that Dhammayut politics is "a grave crime in Sangha affairs and unhelpful to Dhammic practices" (2019: 194).

Nevertheless, their doctrinal practices push these forest monks to engage with ecology, as the name implies. Martin Seeger points out that Thai forest monks stand against deforestation. The wilderness plays its part as a spiritual sanctuary and forest monasteries lead to "the ultimate freedom" (2014: 64). For Seeger, local Buddhism and animistic beliefs are "in a harmonious marriage" (ibid). For people in the countryside, *ban – wat – pa* (home – temple – forest) are but a syncretistic unit where secular doctrines cannot be separated out from spiritual traditions and the sacred forests they are dependent on. Bialek (2014: 3) considers Thai Buddhist ecology monks as a form of "engaged Buddhism":

> Ecology monks draw from Buddhist concepts of impermanence, dependent origination, and suffering in conjunction with indigenous beliefs in forest and tree spirits to foster a relationship between the forest and human communities. (ibid: 4)

With all these notions, therefore, the role of Phra Kruva Boonchum, the Chiang Rai – Myanmar forest monk in Jao Mae Nang Non's legend, necessitates locals' and Tai Yai's cultural narratives to bring back their voices and identities, and also to blur Thai monocultural tradition. The presence of Kruva Boonchum not only helps liberate local identities by showing the impurity and disruptions to Thai religious monoculture, but also emphasises the mutual relationship between forest monks and the sacred mountains as spiritual sanctuaries in the arena.

Conclusion

Tham Luang - Khun Nam Nang Non cave complex in Chiang Rai province, Thailand, is imbedded with magic and Cultural-Natural history. The beliefs and practices of revering the mountain have circulated among locals and especially the Tai Yai ethnic minority residing near the area. The mountain is believed to be animated by supernatural entities – one of which is the female spirit, Jao Mae Nang Non, whose reputation became widespread in the rescue mission of The Wild Boars' football players and their coach in June and July 2018. In this chapter, I addressed that the Tham Luang cave and ecological spiritualities blend different influences. Folks' beliefs in the mystic power of the ghost spirits and the practices of magico-animistic Buddhism create diversity in the landscape. It also opens up a liminal space in which the negotiation between local and national identity is juxtaposed. Such liminal space represents the ecological realm of the mountain as a contested terrain for rural folks in resisting the cultural dominance of the Thai nation-state. All of which is related to ethno-ecological perspectives on the mountain among the Tai Yai ethnic minority which is enacted in the legend of Jao Mae Nang Non.

As a folk orality, Jao Mae Nang Non's legend is a good example of folk literature which is a dynamic boundary crossing. When Jao Mae Nang Non comes into the milieu of cultural contestation, her eco-space reveals the configuration of power that re-vocalises "the powerless" – the diaspora. Her mountains become the representative frontier of the impurity of cultural concepts since it is fluid and not a stable identity. The role of Buddhism in Thai socio-cultural fabric also entangles with the folk legends revealing the multi-rubrics of religiosity. The legend of Jao Mae Nang Non bridges understandings of rural cultures and nature-oriented relationships. This cultural and religious mix shows how locals venerate the lands, waters, and mountains as parts of their existence along with their strong beliefs in magico-animistic Buddhism. The configuration of *ban* (home), *wat* (temple), and *pa* (forest) for the rural people cannot be segregated.

Unlike most of orthodox Buddhist monks whose Pali-scriptural study is the main practice, the forest monks advocate themselves not only to the learning of Buddhist dogmas but also ascetic mediation in forest monasteries and in the wilderness. Their practices are considered to be engaged Buddhism in which human lives, nonhuman agencies, and natural landscapes are interlinked and hybridised. This helps create new liminal spaces for cultural difference and environmental narratives. Myths and legends are more likely to emotionally

rouse us than pure history. In folk narratives, aesthetic values become sites of questioning, resistance, and bargain. The narrative of Jao Mae Nang Non's legend unfolds the rural and diaspora confrontation, and the negotiation with the institutionalised milieu. In this sense, religious and political orders are entangled in a series of discursive practices towards tales.

Conclusion

'*Everywhere there is connection. Everywhere there is illustration.*
No single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended
except in relation to other events, to other literature.'
(Matthew Arnold, 1857)

The present study has sought to expand the understanding of the interrelationships between Human-Nature and storytelling that are mediated by cultural beliefs, socio-politics, history, and religion with the land itself. There is an outside intervention that stops rural people from enjoying their traditional relationships with Nature and their environment. By drawing on the folk oralities from across the modern Thai state, the thesis focuses on rural and regional locations as the source materials that set out in contrast with oralities collected and re-articulated by the central Thai state. Considering literary works as cultural texts, I take folk orality that is not solely fictional or fanciful, but rather is a narratological blueprint. As such, it emphasises the ways that common people make sense of their environmental phenomena and cope with environmental conflicts with various external pressures and forces.

Taking folk lullabies, folk archaic female spirit-related rhymes in connection with Mae Sue, the Phra Rot Meri tale and the folk legend of Jao Mae Nang Non into account, these conceptual materials indicate how the discourses of Siamese/Thai nationhood have interfered with rural people's nature-oriented knowledge and their coexistence with natural environment. This thesis therefore develops its research questions within the four key categories: Nature-related knowledge among rural people from the peripheral regions; intertextual transformations; the Culture-Nature divide; and environmental conflicts with the Thai grand narratives. In order to tackle these aspects, I combine first-hand experiences derived from in-depth interviews of the 4 main regional participants in Thailand and Luang Prabang in Laos along with the documentary research. Rather than take an aesthetic approach to the texts, I utilise a variety of theoretical approaches with the interdisciplinary perspectives of intertextuality, political ecology, colonial discourses, posthumanism, and Buddhist hybridity.

This thesis is structured around the ways in which Thai rural people reside with their natural environment, as represented in the regional folk lullabies. In Chapter 2 and 3, the reciprocal and accountable characteristics of Nature, all sentient beings, and also supernatural entities reflect how human geography, perceptions through natural mysticism, and emotions

have a significant impact in everyday life. The folk rhymes and their lyrics clearly convey the intersections between Culture and Nature whereby rural people's sentiments and their conceptual abstraction about the nurtured/sacred Nature help blur the distinctions between the two. That is, the folk rhymes as cultural texts have combined Nature-related knowledge that connect Culture and Nature together.

However, the more that folk literary culture has come under the influence and pressure of the grand narratives of the Siamese/Thai discourses out of the larger environment, the more it has come to depict images of resource management, resource struggles, and their cultural ramifications. Such notions further bring me to the complex interplay between the politicisation of the environment and Siam/Thai state's intervention that leads to a cultural rift in both the lifestyles and the narratives of rural communities. Land-grabbing, economic dispossession, and industrial agriculture are explored in the thesis as the discursive practices deployed by the state to absorb natural resources that have affected the environmental health of the periphery as being well reflected through the lens of oralities and literature. That is, the ideas of the horizontal vision and reciprocal relationships pertain in the rural people's conceptualisation are exploited and disrupted by the vertical transcendence and the abuse of power imposed by the Thai state.

The state's disruptions of Culture-Nature have also expanded to attempts to polarise supernatural-related belief systems to serve Siamese/Thai hegemonic discourses. In the case of Mae Sue*,* as I have elaborated in Chapter 3, supernatural beliefs and femininity have been objectified. The rural lullaby versions about Mae Sue – in her role as having a reciprocal relationship with rural people in tending to babies - and the reflections of rural people's subjectivity are considered as inferior and insignificant compared to the new images of the Brahmanised/Buddhistised Mae Sue demonstrated by Siamese intellectuals. As an effect of this, religion and politics meet in a sociopolitical nexus. The animistic beliefs held by many rural people are considered to be a failed epistemology in comparison with Buddhist tenets. Mae Sue is therefore re-classified as orthodox in the hegemonic state project of creating a central monoculture.

In folk literature the relationship between the storyteller and the text produces a link between temporal dimensions and cultural boundaries (Bassnett, 2007). Another principle concern of this thesis is therefore the search for intertextual transformations in folk storytelling. They can be mapped by the development of folk stories, such as in the central Thai lullabies

and in the transformations of the Phra Rot Meri story, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. This form of manipulation appears in the attempts of Siamese scholars to shift natural understandings to serve the conventions of central Thai forms narration using the folk literary materials as intertexts. The self-image that the Siamese/Thai nation-state has projected is one of mastery over Nature, hence having tamed it. As a result, this monolithic perception brings about the subjugation of the natural environment and concurrently the invasion of indigenous territories as in the case of Meri's landscape in the *Rathasena Paññasa Jataka*. Distinctions between Culture and Nature have therefore emphasised the inconvenient truth of Siam/Thai colonial practices promoted through the folktales.

To understand the Culture-Nature divide in the terms of the renowned posthumanist, Descola, Nature is seen as "a place resistant to all attempts to tame it" (2013: 32). Nature instead inspires constructed forms of human Culture. In some senses, the hierarchical order that is established between Nature and human Culture imply a linear perspective of human cognitive abilities to understand cultural processes in and through Nature (ibid: 59). That is, humans identify their existence in relation to the "outside world" by seeing the latter as an "other", i.e. something that is different to "us". Clashes between human sameness and the difference posed by the "other" become problematic in terms of the celebration of human power and the marginalisation of otherness that it imposes. Such distinctive ideologies have pushed the natural sphere to become, as Descola describes it, a "mere ventriloquist's dummy, of which man could make himself, as it were, the lord and master" (61). The body is the first thing that enters our perception, but the self-image as master has pushed Nature to the periphery. The Siamese/Thai state's interventions in the Culture-Nature sphere in the folk oralities therefore has a significant impact on rural people's sense of deep history in relation to the environment. As a result of the historical forces that construct human consciousness, the Thai environment has consequently been placed in danger, and remains in this position today.

The landscapes of the forest and the jungle have lost their sense of magic following the introduction of "civilisation" to the land. The forest, which was once held to be a sacred and mysterious space, has been brought under control and tamed, a fate worse than it being stereotyped as a site of fear. The re-narration and the suppression of folk cultures, their narratives, and eco-spaces has, however, led to revolt and resistance. In the case of the folk legend of the local mountain spirit Jao Mae Nang Non in Chiang Rai province, discussed in Chapter 6, the tropes of politics and religion have once again become intertwined. The notion

of intertextuality and sociopolitical ramification is evident in the multiple layers of this legend. Starting with ecological agenda among Lua ethnicity residing in the area approximately during the thirteenth century, Mae Nang Non mountain range was known at that time as Phu-Sam-Sao. This mountain has been set as a mystic and sacred landscape in order to save precious water resources for those of people downhills. With leapfrogged economic development in Thailand during 1980s, massive proportion of Myanmar transnational workers migrated and settled in their "new home" in Chiang Rai province. At this stage, cultural differentiation and historical trauma among Tai Yai workers, mostly form Shan state, have been assimilated and entangled with local eco-scape. Under the circumstances of uncertainty in lives, hard-working jobs, and the Wild Boars' football team incident, both the legend and the eco-scape create the cultural interstice where diasporic identities are re-articulated and mixed with normative form of dominant narrative of Thai state. The cultural negotiation has further revived diasporic space by spotlighting on the spiritual role of Phra Khuva Boonchum, a forest monk who earn great reverence form Tai Yai people. The mimicry occurs in the sense where natural spiritualities, animistic beliefs, and local Buddhism are intertwined with the orthodox Buddhist pattern by and large. Each version of this legend reveals the resistance of Tai Yai ethnic people residing near the mountain to conventional Buddhism and the dominant Thai narrative. The natural arena and archaic female spirits have played pivotal roles in bringing environmental conflicts and national-cultural negotiation to the fore, in keeping with Peluso and Vandergeest's contention that "jungles are associated with insurgency and thus became violent versions of political forests" (2011: 218). The folk legend of Jao Mae Nang Non opens up, however, a new horizon of the intersectionality of nature-oriented knowledge, human sentiments towards Nature, resource management, and rural Buddhist hybridity at the local level. Bringing this tale into the discussion has allowed for the development of further understandings of local identity and the subtle complexity of its Human-Nature interrelationships.

Power relations have always influenced human experiences. Folk oralities provide a good example in this respect, dealing as they do with resource-related interactions where the differing demands of national and local perspectives intersect in the sphere of Nature and the control of Nature. There are many more environmental themes in literary texts that have potential for further study particularly from the standpoints of environmental security, environmental justice, emotional political ecology, the Anthropocene, the ecosystem services, worlding, and more. This further research could be useful to bring out the positive movement and fair development that uplift the voices of marginalised groups. It continues to be of value

to link our imaginative and mystical experiences with the deep listening to local storytellings, re-reading literary texts and re-opening the deep cultural memories of the subaltern given their potential to revive a sense of peaceful coexistence between humans and Nature in the wider sense of those terms.

Bibliography

English Materials

Ahmed, Sara. 2014. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Akins, Joel. 2010. *Transmitting Traditional Lanna Music in the Modern-Day City of Chiang Mai*. Master's degree thesis: Chulalongkorn University.

Allen, Graham. 2011. *Intertextuality: The New Critical Idiom*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Anderson, Benedict, R. O'G. 1990. *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

----------. 2006 [1983]. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso.

Anuman Rajadhon, Phraya. 1968. *Essays on Thai Folklores*. Bangkok: Thai International Religious Commission for Development and Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation.

Arjun Subrahmanyan. 2019. "Worldly Compromise in Thai Buddhist Modernism". *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 50(2): 179 – 201.

Ashford, Joan A. 2009. *Ecocritical Theology: Neo-pastoral Themes in American Fiction from 1960 to the Present*, PhD. thesis: Georgia State University.

Baker, Chris and Pasuk Phongpaichit. 2014 [2005]. *A History of Thailand*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

----------. 2019. *From the Fifty Jãtaka: Selections from the Thai Paññasa Jãtaka*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.

Bal, Mieke. 1997. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. London: University of Toronto Press.

Barber. Elizabeth W. 2013. *The Dancing Goddesses: Folklores, Archaeology, and the Origins of Europe Dance*. New York: W.W.Norton & Company.

Barker, Chris and Jane, Emma A. 2016. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. London: SAGE.

Barthes, Roland. 1977. *Image, Music, Text*. Translated by Stephen Heath. n.p.: Fontana Press.

Bartosch, Roman. 2013. *EnvironMentality: Ecocriticism and the Event of Postcolonial Fiction*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi B.V.

Bassnett, Susan. 1993. *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*. n.p.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Bate, Jonathan. 1991. *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*. London: Routledge.

Begon, Michael, Townsend, Colin R., and Harper, John L. 2006. *Ecology: From Individuals to Ecosystems*. Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing.

Bernardi, Giorgio, Fantini, B., and Dröscher, A. 2015. "Crossroads between Nature and Culture: An Introduction". *History and Philosophy of the Life Science*s 36(3): 301 – 304.

Bhabha, Homi K. 2004 [1994]. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.
----------. 2003 [1996]. "Culture's In-Between". In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by Steward Hall and Paul Du Gay, 53 – 60. London: SAGE.
Bialek, Marieta R. 2014. *Thai Buddhist Ecology Monks: Competing Views of the Forest*. Master's degree thesis. University of Colorado at Boulder.
Bladow, Kyle and Jennifer, L. 2018. *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska.
Blaikie, Piers. 1985. *The Political Economy of Soil Erosion in Developing Countries*. London: Routledge.
Bonnár, Lisa. 2014. *Life and lullabies. Exploring the basis of meaningfulness in parents' lullaby-singing*. n.p.: NMH Publications.
Boyce, M. 1984. *Textual sources for the study of Zoroastrianism*. Manchester: Manchester.
Braidotti Rosi. 2013. "Posthuman Humanities". *European Educational Research Journal* 12(1): 1-19.
Bryant, Raymond L. 1992. "Political Ecology: An Emerging Research Agenda in Third-world Studies". *Political Geography* 11(1): 12 – 36.
----------. 1998. "Power, Knowledge and Political Ecology in a Third World: A Review". *Progress in Physical Geography* 22(1): 79 – 94.
Buell, Lawrence. 1995. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
----------. 2005. *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. Malden: Blackwell.
----------. 2011. "Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends". *Qui Parle* 19(2): 87 – 115.
Campbell, Joseph. 1969 [1904]. *The Flight of the Wild Gander: Explorations in the Mythological Dimensions*. New York: Viking Press.
----------. 1991. *The Power of Myth*. New York: Anchor Books.
----------. 2008 [1949]. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. California: New World Library.
Capra, Fritjof. 1975. *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*. Colorado: Shambhala.
Cassaniti, Julia L. and Menon, Usha. 2017. *Universalism without Uniformity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Chanokporn Chutikamoltham. 2015. *Destabilising Thainess: The Construction and National Culture in State Ideologies and the Return of the Repressed*. PhD. thesis. London: SOAS University of London.
Chi Pham, Chitra Sankaran, and Gurpeet Kaur, eds. 2019. *Ecologies in Southeast Asian Literatures: Histories, Myths and Societies*. Delaware and Malaga: Vernon Press.
Clark, John P. 2012. "The Emergence and Development of Political Ecology". *Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics, San Diego: Academic Press* 3(2): 505 – 516.
Coupe, Laurence. 2009. *Myth: The New Critical Idiom*. Oxon: Routledge.
Couper, Pauline R. 2018. "The Embodied Spatialities of Being in Nature: Encountering the Nature/Culture Binary in Green/Blue Space". *Cultural Geographies* 25(2): 285 – 299.
Creed, Barbara. 2007 [1993]. *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge.
Crutzan, Paul J. 2002. "Geology of Mankind". *Nature* 415: 23.

Crutzan, Paul J. and Stoermer, Eugene F. 2000. "The 'Anthropocene'". *IGBP Newsletter* 41: 17 – 18.
Culler, Jonathan D. 1975. *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistic and the Study of Literature*. New York: Routledge.
---------- . 2000. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
De Moraes, T. 2018. *Myth Atlas: Maps and Monsters, Heroes and Gods from Twelve Mythological Worlds*. New York: Little Bee Books.
Deming, Alison H. and Savoy, Lauret E. 2011. *Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World*. Minnesota: Milkweed.
Descola, Philippe. 2013. *Beyond Nature and Culture.* Translated by Janet Lloyd. Chicago: The University of Chicago.
----------. 2013. *The Ecology of Other*. Translated by Geneviève Godbout and Benjamin P. Luley. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.
Duff, David. 2002. "Intertextuality versus Genre Theory: Bakhtin, Kristeva and the Question of Genre". *Paragraph* 25(1): 54 – 73.
Elmhirst, Rebecca. 2011. "Introducing New Feminist Political Ecologies". *Geoforum* 42: 129 – 132. doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.01.006.
Elmhirst, Rebecca, Siscawati, M., and Basnett, Bimbika S. 2015. 'Navigating Investment and Dispossession: Gendered Impacts of the Oil Palm "Land Rush" in East Kalimantan, Indonesia'. *International Academic Conference: Land Grabbing, Conflict and Agrarian-Environmental Transformations: Perspective from East and Southeast Asia*, paper no. 69. Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, 5 – 6 June.
Erll, Astrid. 2011. *Memory in Culture*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Esterik, Penny V. 1982. "Interpreting a Cosmology: Guardian Spirits in Thai Buddhism". *Anthropos Journal* 77(1): 1 -15.
Estés, Clarissa P. 2008. *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Contacting the Power of the Wild Woman*. London: Rider.
Fagundes, Francisco C. and Blayer, Irene M.F. 2007. *Studies on Themes and Motifs in Literature: Oral and Written Narratives and Cultural Identity*. New York: Peter Lang.
Farrar, Janet and Stewart F. 1996 [1987]. *The Witches's Goddess: The Feminine Principle of Divinity*. Croydon: Robert Hale.
Finot, Louis. 1917. "Recherches sur la Littérature Laotienne". *Bullentin de l'Ecole FranÇaise d'Extrême – Orient* 17 (5): 1 – 218.
Forbes, M. 2020. *Incest in Ancient Greece and Rome: How Was It Viewed?* [online]. Available at: https://www.thecollector.com/incest-ancient-greece-rome/?fbclid=IwAR24LFZrusNprInBqtUkjN2piHDMmxhqQapO0zJ9gQHyDKImHCztVV9p1K4. [Accessed 2 Feb. 2021].
Forret, P. 2007. *Weekday Colors (According to Ayurveda)* [online]. Available at: https://blog.forret.com/2007/08/21/weekday-colours-ayurveda/. [Accessed 6 Aug. 2020].
Frank, Arthur W. 2010. *Letting Stories Breathe: A Socio-Narratology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Frazer, James G. 1926. *The Worship of Nature*. London: Macmillan.

Fry, G. E., Nieminen, Gayla S., and Smith, H. E. 2013. *Historical Dictionary of Thailand*. Maryland: Scarecrow Press.
Fuhrmann, Arnika. 2016. *Ghostly Desires: Queer Sexuality and Vernacular Buddhism in Contemporary Thai Cinema*. Durham: Duke University Press.
Garrard, Greg. 2012. *Ecocriticism*. London and New York: Routledge.
Genette, Gérard. 1980. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Translated by Jane E. L. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Fromm, Harold. 1996. *The Ecocriticism Readers: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Georgia: University of Georgia Press.
González-Hidalgo, M., and Zografos, C. 2020. "Emotions, Power, and Environmental Conflict: Expanding the Emotional Turn in Political Ecology". *Progress in Human Geography* 44(2): 235 – 255.
Grabowsky, Volker and Berger, Hans G, eds. 2015. *The Lao Sangha and Modernity: Research at the Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang 2005 - 2015.* Luang Prabang and New York: Anantha Publishing.
Graves, Robert. 1960 [1955]. *The Greek Myths*. London: Penguin Books.
Greg, Garrard. 2004. *Ecocriticism: New Critical Idiom*. Oxford: Routledge.
Gutman, Matt. 2018. *The Boys in the Cave: Deep Inside the Impossible Rescue in Thailand*. New York: HarperCollins.
Haraway, Donna J. 2008. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Harrison, Rachel V. 2011. "Literature, Theory, and the Politics of Criticism in Contemporary Thailand". *PMLA/Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*126(3): 658 – 661.
----------. 2014. *Disturbing Conventions: Decentering Thai Literary Cultures*. London: Rowman and Littlefield International.
----------. 2017. "Dystopia as Liberation: Disturbing Femininities in Contemporary Thailand". *Feminist Review* 116(1): 64-83. doi:10.1057/s41305-017-0070-y.
Harrison, Rachel V. and Jackson, Peter A. 2011. Introduction. In *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traced of the Colonial in Thailand*, edited by Rachel Harrison and Peter A. Jackson. 1-36. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
Hartmann, John F., Henry, George M., and Kongananda, Wibha S. 1989. "Lexical Puzzles and Proto-Tai Remnants in an Old Thai Text". *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 4(2): 71 – 85.
Helms, Mary W. 1978. "On Julian Steward and the Nature of Culture". *American Ethnologist* 5 (1) (1978): 170–83. http://www.jstor.org/stable/643743.
Heneghan, Liam. 2018. *Beasts at Bedtime: Revealing the Environmental Wisdom in Children's Literature*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
High, Holly. 2010. "LAOS: Crisis and Resource Contestation". *Southeast Asian Affairs*: 153-161. doi: http://www.jstor.org/stable/41418564.
Hirsch, Philip. 2009. "Revisiting Frontier as Transitional Spaces in Thailand". *The Geographical Journal* 175(2): 124 – 132.
Hitt, Christopher. 2004. "Ecocriticism and the Long Eighteenth Century". *College Literature* 31(3): 123 – 147.

Holling, C. S. 1973. “Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems”. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, *4*: 1–23.
Hrdy, Sarah B. 1999. *Mother Nature: Natural Selection and the Female of the Species*. London: Chatto & Windus.
Huggan, Graham and Tiffin, Helen. 2015. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.
Hundius, Harald. 2004. ‘Lao Manuscripts and Traditional Literature: The Struggle for their Survival’. *International Conference: The Literary Heritage of Laos: Preservation, Dissemination and Research Perspective*, Vientiane, National Library of Laos, 8 – 10 January.
Igunma, Jana. 2016. *O Graceful Fawn, O Gentle Doe: Deer in Thai Manuscript Art* [online]. Available at: https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2016/12/o-graceful-fawn-o-gentle-doe-deer-in-thai-manuscript-art.html. [Accessed 5 Feb. 2021].
----------. 2020. *A Thai Royal Edition of Pannasa Jataka* [online]. Available at: https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2020/06/a-thai-royal-edition-of-pannasa-jataka.html?fbclid=IwAR0rMF4qZvOz1sq4C29YbVoBC63VBY3-pN_cflFkhfAFPnXxMC6tf0Hs_LM. [Accessed 5 Feb. 2021].
Jabr, Ferris and Magazine, Hakai. 2017. *How Moonlight Sets Nature’s Rhymes* [online]. Available at: https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/how-moonlight-sets-nature-rhythms-180963778/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CTime%20was%20first%20reckoned%20by,Graves%20in%20The%20Greek%20Myths. [Accessed 9 May 2020].
Jack, Albert. 2010 [2008]. *Pop Goes the Weasel: The Secret Meanings of Nursery Rhymes*. London and New York: Penguin Books.
Jackson, Peter A. 1989. *Buddhism, Legitimation, and Conflict: The Political Functions of Urban Thai Buddhism*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
----------. 2016. “The Supernaturalization of Thai Political Culture: Thailand’s Magical Stamps of Approval at the Nexus of Media, Market and State”. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute* 31(3). 826 – 879.
----------. 2020. “Beyond Hybridity and Syncretism *Kala-Thesa* Contextual Sensitivity and Power in Thai Religious and Gender Cultures”. *Journal of Anthropology, Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre* 3(1): 4 – 37.
Jacobs, J. 1912. *Indian Fairy Tales*. Pennsylvania: General Press.
Janit Feangfu. 2014. “Orientalisation from Within and Consuming the Modern World: Rural-Urban Contact in Thai Popular Literature of the 1970s”. In *Disturbing Conventions: Decentering Thai Literary Cultures,* edited by Rachel V. Harrison, 111-135. London: Rowman & Littlefield International.
Johnson, Andrew. 2018. *Inside the Sacred Danger of Thailand’s Caves.* In *The Conversation* [online]. Available at: https://theconversation.com/inside-the-sacred-danger-of-thailands-caves-99638. [Accessed 9 May 2022]
Jory, Patrick. 2016. *Thailand’s Theory of Monarchy: The Vessantara Jãtaka and the Idea of the Perfect Man.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Jory, Patrick and Jirawat Saengthong. 2020. “The Roots of Conservative Radicalism in Southern Thailand’s Buddhist Heartland”. *Critical Asian Studies* 52(1): 127-148. doi: 10.1080/14672715.2019.1702888.

Kamala Tiyavanich. 1997. *Forest Recollections: Wandering Monks in Twentieth-century Thailand*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

----------. 2003. *In the Cool Shade of Compassion: The Enchanted World of the Buddha in the Jungle*. Colorado: Shambhala Publication.

Kanokwan Manorom and Supranee Phomthong. 2018. “Peri-Urban Agriculture in Ubon Ratchathani City: Pressure and Persistence”. *Journal of Mekong Studies* 14(1): 20 – 31.

Kanya Wattanagun. 2017. “Karma Versus Magic: Dissonance and Syncretism in Vernacular Thai Buddhism”. Southeast Asian Studies 6(1). 115 – 137. Kyoto: Center for Southeast Asian Studies.

----------. 2021. “Against Hostile Nature: The Roles of Magic and Science in Thailand’s Cave Rescue”. *Manusya Journal of Humanities* 24(1): 68 – 86.

Kapur-Fic, A.R. 1998. *Thailand: Buddhism, Society and Women*. New Delhi: Abpinav.

Karlsson, Klemens. 2020. “A Place of Belonging in Myths and Memories: The Origin and Early History of the Imagined Tai Khuen Nation (Chiang Tung/Kyaingtong, Myanmar)”. In *Stories across Borders: Myths of Origin and Their Contestation in the Borderlands of South and Southeast Asia*, edited by Monica Janowski and Erik de Maaker, *Southeast Asian Studies* 9(2): 181-201. doi: https://doi.org/10.20495/seas.9.2_181.

Kenney, Susan. 2005. “Nursery Rhymes: Foundation for Learning”. *GMT Fall* 19(1): 28 – 31.

Keyes, Charles F. 1967. *Isan Regionalism in Northeastern Thailand*. Ithaca and New York: Cornell University.

----------. 1989. “Buddhist Politics and Their Evolutionary Origins in Thailand”. *International Political Science Review*: Historical Framework of Revolutions 10(2): 121 – 142.

----------. 1999. “Buddhism Fragmented Thai Buddhism and Political Order Since the 1970s”. *Seventh International Thai Studies Conference*. Amsterdam. 4 – 8 July.

Keyes, Charles F., Kendall, Laurel, and Hardacre, Helen, eds. 1994. *Asian Visions of Authority: Religion and the Modern States of East and Southeast Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

King, Anthony. 2011. “Functionalism and Structuralism”. In *The SAGE Handbook of the Philosophy of Social Sciences,* edited by Jarvie, I. C, 430 - 442. London: n.p.

King, Ursula. 1993 [1989]. *Women and Spirituality: Voices of Protest and Promise*. London: Macmillan.

Kirsch, Thomas A. 1997. “Complexity in the Thai Religious System: An Interpretation”. *The Journal of Asian Studies: Association for Asian Studies* 36 (2): 241 – 266.

Kislenko, A. 2004. *Culture and Customs to Thailand*. Westport: Greenwood.

Kohn, Eduardo. 2015. “Anthropology on Ontologies”. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44: 311- 327.

Kittisak Rattanakrajangsri, Thapat Maneerat, and Colchester, Marcus. 2013. *The Mani People of Thailand on the Agricultural Frontier*. In *Forest People Program* [online]. Available at: https://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/private/publication/2013/12/conflict-or-consent-chapter-11-mani-people-thailand-agricultural-frontier.pdf [Accessed 9 April 2021].

Kovit Anakecchai (pseud. Khemananda). 1984. 'A Glimpse into the Spiritual Structure of Thai Folklore'. *International Conference on Thai Studies*: *Thai Studies Program*, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 22 – 24 August.

Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Leach, Melissa. 2007. "Earth Mother Myths and Other Ecofeminist Fables: How a Strategic Notion Rose and Fell". *Development and Change* 38(1): 67 – 85.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. 1978. *Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture*. Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press.

Love, Glen A. 2003. *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment*. Virginia: University of Virginia Press.

Maclean, Morag, Bryant, P., and Bradley, L. 1987. "Rhymes, Nursery Rhymes, and Reading in Early Childhood". *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, Michigan, Wayne State University; Oxford; Oxford University 33 (3): 255 – 281.

Manas Chitakasem. 1974. *The Nature of Nirat Poetry and the Development of the Genre*. PhD. thesis: SOAS University of London.

----------. 1999. "*Politics and Thai Literature"*. In *Texts and Contexts: Interactions Between Literature and Culture in Southeast Asia*, edited by Luisa J. Mallan-Hall and Lily Rose R. Tope, International Conference on Southeast Asian Literatures, 42 – 68, May, 1997. Diliman. University of the Philippines.

Manich Jumsai. 2000. *History of Thai Literature*. Bangkok: Chalermnit.

Martelli, Francesca. 2020. "Metamorphoses (ii): Latin Literature, Critical Posthumanism, Ecocriticism, Ecopoetics, Ovid (Classic)", *Brill Research Perspective on Ovid*, n.d.

Martin, Philip. 2007. *The Economic Contribution of Migrate Workers to Thailand: Towards Policy Development.* Bangkok: International Labor Organization.

Massola, James. 2018. *The Thai Cave, the Monk and the Sleeping Princess*, In *The Sydney Morning Herald* [online]. Available at: https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/the-thai-cave-the-monk-and-the-sleeping-princess-20180705-p4zpnj.html?fbclid=IwAR0BRjdIzITQBa9aTE1CsxUdaIzB6R3Qm6TyCmS5L4JHwLOiYYphfDm80eA [Accessed 23 April 2021].

May, Brittany N. 2020. "The Rhymes and Reason for Nursery Rhymes in the Elementary Music Classroom". *National Association for Music Education, Virginia, United States* 33 (2). 90 – 96.

McDaniel, Justin T. 2011. *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monks: Practicing Buddhism in Modern Thailand*. New York: Columbia University Press.

McDonald, Mary P. 1974. "Rhymes or Reason?: A Microscopic View of Nursery Rhymes". *The Journal of Negro Education* 43(3): 275 – 283.

Merchant, B. 2014. *Salt is Turning Farmland into Wasteland Around the World*. In *Motherboard Tech by Vice* [online]. Available at: https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/gvyd9y/salt-is-ruining-one-fifth-of-the-worlds-crops. [Accessed: 6 June 2020].

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1964. *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Mills, Mary B. 1995. "Attack of the Widow Ghosts: Gender, Death, and Modernity in Northeast Thailand". In *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics, Southeast Asian Studies,* edited by Aihwa Ong and Michael Peletz, 244 – 273. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mischung, Roland. 2011. 'Wild People' at the Edge of Thai Society: Thai Conceptions Versus Constructions of Space and History by Hmong and Karen". In *Southeast Asian Historiography: Unravelling the Myths*, edited by Volker Grabowsky. 84 – 99. Bangkok: River Books.

Morris, Jack. 2011. *The Book of Classic Nursery Rhymes*. Herefordshire: Otter-Barry Books.

Morton, Timothy. 2007. *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press.

Murphy, Stephen A. 2013. "Buddhism and Its Relationship to Dvaravati Period Settlement Patterns and Material Culture in Northeast Thailand and Central Laos C. Sixth – Eleventh Centuries A.D". *Asian Perspectives, Special Issue: Landscape Archeology in Southeast Asia, University of Hawaii Press* 52(2): 300 – 326.

Niyada (Sarikabhuti) Lausunthorn. 2015. *Paññasa Jataka: Its Genesis and Significance to Thai Poetical Works*. Bangkok: Lai Kum.

Nuemann, Erich. 1963. *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*. Translated by R. Manheim. New Jersey and Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press.

Nunley, Charles. 2010. "Sounding the Limits of resistance Memory: Robert Desnos, Comics, and Nursery Rhymes". *The French Review* 84(2): 284 – 298.

O'Connell, Caitlin. 2021. *Wild Rituals: 10 Lessons Animals Can Teach Us About Connection, Community, and Ourselves*. San Francisco: Chronicle Prism.

Offen, Karl. 2004. "Historical Political Ecology: An Introduction". *Historical Geography* 32: 19 – 42.

Olesen, J. 2020. *Color Meanings* [online]. Available at: https://www.color-meanings.com/color- wear-day-colors-week/. [Accessed 6 Aug. 2020].

Omernik, James M. 1987. "Ecoregions of the Conterminous United States". *Annual of the Association of American Geographer* 77 (1), 118 – 125.

Opie, Iona & Peter. 1997 [1951]. *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Paik, Christopher and Vechbanyongratana, J. 2018. *Mandala Matters: Former Tributary States and Modern Civil Conflict in Thailand.* In Working Papers at https://christopher-paik.com/working-papers. [Accessed 9 May 2021].

Pasteve Global. 2017. *Brood Parasitism: A Test of the Optimal Acceptance Threshold Hypothesis (Part 2)* [online]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzcHYuvHAGg. [Accessed 7 Dec. 2020]

Patcharin Buranakorn. 2009. *Sorrow in the Paññasa Jataka: Emotion and the Teaching of Dhamma*. PhD. Thesis: Chulalongkorn University.

Pattana Kitiarsa. 2005. "Beyond Syncretism: Hybridization of Popular Religion in Contemporary Thailand". *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 36 (3), United Kingdom: National University of Singapore: 461 – 482.

----------. 2012. *Mediums, Monks and Amulets.* Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.

Peet, Richard and Watts, Michael. 1996. *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements*. London: Routledge.

Peluso, Nancy L., and Vandergeest, P. 2011. "Political Ecologies of War and Forests: Counterinsurgencies and the Making of National Natures". *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 101 (3): 587-608. doi: 10.1080/00045608.2011.560064.

----------. 2020. "Writing Political Forests". *Antipode* 52(4): 1083 – 1103.

Phacharawan Boonpromkul. 2019. "'Sao Hai': The City Pillar, The Crying Rree Trunk, The Goddess Shrine, and Contradictions in the Sacralization of Nature". South East Asia Research 27(4): 321-343. doi: 10.1080/0967828X.2019.1673607.

Phelan, James. 1951. *Narrative as Rhetoric: Technique, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology*. Ohio: Ohio State University.

Pierotti, Raymond and Wildcat, Daniel. 2000. "Traditional Ecological Knowledge: The Third Alternative (Commentary)". *Ecological Applications* 10(5): 1333 – 1340.

Pinkaew Laungaramsri. 2020. "Governing by Paper: Mediating Textual Border and Negotiating Mobility in Thailand". *South East Asian Research* 28(3): 267 – 283.

Piyadech Arkarapotiwong. 2022. "Education Reform, Colonization, and Unification of Thailand: The Turning Point of Education Buildings in Lanna". *Civil Engineering and Architecture* 10(3): 1108 – 1117.

Plumwood, Val. 2001. *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*. London: Routledge.

----------. 2003. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. London: Routledge.

Poulsen, Anders., Askerud P. 2007. *Childbirth and Tradition in Northeast Thailand: Forty Years of Development and Cultural Change*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

Pramool, S. 1977. *Religion and State in the Political Life of Thailand.* PhD. thesis: Savitribai Phule Pune University.

Pranab Kumar. 2009. *Global Perspectives on Science and Spirituality.* West Conshohocken, Pa: Templeton Press.

Pranee Wongtet. 2006. *Gender in Southeast Asia*. Bangkok: Matichon.

Price, M., and Jones, S. 2019. *Achieving the Impossible: Thai Cave Rescue a Year On* [online]. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-48690524. [Accessed 23 April 2021].

Propp, Vladimir. 1984. *Theory and History of Folklore*. Translated by Ariadna Y. Martin and Richard P. Martin. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Ram, Kalpana and Houston, Christopher. 2015. *Phenomenology in Anthropology: A Sense of Perspective*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
Reynolds, Craig J. 2002. *National Identity and Its Defenders: Thailand Today*. Chiang Mai; Silkworm Books.
----------. 2006. *Seditious Histories: Contesting Thai and Southeast Asian Pasts*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press and Singapore University Press.
Ricks, Jacob I. 2008. "National Identity and the Geo-soul: Spiritually Mapping Siam". *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 8(1): 120 – 141.
Robbins, Jim. 2012. *The Ecology of Disease. The New York Times*. In *Sunday Review* [online]. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/15/sunday-review/the-ecology-of-disease.html?fbclid=IwAR0L6nPHlGBlzBSBQ276bLb_SiZmkJb5v_xc9zJIPv4icqFAX2_65rkyuEE. [Accessed 15 March 2020].
Robbins, Paul. 2012. *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
Roberts, Jason. 2020. "Political Ecology". In *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology* [online]. Available at: https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/political-ecology [Accessed 9 May 2022].
Ropharat Aphijanyatham. 2009. 'Perceptions of Borders and Human Migration: The Human (in)Security of Shan Migrant Workers in Thailand'. *International Conference on International Migration, Multi-local Livelihood and Human Security: Perspective from Europe, Asia and Africa*, Bangkok: Thailand, 29 – 30 August. https://books.openedition.org/irasec/1054.
Ryan, John C. 2015. 'Beyond East Asian Landscapes: A Survey of Ecocriticism in Thai Literary Studies'. *International Conference on Trends in Economics, Humanities, and Management (ICTEHM'15)*, Pattaya: Thailand, 12 – 13 August. doi: http://www.icehm.org/proceedingspdf.php?id=21.
----------. 2018. *Southeast Asian Ecocriticism: Theories, Practices, Prospects*. Maryland: Lexington.
Said, Edward W. 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf.
Sangamithra, A., Swamy, G.J., Sorna, P. R., Chandrasekar, V., Sasikala, S., and Hasker, E. 2013. "Coconut: An Extensive Review on Value Added Products". *Indian Food Industry Magazine, Khanataka: The Association of Food Scientists and Technologies (India)* 32 (6): 29 – 36.
Schedneck, B. 2012. *Constructing Religious Modernities: Hybridity, Reinterpretation, and Adaptation in Thailand's International Meditation Centers*. PhD. thesis: Arizona State University.
Schliephake, Christopher. 2020. *The Environmental Humanities and the Ancient World: Questions and Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Schneidau, Lisa. 2019. Botanical Folk Tales of Britain and Ireland. London: The History Press.
Seeger, Martin. 2014. "Ideas and Images of Nature in Thai Buddhism: Continuity and Change". In *Environmental and Climate Change in South and Southeast Asia: How are Local Cultures Coping?* edited by B. Schuler, 43 – 74. Leiden and Boston: Brill.

Sharrock, Alison, and Alison, K., eds. 2020. *Maternal Conceptions in Classical Literature and Philosophy*. University of Toronto Press [online]. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/j.ctvwh8d50. [Accessed 2 September 2022].

Shiva, Vandana and Mies, Maria. 2014 [1993]. *Ecofeminism*. London and New York: Zed Books.

Siani, Edoardo. 2018. *Myth and Politics in Thailand's Cave Rescue Operation*. In *New Perspective on Southeast Asia* [online]. Available at: https://www.newmandala.org/myth-politics-thailands-cave-rescue-operation/?fbclid=IwAR13dHlXg5HLu-JxyiFpCQ70H2gtwj9VMBrKufh7BAdp7xyD6tMLh0nAqgk. [Accessed 23 April 2021].

Singh, A. 2015. **"**A Review on Carissa Carandas Phytochemistry, Ethnopharmacology, and Micropropagation As Conservation Strategy". *Asian Journal in Pharmaceutical and Clinical Research* 8(3): 26 – 30.

Siraporn Nathalang. 2000. "Conflict and Compromise Between the Indigenous Beliefs and Buddhism as Reflected in Thai Rice Myth". In *Thai Folklore: Insights into Thai Culture,* edited by Siraporn Natalang. 99 – 113. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.

Skilling, Peter. 2006. "Jãtaka and Paññasa – Jãtaka in South East Asia". In *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, edited by Hinüber, V. & Gethin R., 113 – 184. Lancaster: n.p.

Smith, Anthony D. 1999. *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Soison Sakolrak. 2003. *Thai Literary Transformation: An Analytical Study of the Modernisation of LilitPhra Lor*. PhD. thesis. London: SOAS University of London.

Spufford, Francis. 2002. *The Child That Books Built*. London: Faber and Faber.

Steel, F. A. 1894. *Tales of the Punjab* Told by the People. London: Macmillan.

Steffen, W., Grinevald, J., Crutzen, P.J., and McNeill, J. 2011. "The Anthropocene: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives". *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* A 369: 842 – 867.

Steward, Julian H. 1955. "The Concept and Method of Cultural Ecology" In *Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Stott, Philip A. 1978. *Nature and the Man in South East Asia*. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

----------. 1991. "*Mu'ang* and *Pa*: Elite Views of Nature in a Changing Thailand". In *Thai Constructions of Knowledge*, edited by Manas Chitakasem and Andrew Turton, 142 – 145. London: SOAS University of London.

Subrahmanyan, Arjun. 2019. "Worldly Compromise in Thai Buddhist Modernism". *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, The National University of Singapore* 50(2): 179 – 201.

Suchitra Chongstitvatana. 1984. *The Nature of Modern Thai Poetry Considered with Reference to the Works of Angkhan Kalayanaphong, Naowarat Phongphaibun and Suchit Wongthet*. PhD. thesis. London: SOAS University of London.

Sullivan, C.W. 1999. “Songs, Poems, and Rhymes”. In *Children’s Folklore: A Source Book,* edited by Brian Sutton-Smith, Jay Mechling, Thomas W. Johnson, and Felicia R. McMahon, 145 – 160. Colorado: University Press of Colorado.

Sundberg, Juanita. 2017. “Feminist Political Ecology”. *The International Encyclopedia of Geography: People, the Earth, Environment and Technology*. 1 – 12.

Suratadchanukoon Nunphooban, Thanya Sungkhapantanont, and Banyatti Salee. 2017. “Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Cosmology in Isan Folk Literature”. *Academic Journal Rommayasan, Faculty of humanities and Social Sciences* 15(3): 69 – 83.

Sutherland, John. 2014. *A Little History of Literature*. Connecticut: Yale University Press.

Sutton, M.Q. and Anderson, E.N. 2010. *Introduction to Cultural Ecology*. Maryland and Plymouth: AltaMira Press.

Tambiah, Stanley J. 1969. *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

----------. 1977. “The Galactic Polity: The Structure of Traditional Kingdoms in Southeast Asia”. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 293: 69 – 97.

Taplin, K. 1989. *Tongues in Trees: Studies in Literature and Ecology*. Cambridge: Green Books.

Taylor, James. 2008. *Buddhism and Postmodern Imagining in Thailand: The Religiosity of Urban Space.* London: Ashgate Publishing.

Taylor, Jim L. 1993. *Forest Monks and the Nation-State: An Anthropological and Historical Study in Northeastern Thailand*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Terwiel, Barend J. 2012. *Monks and Magic: Revisiting a Classic Study of Religious Ceremonies in Thailand*. Copenhagen, NIAS Press.

Thak Chaloemtiarana. 2009. “Making New Space in the Thai Literary Canon”. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 4(1): 87 – 110.

----------. 2018. *Read Till It Shatters: Nationalism and Identity in Modern Thai Literature*. Canberra: ANU Press.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. 2020. *Cuckoo* [online]. Available at: https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/cuckoo/. [Accessed 7 Dec. 2020].

Thongchai Winichakul. 1994. *Siam Mapped the History of the Geo-body of a Nation*. Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.

---------- . 2008. “Siam’s Colonial Conditions and the Birth of Thai History”. In *Unraveling Myths in Southeast Asian Historiography*, edited by Volker Grabowsky and Bass Terweil. 21 – 43. Bangkok: Rivers Books.

---------- . 2014. “Modern Historiography in Southeast Asia: The Case of Thailand’s Royal-Nationalist History”. In *A Companion to Global Historical Thought*, edited by Prasenjit Duara, Viren Murthy, and Andrew Sartori, 257 – 268. London: Blackwell.

---------- . 2015. “Buddhist Apologetics and a Genealogy of Comparative Religion in Siam”. *Numen* 62: 75 – 99.

---------- . 2015. “The Other Within: Travel and Ethno-Spatial Differentiation of Siamese Subjects 1885 – 1910”. In *Civility and Savagery: Social Identity in Tai States*, edited by Andrew Turton, 38 – 62. Richmond and Surrey: Curzon Press.

Turton, Andrew. 2015. *Civility and Savagery: Social Identity in Tai States*. Richmond and Surrey: Curzon Press.

Vandergeest, Peter and Schoenberger, Laura. 2020. *De-Centring Land Grabbing: Southeast Asian Perspectives on Agrarian-Environmental Transformations*. Oxfordshire and New York: Routledge.

Von Franz, Marie-Louise. 1993. *The Feminine in Fairy Tales*. Boston and London: Shambhala.

Wanrug Suwanwattana. 2015. "Re-Narrating a Local Myth, Reproducing the Thai 'Royalist–Nationalist' Narrative: 'The Myth of Sao Hai' by Daen-Arun Saengthong". *South East Asia Research* 23(4): 505-520.

Warner, Marina. 1996 [1985]. *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form*. London: Vintage.

Warren, Karen J. 1997. "One: Taking Empirical Data Seriously: An Ecofeminist Philosophical Perspective". In *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, edited by Karen J. Warren, 3 – 20. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

---------- . 2000. *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters*. Maryland and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

---------- . 2009. *An Unconventional History of Western Philosophy: Conversations Between Men and Women Philosophers*. London: Lowman and Littlefield.

Weiss, Gail and Haber, Honi F. 1999. *Perspectives on Embodiment: The Intersections of Nature and Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Wikramanayake, Eric, Dinerstein, Eric, and Loucks, Colby J. 2002. *Terrestrial Ecoregions of the Indo-Pacific: A Conservation Assessment*. Washington: Island Press.

Wolfe, Carey. 2009. *What is Posthumanism?* Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Wolf, Eric. 1972. "Ownership and Political Ecology". *Anthropological Quarterly, Dynamics of Ownership in the Circum-Alpine Area (Special Issue)* 45(3): 201 205.

Worton, Michael and Still, Judith. 1990. *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Yos Santasombat. 2008. *Flexible Peasants: Reconceptualizing the Third World's Rural Types*. Chiang Mai: Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable development, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University.

Young, Robert J.C. 1995. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race.* London: Routledge.

Yukio, Hayashi. 2003. *Practical Buddhism Among the Thai-Lao: Religion in the Making of a Region*. Kyoto: Kyoto University Press.

Zajko, Vanda and Leonard, Miriam, eds. 2008. *Laughing with Medusa: Classical Myth and Feminist Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zaman Al Umma, Khoirul. 2015. "Ferdinard de Saussure: Structuralism and His Roles in Modern Linguistics". *Journal Lisanu ad-Dhad* 2(1): 1 – 19.

Zengin, Mevlüde. 2016. "An Introduction to Intertextuality as a Literary Theory: Definitions, Axioms and the Originators". *Pamukkale University Journal of Social Sciences Institute* 25(1): 299 – 326.

Zhao, Q., Van den Brink, P.J., Carpentier, C., Wang, Y.X.G., Rodríguez-Sánchez, P., Xu, C., Vollbrecht, S., Gillissen, F., Vollebregt, M., Wang, S. and De Laender, F. 2019. "Horizontal and vertical diversity jointly shape food web stability against small and large perturbations". *Ecology Letters* 22: 1152-1162.

Zipes, Jack. 2004. *Speaking Out: Storytelling and Creative Drama for Children*. New York: Routledge.

---------- . 2012. *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Thai Materials

Amonrat Wechagarn, Sukanlaya Choenkwan, and Prapatsorn Kiatsuranont. 2020. "Need for Extension on Mulberry Cultivation and Silkworm Rearing of Farmers in Si Sa Ket Province". *Khon Kaen Agricultural Journal* 48(2): 369 – 380.

Anan Ganjanapan. 2018. "อานันท์ มองอานันท์" [In Anan's Views]. In *ข้ามพ้นกับดักคู่ตรงข้าม* [*Beyond Binary Opposition*], 1 – 16. Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University.

Anek Nawikkamun. 2007 [1978]. *เพลงนอกศตวรรษ* [*Beyond the Centuries of Central Folk Songs*]. Bangkok: Muang Boran.

Anuman Rajadhon. 1968. *Essays on Thai Folklore*. Bangkok: The Social Science Association Press of Thailand.

Aphiluk Kasampolkoon. 2016. "แม่ที่ 'มองไม่เห็น' แต่ชี้เป็นชี้ตาย: ชีวิตความเป็นอยู่ของ 'แม่ซื้อ' กับวิธีคิดของคนไทย" [The Invisible Mother: Life of *Mae Sue* and Thai Perspectives]. In *พลังผู้หญิง แม่เมีย และเทพสตรี: ความจริงและภาพแทน* [*Female Power, Mother/Wife, and Goddesses: Realities and Representations*], edited by Pipat Krajaejun, 73 – 90. Bangkok: Ministry of Education.

Aranya Sipiphon. 2021. *มานุษยวิทยานิเวศ: พัฒนาการ แนวคิดและข้อถกเถียง* [*Ecological Anthropology: Development, Concepts, and Debates*]. Chiang Mai: Office of Research Administration, Chiang Mai University.

Bariharn Thepthanee. 1953. *พงศาวดารชาติไทย: ความเป็นมาของชาติไทยแต่ยุคดึกดำบรรพ์* [*Thai-State Chronicles: Background of Thai-State Since Prehistoric Era*]. Phra Nakorn: Prajakwittaya.

Benja Hongthong. 2001. *เพลงกล่อมลูกภาคเหนือ: กรณีศึกษาจังหวัดเชียงใหม่* [*Northern Thai Lullaby: A Case Study of Chiang Mai Province*]. Master's degree thesis: Mahidol University.

Boonteun Srivorapot. 2017. "พระรถเสน: จากกาพย์ขับไม้สู้บทมโหรี" [Phra Rotthasen: From Kaab Khab Mai to the Mahori]. In *ประชุมวิชาการระดับชาติเรื่อง ขับนิทานนางสิบสอง ขานทำนองพระรถเมรี: นิทานมรดกแห่งอุษาคเนย์* [*National Conference, Nang Sibsong Folktales Phra Rot Meri Verses: Southeast Asian Folklore Heritage*], 25 - 47, Bangkok, Kasetsart University, 7 July.

Buapan Suphanyot. 2018. *กลอนเพลงพื้นบ้านภาคกลาง: ปฏิพากษ์ ปฏิภาณ วิธีการสร้างสรรค์* [*Central Thai Folk Song: Rapartee Drama and Creative Method*]. Bangkok: Samlada.

Chaleaw Suriyamart. 2013. *ภูเวียง: เมืองประวัติศาสตร์* [*Phu Wiang: Historical District*]. Khon Kaen: Khon Kaen Print.

Chanokporn Chutikamoltham. 2021. “ผู้กระทำการ อำนาจ และความเป็นประวัติศาสตร์ในมนุษยสมัย: กรณีศึกษาเรื่องป่าไม้ ในสมัยพัฒนาการ (พ.ศ. 2502 – 2516)” [Agent, Power, and Histories in Anthropocene: A Case Study of Forestry in Development Domain 1959 – 1973]. In *Anthropocene*, edited by Kengkij Kitirianglarp, 237 – 280. Bangkok: Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre.

Chawanakorn Kaewkarn. 2019. *ป่าซาไก* [*Sakai Forests*]. Bangkok: Barn Book.

Chintana Paepdip, Yaowapha Molcharern, Warunya Yingyongsak, Sarawut Lordee, Sittichai Panchon, and Siramon Chusuwan. 2018. “การศึกษาโลกทัศน์ที่ปรากฏในคำขับลูกอ่อนของชาวไทลื้อ” [A Study of Tai Lue Worldviews as Appearing in Lullabies]. *Journal of Liberal Arts, Maejo University* 6(2): 59 – 72.

Chit Phumisak. 1983. *สังคมไทยลุ่มแม่น้ำเจ้าพระยาก่อนสมัยศรีอยุธยา* [*Thai Society on Chao Phraya Basin in Pre-Ayutthaya Era*]. Bangkok: Thai Quality Books.

Chonticha Nisaisat. 2009. *ยักษ์ในนิทานพื้นบ้านภาคเหนือของไทย: บทบาทและความหมายเชิงสัญลักษณ์* [*Giant in Northern Thai Folktale: Roles and Symbolic Meanings*]. Master’s degree thesis: Chulalongkorn University.

Chutima Pragatwutisarn. 2011. “Love is Homesickness: Nostalgia and the Fetishisation of the Female Body in *Mae Bia”*. *Journal of Social Sciences* 23(1): 111 – 155.

Culture, Sports, Tourism Department of Thailand. 2012. *บางกอก บอกเล่า (เรื่อง) วัด* [*Bangkok’s Narration About Temples*]. Bangkok: Religious Printing House.

Daen-Aran Saengthong. 2009. *The Myth of Sao Hai*. Bangkok: One Edition.

Damrong Rajanubhab, Prince. 1904. *จดหมายเหตุเสด็จพระพาสต้น* [*Archive of Unofficially Visit*]. Bangkok: Bunjakit Trading.

---------- . 1920. *บทกลอนกล่อมเด็ก ฉบับสอบ* [*Nursery Rhyme, Revised Version*] [online]. Available at: http://digital.nlt.go.th/items/show/3646?. [Accessed 28 Aug. 2020].

---------- . 1929. *ตำนานโรงเลี้ยงเด็กของพระอัครชายาเธอฯ* [*The Legend of Care Home for Children in The Children’s Home of H.M. Queen Sudhasininat]* [online]. Available at: http://digital.library.tu.ac.th/tu_dc/frontend/Info/item/dc:48060. [Accessed 4 Oct. 2020].

---------- .1956. *ปัญญาสชาดก ฉบับหอสมุดแห่งชาติ ภาคที่ 2* [*Paññasa Jataka By National Library, Series Two*]. Bangkok: Silapabunnakarn.

Davisakd Puaksom. 1997. *The Readjustment of Knowledge, Truth, and Power of the Elites in Siam, 1782 – 1868*. Master’s degree thesis. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University.

---------- . 1997. “Orientalizing the Occidental of Siam”. *Thammasat Journal, History, Chulalongkorn University* 20: 253 – 313.

Department of Cultural Promotion. 2016. *วรรณกรรมพื้นบ้าน: มรดกภูมิปัญญาทางวัฒนธรรมของชาติ* [*Folklore: National Culture and Wisdom Heritage*]. Bangkok: Office of Printing Works Veteran Welfare Organization.

Department of Mineral Resources. 2006. *โครงการศึกษาผลกระทบสิ่งแวดล้อม: การทำเกลือจากน้ำเกลือใต้ดินในภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือ (อุดรธานี)* [*Final Report of Environmental Impacts on the Northeastern Thailand on Salt Farming (Udon Thani)*]. Bangkok: Department of Mineral Resources.

Department of National Parks, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation. 2018. *ประวัติถ้ำหลวง – ขุนน้ำ นางนอน* [*The History of Tham Luang Khunnam Nang Non National Park*]. Chiang Rai: Department of National Parks.

Duangduean Boonyawong. 1997. *แนวคิดและฮีตคองท้าวฮุ่งท้าวเจือง* [*Laotian Perspectives and Traditions towards Thao Houng Thao Chueng Myth*]. Bangkok: Mathichon.

Duangmon Chitchamnong and Suchitra Chongstitvatana. 1990. "วิวัฒนาการด้านรูปแบบและสุนทรียภาพของวรรณคดีไทย" [Development of Thai Literary Pattern and Aesthetics]. In *พัฒนาการวรรณคดีไทย* [*Development of Thai Literature*], 554 – 618. Bangkok: Arun Press.

Fasuay Treeod. 2013. *เพลงกล่อมเด็กพื้นบ้านอีสาน: คุณค่าต่อการอบรมเลี้ยงดูเด็กปฐมวัย* [*Thai E-san Traditional Lullaby Songs: Value on Child Rearing*]. Master's degree thesis: Kasetsart University.

Fine Arts Department. 1935. *ฉันท์เยาวพจน์* [*Youth Poetry*] [online]. Available at: https://vajirayana.org/%E0%B8%89%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%97%E0%B9%8C%E0%B9%80%E0%B8%A2%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%9E%E0%B8%88%E0%B8%99%E0%B9%8C/%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%B3%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%B3. [Accessed 29 Aug. 2020].

---------- . 2009. *ประชุมเรื่องพระรถ* [*Phra Rot Collections*]. Bangkok: Fine Arts Department.

---------- . 2015. *เทวสตรี: คติพุทธ พราหมณ์ และความเชื่อในประเทศไทย* [*Feminine Deities of Buddhism, Hinduism and Indigenous Cults in Thailand*]. Bangkok: Fine Arts Department.

---------- . 2020. *สูติกรรมในอดีตของสยาม* [*Midwifery of the Old Siam*]. Bangkok: Fine Arts Department.

Jatuporn Sirisumpan. 2014. "เพลงกล่อมเด็ก" [Lullabies]. *Thai Junior Encyclopedia, Project by Royal Command of H.M. the King* 39: 42 – 77.

Jiraporn Sathapanawantana. 2011. "ประวัติศาสตร์เมืองพิษณุโลก" [Phitsanulok History]. *Journal of Social Sciences Naresuan University* 28(2), 1 – 18.

Kanokwan Manorom. 2019. "เขตเศรษฐกิจพิเศษชายแดนอีสาน ภายใต้เสรีนิยมใหม่และรัฐในฐานะ "นายหน้าที่ดิน" กรณีศึกษาเขตเศรษฐกิจพิเศษมุกดาหาร" [Special Economic Zone in Isan Border Within Neoliberalism and State as "Real Estate Agents" of Mukdahan Province]. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 45(1): 269 – 299.

---------- . 2022. *นิเวศวิทยาการเมืองแนวสตรีนิยม* [*Feminist Political Ecology*]. Bangkok: Siam Communication Arts.

Karakkada Bunwichai. 2017. "พระรถเมรี: การศึกษาบทบาทหน้าที่ของชาดกท้องถิ่นภาคใต้" [Phra Rot Meri: A Study of Its Functions as a Regional Jataka of Southern Thailand]. In *ประชุมวิชาการระดับชาติ เรื่อง ขับนิทานนางสิบสอง ขานทำนองพระรถเมรี: นิทานมรดกแห่งอุษาคเนย์* [*National Conference, Nang Sibsong Folktales Phra Rot Meri Verses: Southeast Asian Folklore Heritage*], 235 – 265, Bangkok, Kasetsart University, 7 July.

Kesinee Payanun. 1993. "Silk Production and Marketing Situation in the Northeast, Thailand". *Agricultural Journal* 14(1): 144 – 161.

Kornchanok Nanthakanok. 2020. “Speech Acts of the Lullabies in Chinag Mai Province”. *Udon Thani Rajabhat University Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 9(1): 125 – 148.

Krom Phra Klang. 1930. *พงศาวดารล้านช้าง* [*Phongsawadan Lan* Chang]. Bangkok: Thampittayakan.

Kusuma Raksamani. 1990. “วิวัฒนาการด้านเนื้อหาและแนวคิดของวรรณคดีไทย” [Development of Thai Literary Contexts and Concepts]. In *พัฒนาการวรรณคดีไทย* [*Development of Thai Literature*], 619 – 663. Bangkok: Arun Press.

Lak Boonrueng. 2018. “หลักฐานเกี่ยวกับวัฒนธรรมศรีวิชัยในคาบสมุทรภาคใต้” [The Evidence on the Culture of Srivijaya in the Southern Peninsular]. *Khuangpaya Journal, Chiang Mai Rajabhat University* 13:130-63.

Lom Phengkaew. 1984. *พระรถนิราศ: สำนวนเจ้าพระยาพระคลัง (หน)?* [*Phra Rot Nirat: Jao Phraya Phraklang Hon’s Version?*]. Bangkok: Reangkaew.

Maha Sila Virawong. 1997. *ประวัติศาสตร์ลาว* [*Laotian History*]. Translated by Sommai Premjit. Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University.

Namphueng Padamalangula. 2018. “The Complexity of the Genre and the Debate Regarding Nirat”. *Thai Studies Journal*, 14(1): 61 – 78.

Nantaporn Poung-Kaew. 1984. *A Comparative Study of Various Versions of Phra Rot-Meri*. Master’s degree thesis: Chulalongkorn University.

Naphatcharaphun Keeyangrungreong, Rattana Sittioum, Naththakarn Nettansakul, Nutthanee Seangow, Putticha sigtong, siriporn Naksap, Suparuk Tedmaha, and Sunisa Jaroenjit. 2019. “The Cost and Benefit of Sericulture Farmers in Huaihai Village, Huaiha Sub-district, Nakorn Thai District, Phisanulok Province”. *Journal of Management Science Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University* 1(2): 61 – 74.

Narumol Silpachaisri. 2018. *Mae-sue’s Thai Puppet*. Granted Research by Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin, Nakhon Pathom.

Nattaya Koraneekij. 2011. *Maha Sila Viravong’s Phongsawadan Lao as a Source of the History of LOAS*, Master’s degree thesis: Silpakorn University.

Natthanai Prasannam. 2019. “ประพันธศาสตร์ของความหลัง: ความทรงจำวัฒนธรรมกับวรรณกรรมศึกษา” [Poetics of the Past: Cultural Memory and Literary Studies]. In *นววิถี: วิธีวิทยาร่วมสมัยในการศึกษาวรรณกรรม* [*New Turn in the Humanities: Contemporary Methodology in Literary Studies*], edited by Suradech Chotiudompant, 45 – 72. Bangkok: Siam Paritat.

Nidhi Eoseewong. 2012 [1984]. *ปากไก่และใบเรือ: รวมความเรียงว่าด้วยวรรณกรรมและประวัติศาสตร์ต้นรัตนโกสินทร์* [*Pen and Sail: Literature and History in Early Bangkok*]. Nonthaburi: Same Sky Books.

Niphatporn Phengkaew. 2012. *เรื่องเล่าของพลัง* [*The Narrative of Power*]. Bangkok: Sukaphapjai.

Niyada (Sarikabhuti) Lausunthorn. 2015. *Paññasa Jataka: Its Genesis and Significance to Thai Poetical Works*. Bangkok: Laikham.

Pacharawan Boonprobkul. 2019. “Ecocriticism นิเวศวิจารณ์: วรรณกรรม ธรรมชาติ สิ่งแวดล้อม โลก” [Ecocriticism: Literature, Ecology, Environment, Earth]. In *นววิถี: วิธีวิทยาร่วมสมัยในการศึกษาวรรณกรรม* [*New Turn in the Humanities: Contemporary Methodology in Literary Studies*], edited by Suradech Chotiudompant, 375 – 437. Bangkok: Siam Paritat.

Pankaew Chai Yao. 2013. “A Comparative Analysis of Thai and Chinese Lullabies”. *Liberal Arts Review* 8(15): n.p.

Pathom Hongsuwan. 2013. “ปู่เยอย่าเยอ: พื้นที่ในจินตนาการกับการสร้างจิตวิญญาณความศักดิ์สิทธิ์” [The Roles and the Meaning of the Puyur Yayur from the Myths and the Rites in Lao Society]. In *นานมาแล้ว มีเรื่องเล่า นิทาน ตำนาน ชีวิต* [*Remnant Repertoires of Folklores, Legends, Life*], 101 – 132. Bangkok: Chula Press.

Pattama Theekaprasertkul. 2004. *The Images of Thai Kings in Literature of the Ayuttaya Period*. Master’s degree thesis: Silpakorn University.

Pattana Kitiarsa. 2014. *สู่วิถีอีสานใหม่* [*Isan Becoming: Agrarian Change and the Sense of Mobile Community in Northeastern Thailand*]. Bangkok: Wiphasa.

Phanphen Khruethai. 1989. “เอกสารข้อมูลเพลงกล่อมเด็กล้านนา” [Lanna Lullabies]. In *The Research for Lanna Folklores and Its Folk songs*. Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute.

---------- . 1992. *เพลงกล่อมเด็กล้านนา* [*Lanna Lallubies*]. Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute.

Pha-ob Posakrisana. 1978. *เพลงกล่อมเด็กและเพลงประกอบการเล่นของเด็กภาคกลาง 16 จังหวัด* [*16 Provinces of Central Thai Lullabies*]. Bangkok: Department of Cultural Promotion.

Phonphen Hanthrakoon. 2003. “ผู้หญิงไทยในกฎหมายตราสามดวง: จากผู้หญิงเป็นใหญ่ ถึงผู้หญิงเป็นควาย ผู้ชายเป็นคน” [Women in the Three Law Seals: From Maternity to Women as Buffalo, Men as Human]. *History Conference: Thai Women’s Roles from historical and Literary Perspectives*, February 2003: 246 – 302.

Pichet Saengthong. 2016. *Legends and Local Mythic Narratives in Southern Thailand*. Bangkok: Gypsy Group.

Pinkaew Laungaramsri. 2009. “นิเวศและเพศภาวะกับเสียงที่เงียบหายในสตรีนิยมและขบวนการสิ่งแวดล้อมไทย” [The Silence of Ecology and Gender in Thai Feminist and Environmental Movements]. *Stance, The Thai Feminist Review* 3: 1 – 28.

---------- . 2020. *Wombs of the Nation: Disciplining Reproduction and the History of State and Women’s Sexuality in Thailand*. Chiang Mai: Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

Pitchaya Saenamontri. 2009. *เพลงกล่อมเด็กภาคอีสาน* [*Isan Lullabies*] [online]. Available at: https://www.stou.ac.th/study/projects/training/culture/plengkromdek.htm. [Accessed: 9 June 2020].

Piyachat Sindhusa-ad. 1996. *Lan Chang Social: 21-23 B.E*. Master’s degree thesis, Department of History, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University.

Piyadech Arkarapotiwong. 2022. “Education Reform, Colonization, and Unification of Thailand: The Turning Point of Educational Buildings in Lanna”. *Civil Engineering and Achitecture* 10(3): 1108 – 1117.

Pongpan Maneerat. 1986. *วิวัฒนาการของเพลงกล่อมเด็ก* [*The Development of Lullabies*]. Socio-Anthropologist Journal, Thammasat University 5(1), February 1986.

Poramin Jaruwon. 2004. *Conflict and Compromise in Thai Myths.* PhD. thesis. Chulalongkorn University.

Pranee Jamhunthian. 1999. *การศึกษาชุมชนโบราณเมืองนครไทย อำเภอนครไทย จังหวัดพิษณุโลก* [A Study of Nakhon Thai Old City, Nakhon Thai District, Phitsanulok Province]. Phitsanulok: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University.

Pranee Wongtet. 2006. *เพศสภาวะในสุวรรณภูมิ (อุษาคเนย์)* [*Gender in Southeast Asia*]. Bangkok: Matichon Book.

Prasert Na Nakorn. 1973. *โคลงนิราศหริภุญชัย* [*Hariphunjaya Nirat*]. Chiang Mai: Ratchamangala Pisek Nation Library.

---------- . 1992. *ข้อมูลพื้นฐานเกี่ยวกับเมืองพิษณุโลก* [*Phitsanulok Basic Information*]. Chiang Mai: n.p.

Pratueng Klaysubun. 1985. *ร้อยกรองชาวบ้าน* [*Folk's Poetic Verses*]. Bangkok: Suthisarn Press.

Premvit Vivattanaseth. 2014. "การสู่ขวัญ: พิธีกรรมแห่งชีวิตชาวไทลื้อที่อำเภอเชียงคำ จังหวัดพะเยา" [Spirit Retrieving Ceremony: A Life Ritual of Tai Lue Ethnic Group in Chiang Kham District, Phayao Province]. *Silpakorn University Journal* 34(2): 23 – 42.

Priyarat Chaowalitpraphan. 2006. *การสมพาสที่ผิดธรรมชาติในนิทานไทย: การศึกษาอนุภาคทางคติชนวิทยา* [*Unusual Marriage Motif in Thai Tale*]. Master's degree thesis: Chulalongkorn University.

Ratchaneewan Boonanont. 2014. "รูปแบบการบริหารการจัดการการท่องเที่ยวอย่างเป็นธรรม: กรณีศึกษาวัดวังพระธาตุ ตำบลไตรตรึงษ์ อำเภอเมือง จังหวัดกำแพงเพชร" [Fair Tourism Management: A Case Study of Wat Wang Phratat, Tai-Trueng Subdistrict, Meang District, Kampangphet Province]. *The Golden Teak: Humanity and Social Science Journal* 20(3): 43 – 57.

Rattanaphon Chuenka, ed. 2017. *ขับนิทานนางสิบสอง ขานทำนองพระรถเมรี* [*Nang Sibsong Folktales, Phra Rot Meri Verses*]. In *ประชุมวิชาการระดับชาติเรื่อง ขับนิทานนางสิบสอง ขานทำนองพระรถเมรี: นิทานมรดกแห่งอุษาคเนย์* [*National Conference, Nang Sibsong Folktales Phra Rot Meri Verses: Southeast Asian Folklore Heritage*], Bangkok, Kasetsart University, 7 July.

Ratthana Bunmatthaya Tosakul. 2007. "ชาวนาอีสาน ชาติไทย และการพัฒนาไปสู่ความทันสมัย" [Isan Peasants, Thai Nation and Modernization]. *Journal of Social Sciences* 19(1): 69 – 129.

Ruenruthai Satjaphan. 1973. *นิราศคำโคลง: การวิเคราะห์และเปรียบเทียบกับนิราศชนิดอื่น* [*Klong Nirus: An Analytical and Comparative Study with Other Type of Nirus*]. Master's degree thesis: Chulalongkorn University.

---------- . 2013. *มิใช่เป็นเพียง "นางเอก": ภาพสะท้อนจากตัวละครสู่ชีวิตจริง* [*Not Just "A Female Protagonist": Reflection of Drama Characters to the Real-life*]. Bangkok: Praphansarn.

Samran Pholdee. 2022. *ประวัติศาสตร์ การเมือง การสงคราม สมัยต้นรัตนโกสินทร์* [*Histories, Politics, and Wars in the Early Rattanakosin Period*]. Nonthaburi: Sripanya.

Sanan Thammathi. 2016. *ผีในความเชื่อล้านนา* [*Ghosts in Lanna Beliefs*]. Chiang Mai: The Center for the Promotion of Arts and Culture.

Saneha Boonyalak. 2002. *การศึกษาภาพสะท้อนสังคมจังหวัดพิษณุโลกและคุณค่าเชิงวรรณศิลป์จากบทเพลงพื้นบ้าน* [*A Study of the Social Reflection and the Literary Value of Folk Songs in Phitsanulok*]. Master's degree thesis: Rajabhat Institute Pibulsongkram.

Santhi Sawethwimol. 2019. *ข้าวโพด หรือข้าวสาลี* (*Corn or khaopot sali)* [online]. Available at: https://e-shann.com/%e0%b8%82%e0%b9%89%e0%b8%b2%e0%b8%a7%e0%b9%82%e0%b8%9e%e0%b8%94-%e0%b8%ab%e0%b8%a3%e0%b8%b7%e0%b8%ad%e0%b8%82%e0%b9%89%e0%b8%b2%e0%b8%a7%e0%b8%aa%e0%b8%b2%e0%b8%a5%e0%b8%b5/. [Accessed 9 Jan. 2020].

Santita Ganjanapan. 2011. *ความคิดสีเขียว วาทกรรม และความเคลื่อนไหว* [*Green Perspective, Discourses, and Movements*]. Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University.

Sarun Makrudin. 2021. "Mae Sue: The Belief and Iconography of Guardian Goddesses of Infants in Central Thailand". *Damrong Journal of the Faculty of Archaeology Silpakorn* 20(2): 177 – 206.

Sathiankoset. 1960. *สารคดีและประเพณีน่ารู้เกี่ยวกับเมืองสวรรค์และผีสางเทวดา* [*Heaven and Ghost Documentaries and Traditions*] [online]. Available at: https://issuu.com/volunteerspirit/docs/satienbook129?viewMode=magazine. [Accessed 4 Aug. 2020].

---------- . 1962. *ประเพณีเนื่องในการเกิดและประเพณีเนื่องในการตาย* [*Birth and Death Rituals*] [online]. Available at: https://issuu.com/volunteerspirit/docs/satienbook008?viewMode=magazine. Accessed 4 Aug. 2020].

---------- . 1962. *ประเพณีการเลี้ยงเด็ก* [*Traditions of Child Nurturing*] [online]. Available at: https://issuu.com/volunteerspirit/docs/satienbook072?viewMode=magazine. [Accessed: 4 Aug. 2020].

---------- . 1988. *ประเพณีเกี่ยวกับชีวิต การเกิด [Rituals About Life and Birth].* Bangkok: Mae Kam Phang.

Siraporn Nathalang. 2005. *ทฤษฎีคติชนวิทยา: วิธีวิทยาในการวิเคราะห์ตำนาน-นิทานพื้นบ้าน* [*Folklore Studies: Methodological Analysis of Legends-Folktales*]. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University.

Siri Sarakot. 1982. *การคล้องช้างที่เพนียดจังหวัดพระนครศรีอยุทธยา* [*The Elephant Round-Up Ritual, Ayutthaya Province*]. Bachelor's degree thesis: Silpakorn University.

Siripoj Laomanajacharoen. 2022. *ศาสนาผีใต้เงื้อมเขาพระสุเมรุ* [*Animism Under Mount Meru*]. Bangkok: Ruenkaew.

Siriporn Tongkhanarak. 2013. "The Dynamics in the Relationship of Thai-Lao Border in Globalization". *Journal of Mekong Societies* 4(1): 123–147. doi: https://so03.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/mekongjournal/article/view/10074.

Sirirat Suguntha. 2014. "The Mobility of Burmese Labors in Upper Northern Thailand". *Journal of Economics* 18(1), 45 – 63. Chiang Mai: University of Chiang Mai.

Social Research Institute Chiang Mai University. 2020. *แม่ญิงล้านนา: ประเพณี พิธีกรรมเกี่ยวกับแม่ญิงล้านนา* [*Lanna Women: Traditions and Rituals about Lanna Women*] [online]. Available at: https://www.sri.cmu.ac.th/~maeyinglanna/main7/main4.php?fbclid=IwAR10RygLYOtmIwzHB9d3XaAFczdGhFKzQ1h13jEoYz9TDrrOsfMyW00VZQg. [Accessed 4 Aug. 2020].

Somboon Saengsuban. 2019. *โครงการวิจัย โนราโรงครูท่าแคกับการสืบทอดและสร้างสรรค์ความสัมพันธ์ในชุมชน ตำบลท่าแค อำเภอเมือง จังหวัดพัทลุง* [*Research Project on Thakae Norah, Transmissions, Creativities, and Local Cooperation, Thakae, Mueang District, Patthalung Province*]. Patthalung: n.p.

Songkhla Folklore Museum. (n.d.). [*Prehistoric Man*]. Songkhla, Thailand.

Songkhla Folklore Museum. (n.d.). [*The South Culture from Hinduism to Srivijaya*]. Songkhla, Thailand.

Soonthorn Panyapong, Viyouth Chamruspanth, and Wongsa Laohasiriwong. 2012. "Conflict Between Local Community and Public Organizations on Water Management from LamPatao Dam, Kaeng Khro District, Chaiyaphum Province". *Journal of Mekong Societies, Center for Research on Plurality in the Mekong Region, Khon Kaen University* 8 (1): 115 – 135.

Sri Amornyan. 1976. "พระรถเสน" [Phra Rottasean]. In *Thai Folktales*. Bangkok: Ministry of Education.

Srisak Wallipodom. 2000. 'The Chao Phraya Society: Development and Change'. *International Conference of the Chao Phraya Delta: Historical Development, Dynamics and Challenges of Thailand's Rice Bowl*, Bangkok, Kasetsart University. 12 – 15 December.

---------- . 2018. เขาขุนน้ำนางนอน: ภูศักดิ์สิทธิ์ของแอ่งเชียงแสน [Kao Khunnam Nang Non: Sacred Mountain in the Chiang Saen Basin]. *Newsletter Lek-Prapai Viriyahpant Foundation* 22(119): 4 – 7.

Suchat Phuwarat. 2013. *เวชกรรมไทย เล่ม 1 (โรคของมารดาและเด็ก) คัมภีร์ปฐมจินดา* [*Thai Medicine No. 1 (Diseases of Mothers and Children) Treatise of Siamese Traditional Medicine*] [online]. Available at: https://phuketthaitraditionalmedicinecenter.blogspot.com/2013/10/blog-post_15.html?fbclid=IwAR10RygLYOtmIwzHB9d3XaAFczdGhFKzQ1h13jEoYz9TDrrOsfMyW00VZQg. [Accessed 4 Aug. 2020],

Suchit Wongtet. 2019. *ขวัญเอ๋ยขวัญมาจากไหน?* [*Where Does Khwan Come From?*]. Bangkok: Ruenkaew Printing.

---------- . 2016. *Phra Rot Meri: Lao's myth in Ayuttaya Era*. In *Matichon Online* 19 (5). Available at: https://www.matichon.co.th/columnists/news_142068. [Accessed: 20 Oct. 2018).

---------- . 2018. *ขุนน้ำนางนอน ความทรงจำเก่า-ใหม่ จากแม่สายถึงเชียงแสน (จ.เชียงราย)* [*Khunnam Nang Non: Now-then Memories from Mae Sai to Chiang Saen*]. In *Suwannabhum in Asia, Matichon Daily* [online]. Available at: https://www.matichon.co.th/prachachuen/news_1173745. [Accessed: 3 May 2021].

Suebpong Thammachat. 1996. *วิถีชีวิตชาวไทยภาคใต้จากเพลงกล่อมเด็ก อำเภอเขาชัยสน จังหวัดพัทลุง* [*The Southern lives from Lullabies, Khao Chaison District, Phatthalung Province*]. Thaksin University: Songkhla.

Sunee Leopenwong and Kulthida Tuamsuk. 2002. "The Reflexes of Isan Lullabies". *Khon Kaen University Research Journal* 7 (1): 78 – 85.

Suphee Samorna. 2016. *สังคมวิทยาอีสาน* [*Isan Sociology*]. Udon Thani: Saksri Arksorn.

Sureerut Chernchaivachirakul. 2005. *ปัญหาในสังคมไทย: กรณีศึกษาจากหนังสือจดหมายเหตุฯ บางกอกรีคอร์เดอร์* [*Problem in Thai Society: Case Study from The Bangkok Recorder*]. Srinakharinwirot University: Bangkok.

Sutheera Satayaphan. 2017. "An Investigation of the Genre of 'Bot Lakhòn Nòk' Manuscript: A Case Study of 'Phra Rot-Meri". *International Conference on Thai Studies: Globalized Thailand, Connectivity, Conflict and Conundrums of Thai Studies*, Chiang Mai: Thailand, 15 18 July.

Suwannee Thongrot. 2010. "การศึกษาวิเคราะห์เพลงกล่อมเด็กตำบลไตรตรึงษ์ อำเภอเมือง จังหวัดกำแพงเพชร" [An Analytical Study of Lullabies in Tambon Trai – treung Mueang District, Kampheangphet Province]. *Journal of Humanities Naresuan University* 7(1): 1 – 23.

Suwit Jiensuwan. 2006. "ประเพณีทำขวัญ: พิธีกรรมแห่งการประสานและกลมกลืนความแตกต่างทางชาติพันธุ์" [The Spirit Retrieving Ceremony: Compromising Khwan Ritual with the Ethnic Distinctions]. In *Rituals, Legend, Folktales, and Folk Rhymes: The Roles of Folklore in Thailand*. edited by Sukanya Sujachaya, 163 – 204. Bangkok: Chula Press.

Suwit Thongsriked. 1980. *พิธีกรรมต่างๆ ในนครศรีธรรมราชที่ได้รับอิทธิพลจากศาสนาพราหมณ์* [*Rituals in Nakhon Si Thammarat Influenced by Brahmanism*]. Nakhon Si Thammarat: Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University.

Thai Herbal Learning Site. n.d. *พระคัมภีร์ปฐมจินดา* [*Treatise of Siamese Traditional Medicine*] [online]. Available at: https://be7herb.wordpress.com/%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%A0%E0%B8%B5%E0%B8%A3%E0%B9%8C%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%9E%E0%B8%97%E0%B8%A2%E0%B9%8C-%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%B3%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A2%E0%B8%B2/%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%A0%E0%B8%B5%E0%B8%A3%E0%B9%8C%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%9E%E0%B8%97%E0%B8%A2%E0%B9%8C/%E0%B8%9E%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%A0%E0%B8%B5%E0%B8%A3%E0%B9%8C%E0%B8%9B%E0%B8%90%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%88%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%94%E0%B8%B2/?fbclid=IwAR1Y3dM3-a1jO4CEYZbxNyjdENhGLp2dfFHDpUpwrkmmkHgXLk-4B2ewSpw. [Accessed 4 Aug. 2020].

Thai National Museum. 2015. *เทวนารี* [*Goddesses*]. Bangkok: Bangkok National Museum.

Thenes Wongyannava. 2013. *เขียนหญิง: อำนาจ โยนี และการเขียนของลึงค์* [*Female Writing: Power, Yoni, and Patriarchal Historiography*]. Bangkok: Unfinished Project Publishing.

Thanet Aphornsuvan. 2020. *คนไทยเริ่มออกเดินทางท่องเที่ยวตั้งแต่สมัยรัชกาลที่ 5* [*Thais Begin to Travel Since the Era of King Rama 5*] [online]. Available at: https://www.silpa-mag.com/history/article_37875?fbclid=IwAR3R1ABHSqhjGdrl8tU9lDVi5leg8TiLMNZfbrnxVtH7gNyy7AupoTfFB08. [Accessed 3 Dec. 2020].

Thanya Sangkaphanthanon. 2009. *Ecocriticism: Discourse of Nature and Environments in Thai Literature*. PhD. thesis: Naresuan University.

---------- . 2013. *Ecocriticism in Thai Literature*. Bangkok: Nakorn.

Thanya Sangkaphanthanon and Lawan Sangkaphanthanon. 2018. "Green Folklore: Folklore Studies, in the View of Ecocriticism". *Songklanararin Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 24(3): 3 – 30.

Thatsanee Buarapa. 1999. *ประเพณี พิธีกรรมการเลี้ยงเด็กของชาวอีสาน* [*Traditions and Rituals of Child Raising in Isan*]. Maha Sarakham: The Research Institute of Northeastern Art and Culture.

Theerapong Meethaisong. 2017. "พระสงฆ์กับองค์เจ้าในการปฏิรูปหัวเมืองอีสานผ่านกลไกอำนาจรัฐ" [Monks and King in the Reformation Isan Through State Apparatus]. *Humanities and Social Science* 34(3): 288 – 309.

Udom Rungruengsri. 1990. *พจนานุกรมล้านนา-ไทย ฉบับแม่ฟ้าหลวง* [*Lanna-Thai Dictionary, Mae Fah Luang]*. Bangkok: Amarin.

---------- . 1999. "เพลงกล่อมเด็กและเพลงร้องเล่น" [Lullabies and Singing Games]. *The Northern Thai Cultural Encyclopedia* 9. Bangkok: Thai Cultural Encyclopedia Foundation.

Vajirayana Library. 1926. *ประชุมบทลำนำ เล่ม 1 เห่กล่อมพระบรรทม* [*Folk Ballard, No.1, The Royal Lullabies*] [online]. Available at: http://digital.nlt.go.th/items/show/5324. [Accessed 3 Dec. 2020].

Varittha Thawarorit. 2008. *Implications of Political and Society on Thai Lullabies*. Master's degree thesis: Chulalongkorn University.

Variya Doungnoi. 2019. "นิเวศวิทยาการเมืองว่าด้วยความขัดแย้ง และการต่อต้านการทำเหมืองแร่ของกระบวนการเคลื่อนไหวทางสังคม" [Political Ecology of Conflict and resistance to Mining of Social Movements]. *Burapha Journal of Political Ecology* 7(2): 133 – 154.

Vithi Phanichphant. 2001. *ศิลปะเครื่องเขินในล้านนา* [*Arts of Lanna Lacquerware*]. Chiang Mai: Center for the Promotion of Arts and Culture, Chiang Mai University.

Woramas Tunpattrakul. 2018. "Through Ecofeminist Eyes: Woman, Nature and Maternal Absence in Linda Hogan's Solar Storm". *Humanities Journal* 25(1): 79 – 103.

Wiboonwan Musikanukhroa. 1992. *Buddhasenaka: A Text Critical Analysis and A Study of the Characters' Action*. Chiang Mai: Chiangmai University.

Yongyuth Chuwaen. 2019. *Rescue a Thai Local History*. Bangkok: Gypzy Group.

Yukti Mukdawijittra and Chutchon Ajanakitti. 2021. *มานุษยวิทยาพ้นมนุษย์* [*Posthuman Anthropology*]. Bangkok: Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre.

Interviews

Central Thailand

Buapan Suphanyot (บัวผัน สุพรรณยศ). 2020. Personal Interview. 16 January, Bangkok.

Juob Kwanwong (จวบ ขวัญวงศ์). 2019. Personal Interview. 27 November, Sukhothai.

Kanokwan Phromduang (กนกวรรณ พรหมดวง). 2019. Personal Interview. 28 November, Sukhothai.

Kwanjit Sriprajan (ขวัญจิต ศรีประจันต์). 2020. Personal Interview. 19 January, Suphanburi.

Mae Chusri (แม่ชูศรี). 2020. Personal Interview. 23 January, Lopburi.

Mae Jamjuree (แม่จามจุรี). 2019. Personal Interview. 26 November, Sukhothai.

Mae Samak (แม่สมัคร). 2020. Personal Interview. 23 January, Lopburi

Mae Sommai (แม่สมหมาย). 2019. Personal Interview. 27 November, Sukhothai.

Serphon Phleungsai (สืบพร เปลื้องสาย). 2020. Personal Interview. 22 January, Lopburi.

Sirichai Lithonglor (ศิริชัย หลีทองหล่อ). 2020. Personal Interview. 22 January, Lopburi.

The Support Arts and Crafts International Center of Thailand. 2020. Field Trip. 25 January, Ayutthaya.

Uayphon Sammaphatthara (อวยพร สัมมพัทระ). 2020. Personal Interview. 24 January, Ayutthaya.

The Northern Thailand

Boriboon Phonphiboon (บริบูรณ์ พรพิบูลย์). 2019. Personal Interview. 5 November, Chiang Mai.

Boonma Japjainai (บุญมา จับใจนาย). 2019. Personal Interview. 13 December, Chiang Rai.

Inkham Najai (อิ่นคำ นาใจ). 2019. Personal Interview. 12 December, Chiang Rai.

Janta Indrarangsri (จันตา อินทรังสี). 2019. Personal Interview. 13 November, Nan.

Kamphan Yodkhamsai (คำปัน ยอดคำใส). 2019. Personal Interview. 12 December, Chiang Rai.

Mae Luen (แม่ลืน). 2019. Personal Interview. 28 October, Mae Hong Son.

Mae Sangoog (แม่แสงอ่อง). 2019. Personal Interview. 28 October, Mae Hong Son.

Mae Sankham (แม่แสนคำ). 2019. Personal Interview. 5 November, Chiang Mai.

Mae Srikeaw (แม่ศรีแก้ว). 2019. Personal Interview. 10 December, Chiang Rai.

Mae Srinuan (แม่ศรีนวล). 2019. Personal Interview. 13 December, Chiang Rai.

Natchawin Phromkorn (ณัฐชวิน พรมกร). 2019. Personal Interview. 10 December, Chiang Rai.

Ninnete Wongsamran (นิลเนตร วงศ์สำราญ). 2019. Personal Interview. 29 October, Mae Hong Son.

Phetkaew Surahan (เพชรแก้ว สุรหาญ). 2019. Personal Interview. 12 December, Chiang Rai.

Pho Nan Chudet (พ่อหนานชูเดช), 2019. Personal Interview. 10 December, Chiang Rai.

Prapai Julaphan (ประไพ จุลพรรณ). 2019. Personal Interview. 8 November, Chiang Mai.

Prasert Pradit (ประเสริฐ ประดิษฐ์). 2019. Personal Interview. 28 October, Mae Hong Son.

Samak Sudsri (สมัคร สุดศรี). 2019. Personal Interview. 28 October, Chiang Rai.

Sarawanee Sukumwada (ศรวณีย์ สุขุมวาท). 2019. Personal Interview. 10 December, Chiang Mai.

Sarot Ratthanamas (สโรช รัตนมาศ). 2019. Personal Interview. 13 November, Nan.

Sodsri Meejantha (สดสี หมีจันทร์ต๊ะ). Personal Interview. 29 October, Mae Hong Son.
Somjet Wimolkasem (สมเจษฎ์ วิมลเกษม). 2019. Personal Interview. 15 November, Nan.
Sripan Karltom (ศรีพัน ขาลถม). 2019. Personal Interview. 3 November, Chiang Mai.
Suphannee Phromkorn (สุพรรณี พรมกร). 2019. Personal Interview. 10 December, Chiang Rai.

The Northeast Thailand

Anonymous. 2020. Personal Interview. 14 February, Khon Kaen.
Boonsorn Phromsrijan (บุญศร พรหมศรีจันทร์). 2020. Personal Interview. 15 February, Udon Thani.
Janchay Khongsamphan (จันทร์ฉาย คงสัมพันธ์). 2020. Personal Interview. 13 February, Chaiyaphum.
Kammi Sangjan (คำมี แสงจันทร์). Personal Interview. 13 February, Chaiyaphum.
Kanae Phonphong (คเณ พลพงษ์). 2020. Personal Interview. 13 February, Khon Kaen.
Netechanthra Boonyanit (เนตรจันทรา บุญนิตย์). 2020. Personal Interview. 16 February, Udon Thani.
Somkiat Phawong (สมเกียรติ ภาวงศ์). 2020. Personal Interview. 16 February, Udon Thani.
Tanakorn Jindasap (ธนากร จินดาทรัพย์). 2020. Personal Interview. 14 February, Khon Kaen.
Thianchai Supat (เทียนชัย สุพัฒน์). 2020. Personal Interview. 13 February, Khon Kaen.
Thongma Khanusong (ทองมา กานุสงค์). 2020. Personal Interview. 18 February, Nong Khai.
Vichai Naphua (วิชัย นาป๋ัว). 2020. Personal Interview. 13 February, Chaiyaphum.

The Southern Thailand

Boon Kaewwilad (บุญ แก้ววิลาศ). 2020. Personal Interview. 31 January, Nakhon Si Thammarat.
Jamrat Sinyoung (จำรัส สินธุ์ยัง). 2019. Personal Interview. 19 December, Phatthalung.
Kanueng Khongkaew (คะนึง คงแก้ว). 2020. Personal Interview. 6 January, Songkhla.
Mae Yupha (แม่ยุพา). 2020. Personal Interview. 6 January, Songkhla.
Praphai Sinyoung (ประไพ สินธุ์ยัง). 2019. Personal Interview. 19 December, Phatthalung.
Somphong Noidaorung (สมพงษ์ น้อยดาวรุ่ง). 2020. Personal Interview. 9 January, Songkhla.
Suem Inchum (เสริม อินชุม). 2019. Personal Interview. 20 December, Phatthalung.
Thammanit Nikhomrat (ธรรมนิต นิคมรัตน์). 2020. Personal Interview. 10 January, Songkhla.
Thammarat Nutadhira (ธรรมรัตน์ นุตะธีระ). 2020. Personal Interview. 4 January, Satun.
Thanom Nutadhira (ถนม นุตะธีระ). 2020. Personal Interview. 2 January, Satun.
Thao Khai (เต่าไข่). 2020. Personal Interview. 4 January, Satun.
Ubon Chucherd (อุบล ชูเชิด). Personal Interview. 19 December, Phatthalung.

Laos PDR

Ekasith Siriphon (เอกสิทธิ์ ศิริผล). 2019. Personal Interview. 20 November, Luang Prabang.
Janti Wilaivong (จันที วิไลวงษ์). 2019. Personal Interview. 19 November, Luang Prabang.

Mae Sida (แม่สีดา). 2019. Personal Interview. 18 November, Luang Prabang.
Sathupheng (สาธุเพ็ง). 2019. Personal Interview. 18 November, Luang Prabang.
Somchit Kirivong (สมจิตร คีรีวงษ์). 2019. Personal Interview. 19 November, Luang Prabang.
Thongchanh Manivong (ทองจัน มณีวงษ์). 2019. Personal Interview. 17 November, Luang Prabang.