

“การทำนาลุ่ม” วัฒนธรรมร่วมของคนไทย : กรณีศึกษาคนไทยใหญ่ในจังหวัด แม่ฮ่องสอน ประเทศไทย และคนไทยอายตอน ในรัฐอัสสัม ประเทศอินเดีย

“Wet-Rice Cultivation” Shared Culture of Tai People: A Case Study of Tai Yais in Maehongson, Thailand and Tai Aitons of Assam, Thailand

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มุ่งศึกษาความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับ นางขวัญข้าว หรือแม่โพสพ ผู้ปกป้องดูแลรักษาข้าวตามความเชื่อของคนไทย นับตั้งแต่เมื่อต้นกล้าอนุบาลได้ถูกปักลงในผืนดินจนให้ผลผลิต นางขวัญข้าวหรือแม่โพสพ เป็นความเชื่อในสิ่งเหนือธรรมชาติ หรือการบูชาธรรมชาติ (Animism) เพียงอย่างเดียวที่สืบทอดกันมา ที่มีลักษณะเป็นเพศหญิงในบรรดาสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ในสิ่งเหนือธรรมชาติที่คนไทยให้ความสำคัญในฐานะแม่ ซึ่งเป็นผู้ดูแลเรื่องปากท้องอาหารการกินและความอุดมสมบูรณ์ของชุมชนหมู่บ้าน ก่อนที่ศาสนาพุทธจะเข้ามาเป็นสายใยหลักของชุมชน ที่นำไปสู่การให้ความสำคัญและยกย่องเพศชายเป็นใหญ่ในฐานะพ่อผู้ปกครอง และผู้สืบทอดศาสนาพุทธและวัฒนธรรมไทยได้ดีกว่าผู้หญิง อย่างไรก็ตาม การเคารพบูชานางขวัญข้าวหรือแม่โพสพ ยังคงมีสืบเนื่องมาจวบจนถึงปัจจุบันแม้ศาสนาพุทธจะเข้ามาเป็นองค์ประกอบหลักในวัฒนธรรมไทย แต่นางขวัญข้าว หรือแม่โพสพ ก็ยังคงเป็นความเชื่อที่คนไทยยังคงเคารพบูชาเพราะถือเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของวัฒนธรรมข้าวของคนไทย วัฒนธรรมข้าวสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงอัตลักษณ์ความเป็นไทนอกเหนือไปจากการใช้ภาษาไทยและวัฒนธรรมประเพณีธรรมเนียมแบบไทย ข้าวเป็นอาหารหลักของคนไทยมาช้านาน ทำให้วัฒนธรรมข้าวหรือประเพณีพิธีกรรมที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการทำนานั้นเป็นเรื่องที่คนไทยทุกคนมีส่วนร่วม ผ่านวัฒนธรรมที่จับต้องไม่ได้ เช่น ความเชื่อเรื่องนางขวัญข้าวหรือแม่โพสพ พิธีร้องขวัญ การบูชานางขวัญข้าว ความเชื่อเรื่อง “ผีไร่, ผีทุ่ง” อาหารหรือขนมที่ทำมาจากข้าว เป็นต้น

คำสำคัญ: 1. ไทศึกษา; 2. วัฒนธรรมข้าว; 3. พิธีกรรมไทย; 4. ไทใหญ่; 5. ไทอายตอน

Abstract

This article examines the belief in "Nang Khwan Khao" or "Mae Posop," the rice goddess or guardian mother, who oversees and nurtures rice according to the beliefs of the Thai people. Since the early stages of rice cultivation, Nang Khwan Khao or Mae Posop has been a belief in supernatural or animistic worship that has been passed down through generations. She is typically depicted as a female deity among the revered entities in the realm of nature that Thai people hold in high regard, often viewed as a mother figure responsible for the fertility of the land, food, and prosperity of the village community. Before



Buddhism became the predominant religion in Thai communities, emphasizing the importance and elevation of males as patriarchal figures and inheritors of Buddhist religion and culture, respect and worship for Nang Khwan Khao or Mae Posop remained prevalent. Even with Buddhism becoming a fundamental component of Thai culture, reverence for Nang Khwan Khao or Mae Posop continues to be deeply ingrained. It is considered an integral part of Thai rice culture, reflecting the identity of the Thai people beyond language and traditional customs. Rice has long been the staple food of the Thai people, leading to rituals and ceremonies related to rice cultivation becoming shared cultural practices among all Thai people. Through intangible cultural heritage such as beliefs in Nang Khwan Khao or Mae Posop, chanting rituals, worship ceremonies, beliefs in "field ghosts" or spirits, and various rice-based foods or desserts, the culture surrounding rice cultivation has become something all Thai people share. These traditions encapsulate aspects of Thai identity that are not easily grasped, highlighting the significance of rice culture in Thai society.

Keywords: 1. Tai Studies; 2. Rice Culture; 3. Tai Ritual; 4. Tai Yai; 5. Tai Aiton

1. Who are the Tais?

The word 'Tai' describes a particular group of people belonging to Mongoloid race who are scattered all over Asia. They live in the southern part of China and Southeast Asia which include Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Burma, and also to some extent in some parts of North-East India. This has been mentioned by W.C. Dodd's in his book *The Tai Race: Elder Brother of the Chinese* (1923) which explored the location of the Tai race from the southern part of China, South East Asia to India. However, the present study locates and selects two precise zones for comparative study specifically from India and Thailand as mentioned above. Ethnographic study of those two zones is the main application concern of the study. Tai people usually call themselves with a combined word that begins with 'Tai' which is then followed with the specific difference of their own groups.

1.1 Tai Aitons

Tai Aitons of Assam, India and Tai Yais, Maehongson, Thailand share common tradition and belief as they belonged to Tai group. These two groups reside differently in Assam, India and Maehongson, Thailand although the Tais settle in various places but the similarity of culture brings about shared identity among Tais.

Tai Aitons call themselves as 'Tai Aiton' while Assamese people call them as 'Aitonia'. The word 'Aiton' comes from two Tai words; 'Ai' meaning 'brother' and 'Ton' meaning 'high'. But, Padmeswar Gogoi (1968) said that the name 'Aiton' comes from the place 'Mueng Aiton' in Chindwin Myanmar. However, the etymological meaning to some extent sustains as coming from a particular place does not dispel the preceding possibility. So, 'brother of high hill' or 'high spirited brother' remains for the Tai Aitons.

Assamese people once called Tai Aitons as Aitonias. Jaya Buragohain (1998) mentioned that the Aitons migrated to Assam from the upper Chindwin Valley in Burma during the middle of the 18th century when Alongphaya king, the founder of the Kongbung Dynasty built up an extensive kingdom by conquering tribes and states within and outside Burma. In order to avoid the war and the Burmese rules, they migrated from the place 'Aiton' and settled down in the Ahom's territory.

1.2 Tai Yais

In the past Thai people or *Kon Mueng* used to call Tai Yais as 'Ngew' (เงี้ยว), and this particular term has literally no meaning. The only meaning that can be drawn out for 'Ngew' is thus a derogatory one. In Myanmar, people know them as 'Shan', 'Shyam' or 'Sam' and these signify probably specific geographical locations. Nowadays, 'Tai Yai' generally means the group of Tai people who migrated from Shan state, Myanmar to stay in Thailand. Tai Yai history was included in the history of Chaing Mai, Lanna Kingdom, since Chao Keaw Muang Ma brought his charisma to convince the various groups to stay peacefully together. In the year of 1900, a kind of reformation happened in Siam. With the coming of colonization from French military, the Siamese elite learnt how to use concept of 'race' to reunite the various people into 'nation-state' or 'chat' in Thai. The nation was defined by the land and language, and that means that the Tai Yai people who lived in the reign of King Rama V, were to be defined as 'Thai'.

2. The background of the study

2.1 Tai Aiton community of Banlung Mantai Village, Assam, India

Edward Gait mentioned that Tai Aitons came to Assam in the eighteen centuries around 1791 A.D. Jaya Buragohain (1998) wrote that Tai Aiton village in Bargaon established in 1835. There are 8 villages of Tai Aiton in Assam; 1. Banlung Mantai or Bargaon 2. Ban Hin or Ahomani 3. Ban Sai or Balipathar 4. Chakihola 5. Kalioni 6. Barhola 7. Dubarani 8. Tengani and another one village in Arunachal Pradesh, is called Jonapather.

According to oral tradition among the Tai Aitons, their origin place was called "Mueng Aiton" in the upper Chindwin valley of Myanmar. The Aitons came from *Mung Mau* and then migrated to Assam in the eighteenth century. Tai Aitons took permission from Ahom kings and settled in upper region of the Brahmaputra valley. In Banlung Mantai village or Bargaon, is located on Golaghat-Sarupathar road. *Banlung* in Tai refers to two words; *Ban* means village and *Lung* means big, from the name of the village, the name of Banlung can refer to the size of the village where is very big village. *Mantai* means people who speak Tai language. The environment in the village is similar with Chindwin valley as it is in tropical rainfall zone. Banlung Mantai has residential area and farming area which is not too far from each other. They live by the riverside; the land at the river side is abundant for planting vegetable and wet-rice cultivation. It is seen that, Banlung is surrounded by Dhansiri river, the plain area is



suitable for agriculture. Dhansiri river is in the northern, eastern and southern. Tai Aitons call Dhansiri river as *Nam Lung* means the big river. The western side of the village has *Sian Na* or beautiful rice field and a small area on the west was made as *Paheiw* or graveyard. Tai Aitons believe that western side symbolized bad luck, evil or mysterious.

The location of the village is suitable for rice cultivation and Nambor Reserved Forest touches the Northern part of the village. Tai Aiton people still have *Hern-Tai* or raised-house or *Sang-Ghor* (in Assamese) because they live by the side of the river. Tai Aiton's houses keep *Jong-Lik* or *Keng-Phra* or prayer room separately from the house. Because Tai Aiton lives attach with Buddhism as the way of life and the tradition of building the house in Tai, they must construct *Jong-Lik* separately but nearby the house for praying and practices a small ritual at home every day.

Tai Aitons do wet-rice cultivation and plant sugar cane, betel leaf, pineapple, and vegetable. Some Tai Aiton women go to sale their own vegetable in local market nearby the village especially weekend market in Borpatha road and Silonijan. They live in self-sufficient economy. Rice is the staple food. Every household has their own granaries. Tai Aitons make their own agricultural implements such as yoke (*Kho Hang*), Plough (*Thai*), Sickle (*Kuew*), hoe (*Kho*) etc. Some Tai Aitons are working in private business and some people work for government, but majority of the people are farmer.

Tai Aitons still use buffaloes in many agricultural works especially male buffalo (*Kwai*) but nowadays the use of buffaloes is decreasing in the village because of the coming of ploughing machines and the new generations of Tai Aiton children have to go to school and no one is willing to learn how to take care of cattle. The present days, Tai Aitons there who are rich, they hire workers or hire the tractors to do a hard work in the farm. The Labors come from outside the village who are not Tai and they may get paid by a daily wage. But most of the villagers work on their own farms if they have a small piece of land and have enough labours.

Tai Aitons are the followers of Buddhist. In the earliest year of settlement, Tai Aiton practiced Mahayana Buddhism after that they shifted into Hinayana Buddhism as the oral history talks about the coming of Burmese monks from Burma to Assam. Burmese monks converted Tai Aitons from Mahayana Buddhist into Hinayana Buddhist. In Banlung Mantai village has one temple, there is one vihara and one Bikshu or monk or *Chao Ke*. Besides Buddhism, Tai Aitons believe in *Fi* or Spirit also. And the auspicious days or *wandi* is found in their everyday life.

Other spirits are living everywhere such as Nang Khwankao (Rice Goddess), Fi Hoong/Phi Thoong (Paddy field spirit), *Fi Nam* (Water spirit), *Phi Dam* (Community spirit), etc. These *Phis* are benevolent as well as malevolent looking at the deed of the people.

2.2 Tai Yai Community of Ban Pangmoo Village, Maehongson Province, Thailand



In Shan State of Burma, the word Tai Laung is used to call the Tai people of the state. In Thailand, most people know Tai Laung as Tai Yai. The history of Tai Yai migration from *MongMao* kingdom. Nowadays, Tai Luangs or Tai Yais live in many countries such as Shan state in Burma, Southern China, Northeast India, Laos and Thailand. These Tai people, once they settled down and built the village, they would call the village “*Maan*” or “*Ban*” followed by the name of the village such as BanPangmoo. Tai people tend to have their houses nearby the river and the mountains because their lives are attached to agricultural life and seasonal plants. So, Maehongson is the perfect place for Tai people, having immediate access to both rivers and mountains. Tai Yais live in the abundance of the forest and fertility of the soil.

Thus, Maehongson suits all kinds of the plantation. The name of Ban Pangmoo comes from the story of pigs. In the time of 1831 when *ChoawKeawMungma* visited here and found that so many pigs used to come to this place and eat Saltlick. ‘Ban’ means village and ‘Pang’ is a slight variation from the word ‘Pong’ which means Saltlick. And ‘Moo’ is ‘pig’. This story goes as follows that *ChoawKeawMungma* saw the pigs when he was hunting for elephants and suddenly realized that this area was suitable for building a community.

Ban Pangmoo is in the plain area but surrounded by mountains and rivers. The village is a square-shaped area. The local people divided the land into 3 sections based on the usage purpose: rice cultivation area, orchard or farming area and residential purpose. There are two rivers in this region: Pai and Sa-gna. Ban Pangmoo is located nearby the river and amidst small mountain ranges surrounding it from multiple sides. One of the villagers (age 35) said that this was a good and suitable location for their ancestors. And, thus, Tai Yais are attached to rice cultivation. The main crops produced in this village are rice, sesame and peas. Tais of Ban Pangmoo divides the land into 12 areas such that the plantation area is located separately from the residential area. These cultivation areas of the village are; 1. Huay Poo 2. Tong Poo Lao 3. Tong Na Mai khee 4. Doi Kai 5. Tong Poo La 6. KhunHeiw 7. Tong Mak Peung 8. West side garden of Mae Sa-Nga River 9. HuayPoong Chan 10. HuayPok Chan 11. Huay Nam Gud and 12. The plain area in HuayPok Chan.

Tai Yai people do rice cultivation twice a year and they never leave the land without any plantations. With the help of the government on artificial rain and a good irrigation plan, Tai Yai people cultivates good number of crops throughout the year. The main crops are rice, soybean, sesame, peanut, local bean, garlic, chili, pumpkin, corn, cucumber etc.

Tai Yais have the faith in goodness. Regarding Buddhist philosophy, if one is doing a good thing, one can get a good thing in return. But in everyday life, Tai Yais have so many beliefs in ‘*Phi*’ (spirit) or supernaturals. Many key Tai people explain about the belief in *Phi* and there are two kinds of *Phi*.



- a. *Phi Arak* or good spirits have the power to protect Tais and the village from a bad spirit itself such as *Phi ChaoMaung* or the ancestor spirit.
- b. Other spirits are living everywhere such as *Phi Nam* (Water spirit), *Phi Din* (Earth spirit), *Phi Pa* (Jungle spirit), *Phi Doi* (Mountain spirit), *Phi Toong* (Rice field spirit), *Phi Yuggaso* (Tree Spirit) etc. These *Phis* are benevolent as well as malevolent looking at the deed of the people.

3. Wet-rice farming and the ethnic identity maintaining: Wet-rice cultivation among Tai Aitons and Tai Yais

Rice is the staple food for Tai people. The relationship between Tai people and Rice culture appears in their beliefs, folklore and worshipping. In Tai Aiton cosmology, as mentioned in chapter 4-5, the belief system is starting with Buddha and other supernatural such as *Fi Sumong* (village guardian spirit), *Fi Dam* (ancestor spirit), *Fi Nam* (water spirit), *Fi Hoong* is spirit of the tree, *Nang Khon Khao* (goddess of Paddy fields) and in Tai Yai cosmology, the belief system starts with Buddha, *Phi Arak* (ancestor spirit) and the other spirits such as *Phi Nam*(water spirit), *Phi Din* (earth spirit), *Phi Toong*(rice field spirit) *Mae Phosop* (goddess of grain and paddy). All these belief systems is related to rice culture.

Tai people live their lives in subsistence economy. Both of Tai Yais and Tai Aitons are the rice growers including vegetables and crops. Their houses and agricultural farms are not in the same area but not too far from the villages. Tai Yais of Ban Pangmoo live nearby *Sa-Nga* River and *Pai* River, on the other hand, Tai Aitons of BanLung Mantai live nearby Dhansiri River. The location of both villages is good for rice cultivation especially wet-rice cultivation.

In Banlung Mantai village, the rainy season starts in June after the rain and the soaked land, Tai Aitons would start going to their rice fields. There is a ritual for sowing; it is called *TaKa* or nursery land for the spout. In this ritual, the head of the family would call all men in family to pray for the Buddha at *JongLik* and pray for their luck from earth spirit and rice field spirit (*Fi Din* and *Fi Na*) for the first sowing of the year. And Tai Aitons believe in the auspicious day, they have to select the good day “*Wan Di*” to plough the land according to Tai astrology. After sprouts are ready, Tai Aitons would transplant into the rice fields and pray to *Fi Din* or *Fi Na*. All women in the family including girls would take part of this activity. Tai Aiton would perform “*Cham Na*” or transplanting seedlings ritual by praying for Lord Buddha and *Fi Din*, *Fi Nam* for blessing them a good production. In the past (30-40 years ago) *Kwai* or buffalo is used to help Tai Aiton people in sowing and plough, nowadays most of Tai aitons use tractor, power tillers.

After 5-6 months, in harvesting time it becomes all women’s works. *WanDi* or good day for harvesting has to be selected according to Tai astrology book. This ritual is called



“*Hon Khao*” and women do all the ritual. After selecting auspicious day, all women in the family or neighbors would come and help each other.

Tai Aitons believe in *Nang Khwan Khao* or goddess of paddy. The ritual would start with praying for *Nang Khwan Khao* but this ritual nowadays is extinct because of most of the harvesting will be done by the workers. After that they would carry grain to granary, and it is done by male. Tai Aitons keep grain in big baskets which is made of bamboo, mud and cowdung inside the granary. In the past, Tai Aiton husked the rice with wooden mortar but nowadays they also use rice husking machine. And lastly the time for eating new rice be a small ritual of taking new rice is observed with family members, relatives and village members and it would come at the same time as Bihu in Assamese culture in January.

In Tai Yais of BanPangMoo, Maehongson, Thailand, the rice worshiping goes together with all steps of growing rice. Tai Yais start rice cultivation in wet season starting from May-June. Before rice plantation, Tai Yai would pray or *Phi Choa Mung* or *Phi Arak* for blessing them a good cultivation and good products, after that they would worship *Phi Fai* (irrigation spirit) with *KhaoTok* (popped rice) and flower including meats or sweets. The first ritual is called “*HagNa*” or the first-time cultivation. This ritual starts with *Phi Nam* (water spirit) and *PhiDin* (earth spirit) worshipping by making *SongLor* (made of bamboo) to keep food inside for *NangKhawKhao*. Tai Yais would plant rice only seven clumps for the first day and they have to select the auspicious day or *WanDi* according to the astrology calendar, then the next day they can continue plant the rest of rice. Tai Yais used buffalo (*Kwai*) in the time of plough and sowing in the past. Nowadays most of Tai Yais use tractor because it is faster than buffalo. In the past, *HongKwanKwai* ritual was there in BanPangmoo. It is the ritual for letting the buffalos from each farm to the forest and worshipping buffalos with a bouquet of flower ties on buffalo’s horn then worship the spirit with rice, banana, a pair of candles, flower two bouquets, two threads, and *NamSomPoy* (it is a holy water with *Som Poyleaves* that Tai Yais believe, it gives a good refreshment and protection from evils). This ritual would do after Sowing seven days to apologize for buffalos. After letting all buffalos go to the forest, Tai Yais believe that *Phi Pa* or *Phi Doi* (mountain or forest spirit) will take care of the buffalos then for a week. Tai people would go and bring them back to the village. Nowadays, this ritual is not found because people use tractors for sowing.

In the harvesting time, Tai Yai women would harvest first seven clumps of rice and that is called “*Khao Panna*” which Tais believe that there is paddy spirit. Tai Yais would pray to *KhaoKwanNa* that “*the more I eat the rice will remain the same*” After the harvesting, “*GunTor PujakhaiYa Ja Kai*” the family leader would use the big hand fan blows on the grain, if some grains blew outside, they would collect it and keep it inside the special basket for offering to *MaePhoSop* or *NangKhanKhao* for next year.

Gin Hua Khao Mai or eating new rice ritual would be arranged in December or January, Tai Yais would make “*TangSomTorLuang*” or making a basket of food and fruit and



bring it to temple, they always make “*KhaoPuk*” (Tai sweets made of black sesame and sticky rice) from new rice.

Rice for Tai people is not only a staple food but also it reflects Tai food system from production to consumption. As Tai people settle down not too far from the river and select plain area to settle Tai village because Tais concern more about wet rice cultivation which is related to water system, soil fertility and rainfall pattern. The researcher made the wet rice cultivation process as a table for understanding the process and the wet rice cultivation culture among both groups.

Wet-rice cultivation process	Tai Aiton, Assam	Tai Yai, Thailand
1. Location of the village	Tai Aitons village is located nearby NamLung or Dhansiri river	Tai Yai village is located nearby Pai River and Sa-Nga River.
2. Timing	In June is the rainy season in Assam.	In May-June is the rainy season in Maehongson, Thailand.
3. Worshipping	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Ta Ka</i> or rice seedling ritual, <i>Cham-Na</i> or transplanting TaiAiton would pray for Lord Buddha and then Phi Din Phi Na to protect their seeds. 2. <i>Hon Khao</i> Harvesting ritual, <i>NangKhwankhao</i> worshipping 3. <i>Jin Khao Mai</i> –eating new rice in January 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>HagNa</i> or rice seedling ritual, Tai Yai would pray for Phi ChoaMung and Phi Fhai, Phi Din and Phi Nam to protect rice seedlings and then they would plant <i>KhaoKwanNa</i> 7clumps on the auspicious day. 2. <i>Hong Kwan Kwai</i> or buffalo worshipping or GunTor Kwai. 3. <i>Hong Kwankhao</i> or <i>GunTor Pu ja Khai Ya Ja Kai</i> 4. <i>Gin Hua Khao Mai</i> - eating new rice in December-January

Table 1 : Wet Rice Cultivation Culture in Tai Aiton and Tai Yai

Conclusion



The researcher selected Wet-Rice cultivation culture to highlight the similarities between Tai Aitons, Assam, India and Tai Yais, Maehongson, Thailand. Both of the Tai groups share many similarities mainly they have faith in Buddhism and having the agricultural life that brought about similarity in belief systems and ceremony. Moreover, Tai belief that is similar with each other. Speaking the same Tai language makes the sense of one-ness and sense of belonging to Tai ethnic group. One good example is the word *Ban* means village, is used in both the areas.

Both of Tai groups follow Buddhism and their lives attach to Wet-rice cultivation that bring about the same belief system such as the belief of *Nang Khon Khoa* or *Mae Posop* and their cycle of life goes along with the agricultural life. It reflects through ritual in a year and *Poi* which Tai Aitons and Tai Yais have in common throughout the year.

The Belief system among the Tai Aitons, they practice Theravada Buddhism. They also believe in *Fi* or spirit. Thus, there are two kinds of beliefs in Banlung; firstly, *Fra* or Buddha and secondly, *Fi* or spirit such as *Nang Khon Khao* or *Rice goddess*, *Fi Nam* or river spirit, *Fi Dam* means ancestor spirit. The Buddha for the Tai Aitons is the greatest one. From the participant observation, it is found that the Tai Aitons would always pray to the Buddha before worshipping a different spirit. Some of them said that the spirit does not exist because the Buddha can be overpowering the evils.

For Tai Yai's belief system, Tai Yais have the faith in goodness. Regarding Buddhist philosophy, if one is doing a good thing, one can get a good thing in return. And the Buddha is the highest belief for the Tai Yais. But in everyday life, the Tai Yais have so many beliefs in *Phi* (spirit) or the supernatural. Many key informants explained about the belief in *Phi* that there are two kinds of *Phi*; First, *Phi Arak* or good spirits who have the power in protecting the Tais and the village from a bad spirit itself such as, *Phi Chow Meuang* or the ancestor spirit. *Phi Hoong* is spirit of paddy field, *Phi Nam* is spirit of the water, *Phi Dam* means ancestor spirit, *Phi Sumong* means spirit of the village. And secondly, other spirits are living everywhere such as *Phi Nam* (Water spirit), *Phi Din* (Earth spirit), *Phi Pa* (Jungle spirit), *Phi Doi* (Mountain spirit), *Phi Toong* (Rice field spirit), *Phi Yuggaso* (Tree spirit) etc

Even though the people are Buddhists they follow the lunar calendar. That makes them share same kinds of beliefs in auspicious time and the same festival and ritual. The word *Phi* is similar in meaning relating to the supernatural power. Interestingly, the rice culture is found as a similar practice between both the groups. *Nang Khon Khao* for the Aitons and *Phi Toong* for the Tai Yais are functional as the practices of the protection of the paddy field. And both groups would worship *Nang Khon Khao* or *Phi Toong* before inaugurating rice plantation.

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