



The Co-Structure of the Thai Legends and the Malay Hikayats

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I. Introduction

As the author, I am interested in two main ethnicities composing of a society in Thai and Malay Peninsula area. It seems that though they are entirely different on cultures and beliefs. Their tales have the same structure and how it becomes. In order to find these assumptions, it is important to look backwards to the definition of the tales proposed by Roland Barthes, which it be clarified. Barthes suggests the opinion that not only the tale has its crossed cultures and history; “it is also able to change itself without destroying its own foundation(Barthes 1977, 79).”

What makes the tale of diverse cultures different is the cultural condition and a particular history. This is because culture and history are constructive definitions of the legends(White 1981, 2). However, the structure and/or the basic component of the legends can be

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comprehended between the different cultures and are not adhered to a particular culture(Reynolds 2007, 205).

This thought is similar to Claude Levi-Strauss who sees that the basic structural similarities of the legends are resulted from both classical and contemporary man who has identical human mind. But what is different is the classical man has procedure for answering the question by looking at the relationship and the connection of each group and how they relate to each other under the same system. But the process of scientific respond of current society is the identification of problems into parts and giving solutions according to a particular part without concerning to the relationships of all systems in the universe. The unit of analysis of Strauss is not the substance and cultural boundary but it is the human thought which is in a universal form. In the other words, Strauss is of the opinion that the extension of the legends will go continuously but the structure will exist as it is(Jaruworn 2006, 2-3).

Legend is an art in the sense that it is reproduced and miniaturized. However, on the other side, there is a structure binding together the internal matters till it becomes special. Legend has both scientific and classical characteristics. However, the legend is different from art on its starting point of construction, i.e. arts starts from materials and things to be constructed or painted. But legends commence from structures or a set of relationship, and then materials are made according to it. Thus, art starts from a set of materials and events which lead to structure, whereas legend begins from structure before a set of materials and events are constructed(Jaruworn 2006, 67).

From this point of view, materials and events which were constructed from legend seem to have some difference in its contents. If the components and structure of basic telling are not considered, it may not be seen that legend has a similar structure. The Thai legend and the Malay Hikayat are also possessing this character.

The legend of Nakhonsrithammarat which tells about the settlement of Nakhonsrithammarat city. The legend of the white blood lady tells about the building up of temple and city of the white blood lady in Pattalung, Trang, Phuket, and Nakhonsrithammarat areas. Whereas the Hikayat Pattani tells about the constructing of Pattani city and the Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa tells about the constructing of Kedah city. Even though the details of these legends are different, as Strauss has pointed out, the difference is the result of the different selection of “materials” for the writing. These materials are the belief of the Buddhism and Islamic including the events and different political cultures of classical governments.

Considering the structure and contents of the telling, it is found that the legends of the two cultures have a similar structure till they are inseparable. The author will consider the repetition of those legends in order to find out their co-structure, by analysing the contents of all traditional legends of the south studied in this research, it is found that there are some important repetitions of contents as follows:

- 1) Emigration to build a new city.
- 2) Kings are bound to supernatural power.
- 3) Animals have their roles in building up the city.
- 4) Religions are the cause of stability and progress.

II. Emigration to Build a New City.

In the traditional legends which are studied by the author, there are some repeated contents. In every legend, it has repeated content which is seeking for new location of a new city. Nakhonsrithammarat legend talked about the king Narabadi whose people suffer a crisis from fever; as a result, they migrate to Saikaew beach (The Crystal

Sands Beach) and built a new city there(Wyatt 1975: 190). Later, fever appeared again and made Nakhonsrithammarat to be a wasted land. Then, king Phanomwang and queen Sadiangthong of Petchaburi dynasty had migrated their people to restore the city of Nakhonsrithammarat till it became a great city(Wyatt 1975: 195-196). The same phenomenon happened to The Hikayat Pattani where Prince Nakkapha from the king Korab Mahachana occupied the throne Kota Mahligai in place of his father who went for hunting and found new good location. Even though this legend did not tell in details what were the reasons behind his leaving the city, he had built a new city until it became a prosperous city of trade and culture.

The content on emigration appeared repeatedly in the same type of legend, for example, The Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa and the white blood lady. In the Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa, though the King Merong Mahawangsa had not determine to migrate for building up a new city, the local condition in the content made him to build a new city. The discovery of the location of Kedah city initiated for new city which had developed quickly, but the story did not tell about the old city of King Merong Mahawangsa. However, the repeated contents on his point appeared obviously when the three grandchildren had emigrated their people and soldiers to build three new cities, in which the eldest Prince built Siamcity, the second Prince built Perak city, and the Princess built Pattani city(Low 1908: 74-85; Chumpengpan 2007: 93-106).

Whereas in the legend of the white blood lady the pilgrimage through building up temple and idols of the lady implied the migration of people and labours to found a city causing various new cities in Pattalung, Trang, and Nakhonsrithammarat such as Khokbangkaew in Pattalung which is said that it used to be the old city of Pattalung and the born monk city (Muang Phra Keud) in Pakphayoon District, Pattalung Province(Piyakul 1982: 5; Indrarawongsa 1981: 28). A part

of legend is said that the white blood lady and Chaophraya Kumar walked to Sthang Bangkaew city and surveyed the place for building up a new city but there was no appropriate locations because of their lowland and flooding place. Thus the white blood lady went further seeking to build a city until they reached Nakhonsrithammarat. The repetition of these behaviors which had been building up temple and creating idols during their trip made the village legend to believe that it caused many new cities or communities where the lady had passed such as Cha-uad community, communities in Chawang, Sichol, Thasala, Thungsong Districts of Nakhonsrithammarat province (Sittisantikul and Chinawongsa 2003: 20-26).

III. King Has Relationship with Supernatural Power

In the legend of Nakhonsrithammarat, Phraya Srithammasokarat emigrated his family and people from Wiangra to Lansaka and discovered the city location and the place for building up crematory for Buddha's relic with the help of Indra and Wisnu. In the legend of Nakhonsrithammarat which is believed to be the oldest copy, has said that Wisnu helps Phraya set up and build the grand crematory that contained Buddha's relic, then Wisnu ascend to Indra (Wyatt 1975: 194)).

In the legend of Buddha's relic for religious verses, the role of Indra in helping to build crematory and city was conveniently successful. The finding of good location for crematory and city was an important foundation that caused Nakhonsrithammarat progressive. A different version of legend said that Phrathammasokarat had a dream of collecting his people to clear a land, sending king of Nagas to demarcate the land, and sending an expert artisan to resolve the bad mystery.

In the Malay Hikayat, it is also found that the supernatural power had an influential role in the future of the city and the kings. The Hikayat Pattani said that the ancestor of Sriwangsa dynasty was an heir of paradise. A heir's lady, Kamphuwangku, was born from sponge and was married to a male heir born from bamboo and they had an heir who was the white blood lady/princess. From the story, it is said that she has come from a paradise and she is the first ancestor who rules Pattani kingdom(Teeuw and Wyatt 1970 Vol. 1: 197). This is similar to the Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa whose story emphasizes that the king of Kedah is the divine king. Even though his ancestor is from the Daityas or demon, in order to ascend to the throne he/she must have related to the lineage of divine ancestor, such as the Prince of King Daityas who was born a farmer mother. This legend says further that in order to seek justification for being the next king of Kedah, the legend explains that the father of that farmer mother is a succeeding king and this mother queen has her lineage from an angel. She has left her royalty to the town because of dissatisfaction of people and lived as common people(Low 1908: 123).

The small actor who was born from the bamboo and had white blood is the issue that shows the relationship of the rulers with the supernatural. This can be seen from the popular local legend in Pattalung province, this includes the legend of white blood lady. In this legend, it is said that the white blood lady and her husband were born from bamboos, though the legend has not related the two actors with angels or the divinity. However, all the events imply that the white blood lady is related to supernatural power. She is based on supernatural power or the self-proclaimed power which is of those who have prestige, power of merit, good personality, and prominent qualifications which are different from others. In the case of the white blood lady represents female and the white blood means the pure and

the innocent.

The more dominant characteristic causes the white blood lady to contact or communicate with supernatural power. This is mysterious power, for example the finding a lot of wealth beneath the earth. All these are the tools given by mystery to the white blood lady in order that she continues to be in the authority. Considering this together with the Hikayat Pattani and the Hikayat Merong Mahawongsa, it is found that the white blood and the being born from sponge and bamboo are closely related to the belief of divine power.

Since the characteristics of the play are related to “white color.” This can be seen in the legend of Malaysia as apparent in the Hikayat Raya Pasai. When Merah Silu, the Sultan of Pasai, take off the scarf of the Princess Bertung, the white blood, which implies her purity, had flown until she died(Omar 1993: 7-8). In the Hikayat Hangtuh, it mentioned about Song Sapuba, the Sultan of Bukit Sri Guntang, had been in the forest for hunting. He met a Princess there and later married her. This Princess was born from the saliva’s bubble of a white cow. Later on after their marriage, they had four Princes who became the Sultan of the other four cities around Bukit Sri Guntang(Omar 1993: 29). The implication of the sending of the four Princes of Song Sapuba was that the four Princes were the lineage of King or Sultan whose ancestor was from heaven which was the supernatural power. The case of marriage of Sultan of Sri Guntang with the Princess born from saliva’s bubble of a white cow is to show the relationship of the status of king whose lineage is from the heaven. From this relation, it can be seen that the perception of the teller or the writer of the traditional legend in peninsula is to tell that the earth and the heaven are closely and continuously related. Thus, the king is important as “an agent of God on earth,” or “the king sent by God from the heaven(Omar 1993: 45).”

Besides the main stated legend, various villages’ legends in the

middle of the south imply a repetition on the king or leader who are related to supernatural power. These legends often says about the establishment of villages under the leadership of village leaders who have supernatural power over the common people, for example, those who have the knowledge of magic or those who have long life, and have a miraculous glass stone. Nithi Iewsriwongse who studies on this issue opines that story is told to relate village and supernatural power implies an absolute power of village which occurs from a special relationship between absolute power and mysterious power. This power can be explained from either religious or superstitious view(Iewsriwongse 1995: 13-14).

IV. Animals Have Their Role in Building Up New Cities

This issue seems to be obviously apparent in all the legends. The Nakhonsrithammarat legend have ideal animals from traditional belief and Buddhism, playing role in building up the city of Nakhonsrithammarat. The animals are either impersonated from angels or the sacred supernatural power and the general animals. This sometimes implies as supernatural power of an animal, for example, the explanation of Indra's order for Wisnu to impersonate as a deer wandering in the forest in order to deceive a hunter named Suri to follow it until he finds the place where the glass stone is hidden. Later, this place becomes the location for crematory and city of Nakhonsrithammarat. The hunter, Suri, has met the king Phrachao Srithammasokarat, and told him about the matter. When the king sees the glass stone and knows about the geographical importance of this place. Then he orders the hunter to lead soldiers and the drawer to draw the map for him in order to plan for building up crematory and the city.

Besides deer, garuda also plays an important role as apparent in Nakhonsrithammarat legend of religious verses, which said that Bhrama had impersonated himself as a long-wings garuda taking off at Saikaew beach and helped the Princess Hemchala and Chao Thon Kumar, to collect the tooth relic from Naga city. It also helped the two brethren to be safe from being snatched of the tooth relic hidden in Saikaew beach by nagas.

Naga is another animal that has a role for building up a city. The story says about Naga and naga soldiers of Naga city. Though this type of animal has played a negative role such as an effort to steal the tooth relic to place at pagoda of Naga city and by hook or by crook it tries to stop the placing of tooth relic at Saikaew beach. This negative role of nagas in originating a city encourages Nakhonsrithammarat city built by Phra Chao Srithammasokarat greater because nagas are the obstructed actors which prove the importance of the tooth relic that is the center of Nakhonsrithammarat. According to the opinion of Levi-Strauss, this type of legend is called "inversion," i.e. the story tells about the role of animal for building up the newcitytoo. But the roles of deer and garuda are positive and the role of nagas is negative. However, the three type of animals have a cooperative role in occurring the city of Nakhonsrithammarat. Later on, nagas have shown their positive role when Indra has ordered naga to crawl for demarcating the frontier of building up a new city for Phra Chao Srithammasokarat. This reflects an implication of becoming the protector and acceptor of religion, which becomes the idea that appear generally in the legend of Thai Buddhist culture. In the legend of Phra Chao Liab Lok, it says about the Buddha that when he arrive at Doi Keung, a naga has given his own eye ball for the Buddha. The legend of Phrabath Bang Wit, says that a naga has created the pool and golden dipper for Buddha to clean stools and urine. Later, it appears the foot trace for worshipping(Jaruworn

2006: 272).

Nagas play a role as supernatural power concerning earth, water, and old cities in the original belief. Nagas had dug the earth until it becomes various canals and rivers, for example, the naga, Phraya Suttanaga had dug the earth till it became Khong river, whereas Phraya Srisattanaga had dug the earth to become Uoo-river and created “Naga Dam” or “Li Phi” to obstruct the water source flowing to the ocean. It also helped to build Suwanna Khomkham city. Panthunaga helped to create Nagpantusinghanawat Nakhorn and the naga built Nongkhanthae Seunam city for Burichan Ayeluay(Jaruworn 2006: 269).

In the Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa, the impersonated naga of a magician had an important role in creating the turning point for Kedah, i.e. it was the one that defied the power of Daityas King, until the Daityas King lost his authority over the chief of officials and people and left his throne to the rural. This made Kedah short of a ruling King for many years, the stated role of naga had prepared Kedah for the light of Islam future during the King Mahawangsa.

It can be seen that nagas have both positive and negative role. When the ruler and mankind misbehave, nagas have power to make bad effect to the city or the world as appear in the legend of Thai Buddhist culture which says that nagas had destroyed the river bank till the Suwanna Khomkham city collapsed. Meanwhile if mankind misbehaved to angels, angels would order nagas not to swim in the river which would cause drought((Jaruworn 2006: 272). In the Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa, it is found that the nagas, or the big snake, defied the authority of the king because the king misbehave to his people or the good practices of the king. The naga as a supernatural power would come down to defy the misbehaved king until the king left the throne.

The role of animals in building up the city but in a negative way

as seen in the legend of Nakhonsrithammarat as stated earlier. It also appeared in the Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa in the same manner. The story tells about the garuda from the deserted city of Langka who wants to defy the fate of mankind whom God has already planned for them. The naga has attacked the fleet of the Prince Rum led by the king of Merong Mahawangsa for three times resulting to disintegration of soldiers and directions. This attack caused the boat of Merong Mahawangsa king floated to the coast where later he established this place as Kedah city. This great city was wealthy for trade and powerful over other cities.

The negative role of garuda in the Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa is opposite to the positive role of Johari, an elephant of Pattani. This elephant understood human language and had a special instinctive sense. It led the second Princess of Kedah to find an appropriate location for building up the city of Pattani. It also helped to search for an heir of Daity a king in order to rule the city. After the absence of the ruler in Kedah because the chiefs of officials drove the Diaty asking out of the city. The role of Joharica used the kingdom and authority continuous and strengthened.

In the legend of the white blood lady, elephant had an important role in building up the city of the white blood lady and her husband. From the birth of the white blood lady, an elephant had brought bamboos of which the white blood lady born and the prince from it. Mo Sadam or Elephant doctor of Sathing Pharannasi city, caused the couple Ta and Yai found two of them and brought them up. In the case of the building up of Bangkaew city, the elephant found much wealth for the white blood lady to build temples, idols and the city.

According to Buddhism, elephant is a majestic animal of the king and has an important role in placing Buddhism. In the legend of Doi Suthep, it says that when installing the Buddha's relic on an auspicious elephant and prays that it may stop at an appropriate place

for the placing of Buddha's relic(Jaruworn 2006: 261). This role is similar to the elephant in Hikayat Pattani, in which elephant had led the Princess of Kedah to find an appropriate place for building up Pattani city, because of this elephant is related to the king and stability. Possessing a special characteristic of elephants showed the power of the king, as power relation, to the smaller states. The elephant is the symbol of loyalty, in which the smaller states would be loyal to the bigger and more powerful states. As it is shown in the legend of the white blood lady, Ta Petch and Yai Sammo who are elephant doctors of Pattalung. They had to send the elephant to Pharannasi City. When the elephant doctor had been descended to the white blood lady, she had sent an elephant to the king of Sri Ayuttaya. The implication of this is that elephant is the mark of authority of king and loyalty. In Malay history, the lose of authority of the king Dheva Sura of Pahang is made to relate to his elephant, i.e. during his detention when he lost to the king of Malaka, he saw his elephant named Dakenyang once more and he found that the nail of Dakenyang fallen off. Thus he bemoaned that "it is the first time I see my elephant behaves like this, it is no wonder that we lost our land(Omar 1933: 7)."

In the Hikayat Pattani, another animal which plays an important role in building up a city is chevrotain. Phraya Thao Nakkaph, the first king of Pattani, had build the city where the chevrotain running to lead the way for this cause. The role of chevrotain appeared in the local legend of Malaysia which said that the chevrotains had a role in building up of Johore city in Sejarah Melay. It should be noted that chevrotain is similar to a deer which is an animal that has a role in the legend of Thai Buddhist culture as shown in the legend of Nakhonsrithammarat in which the deer is the impersonated body of Wisnu. That similarity of both animals shows that the belief of the animals which have similar supernatural quality, which may have

the cooperating original source of belief.

V. Religion Causes the City Stable and Prosperous

The legend of Nakhonsrithammarat has paid much importance for supporting Buddhism of the king and people by demarcating the different lines between the status of Phrachao Srithammasokrat and Nakhonsrithammarat city before and after building up crematory which is the symbol of maintaining Buddhism. The legend has shown that before the building up crematory, the king of Nakhonsrithamrat used to be a leader who fails to stabilize his state. It can be seen from the emigration of his people to the south in order to find a location of a new city for three times before situating Nakhonsrithammarat city. Until the crematory is created; he becomes the king of complex merit. There are various kings whether near or far away coming to make relationship, even the antagonistic kings of Langkasuka and Hongsa also establish relationship and cooperation with the Nakhonsrithammarat's king.

In the Hikayat Pattani, Islam has obviously demarcated the two different periods of Pattani, i.e. the old Pattani worshipped idols according to Hindu belief, and the new Pattani when Pattani kings and people embraced Islam. The legend says about the event when Phraya Thao Nakkapa, the first king, has fulfilled his promise to Shiekh Said, the Pasai doctor of skin diseases, by embracing Islam and changing his name to Sultan Ismail Zillullah Fil-alam or Ismail Shah, and even building up mosque to show Islamic symbols. Later, Pattani can produce cannon and has potential for warfare, can even make a war against Ayuttaya, and protect itself from outside invasions like Johore and Palembang kingdoms. In the Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa, when the king has changed his religion to Islam from

the knowledgeable people of Bagdad, as also the case of Kedah, “Islam has waked up the sleeping people of Kedah to meet the light(Maier 1988: 182).” Even though the Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa is different from the Hikayat Pattani and various Malaysian Hikayat because it tells about the arrival of Islam at the end of the plot rather than at the beginning of the plot. This points out to the importance of Islam and state stability, as Chuliphorn Wirunha has noted that this is because of the two pillars, the dynasty and Islam have securely settled down, it is not necessary for Kedah to have a dynamic history, i.e. after embracing Islam. “Whoever rules Kedah, the event in this state will not be different from the reign of Sultan Musaffar Shah, the first king who embraces Islam. “Because of this, it is no need to write them down. The Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa is the story that has only one theme, whatever shows of belief, understanding, and perception of Kedah people will also be under the same theme(Wirunha 2008: 184).”

The part of maintaining religion of the white blood lady in the legend is to build temple and idol monks. Her activities are the merits done through building up religious materials and places which are important causes for raising communities and cities. Her role for these activities made her popular until the king of Sukhothai has called upon her and wanted to appoint her as king’s concubine. The legend of the white blood lady from the local people telling is said the the popularity of the white blood lady causes her to be a queen of the king of Nakhonsrithammarat city. “She had maintained Buddhism by building up and renovating various temples either in Nakhonsrithammarat or in the cities nearby. She had also done a lot of useful benefits for the city until she became the beloved of her people(Sittisantikul and Chinawongsa 2003: 22).”

VI. Conclusion

In short, it is seen that though the contents or the story in the traditional legends of the south of both Thai Buddhists, Muslim cultures and the mixing legends are different, but when considering of the components of the legends had repeatedly shown, it is found that the content structure and the story telling are of the same type. This structural telling is probably the basic means of communicating the story of people in the south or Malay Peninsula (Southeast Asian) before it is divided by religions and ethnicities of the new nation-state system during the 25th BC. It is also a strong cultural story telling. Even though in the later period the middle south has been influenced by Buddhism and the southernmost has been influenced by Islam, the story telling through the stated basic structure can be obviously seen. The stated basic structure confirms that though the traditional legend had produced the story of the kings or the upper class before becoming the written legends which studied by the current Thai academic circle, these legends were before the tell-tale literatures. From this view, the thought, belief, and ideals, which appeared in the written legends and later became the ideal of the king in Thai and Malaysian legends such as the idea the divine king, were the popular ideas of local people before they were polished by the royal court as the ideal of king institution. As pointed out by Sharifar Maznah Syed Omar, that the belief of miracle or the supernatural of human and animal were disseminated in the tell-tale culture of the local people for a long time. Later the legend creators had mixed these ideals with the upper class ideology before the dissemination of the royal court in order to support their own status before their people via story telling(Omar 1933: 94).

Another important cause is the trace of Hinduism and Buddhism in which they used to be the cultural fountain and belief of the people

in the peninsula. It is found in the southernmost that there were influences of Sawai sect of Hinduism whose belief was to worship Siva or Visnu as an archangel as witnessing in the sculpture relating to cultural Hinduism in the old city of Yarang in Pattani such as Yonitrona altar, Hindu phallic symbol of creative power, and Cow idol. The worship of Siva appeared in the tradition of the shadow playing of the south, worshipping of Gunung or crematory mountain in the arts of play and routine. Besides this, it found also that the antique sculpture implying to Visnu angel such as the stone idol the four-hands Visnu which located at the shrine of the city-god in Songkhla province. In the middle of the south, it is found the antiques of the two sects, even though the trace of Hinduism in this part had been influenced directly from India where as the trace of Hinduism in the southern most had been influenced by Java-Hinduism.

Beneath Hindu culture, the concept concerning crematory mountains coexisted and reflected the clearest past and current ways of life. The original Malay believed that Siva dwelled on the top of that crematory mountain. This means that crematory mountain is the center of the universe. The surrounding Sattabariphan and Krailas mountains are of crematory mountain. Thus, local belief, the word crematory mountain is included of important mountains which, according to Hindu belief, it was believed that all angels dwelled in crematory mountain. This reflected clearly the ways of life of Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslims.

Key Words : Thai, Malay, Legend, Nakhonsrithammarat, Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa, Levi-Strauss Theory

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<국문초록>

태국 전설과 말레이 히카얏의 공존 구조

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오늘날 태국 남부 국경 부근의 3개주와 말레이 북부의 일부가 포함된 지역은 불교 사회인 태국과 무슬림 사회인 말레이라는 문화적인 차이가 있음에도 불구하고 그 문화적 근원을 찾아 보면 분명히 이전의 타이불교와 말레이 무슬림의 근원을 만나게 된다.

이는 역사적으로나 고고학적으로나 혹은 지방문학에서도 뿌리를 찾을 수 있는데 특별히 이 논문에서는 팜난나킨씨탐마랏(나킨씨탐마랏 신화)과 히카얏 메롱 마하왕싸(메롱 마하왕싸 신화)를 중심으로 불교권 타이와 이슬람권 말레이의 문화적인 면을 고찰해보고자 한다.

본 논문에서는 팜난나킨씨탐마랏(나킨씨탐마랏 신화)와 히카얏 메롱 마하왕싸(메롱 마하왕싸 신화) 속에 나타난 두문화, 즉, 불교권 타이와 이슬람권 말레이의 문화는 동일한 구조를 보이고 있음을 밝히고, 그 구조속에 나타난 지도자의 역할과 그 지역의 발전에 종교가 중요한 요소로 작용하였음을 주장하고 있다.

이러한 주장의 바탕은 Levi-Strauss의 이론으로써 태국 남부의 불교권 타이문화와 말레이 북부의 이슬람권 문화가 얼마나 친밀한 문화적 뿌리를 가지고 있는 지를 알게 한다.

주제어 : 태국, 말레이, 팜난나킨씨탐마랏, 히카얏 메롱 마하왕싸,
레비-스트로스 이론