

Research Article

“Ai Khai” Wat Chedi: Perspectives of Meaning Creation as the “Sacred Space”

Anutsara Ruengmak^{*} and Niphon Tipsrinimit

School of Art Libery, Walailak University, Nakhon Si Thammarat 80160, Thailand

Abstract

This article is part of the study entitled “Ai Khai Wat Chedi: A New Form of Merit Making and Reproduction of Sacred Space” with an aim to study the meaning creation of “sacred space” of Wat Chedi Ai Khai. It was designed as a qualitative research. The data for the study were collected for related documents and interviews of the temple committee and officials that took care of Wat Chedi, the villagers living in the temple area and the tourists visiting the temple. The research site was Wat Chedi Ai Khai and the areas in the Cha-long Sub-district, Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat.

The findings revealed that 1) The perspective on community narratives and the resulting belief about Ai Khai Wat Chedi as sacred space were originated from the definition given to meaning of space of Ai Khai Wat Chedi from the belief that narratives could be used to create the community identity as the spiritual anchor by praying for blessings such as fortune, lost and found, health through the exoteric perspectives of outside people in explaining the meaning of worshippers coming to pray and ask for such blessings at the temple 2) Creation of sacred space of Wat Chedi Ai Khai from the existing cultural capital for the benefit of the community resulted from the arrival of a large number of tourists and people. Thus, Ai Khai Wat Chedi has become a tourist attraction with the supportive evidence of the emerging cultural capital no matter whether it is a countless number of stucco chickens in the temple area, fragments of firecrackers piling up higher than a person's height and sacred objects that are reproduced four times within a month influenced by the firm belief and faith of the people leading to increased revenue that boosts the community economy. People living in the area of Wat Chedi Ai Khai both those selling local products in the temple compound and others on the five routes to the temple from Nakhon Si Thammarat-Sutatthani Road leading to the entrance to Wat Chedi Ai Khai with 97 shops surrounding the temple selling all types of offerings. Wat Chedi Ai Khai thus reveals the esoteric perspective as the space for livelihood making of the villagers. Besides, the temple is the space of religious activities of Buddhist monks. Therefore, Wat Chedi Ai Khai has continuously obtained financial donations to renovate the temple in an act to preserve Buddhism.

Keywords: Sacred space, Wat Chedi Ai Khai, Meaning creation of Sacredness

^{*} Corresponding authors:
Anutsara Ruengmak E-mail: anutsara.ru@wu.ac.th
Received: 28 October 2021,
Revised: 2 December 2021,
Accepted: 8 December 2021

Introduction

Wat Chedi, Cha-long Sub-district, Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat is a popular place where people from all directions, both in the locality and other places, come on a visit to pay respect, pray to and worship the sacred supernatural being present at Wat Chedi. This being is not a Buddha image or any of other religious figures commonly found in other temples but this is a carved figure of a child, wearing sun glasses and the soldier's military camouflage suit, popularly known as “Ai Khai, Wat Chedi Child”.

The story of “Ai Khai Wat Chedi” has been found in two legends. The first legend is according to the narrative of Kirachaiwanit (2015) that Luang Poo Tuad hiked from Wat Pakoh on his pilgrimage with a ten-year-old boy named “Ai Khai”. The monk and the boy stopped on the way for several days to preach the villagers in the area at a deserted temple that was under the ground showing only the tip of the pagoda and an old religious hall. One day, Ai Khai became very seriously ill and later died. Luang Poo Tuad then cremated Ai Khai's body and made the spirit stay at that temple to protect the temple's fortune and wait until designated merit-makers were born to renovate the temple. The first legend coincided with the second one which is based on Phromwiset (1976, p. 36), who says that the legend of “Ai Khai, Wat Chedi Child” appeared in the area of Moo 7 Chalongs Sub-district, Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, the location of the temple nowadays. It is about a young child of 9-10 years old, whom the villagers believe to be a sacred spirit living here from the Ayuddhaya Period. Some villagers say the boy did live there in the past and his spirit ‘Ai Khai’ could bring good luck, fortune and fulfil requested hopes and wishes. Obvious examples were cases of missing cattle that were finally found because of the prays to Ai Khai for help. Eventually, a carved figure was built out of intense faith and power of worship to be resided by “Ai Khai, Wat Chedi Child”.

“Ai Khai, Wat Chedi”, a wooden carved figure that people respect and place their faith in, has led to countless prays for help until it has been rumoured by words of mouth that Ai Khai of Wat Chedi “entertains requests for help and blesses those who worship him.” Thus, a non-stop flow of an unimaginable increasing number of people from other areas travel to the temple to pray to Ai Khai and this phenomenon finally caught the attention of the media who wish to make this news. Empirical

evidence revealing the sacredness of Ai Khai Wat Chedi was in a countless number of offerings at the temple such as stucco chickens that lined the entrance road to the temple courtyard, policemen statues, statues of graduates, mountains of used fragments of firecrackers, shadow puppet show performing groups and long drum dancing troupes, employed to perform in an act to fulfil one's vow, or military camouflage suits, sun glasses, bows and arrows. All of these objects embody offerings by the villagers because of their strong faith in the sacredness of Ai Khai. Another piece of evidence is the booming business community around the temple with huge sales of offerings. The stories of “Ai Khai Wat Chedi” have been popularly known for ages, spread by TV, newspapers and online media. Besides, songs about Ai Khai and several other legends were written. Poonsook et al. (2019, p. 359) claimed that within the past five years, Wat Chedi (Ai Khai) Sichon Sub-district, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province frequently appeared in the newspapers and online social media before the day of the Government Lottery Announcement. The media often reported crowds of people from all directions thronged the temple to pray to Ai Khai, who is expected to destine them to be the lottery winners.

This phenomenon of crowds of people both from domestic areas and abroad visiting Wat Chedi aroused the researcher's interest in studying the process of making meaning of space of Wat Chedi determined by narratives on sacredness. The research aimed to study meaning making of space of the public highlighting the relationship between people and space. The conceptual framework of Wm. Hume Jansen was adopted in the analysis of various angles of meaning construction for Wat Chedi Ai Khai with an inclusion of both the esoteric perspectives of the local people and those exoteric perspectives of outside people. The study was designed using a qualitative approach. The study would raise an awareness of the relationship between beliefs and community business promotion and would be used as basic data for interested people.

Research Methodology

This study was an ethnographic research employing qualitative methods and Wm. Hume Jansen 's Theory of Blason Populaire, the concept of which was presented in "The Esoteric-Exoteric in Folklore," the nature of expressing attitude of public speakers within the local community or those from outside both positively and negatively (Udomsilp, 2016, p. 114). The scope of the study consists of:

- 1) The scope of informants consisting of the temple committee and official caretakers as well as the villagers residing in the location and tourists to the temple, who were interviewed
- 2) The scope of the research content involving a study of the concepts of defining the meaning of space sacredness employing observations, interviews and focus group discussions
- 3) The scope of the study location referring to the prime location for the study covering Wat Chedi Ai Khai and Chalong Sub-district, Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat was also surveyed.

Research Findings

Wat Chedi Ai Khai is an important religious place of Buddhism, worshipped by people in many areas. All religious festivals are annually celebrated with Ai Khai Wat Chedi, a respected sacred wooden figure as the major attraction drawing people to make merits at Wat Chedi, Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. Previously, Wat Chedi had only one religious hall but within 5 years, the temple has expanded from a small area of a few rais to more than 30 rais from charity force and strong faith. This results in the creation of meaning showing the relationship between community narratives and beliefs concerning sacredness space in various dimensions.



Figure 1 Map of Wat Chedi Ai Khai, Chalong Sub-district, Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province

1. The View of the Community Narratives and Beliefs about Ai Khai Wat Chedi as Space of Sacredness

The stories about Ai Khai, Wat Chedi Child are related to the beliefs of the sacred space of the Community and a large number of people who come to pray at the temple for different reasons. There have been stories about Ai Khai helping to fulfill wishes and hopes requested. Stories of miracles of Ai Khai Wat Chedi have been passed on through generations and mural paintings at Wat Chedi show stories and brave actions of Ai Khai, Wat Chedi Child.

Jomrit (2020) said in an interview that Ai Kai in the legend of a 9 to10-year-old boy was a farmer's son. While waiting for parents to come home from the rice field, he woke up to see a flood rising high. He went into panic, jumping from his house on stilts into the water and was finally drowned. After death, while the spirit wandered about to look for his parents, he met Phra Maha Tain Kan Chong, the teacher of Somdej Phra Naresuan the Great. When Luang Poo Tuad began his journey from Ayuddhaya to settle the dispute between Ayuddhaya and Raja of Pattani, Phra Maha Tain Kan Chong came to see Luang Poo off on his journey. Ai Kai met Luang Poo Tuad, so he followed him until Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat, where the monk stopped for a rest at the Village Hall. People all spread words that the revered monk was here. He stayed at Sichon for months during which he built the Buddha Image and the Chedi before he continued on his journey to Pattani. The area was then named Baan Bodi Sadej after the monk had left.

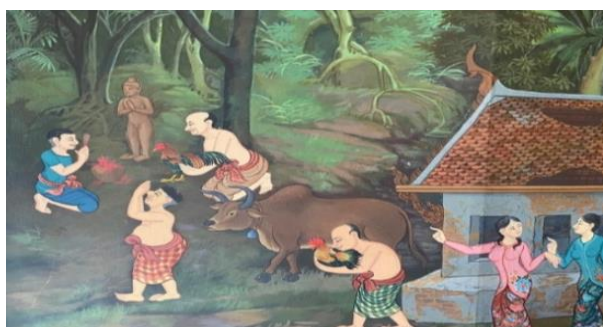


Figure 2 Mural Painting at Wat Chedi Depicting Praying for the Fulfillment of Hopes and Wishes and Miracles of Map of Wat Chedi Ai Khai

When some people in the community got their hopes and wishes fulfilled, a naked figure of a boy was then carved from wood, based on the dream vision of the village Head called Tiang or Tiang Muang-in or casually nicknamed “Tiang Hak Lek”, believed to practice in black magic. This event took place in around B.E. 2523-2524 (Phromwiset, 2020, p. 36). Later, the name “Ai Khai Wat Chedi” was changed to “Grandpa Khai” because it was felt that the callers were of the grandchildren generation, so they should treat the more senior person like Ai Khai with respect. Calling someone “Ai” in the present time is considered impolite. However, “Ai Khai” continues to be used to name each lot of the coins or images produced each time. Kardmeesap (2020) says the temple committee and other involved parties use the name “Ai Khai” because Ai Khai died in his childhood. He had no chance of getting old to become a grandfather. His spirit is now residing at Wat Chedi with an intention to help the villagers. Ai Khai Wat Chedi is therefore like a guardian spirit of the area. This story has been spread in this way in connection with many other stories from the villagers who had direct experience in similar ways as well as fulfilled hopes and wishes blessed by Ai Khai Wat Chedi Child leading to more intense faith in the sacredness of Ai Khai Wat Chedi.

“Ai Khai Wat Chedi” the Meaning of Space of Sacredness as Psychological Supportive Anchor

When people are faced with a lot of problems in life, they will look for a way out or depend on something to calm their state of mind. This is basically what people normally do and act, especially if this can help them escape from the problems. Jaied (Interview, 2019) mentioned that each day, thousands of worshippers thronged the temple to ask for blessings, help for wish fulfilling and present offerings promised. There would be more people during the religious festivals, who come for different reasons. Previously, Ai Khai was most well-known for helping the lost things returned to the owners but now most people believe that Ai Khai would bring luck, so they mainly pray for luck, fortune or better destiny. The meaning of Wat Chedi as psychological supportive anchor can be categorized into several types of beliefs as shown in the table below.

Beliefs Concerning “Ai Khai Wat Chedi” the Meaning of Space of Sacredness as Psychological Supportive Anchor

Belief about Luck and Fortune

Patthasong (2020) said that her mother gave her an Ai Khai coin from the first lot produced by Monk Term to give the villagers. She prayed to the coin out of her strong faith in it, mostly for fortune. The first time she brought the coin home, she won an underground lottery and she continues to win the money that way. She believes the story of Ai Khai because she gets luck. Every time, she wins the lottery, she will light firecrackers and offer the red carbonated drink to Ai Khai.

Jaied (2020) said her family had a coin, a figure and Ai Khai finger ring to worship. Most of the time, she will pray to Ai Khai to ask for all passes in the subjects she is studying. The offering in return for her success each time is the red carbonated drink.

Belief about “Lost and Found”

Somwong (2020) explained that her faith and belief in Ai Khai began when her buffalo went missing, so she prayed to Ai Khai for help in having the buffalo returned. She promised to light firecrackers for that. In the end, she found the lost buffalo. After that,

her faith developed and she has worshipped Ai Khai from then on.

Jaided (2020) said that she liked to raise red-whiskered Bulbul birds. She spent a fortune buying one. One day, she left the door of the cage open and the bird escaped. She tried to lure it back but unsuccessfully. Finally, she prayed to Ai Khai Wat Chedi that she would offer the red drink for the returned bird. In the evening, she could successfully lure the bird back.

Belief about Physical Health

Bunrak (2020) said she had a stomachache and decided to go to see the doctor. She was told that she needed an operation. She then prayed to Ai Khai, promising to light firecrackers and buy a stucco chicken as offerings. When she was examined by the doctor again, she found that her symptoms had gone. Lastly, she did what she had promised to do.

Junlapak (2020) admitted that she wanted to get pregnant with a baby girl badly, so she went to Wat Ai Khai to pray for a baby girl. After, she got what she had asked for, she went to the temple to light the firecrackers as the offerings.

Phoka (2020) said that she was a Muslim, who worshipped Islam but she came to the temple to seek the blessings of Ai Khai because she was certain that Ai Khai was not a Buddhist monk but a temple boy. She often asks for blessings in her job and for better health.

Beliefs about asking for a son

Jaided, K. (2020) saying that Uncle doesn't have a son, therefore comes to ask for a blessing from Ai Khai Find a son who is smart, intelligent and cute as an egg. when he came to vow by offering a stucco chicken.

The interviewed data above reflect the views of people who come to pray to Ai Khai and make their requests for certain things from the past to the present. They revealed the experiences they had gone through that led to their acceptance and worship Wat Chedi Ai Khai as psychological supportive anchor. No matter what problems they have in their daily life, they will pray to Ai Khai for a way out, and problem explanation. This is increasingly popular. What is worth noticing is that the development of requests has changed from asking for the lost objects to be returned, which most were. Now, more requests to Ai Khai are on

blessings for luck and fortune. Each day, no fewer than one thousand people visited the temple resulting in a huge increasing number of offerings. With these, the temple has given away the offered objects on various occasions, for example, distributing the offered toys on Children's Day and donating the children's soldier camouflage suits to people in the North of Thailand in winter. Ai Khai Wat Chedi has thus become a sacred space, popularized by the people with the view to pay respect to as a psychological supportive anchor of all no matter what religion they observe.



Figure 3 Donating offerings on the occasion the National Children's Day in 2020 at Wat Chedi temple

2. Building a Sacred Space of Wat Chedi Ai Khai from the Culture Capital for the Benefits of the Community

From the phenomenon of crowds of over a thousand of people visiting the temple to pray for the blessings of Ai Khai. Based on the statistics of visitors, Wat Chedi Ai Khai has become a sacred space through the views of people who can freely visit the temple. Thus, five routes to Wat Chedi have been created, namely, Hin Intersection Route, Hua Rad Junction Route, Khao Ka Junction Route, Ton Rieang Intersection Route and Chom Piboon Intersection Route. As a result, this temple has been one in the list of tourist Buddhist places of Nakhon Si Thammarat in the Plan of Economic Development B.E. 2017.

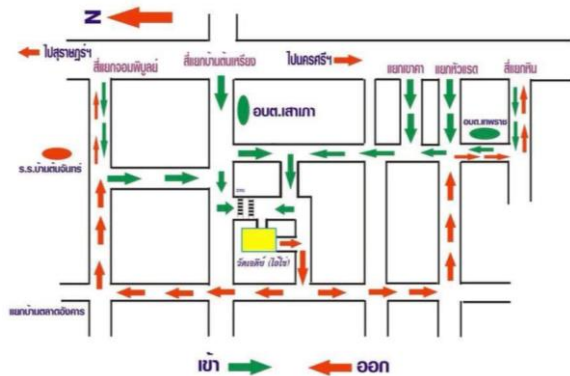


Figure 4 Five Routes to Wat Chedi Ai Khai from he Main Road Nakhon Si Thammarat-Suratthani

2.1 “Ai Kai Wat Chedi” the Meaning of Space of Sacredness as Tourist Promotion Space

Besides being a sacred space for psychological support, Wat Chedi is an area where many interested people want to visit and have their photographs taken for remembrance with the respected wooden figure of Ai Khai, a piece of evidence of faith towards Ai Khai Wat Chedi. The beliefs of visitors have led to a phenomenon of presenting tremendous offerings to Ai Khai as discussed in the following section. Including Jaied, K. (2020) said he had seen tourists from Malaysia and Singapore paying homage to Ai Khai. Including Burmese people who live in the coastal area of Sichon, often come to make merit at Wat Chedi Ai Khai, including

Stucco Chickens

Representing fighting cocks were Ai Khai’s favourite pets while he was alive. At first, live fighting cocks were brought to the temple as offerings, so they were scattered in the temple area and the number continuously increased. The temple committee wanted to reduce the problems of chicken manure left on the ground, so they announced that stucco chickens be used instead of live fighting cocks. This is why the temple open area is crowded with stucco chickens, both big and small. Next, a huge stucco chicken of about 10,000-15,000 baht was offered to the temple by a Malay millionaire and had to be placed lining up the entrance road. Many other people followed suit. Thus, all roads to the temple were lined with many stucco chickens which acted as guides. People spread the word “You will not get lost when traveling to Wat Chedi Ai Khai because chickens

will show you the way.” Both sides of the roads to the temple are lined with stucco chickens.



Figure 5 Evidence Showing the Arrival of Both Thai and International Tourists at Wat Chedi Ai Khai

Fragments of Firecrackers

Besides the stucco chickens used as offerings to Ai Khai, local and international tourists from Malaysia and Singapore show gratitude for fulfillment of their wishes by lighting firecrackers which make loud crackling sounds continuously for hours and days, especially Saturdays and Sundays. More and more visitors to the temple resulted in having to move the place to light firecrackers three times (Jaihaw, 2020) due to the huge piles of the fragments left. Currently, the fragments are piling so high that the piles are compared to “Mountains of Firecrackers”.

Sacred Objects

Besides the wooden carved figure of Ai Khai Wat Chedi, other sacred objects have also been produced, starting from the first temple abbot, Por Taan Term on the occasion of Fan Rank “Phra Kru Jettayapirak” Advancement Cerebration in 1973. After that time, more sacred objects of Ai Khai Wat Chedi were produced. Believed in the power of luck granting and wish fulling and trade favouring, pictures of Ai Khai Wat Chedi Child have been produced in various styles such as talismans, photographs and posters. Small images that can be carried include pendants, coins and various sizes of statuettes from the very small of 5 inches popularly placed to be worshipped by various shops, restaurants, goods outlets and public transport terminals all of which have Ai Khai statuettes (Phromwiset, 2020, p. 37). There are always long queues of about 2 kilometres of those worshippers to the entrance to the temple gate.

The interview data reflected that Wat Chedi is a space for tourism because the visitors are interested in the phenomenon of lots of people offering stucco chickens left scattered on the temple

grounds as well as the lighting of the firecrackers that resulted in mountains of the fragments. Wat Chedi Ai Khai becomes a religious tourist attraction highlighting prominence in space, beliefs and faith of those merit makers influencing the decision to rent sacred objects representing Ai Khai Wat Chedi such as coins, respected figures and talismans all of which have gone through incantation at the temple and have run out within one single day. For all these reasons, it can be concluded that Wat Chedi is a sacred place in the viewpoints of those who come to this important Buddhist space cum a tourist attraction. The flow of tourists both local and international, especially Malaysians who visited the temple in large numbers to worship Ai Khai Wat Chedi. As a result, the temple widened the toilet areas and parking spaces to make sure there are enough to accommodate visitors. Wat Chedi indicates it has a meaning for tourism space.



Figure 6 Evidence Showing the Arrival of Both Thai and International Tourists at Wat Chedi Ai Khai Chalong Sub-district, Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province

2.2 “Ai Khai Wat Chedi” the Meaning of Sacred Space for Community Economy Promotion

The meaning given to Wat Chedi Ai Khai as space for livelihood making of People in Chalong Sub-district, Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province refers to the views based on trade within the temple grounds and shops surrounding the temple. The entrances to the temple consist of five routes. The shops surrounding the temple sell objects as offerings for the purpose of vow fulfillment no matter whether they are stucco chickens in various sizes, children’s toys, firecrackers or even boiled eggs shop owners agree to be paid to prepare. Hundreds of shops have lined up the routes, while the shops on the temple grounds have their private areas allocated. These shops often sell foods and drinks because many people come to make merits each day as explained in the interviews.

“...At this moment, Wat Chedi Ai Khai has changed from previously. Lots of people come to

the temple each day, especially Saturdays and Sundays or public holidays. They travel here by tour buses and rented vans to worship Ai Khai following their beliefs. To accommodate lots of visitors to the temple, the temple has paid attention to management issues such as no fee collection for parking spaces and the rest rooms because this is a temple. Shops selling foods and drinks are available. Sellers at these shops are requested to be residents of the village because the temple primarily aims to support the villagers with some extra incomes. They are encouraged to sell processed food from home without having to go to the markets outside. In this way, the villagers will stay close to the temple like before. The villagers, as a result, cherish this kind space because this is life space for them. This corresponds with Ai Khai’s wish to help villagers from their misery and for the sustainability and development of Wat Chedi Ai Khai (Jipata, 2020).



Figure 7 Local products at Wat Chedi Ai Khai Chalong Sub-district, Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province

From the interviews, it is noticeable that Wat Chedi Ai Khai is a space for community economy promotion. It is a channel for the villagers’ livelihood making, especially the local products such as salted cashew nuts, durian paste and shrimp oil paste. This act is considered space preservation by community people. What is interesting is not only the business of selling foods and drinks but also the lottery business is allowed to operate on the temple grounds. A separated area has been allocated for this business to serve the needs of merit makers at the temple.

However, Wat Chedi also extends an opportunity for people from outside to sell goods and services by organizing a fair for selling all products on occasions such as the Great Songkran Festival Fair, Kathin Ceremony, Charity Ceremony Fire Festival. In these festivals, many products are available for sale and there is a clear division of space for stalls. These merit-making festivals may last seven days and seven nights. Movie stars, actors and actresses as well as pop singers are invited to

join. Consequently, many people will visit the temple, generating more incomes for sellers. Wat Chedi Ai Khai is considered a religious space that successfully promotes the economy of the community, Chalong Sub-district, Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. Both the shops surrounding the temple and shops on the temple grounds benefit from these festival celebrations. Besides, the community can earn some incomes. The community narratives have created the community identity and promoted the sacredness of space at Wat Chedi Ai Khai through the viewpoints of tourists who request for the blessings and wish fulfillment.

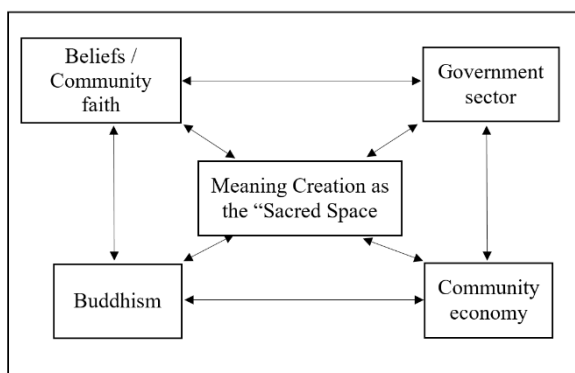


Figure 8 Illustration of the relationship of the Creation of Space sacredness Creation

The stories about the sacredness of ai Khai Wat Chedi are effective for identity creation of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, making the community people proud of their own local identity. This is indeed the culture capital related to the religion and beliefs of people of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, stories about responding to prayers and miracles of Ai Khai Wat Chedi. Thus, the temple can expand its space rapidly leading to reproduction of stories about Ai Khai Wat Chedi in various formats depending on the culture capital such as scared objects, creation of the respected figure and permanently-located objects. The community gains incomes from tourists and people under the policy of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province that promotes Wat Chedi as a religious tourist attraction.

Conclusion and Discussion

Wat Chedi Ai Khai is visited by people both in and outside Chalong Sub-district, Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province for the purposes of travelling and asking for blessings and wish fulfillment. Different groups of people define

the meaning of Wat Chedi Ai Khai differently depending on the relationship of the group of people and the area. Outsiders who visit Wat Chedi Ai Khai normally consider the whole temple ground as a sacred space because the phenomenon is clear from a large number of stucco chickens and firecracker fragments that have been lighted. On the other hand, people in the locality give the meaning of a sacred space as the area for their livelihood making through renting offers of sacred objects Ai Khai. Relationship building between community narratives and beliefs about the sacred space of Wat Chedi Ai Khai has been created through the passing of time and identity adopting of Ai Khai as a sacred being of Chalong Sub-district. All of these are well-linked by time. Thus, the history of the area is nothing else but the history of the existence of the area. The community narratives then become a major medium active in creating the sacred space and the identity for the community, Chalong sub-district, Sichon district, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.

A study of the sacred space Ai Khai Wat Chedi is not only a reflection of the identity of people in the community but also meaning giving to the temple as a psychological supportive anchor of people in the community. The findings reveal that all people in society face a lot of problems in life, be they their daily life problems, from living together in society or the changing context of the community towards a modern society raising a number of problems that affect the mind, so it is necessary for people to look for a mental support. Wat Chedi Ai Khai is a place which people depend on spiritually or psychologically exorcising, getting rid of bad luck and illness from life, asking for luck and fortune, hoping for winning lotteries and gambling or praying for promotion at work.

Besides being a mental support for people, Wat Chedi Ai Khai functions as a sacred space from the culture capital to benefit the community by creating meaning of space to promote tourism because people come to visit the temple through their faith in the religion or to see all objects in the temple--a large number of stucco chickens on the temple grounds, children's toys or firecracker fragments piling up higher than a person's height. The place for firecracker lighting has already been changed three times to a special spot that has been allocated. All of these result from travelers coming for Ai Khai's blessings, praying and presenting offerings from their belief and faith until many

things are left scattered on the temple grounds. In brief, the community has space for making livelihood making and functions as space for promoting the community economy with shops selling local products such as salted cashew nuts, durian paste, shrimp paste, local foods and drinks to serve tourists who come to pray. On the other hand, the five routes to the temple are lined up with hundreds of shops selling offerings such as stucco chickens in various sizes, children's toys, firecrackers and even boiled eggs on order. Without doubt, stories of Ai Khai Wat Chedi have strengthened faith and beliefs of the villagers towards the temple that spread widely. Reproduction of all these objects is based on the Theory of Wm. Hume Jansen on "Blason Populaire". All perspectives both of insiders and of outsiders are positive. Thus, villagers in the community have found their channel of making their livelihood and develop their community economy.

References

- Kirachaiwanit, C. (2015). *Ai Khai Wat Chedi Child, Sichon District*. In *Kom Chyad Luek*. Retrieved from www.komchadluek.net/detail.
- Phromwiset, T. (2019). The Legend of Ai Khai Wat Chedi Child and the Process of Snactification. *Rusamelae Journal*, 40 (1), 36-54.
- Poonsook, T. et al. (2018). *Wat Chedi (Ai Khai) as "Sacred Space"*. In Proceedings of the Tourism. Presented. "Humanities and Social Sciences, Songkla Rajabhat University.
- Udomsilp, P. (2016). Perceptions of Thai Puan in Folktale Literature: Viewpoints of Our Own and Others' Tribes. *Parichart Journal*, 29(1), 110-126.

Interview

- Bunrak, D. (2020, March 8). Personal communication [personal interview]
- Jaided, K. (2020, March 7). Personal communication [personal interview]
- Jaided, D. (2020, March 7). Personal communication [personal interview]
- Jaided, T. (2020, March 7). Personal communication [personal interview]
- Jaihaw, B. (2021, March 8). Personal communication [personal interview]
- Jaihaw, S. (2020, March 7). Personal communication [personal interview]
- Jomrit, A. (2020, March 7). Personal communication [personal interview]
- Jipata, K. (2020, March 7). Personal communication [personal interview]
- Junlapak, B. (7 March 2020). Personal communication [personal interview]
- Kardmeesap, K. (2020, March 7). Personal communication [personal interview]
- Pathhasong, S. (2020, March 8). Personal communication [personal interview]
- Somwong, L. (2020, March 7). Personal communication [personal interview]