

The Legend of Buddha's Relics of Communities along the Mekong River from the Urungga Dhatu Myth

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Abstract

The purpose of this article aims at studying the historical development of the Urungga Dhatu legend in the community of both banks of the Mekong River by using the contextual concept that links to the network of the social relationship and culture of the communities on both sides of Mekong River from the Urungga Dhatu legend as the framework in an analysis. The results of the research are found that the chronicles refer to the Buddha's prediction about the land at the boundary of Lao Lanchang, the Lao Kingdom, a place locating the Buddha's relics that link to the Buddhist monastic orders to the Kingdom. The influences of the beliefs as mentioned have been spread out to the communities on both sides of Mekong River in the areas of Nakonpanom, Nongkhai, Vientiane City, in which are the locations of Phra Dhatpanom, Phra Dhatu Muang La or Phra Dhatu La-Nong, Phra Dhatu Bung Paun, Phra Dhatu Ponjikvieng-Ngue, Phra Dhatu Hor pha Hor phae, Muang Hartsaifong, Vientien City. So the chronicles of Urungga Dhatu result from the beliefs in the Buddha's relics of the Lanchang people linking to the Buddhist places that have the trace of Buddhist beliefs coming from the Tavaravada period, approximately Buddhist Era 13-14.

In the aspect of beliefs and rituals of communities on the banks of Mekong River in the areas of Thailand that concern the Buddha's relics, the community expresses in the forms of the centers of magic places, faith and rituals as the symbols of the political power and the center of community, commercial centers, traveling, and tourism. While the places for research in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, even though they know the Buddha's relics as the chronicles, still believe the Buddha's relics confidently. It may noticed that there are many people participating in various traditional festivals in Vientien City, including the traditional management for worshipping Phra Dhatu in their own locations showing the social network of individuals who have the power in their ways of life in the community on both sides of the Mekong River at the present.

Keywords : legend of Buddha's relics, communities, Urungga Dhatu

Introduction

This is a study of ancient community story using analysis and interpretation from ancient evidences. The majority is historical and cultural analysis and former analysis of people in the community who used to be the cultural owners in the areas of those archaeological sources by designating the age, time, or period systematically as importance. The series of knowledge is obtained from studying the archaeological materials through the archaeological materials that have characteristics emphasizing the society and culture of former people widely because it focuses on the importance of ancient materials that are found in each place. From the passing events, the series of knowledge from the archaeological evidences, which are already analyzed, benefits other aspects of co-education, especially the application of the archaeological evidence to the study history concerning local history, society, and culture. That application of evidences is used in the features as the evidence for supporting the existence of the former people in those locations that the archaeological evidences by a long time retroactively.¹

In every society, the hometowns had been built up retroactively for a long time. The majority is the legend of primitive tribes in the feature beyond the truth connecting to the belief in religions as known in that society. The legend is like the sacred content, the real truths, not to be improved, and the guidance of people's practice in societies; so it means "the Legend." The things as appearing in the content of the legend must be the truth, unchangeable or imitation from the forms of that reality. People in the primitive society saw the truths because the truth reflected the primitive act. The truth in the legend means to search for the skillfulness in order to get steps leading over the cycle of rebirth and reach Nibbāna at the end.

The Legend in the Meaning of the Foundation of Civilization

The legend is the important data leading to understanding of the conceptual structure and various institutions of society. The important principles of studying the legend in the historical dimension are to translate the various symbols of the legends because the symbols from the legends are created from the conceptual feature of the builders of the legends. The values of the legends are that the historians can ask the right questions about whether the cases are true or not. When considering the structure of legends, it can be seen that the legends are the valuable series of knowledge and the meaning for societies. At the same time, the legends

¹ Sujit Vongtes :Palang Laow" where do Esan people come from? Special cultural arts, (Bungkok: Matichon, 2549)

still have the meaning to be the symbols of the societies. It may be said that the contents in the legends are the reflective pictures of societies including values, concepts, and the beliefs of people in societies, and the important thing is that the legends result from the roots of locations and the natives truthfully.

In the Northeast or Esan regions of Thailand is the land in which a lot of people enter to live continuously for a long time, and again it is found that in the areas in which Esan people enter to live, the majority of places have the sources of ancient places as the mental centers of the natives in every village. At the same time, people in the locality live in the retroactive period of time, creating the legends that have been thrown away in each location with the relationship of memory and admittance in order to show the existence of primitive people that have the histories and culture for a long time.

The Cultural Eco-geography and the Location of the Primitive Community in Esan

The progression of the Esan community may be considered from the archaeological evidences and history, and it may be said that the Esan region is the place in which people entering to live before prehistory in the Ban Chiang culture continuously to the beginning history in Tavaravda Period, from Cambodian culture to the history in the cultural Lan Chang, that is, the temporary culture of the Ayudya period and continuously to the Ratanakosin Period. To improve persons in various groups with the environments makes the diversities of cultures as the evidences appeared to be lineages including the ancient places, ancient materials, legends, including the tradition, diversity of beliefs inheriting to the present. The Esan regions are the areas consisting of the dominant culture in Southeast Asia.

The important factors make the Esan region the centralization of people in the past, that is, the suitability of surroundings and wealth in the natural resources and the ways by which people can travel on land and water both in the near regions and the distant ones including the state of geography that enhances the way of life and the security as seen from the Phupan Hill as the ridge of the basin and the long range from Ubon Ratchathiani, Mukdahan, Sakon Nakhon, Udon Thani, and Kalasin. The Phupan Mountain Range is the mountain range that is suitable for living in hiding oneself for the sake of security and the sources of nutrition in the wealth of both plants and wild animals including the minerals that exist in the nature such as the ion minerals that are transformed into the tools for use and the weapons. So it results in the rituals in accordance with the cults of beliefs in the compound of the Phupan Mountain Range. Many sources

of archaeological sites are found, and it shows that the community was originated for many thousands of years and continuously to the present. One importance of the Phupan Mountain Range is the beginning of water or the sources of many river basins flowing to the tableland. Those streams are managed as one important component creates the residents living on both sides by the way of stream of water passing for a long time from the past.

Maha Dhatu Chedi : the Sacred Places, the Center of the Universe

In accordance with the way of Theravada Buddhism in the forms of Lanka that are accepted by the people in the Thai culture of Thais–Laos who live on both sides of Khong River in a great extent approximately B.E. 19. people emphasize the importance in creating and worshiping the Buddhist materials, that is, to worship the Buddha's relics and the great shrines, the Buddha's feet, and Bhodhi Tree by believing that the areas were enshrined for a sense apt to rouse the sense of urgency (the Four Holy places of Buddhism). Because of that the Lord Buddha gave the meaning of those places as the sacred places and the universal center.

By this reason, as mentioned, it is found that the Esan region consists of a lot of legends, histories of people, history of taking up residence, history of the important archaeological places, history of the important Buddha's images in the locations. The diversities of legends were found; the legend of Urungga Dhatu or Phra Dhat Panom is well-known for many people and is mostly memorized. Although the body of knowledge concerning the history of Phra Dhat Panom appeared in the legend of Urungga Dhatu in various parts that are the myths, it seems to be the old situation and miracle, but it is generally accepted by the Buddhists and it makes people believe in placing the Lord Buddha' relics in the tunnel. Anyhow, the essences of knowledge as they appeared in the legend of Urungga Dhatu have the value in studying the historical matters and archaeology of making up the residence in the Northeast of Thailand including the residences in the near areas, Srisakdi Valliphodom² saying that even though this legend was written after the real evidence for a long time, but the myths are mixed together with the concealed contents. When the contents are brought for analysis to compare the archaeological evidence in the ancient materials, it appears that the conclusion can be compiled to be hypothesis briefly and widely for the migration of people, circulation of Buddhism, construction of Phra Dhatu Panom, and others until the social and cultural change of the primitive residences in the Northeast of Thailand, especially the community on the Banks on Mekong River.

² Srisakdi Valliphodom, "Esan in the legend of Phra Urungga Dhatu: in Esan Basin" (Bangkok: Matichon, 2533) p. 853.

The Importance of the Legend of Urungga Dhatu

The importance of Urungga Dhatu does not have only the contents of the legend of social and cultural saying about the history of Phra Dhatu Panom by mentioning that it was the oldest shrine retroactively to the Buddha's period, the Buddhist places that were worshiped by people both Thais and Laos for a long time from the past to the present, but also the legend of Urungga Dhatu has an important role as the legend showing the relationship of people in society that is the ancient state in the basin of the Khong River, especially the importance of Phra Dhatu Panom as the sacred place from the dimension of the society and culture and as the legend showing the relationship of the people in the community in the areas of the Khong River, including the land of Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, and extending to the land of South China, and the legend of Urungga Dhatu still says about the Five Holy Ones (Arahants) who took the Buddha's relics from India and placed the Buddha's relics in the five places, namely:

-Phra Dhatu Hophapae, Saiyfung village, Muang Hard Saifong, Lao People's Democratic Republic

- 29 Phra Dhatu Huonao, located on Loung Mountain, at the present being Phra Dhatu Bangpaun, Maung District, Nongkhai Province

- Urungga Dhatu or the Chest Pagoda, contained in Phra Dhatu Panom, Phra Dhatu Panom District, Nokhonpanom Province.

-7 Phra Dhatu Khiewphang, contained in Phra Dhatu Vieng-Ngue, Maung District, Nongkhai Province

- 9 Phra Dhatu Phrabat (Footprints), contained in Phra Dhatu Maungla or Phra Dhatu La Nong, Maung District, Nongkhai Province

This shows the relationship of people towards the supernatural power, that is, it heremeans the acceptance of people in the basin of the Khong River. They have the faith in five Buddha's relics as the sacred religious places and the refuge of people, especially, people in Esan, who live on the right side of the Khong River, and in Laos, who live on the left side of the Khong River.

The legend of Urungga Dhatu is the important one in the conception of people who make the residence in the territory of the Sakonakon basin, including the territory of the basins of the Khong River and the closed places. The legend of Urungga Dhatu is the chronicle concerning the background of the places and the residences in the Esan territory and the closed areas. The contents in the legend show the relationship of residences by having the center existing at Phu Kampa that

is the located place of Phra Dhatu Panom. From the chronicles that have the legendary issues in the forms of symbolic documents as the palm leaf scripture in compliance with the Buddhists' tradition by hoping to make merit according to destination of Buddhism. After that the scripture has been printed in various names, such as Urungatesana, Urungga Nidana, legend of Urungga Dhatu, and legend of Phra Dhat Panom by printing continuously until the present time.

From study of Piset chuechantarapong,³ it was found that the contents in Urungga Dhatu can be divided into two types, that is, 1) the type of myths and 2) the type of important persons of Laos. In the proportion of the myths, it consists in Urungga Nidana or the primitive chronicle of Phra Dhatu Panom as the feature of fables, that is, the myths concerning plenty of Buddhist places, especially, the Buddha's footprints are found in the territory on two sides of the Khong River in Thailand and Laos in the present and the legend of Sasanakon related to the occurrence of Maung Roi Et and the occurrence of Muang Wiengchantana.

The legend of Urungga Dhatu and a lot of small myths in the feature of the fables are the primitive legend as existed before because there have been the formats in telling the story in the same way with the myths that are found in the palm leaf or in the Northern part of Thailand. These fables began to be written on palm leaves both in Lao Lanchang and Lan Na in the same period, that is, approximately B.E. 18 and so forth because of the period of studying and writing the Buddhist scriptures that were regarded as the most progress in the Kingdom of Lanna and the Kingdom of Lao-Lanchang. In the proportion of the story of Sasanakon Nidana (fables), especially concerning Maung Roi-Et, it was likely to occur in the period of compiling the documents related to the legend of Phra Urungga Dhatu because the methods of performance are different from the other myths in the past, that is, to establish the name of the person, namely Phraya Surivongsadhammikat of Maung Roi-Et in order to comply with the name of Phra Chaosuriyavongsadhammikat of Nakon Wiengchantana, who reigned in the period of compiling the legend of Urungga Dhatu.

The Level of Themes in the Legend of Urungga Dhatu

The contents of Urungga Dhatu indicate the ordered management of levels in accordance with the times as assumed by dividing the period of time into four situations as follows:

1. Duration of time before the Buddha's passing away to Nibbana.

³ Piset chuechantarapong, "Introduction" in *Urungga Nitani*, the legend of Phra Dhatu Panom, (Bangkok: Reinkwaewkanpim, 2521), p. 4-24.

In the legend of Urungga Dhatu, it is said about the Buddha's coming with Ananta, and he stood at the ridge of Nongkanta Sue Nam (the bank of the Nongkanta Sue-Nam) that was the location of Wiangchantana at the present. The Enlighten One predicted the native country that will occur at that place into two periods, that is, the duration of King Asoka of India in the time building Wiangchantana and story of the Holy Ones who took various parts of the Buddha's relics placed in the places as designated by the Lord Buddha and mentioning the names of important people during the diversity of times in accordance with the Buddha's prediction including the construction of Maung Doynantakanghi (Leungpabang) by the hermit's supernatural power from that time. It will be the Buddha's prediction during the time in advance (from B.E. 20 to the end of the Buddha's period related to the duration overlapping the history of Lao-Lanchang). In the duration of time, as said, the names of important persons appeared who come to be reborn again in accordance with the results of Kamma as done before. The themes were the Buddha's prediction in this proportion, Phra Dhepratanamoli, the abbot of Wat Phra Dhatu Panom, suggested in the book of Urungga Dhatu (Bizarre) to write the historical situation concerning the Kings of Kingdom of Lao-Lanchang.⁴

The themes in the legend of Urungga Dhatu from that time referred to the Lord Buddha's traveling by passing the various places on the banks of the Khong River and resulted in the myths related to all those places (along the territory of Uten District, Nakon Panom to the South), and rested at the hill of Kappana Kiri or Kampa Mountain (the area for the location of Phra Dhatu Panom). Phraya Srikotaboon came to invite the Lord Buddha to take alms in the town and took the Lord Buddha's alms bowl to see Him off at Kampa Mountain by vowing to be the Buddhahood in order to be the Enlighten One in the future. At that time the Buddha predicted to Phra Arnon concerning Phrapya Srikotaboon that he would be reborn in Maung Roi-Et for one time and would be reborn as Phraya Sumittadhammavongsa at Amrukhanakon City for one time. For this life, he located Urungga Dhatu in Kampa Mountain, that is, Phra Dhatu Panom.

From that time, the Buddha returned and stopped at Nong Han Laung to teach Phraya Siuwannapingkan with pressing His footprint and then went to one hill of the mountain and called Phramaha Kassapa from Rajakru City (from India) and said to him that "when the Lord Buddha passed away, take Phra Urungga Dhatu (Phra Ura or the chest bone) to place at Phu Kampa," and then He went to Kuvien Mountain (the area of Phu Pan, the boundary of Udonthan Povice). In this section, there is the

⁴ Phra Dhammarajanuwat (Kaew Utummala), *Urungga Nidan, the legend of Phra Dhatu Panom (Bizarre)*, 10th ed. (Bangkok: Nilanara Press, 2537)

interruption, that is, the myth establishing the name of that place as Phu Kuvien.

From that time, the Lord Buddha returned to press His footprint at the Hill of Nantakanghi and predicted that Wiang at Nongkhantaesue-nam (Wiangchan in the period of King Asoka) by saying that this place will be decreased hereafter and the next time there will be one king (meaning Phrachao Fa-ngum, the King of Lan-Chang kingdom) will come to improve and locate Buddhism (Maung Luang Phra Bang) and hereafter this town will be declined and Buddhism will be progressed in Wiangchan in the future.

2. The duration of the time after the Buddha's passing away for eight years.

After the Lord Buddha had passed away eight years prior, Phramaha Kassapa with 500 Holy Ones (Arahanta) took Urungga Dhatu (Phra Urungga Dhatu, the proportion of the chest or the chest bone) from India to Suwanaphum by passing Maung Nong Han Luang. Phraya Suwannapingkan and Phraya Kamdaeng, the chief of Nong Han Luang and the chief of Nong Han Noi, coming to welcome. There had been the competition of constructing the shrines for placing Phra Urungga Dhatu between males and females. The males constructed Phra Dhatu Phupek (in the area of Pannanikom District, Sakon Nakon province) and the females constructed Phra Dhatu Narai Chengveng (in the area of Maung District, Sakon Nakon province). It appeared that the females used their ability to accomplish their work first, but Phramaha Kassapa did not place Phra Urungga Dhatu Narai Chengveng because the Lord Buddha did not order to do so but placed only Phra Angkan Dhutu (the ashes of bone) at Phra Dhatu Narai Chengveng.

After that time, Phramaha Kassapa with Phraya Suwanaping and Phraya Kamdaeng went together to Phu Kampa. Phraya Nantasen of Maung Kotaboon came to welcome (Phraya Kotaboon who used to meet the Lord Buddha passed away, and Phraya Nantasen, the younger brother, reigned instead at the state of Srikotaboon continuously). At that time, Phraya Chunlamani and Phraya Intapatana knew and came to construct Ubmung (Conical Shrine) for placing Phra Urungga Dhatu. In that time, Phra Urungga Dhatu demonstrated the miraculousness for Phramaha Kassapa to know that the Buddha did not want to place that Phra Dhatu because the Enlightened One did not predict that Phra Urungga Dhatu would be placed in this time. Five Kings participated to place Phra Urungga Dhatu in Ubmung by constructing the wood doors for shutting and vowed to be the Holy One hereafter. When the Five Kings returned to their cities, Phra Vissanukam (a deity) came down to carve the decorative designs on Ubmung. The divines came together to worship Phra Urungga Dhatu and

designated the duties to protect and preserve Phra Urungga Dhat.

The themes in the legend of Urungga Dhatu retroactively said about Phraya Srikotaboon who used to take the alms bowl of the Lord Buddha in the past life in the near duration of the Buddha's passing away. He died and went to be reborn as the son of the Chief of Saket City, namely Suriya Kumman, at Maung Saket (Maung Roi-Et) while in Srikotaboon City, Phraya Nuntasena took over the city instead until Suriya Kumman was nineteen years old and reigned in Saket City. Both Phraya traveled to suppress various cities until he took over Roi-Et City in Suriyakumman's power. Saket City was newly named as the City of 111 doors. Suriyakumman took care of the religions at Roi-Et City until to have the name of "Suriyavongsadhammatirajekaraja." When he was eighteen years old in the time of constructing Ubmung for placing Phra Urungga Dhatu, in addition, the contents in the legend of Urungga Dhatu, still have interrupted issues concerning the diversities of the rivers in the area of the Khong River, that is, the U River, Nguem River, Ping River, Moon River, Chee River and Nong Han. In the primitive period, the original belief related to Phya Nak (the Great Snake). In the myths of the Thai-Lao tribes, the belief was that Phya Nak built up the important diverse rivers in the land on both sides of Khong Riverr.

3. The Same Duration with King Asoka

The contents in the legend of Urungga Dhatu refer to the change of the hometowns for a long time and say about the new birth of people in accordance with Kamma as done in the past life. In Maung Nong Han Luang and Maung Nong Han Noi, Both Phya who reigned over the city were the full brother; when they died and they came to rebirth as twins of Phya Intapat of Intapat City, they were named as Maharatanakuman and Chulratanakuman. When they died, both cities were destroyed. Phya Kambang, the uncle of both Phyas, went to construct Maung Suwannaphum "Kaowliew Kaowkot" (means nine turnings and nine bends) inheriting the traditions of both cities that were destroyed, that is, Intapat and Chulmani cities. After Maharatanakuman and Chulratanakuman were one year old, Phya Intapat died, and Phya Chulintapat, the brother, took the throne instead and in the same time, when Phya Chulami of Chulmani City died, his son, named Phya Puttachulmani, reigned instead. The queen of Phya Puttachulmani became impregnated. When both Phya died, they were reborn again to be the son of Phya Puttachulmani named Mahasuwan.

Phya Nantasena of Srikotaboon city died and became reborn again to be the son of Phya Suriyavongsadhamikaraj of Maung Roi-Et, named as Sangkhachaikuman. While Srikotaboon City got the infectious diseases, Phya Nantasena's brother, who was the chief of the city, moved the city to Mairuak forests to establish the Marukkhanakon City and establish his

name as Pya Marukkhanakon.

Phya Nantasena became to be born as Sangkhavishakuman in Saket City, or Roi-Et City. When he was one year old, his father, Phya Suriyavongsadhammikaraja, died and came to be reborn as the son of Phya Marukkhanakon, named Sumittadhamkuman.

In Kurunta, or Sri-Ayodhya city, Phya Sri-Amoni and Phya Fyodhaka announced to be ordained as the hermits in the Himapn forest. Court officers chose one of their own groups to be the chief and saw that Roi-Et City was the city full of wealth, the wealth resulting from their chief. So when their chiefs stayed away from the city and at the same time Phya Srisuriyawongsadhamikaraj died, they moved the troops to attack Roi-Et City, and the people were dispersed. Some went to live in the small places on both sides of the Khong River in the administrative region of Phya Sumittadham at Marukkhanakon. Some returned to their own native city, including 111 countries, while the courts of officials took Sangkhavichakuman to La Nongkhai, which was the town in the region of Suwannaphum of Tao Kamban.

Five Holy Ones (Arahants) returned from Rachakrue and took other parts of the Buddha's relics and placed them in various locations in the region of Burichan. After that they went to visit the relatives in the past life of each individual. Mahasangkha Thera went to Marukkhanakon city and spoke about the past life of Phya Sumittadham. Phya Sumittadham was very pleased and went to improve Ubmung of Urungga Dhaitu at Phu Kampa. In this time, he placed Urungga Dhatu in compliance with the Lord Buddha's prediction, when Phya Sumittadham, after placing Phra Urungga Dhatu, went to improve Buddhism at Roi-Et city. When he died, he went to be a Sumittadham hermit at Himapan forest.

4. The Duration of the Lao-Lanchang Kingdom.

The themes in the legend of Urungga Dhatu were carried out by situations for a long time until reaching the period of King Pothisanraj of the King of Lao-Lanchang, which was in the B.E. 21 by saying that King Pothisanraj found out the Legend of Urungga Dhatu and had the faith in the Buddha's Urungga Dhatu and went to improve the Phra Dhatu Panom that placed Urungga Dhatu and designated the region of Kappana (the merit dedicated to the departed) and managed individuals to improve and protect Phra Dhatu Paom, who were called "Kha Okasa" (servants). On this occasion King Pothisanraj came to make merit by constructing the hall with the lead roof in order to worship the Buddha.

Until the period of the King Chaiyasetthiraj, the son of King Pothisanraj had found out the legend of Urungga Dhatu and had the

faith so he went pay respect to Phra Dhatu Panom and also improved and repaired Phra Dhatu Panom and other shrines descending from his father.

The Legend of Phra Dhatu in the Dimension of the Center of the Community on the bank of the Khong River.

The themes and the situations in the legend of Urungga Dhatu indicate that the basin of the Khong River below is the important area of society and culture of the primitive state, and the important thing is that each primitive state in the basin of the Khong River has the legend of the Buddha's relics, and the construction of social network is made together and to be relatives, constructing the faith with each other or creating the relationship with the primitive folk as said about the legend of Phra Dhatu of the community on both sides of the Khong River as appeared in Nakhon Panom, Nongkhai Province, and Nakhon Laung Wienchan, as follows:

Phra Dhatu Panom

In the legend of Urungga Dhatu⁵ it is said that the location of Phra Dhatu Panom used to locate Srikotaboon city, which was the capital of the Kingdom of Srikotaboon, and Phra Dhatu Panom was built between B.E.8 and B.E. 12 in order to place Urungga Dhatu (the chest bone) of the Buddha by the ruler of Sritaboonnakon and the rulers of various cities, including five cities, to create together, and after Srikotaboon was moved to locate in the other place. The communities around Phra Dhatu were still the great communities looking after Phra Dhatu Panom. In the period of the King Rama 5, the new regulation of administration was established. The communities around were regarded as "the region of Dhatu Panom" depending on the precinct of Lao-puan, and Dhatu Panom District was established in B.E. 2450 from that time.

The Historical Development

The history of Phra Dhatu Panom is divided into two parts, that is, the first part is the legend and the second is the historical record. In the part of the legend, the themes indicate the creation of Buddhism in the territory related to the Buddhist history in the feature of the universal. The occurrence of community and the leaders of community are the supporters of Buddhism in the feature of creating the condition to construct Phra Dhatu Panom.

1. Part 1. The legend of Phra Dhatu Panom in accordance with Urungga Dhatu.

⁵ Charoensupakul, Anuwit, Phra Dhatu Panom (in Thai) (Phra Dhatu Paom, 2nd Ed. Bangkok: Karusapa Press, 1989.

In accordance with the legend,⁶ the first duration began from the Buddha's time, and the Buddha with Phra Ananta came to the territory of the Khong River and predicted the occurrence of the cities that are the supporters of Buddhism and told the rebirth of Phya Srikotaboon, who invited the Lord Buddha to take alms in his city, and when the activity was done, he carried the alms bowl to see the Buddha off at the territory of Phu Kampa. With this result of merit, when Phya SriKotaboon came to be rebirth as Phya Smitdhammavongsa, the ruler of Marukhanakon, he had the opportunity to establish Phra Urungga Dhatu at Kampa Mountain in the following time.

The important evidence of archaeology indicates the belief of the primitive people in the territory of Phra Dhatu Panom in the areas of the Khong River, that is, the culture of constructing the leaflike boundary stone or erective stone that formerly was built up in order to worship the ancestors, but the Indian culture was disseminated in this area. It was adjusted as the leaflike boundary stone in accordance with the way of Buddhism.⁷

The archaeological places in this boundary is Phra Dhatu Panom, in which the legend explained that it was situated on the peak of Kampa Mountain. It was tall on the bank of the Khong River. In the former time, the Khong River was near the body of Phra Dhatu Panom. The trace of the old pathway could be seen, and it is called "Beung" (swamp) at the present time.

The ancient ruins in the territory of the monastery around Phra Dhatu Panom existed for a long time in the period of Davaravadi to the period of Lan Chang and Ayutya, especially in the period of Davaravadi, that is, stone pole, and the leaflike boundary stones located in various directions around Phra Dhatu Panom. Some are the plates of big sandstones with signs on the post. Some posts have the picture of Thupa (relic mound) and the petals of the lotus at the foundation. These leaf-like boundary stones were built in Buddhism in order to demonstrate the sacred territory of Phra Dhatu Panom from the period of Davaravadi.

2. Part 2. The Local History

The second duration is regarded as the history of Phra Dhatu related to the improvement of Phra Dhatu Panom and Wat Phra Dhatu Panom beginning from the period of Lan Chang from the time of King Phothisanraja of Laung Phra Bang (B.E. 2073-2103) coming to construct the

⁶ Ibid,

⁷ Srisakkon Valliphodom, "Esan in the legend of Urungga Dhatu" in the basin of civilization of Esan (Bangkok: Matichon, 2533), p. 8357.

dormitory of the Emerald Buddha image in the territory of the monastery that was regarded as the construction of Wat Phra Dhatu Panom for the first time. Then King Chaichetthathiraj (B.E. 2101-2114) of Wiangchan came to pay respect to Phra Dhatu and also enacted the regulations for the practice for the monastic servants in the community of Phra Dhatu Panom.⁸

In B.E. 2157 the King of Srikotaboon reconstructed and built the permanent materials in the southern direction (Taksina), such as the glass wall, various arches, the worshiping tower for the Buddha' images, and the Buddha image halls. In B.E. 2236-2245 Phra Kru Ponsamek took 3,000 people from Wiangchan to reconstruct Phra Dhatu Panom by changing the top of the Pagoda to the coronal forms like the general Lao shrines, ready for placing the value things on the top of pagoda additionally.

In the duration of B.E. 2355-2356 that was identical to the period of King Rama1, King Anuwong, the ruler of Wiangchan, participating with the chief of Nakonpanom and Mukda Han, reconstructed the boundary of the monastery until B.E. 2369-2371. The war broke out between Lan Chang and Bangkok and made the community in the basin of Khong river disordered, and many people in the community of Wat Phra Dhatu Panom were lost, and Wat Phra Dhatu Panom was ruined. The tower of Emerald Buddha's image collapsed in B.E. 2430.

In the final period of King Rama 5 (B.E. 2411-2453) Phra Kru Rochanaratnabon coming from Ubon to reconstruct Phra Dhatu in the first time and in the second time in B.E. 2449 and to come back to reconstruct the arches in front of the temple additionally. In the end of that year, Phya Damrongrajanuphab came to stay over night at the territory of the temple during the inspection of officials in Esan region and built two bells for the body of Phra Dhatu and removed the District Office from Renu city to the Sub-district of Phra Dhatu Panom in Bangkok Era 126.

In B.E. 2483-2484, the Fine Arts Department reconstructed Phra Dhatu by adding the top by covering the old top about 10 meters in order to seen from the bank of Lao country and B.E. 2497 the gold tiered umbrella was lifted up highly about 5.50 meters given to Phra Dhatu by in B.E. 2518, the officials upgraded the status of Wat Phra Dhatu Panom as the Royal Monastery in the level of the first grade until the year of B.E. 2518, the body of Phra Dhatu Panom was ruined and reconstructed and completed in B.E. 2522 by preserving the old form until the present time.

From the legend of Urungga Dhatu to the local history, it indicated

⁸ Phrathep Rattanamolee, Pravat Yore Phra Dhatu Panom (in Thai) (Short story of Phra Dhatu Panom pagoda) 2nd ed.p.1994.

the importance and the history of Phra Dhatu Panom for a long time, it, here, will be said in nutshell only. The legend of Urungga Dhatu, by telling about the legend, will indicate the situation of hometown in the past since the hometowns were created. The formats of society and custom of the native tribes around the territory of Khong river. Even though it will be the legend and fables, it indicates the various situations in that duration very well and the way to study the local histories that have been carried out for many periods.

Phra Dhatu La-Nong

The primitive Thai people in the basin of the Khong River formerly were in the territory of Paun State, which has Chuntaburi (Wiangchan) as the center, called constructed things “Dhatu.” So the Pagoda in the middle of the Khong River was called “Phra Dhatu in the middle of the water.”⁹

In B.E. 218, King Asoka took the throne in the Makadha territory and sent the Buddhist missionaries to propagate Buddhism by dividing into eight routes. The eighth route went to Suwannaphum with Phra Sona and Phra Uttara as the Buddhist missionaries and to various lands both inside and outside the kingdom, including present-day Thailand , and carried the Buddha’s relics on every route. It made the Buddha’ relics spread out to the diversities of the country from that time. Sending the Buddhist missionaries to propagate Buddhism in the period of the King Asoka caused the Buddha’s relics to spreadout to various countries.¹⁰

King Asoka sent the Buddhist monks to propagate Buddhism in various places, those monks bringing the Buddha’s relics with them. It is assumed that the Buddha’s relics entered Thailand by dividing in accordance with the periods as follows:

Period 1. Relics were imported by Phra Sona and Phra Uttar from the beginning of B.E. 4 in the way of Suvannaphum, the basin of Chaowpaya, by constructing the Pagoda placing the Buddha’ relics, and in B.E. 4-6 Buddhism was propagated in the path of the Northeast part of Thailand in the present.

Period 2. Relics were imported about B.E. 6 by Phra Maha Kassapa carrying Urungga Dhatu to a place in the region of Koytaboon (Phra Dhatu Panom) and carrying some part of the Buddha’s relics given to the King

⁹ Pinit,Charusombat, Nongkhai (Bangkok: Mungkon Press (1994), limited, 2540), p.182-183.

¹⁰ Thongdi Hankunapon, The Buddha’s relics (Bangkok: Munnithi Phra Boromsarikadhatu in Phrasunggarajapatham, 2546),m p. 14.

Achutarat in the region of Yonok to place them at Doiy Tung in B.E. 561 in Chiangrai province. In the time of Phra Maha Kasspa entering, three novices accompanied him, that is, Buddha Rakkhita, Dhamma Rakkhita, and Sangha Rakkhita.

In B.E. 2109 King Chaichetthathiraj 1, the Great King of the Lan-Chang kingdom, built the pagodas covering the cement blocks that are 15.80 meters wide and 33 meters tall. From that time on, the Lan-Chang arts were ruined because of scouring by the stream of the Khong River on the right bank until the big pagoda got ruined on Friday, the 15th day of the waning moon, the 9th month, B.E. 2390 when Nongkhai was established in B.E. 2371 for 19 years and the stream scoured the shore reaching the right shore of the Khong River approximately 180 at the present.

This Phra Dhatu is alike with Phra Dhatu Panom, Dhatu Panom district, Nokon Panom province. The territory of Phra Dhatu has the place not in excess of 100 rai, and it located on the bank of the Khong River. When it reaches the flood season, the Khong River overflows and scours the shore until it is ruined. In accordance with the chronicle, part 70, it was recoded that the Khong River scoured the shore in the territory of Phra Dhatu until reaching Phra Dhatu La-Nong, and it collapsed in the middle of the Khong River on Friday, the 15th day of the waning moon, the ninth month near the evening, Bangkok Era 66, Thai minor Era 1209, and B.E. 2309.

Before the collapse of Phra Dhatu La-Nong into the Khong River, Mr. Ongri Mu Ot, the surveyor of France,¹¹ receiving the official work of the Association of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, came to survey the Khong River and sketch Nakonwat, Nakon Panom, and Cambodia and propagate throughout the world and came to Nongkhai province to sketch Phra Dhatu La Nong, which had been ruined in B.E. 2390.

Fronchivakaryer, the Canadian, one of the staff of surveyors of Indo-China in the Kingdom of Lan-Chang, sketched the drawing of Phra Dhatu La Nong in B.E. 2411, explaining that "Piramit or the body of Phra Dhatu located on the half circle that was cut of the right bank or the Thai bank by this Piramit that was separated from the original location for ten years and declining to water like the broken boat and ready to sink."

At the present, Phra Dhatu La Nong sank in the middle of the Khong River far away from the Thai bank, about 180 meters. The body of Phra Dhatu was created with cement blocks declining to follow the stream of water. In the eastern direction, there are the foundations of right angles

¹¹ [Http://www. sophiaportal.com./forums/index.php?showtopic=103,\(16 December 2558\)](http://www.sophiaportal.com./forums/index.php?showtopic=103,(16 December 2558))

by one angle rising up over the water in half of the base. The body of Phra Dhatu has the architectural figure as far as two left bases and adding for four shelves. It is the body of Phra Dhatu connecting with two shelves of glass lotus. The high part of pagoda is about 12.20 meters and the width of the Phra Dhatu base at the low part is about 15.80 meters.

Phra Dhatu La Nong is the respective material of the Nongkhai people, and the natives provide the traditional festivals related to Phra Dhatu every year, the Rocket Festival in the sixth month in order to pay respect to Phra Dhatu in the first waning day of the sixth lunar month; the ritual ceremony is provided for Phra Dhatu in the fourteenth rising day of lunar month. In the 11th lunar month, Prasat Phueng is given to the monks, and on the fifteenth rising day of the lunar month, the long boat racing is performed at the end of Buddhist Lent for worshipping the Lord Buddha.

That the Phra Dhatu La Nong sank into the Khong river makes people in Nongkhai Province want to reconstruct this Buddhist place, so they participate in supporting Buddhism. The artificial Phra Dhatu La Nong was constructed and replaced the parts of the real Phra Dhatu within it and improved the environments on the bank of the Khong River. The size of the artificial Phra Dhatu at its foundation is 10 x 10 meters wide and its height is 15 meters altogether

Phra Dhatu Bung Puan

From the scripture of Urungga Dhatu or the legend of Phra Dhatu Panom, which are regarded as the oldest written record in the Esan region, it was said that once upon a time, the Lord Buddha stayed at Phra Chettawan Mahavihan near Savatthi City, considering the primitive traditions of three Buddhas who had passed away, that is, Phra Kukusandha, Konagamana, and Kassapa. In the past, those knew with insight that the disciples of those Buddhas, as mentioned, took those Buddhas' relics to a place at the hill of Pana Kiri (Hill of Kappana Kiri; at the present, it is Kampa Mountain for placing the body of Phra Dhatu Panom, Phra Dhatu Panom district, Nakonpanom Province) near Srikotabong city.

At drawn, when Phra Ananta serviced the Lord Buddha with water and toothbrush wood and then the Lord Buddha dressed with red kampon, he took the alms bowl, turning to the eastern direction. Phra Ananta took the Buddha moving by air down to the mound of Konnaow (some books saying Konnao, and some scholars saying Wat Neonpanaow, in Wiangchan) and then came to stay at the ridge of Nong Kantae Suenam (at the present, that place is the basin of the Khong River in the territory of Wiangchan), looking at the gold monitor putting out its tongue at Phonjik Na-Ngue under the Pak Hauy Kukam (some books write Kumkam). The

Lord Buddha smiled and Phra Ananta asked Him why He smiled The Buddha predicted, “Ananta! Tathagata saw the golden monitor putting out its tongue as the cause.” This Suwannaphum Land was the residence of Nagas, that is, Suwaanaga, etc., and water butterfly, land butterfly and all giants, etc. including the situation of the hometown and the Kings who will rule the city in the future in Suvannaphum, land of the basin of the Kong River, as the details appeared in the legend of Urungga Dhatu.

The scripture of Urungga Dhatu says in one section that the golden monitor was Pappa Naga, who lived in the ridge of Bung Paun swamp (at the Present, it is Wat Phra Dhatu Bung Paun, Phra Dhatu Bung Paun sub-district, Maung district, Nongkhai Province), transfigured as Nagga, decorating himself with a crystal breast chain. So it is called Pappara Naga.

King Vichunraj (B.E. 2093-2115), the King of Lan-Chang, came to pay respect to Phra Dhat Bung Paun and ordered to improve Muccarint pond, Pappara Naga pond, or Phya Naga, and invited the Buddhist monks to perform Buddha Pisek (the Buddhist rituals), it was regarded as the sacred water and that sacred water was applied for the important rites in the Loyal Palace of Lan-Chang from that time.

In Buddhist Era 2093- 2115, Phra Chaichettathiraj moved the capital of Laung Pabang to be reconstructed at Woiangchan and had the Royal faith to enhance Buddhism in order to support Phra Dhatu Bung Paun by extending the construction with brick and constructing the wall around the monastery with four arches. In the territory of Phra Dhatu, the churches, the Buddha image hall, and the Buddha's image covering with Naga, including the stone tablet behind the principle Buddha' image in the hall, were constructed, and the pond and well were created at the boundary of the monastery¹²

The Thai government by the Department of Fine Arts (2513) constructed the new shrine placing the Buddha's relics, as constructed about 1,500,000 bat, controlling the construction by builders of the Department of Fine Arts to preserve the same form of the original Phra Dhatu and to place the Lord Buddha's relics in the new pagoda on January 5, B.E. 2520, at 9:39 a.m. with the Supreme Patriarch (Most Venerable Vas Vasano) participating as the president, placing the Buddha's relics, and His Majesty the King with Her Majesty the Queen and His Highness the Prince and Her Highness the Princess coming to be the president of lifting the tiered umbrella to the top of Phra Dhatu Bung Paun on November 28, B.E. 2521, at 15:39 a.m..¹³

¹² Phrathep Ratnamolee, *Prawat Yore Phra Dhatu Panom* (in Thai) (the short story of Phra Dhatu Panom), 2nd Ed., p. 1994.

¹³ Phra Dhammarajanuwatra, (Kaew Utummala) , *Urung ga Ntana, the legend of Phra Dhatu Panom* (Particularly) 10th Ed. (Bangkok: Nilnakarn Press, 2537.)

The Feature of Phra Dhatu Bung Puan

The statues of Phra Dhatu Bung Puan are the quadrangle pagoda, built with brick and laterite. Its foundation is high from the earth one meter. The right base consists of two shelves extending with the quadrilateral forms, lotus-pedal shaped decoration around the pagoda, and the five tiered umbrella consists of five shelves covering with the gold leaf. The below position of each side is 17.20 meters wide. The high top of the tiered umbrella is 34.25 meters, and the figure is like the local arts from the base of upside down lotus of Pra Prang, and the top arbor is similar with Phra Dhatu Panom. From the upside-down lotus to the base is the similar with Phra Dhatu Laung of Wiangchan of Lao people's democratic Republic.

The Founded Evidences

In addition to one of Phra Dhatu Bung Puan, three Phra Prang, seven Pagodas, one great Buddha image, one Phra Naga Prok, one Post of Stone tablet, "Sattamahasthana" was found, that is, the seven important places. When the Lord Buddha was enlightened for forty-five days or seven weeks and the Supreme One enjoyed the happiness of emancipation for seven places, one of the places for seven days by reproducing from India. The places as mentioned are found in Thailand for two places, that is, Wat Chet Yod in Chiangmai Province and Wat Phra Dhatu Bung Puan, Nongkhai Province, especially in this Wat Phra Dhatu Bung Puan, there had seven Sattamahasthan completely in Thailand, namely:

1. Bhodhibanlang means the Buddha sitting under the Bhodhi Tree that was situated in the middle of Pagodas constructed with the round bricks like the upside down jars. The height is three meters and the width is six meters.

2. Ajapalanigothacedi, located in the eastern direction of Bhodhibanlang, was the quadrangle pagoda constructed with cemented blocks. On the top of Pagoda was the arch of the Buddha's image in the form of sitting meditation turning His face to Bhodhibanlung.

3. Muccalintcedi was situated southeast of Bhodhibanlung and was the roofed Buddha's image hall, not to have wall, inside having the nine heads of Naga covering with the Buddha's image facing the Bhodhibanlung.

4. Rajayatanacedi was situated in the southwestern direction and was the quadrangle pagoda like Ajapalanigothacedi. On the top there was the arch of the Buddha's image in sitting meditation facing the

Bhodhibanlung.

5. Rattanacedi, situated west of Bhodhibanlung was the twelve marks of wood with the cemented blocks, and its size was greater than the same with other pagodas.

6. Animisscedi was situated southeast of Bhodhibanlung and was the quadrangle pagoda with the cemented blocks. Its size was smaller than the others.

7. Rattacungkamacedi was situated southeast of Bhodhibunlaung and was the quadrangle pagoda constructed with the cemented blocks. East of the pagoda, it was constructed with bricks that were one meter wide along with the eastern direction, almost reaching Amissacddi, which means the way of Dhutangga (the way of austere practice) of the Lord Buddha (Kaew Utummala, 2536).

Phra Dhatu Phonjik Vien-nguo

Phra Dhatu Phonjik Na-nguo, located in Wat Phra Dhatu Bu, Phang Village Pako subdistrict, Muang District, Nongklhai Province, was one of six important shrines, and it placed the Buddha's relics in accordance with the legend of Urungga Dhatu (legend of Phra Dhat Panom). It explained that the Buddha and Phra Anont used to come from Sawatthi City, India, to the middle basin of the Khong River for the land of Buddhism staying at various places, that is, 1) Wiangchan, 2) Vieng –Ngue (at the present it was situated in Nongkhai province), 3) Nongkahi Province, 4) Nakhonpanom, 5) Srikotaboon, 6) Sakon Nakhon, and 7) Udonthani.

As it appeared in the legend of Urungga Dhatu, it was said that Five Noble Ones (Arahantas), Maharatana Thera 1, Cualla Thera 1, Mahasuwannapatha Thera , Cullasuwanpatha Thera 1, and Sanghavit Thera 1 took the Buddha's relics, about 45 pieces, to place in four places, namely:

1. To take the relics of the pubis bone, about 29 pieces, to place in Phra Dhatu Bung Paun or Laung mountain.

2. To take the rihth relics of the sole of the foot, about 9 pieces, to place in the Phra Dhatu Klangnam (the Phra Dhatu in the middle of Khong river) at La Nong City.

3. To take Phra Dhatu Khiewphang about 3 pieces to place in Phra Dhat Vieng Ngua, Pako Village, Nongkhai Province.

4. To take Phra Dhatu Khiewphang about 4 pieces to place in Phra Dhatu Horpha Horpae in Wiangchan or Vientien.

In B.E 2059-2091 King Phothisan, the father of the King Phrachaichetthathiraj, built up the pagoda covering the stupa (conical shrine) at Phonjik Na Ngua, that is, Phra Dhatu. The present Phra Dhatu is the original shrine from the beginning construction. Phra Dhatu Phonjik Na Ngua is very important as the old Phra Dhutu and is still permanent at the present. While Phra Dhatu La (Phra Dhatju La Nong, the middle shrine in water) and Phra Dhatu Bung Paun, in Nongkhai Province. The bodies of old shrines were ruined, and the new shrine was rebuilt again.

Phra Dhatu Phonjik Na Ngua is the shrine that places Phr Dhatu Khiewphang (the teeth) according to the legend of Phra Urungga Dhatu. Its feature of artistic work is the high shrine constructed with earth and rubber and the base, turning clockwise, is the quadrangle. Its width is 13.50 by 17.50 meters. Inside the base is filled with earth and to plaster with cement in the same. In the corners of 4 directions are found with the ruins of bricks as quadrangle, it is assumed, as the 4 imitative shrines. From that place, it is the below base as the quadrangle around the places in order to locate the 30 imitative shrines. While the shrine base is the round bell on the top, from that place, it is the shelf of lotus in the round diagram overlapping for 4 shelves. The top of high tapering finial is reconstructed later.

The remains of archaeological bricks are in the boundary of the eastern direction of Phra Dhatu Phonjik Vieng Ngua. They are the buildings' bases constructed with the bricks in the size of 5.30 by 5.70 meters, and its height is 80 centimeters. The below base as the building as mentioned. Its feature is one shelf. Inside, the places are improved with bricks and earth. In addition, the pieces of laterites are found around the remains of buildings, as mentioned. It is assumed that base of this building is likely to be Sim (Church), and those pieces of laterites are likely to be the pole that designate the territory in performing Sangha Kamma (formal act) like the church.

While the small shrines are still left completely spreading around the 4 directions of Phra Dhatu Phonjik Vieng Ngua, the feature is just like Phra Dhatu Phonjik Vieng Ngua, that is, the high conic bell connecting with the quadrangle couch complying with molded lime of designs of petal lotus and the top is round.

The registration of archaeological materials in the government gazette in Volume 99, Section 172, dated 18 November B.E 525. The places consist of 1 rfai, 1 ngan, 88 Tarang Wa. At the present, Phfra Dhat Phonjik Vieng ngau is improving again.

Phra Dhat Horpha Horpae

The history of Phra Dhatu Horpha Horpae, Maung Hatchai fong Wiangchan (Vientian).

In accordance with what was said that at that time, Phra Mahakassapa with Phra Arahantas, when constructing the tunnel and placing Urunfgga Dhatu completely, returned to Rajjakrue City. Phra Mahakassapa saw the three novices who practiced in the right way in accordance with the Buddha's teaching and had effort to practice the insight mediation. Those three novices, when they became Buddhist monks, would attain Arahantas in the same time. Their names were: 1. Buddharak, 2) Dhammarak, and 3) Sangharak. Three Arahantas came from Rajjakrue City and stayed at "Nongkok" near Laung Mountain.

Prpa Buddharakkhit went to take Ratanakuman, a relative, from Intatapat City to be ordained in Buddhism and then to live on the banks of both sides of the river on the eastern side and taught the insight meditation in that place.

Phra Dhammarakkhit went to take Mahasuwannapasarakuman, a relative, from Cullamanibhramatata to be ordained in Buddhism and taught the insight meditation in Vieng Nguo under the Mount of Kukam canal. Muen Klang built up the dwelling for him to live at that place, while Phra Sangharakkhit went to take Sanghavjjakuman to be ordained and stayed at Nongkhai. Aunt and father built up the dwelling for him.

With historical evidences, the academics assume that the location of Phra Dhatu Hopha Hopae was established in the boundary of Hartsaifong village, Wiangchan (Vientien), Lao People's Democratic Republic (at the present, the place is located in front of Viengkook, Maung District, and Nongkhai province.)

Muang Viengkook is located in Ban Viengkook, Viengkook subdistrict, Muang district, Nongkhai province while Muang Hartsaifong is in front of Ban Viengkook on the east bank of the Khong River. In the past, Maung Viengkook was the same city as Wiengchan that was the same as Muang Panpao (Srichiangmai) and the same as Viengkook with Muang Hartsaifong in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, which city will be the twin Viengkam city with Wiangchan, which used to be the important city in the Buddhist Era 16-17.

In the historical development of Muang Viengkook and Muang Hartsaifong as appeared in the legend of Urunfgga Dhatu and the archaeological evidence that can be concluded that Maung Viengkook which was the location of the primitive community before B.E. 18-19 that was in the duration of the group of Lao Lan Chang migrating from the southern region and governing the land around the middle Khong River

that was the location of Viengchan – Viengkam (Maung Hartsaifong).

Maung Viengkook and Maung Hartsaifong in B.E. 14-15 were above mentioned that Muang Viengkam (Muang Vieng Hartsaifong) was twin city with Waingchan in the same time, the administrative center of the Lan Chang people was situated in the North territory (from the boundary of Chava–Luang Prabang to Nongsae in the South of China). The community of hometown in the boundary of the Khong river was the situation of Wiangchan and Viengkook (Maung Hartsaifong), that is, the historical groups called one of the land Jenla that evidence appeared in Muang Viengkook-Muang Hartsaifong beginning from the original period of Tavaravadi until the final period finding the stone divine images before Pranakon (Nakon-Wat-Nakon Thom) Wat Yod at Wat Phrakaw as assumed that all those images might be the respective images as Phra Isuan of the groups of people who worship Bhrahmana or Hindu religion. Otherwise, there were plenty of boundary stones in Buddhism in the Tavaravadi period such in archaeological remains, Monasteries in the territory of Viengkook and Muang Hartsaifong, including the Tavaravadi arts in the form of Lopburi also.

The legend of Urungga Dhatu indicates that the groups of people in the Srikotaboon region migrating from Roi-Et to the mount of Huay Kam that is in the same duration with the constructing in the boundary of Nong Kantaesuenam of Suwannaphum before Wiangchan. It shows that before the duration of B.E. 14-15, the groups of community in Muang Viengkook and Maung Hartsaifong used to be the town before this time. From that time, it became more and more development. To receive the influence of groups of people from the South territory to be mixed together with their own cultures or having more influence from that time. The format of seizing the power beyond the other land, especially the places in far destination far from the administrative center of Wiangchan – Viengkook (Maung Hartsaifong) was gradually developed such as the format of spreading out the conceptual power, believe more than to seize the power with the weapon and military.

From that time, the Kingdom of Khom was powerful and was able to spread out the influence throughout the land of Suwannaphum until the bank of the middle region of the Khong River. In the duration of B.E. 16-17 the findings of the stone Buddha's images including the stone tablets and the primitive Khom castles dissipated in the territory of Viengkook and Maung Hartsaifong clearly, that is, the Divine image dressing the cloth of the 7th Voramana at Viengkook in Wat Yodkaew. While Maung Hartsaifong was found with Khom castles showing that Viengkook community and Maung Hartsaifong in that time were the huge and importance for the primitive King spreading out his influence to that place.

In the period of B.E. 18-19 it was identical to the duration of reconstructing hometown of the Kingdom of Sukhothai that the historians analyzed that Siam, Sukhothai people were the groups of community in the basin of the central Khong River, Wiangchan and Viengkam (Veingkook) and Maung Hartsaifong that developed the politics until they could defeat the Khoms' influence from their own territory and spread out their own influence to the land that used to be Khoms' territory. It concludes that Siam people, Sukhothai people, were the groups of people migrating from Maung Wiengcan – Viengkam and Maung Hartsaifong.

The chronicle of Lan Chang used to say about Viengkam in the period of King Fa-Ngum (the ruler of Lan Chang, Chiengtong in B.E. 1896-1915) collecting the Kingdom of Lan Chang by taking the military troops from Cambodia along the Khong River suppressing various country on the way to Paksun to beat Maung Pan and let the chief Tiemkamyor, the son of Phya Nayi Hin, the leader of Pan ruling and took Puan military to beat Chantaburi Wiengcan by floating along Ngum River. From that time they beat Maung Phai Nam of Phya Phao but they could not beat Maung Phai Nam because the wall of Maung was a lot of clumps of bamboos. So they used the tricks to create the gold bullets (the Lao history of Sila Viravongs used Luk Na Mai Krieng-ngern thongkam= primitive weapons) shot into the clumps of bamboos. People covered with the greed and destroyed the clumps of bamboos in order to find out the gold bullets. The King Fa-ngum went through the city and fought by using elephants with Phya Phao, the leader of Maung Phai Nam for a long time but could not defeat and made friend with each other and changed Maung Phai Nam to be "Viengkam" (Maung Hartsaifong) in B.E. 1899 (Lao history of Sila Viravongs saying about the King Fa-Ngum taking military to beat Maung easily. When people destroyed the clumps of bamboos to search for the gold bullets by the King Fa-ngum seeing that he ordered the soldiers to burn the clumps of bamboos and put Phya Phao in the cage up to Chiang Tong City as soon as reaching Ban Tin Haeng, Phya Phao died.)

At the present, Wat Naga Hoph¹⁴ was the old temple for Maung Hartsaifong, Veingchan, but what period of year was constructed, did not appear clearly. It is only legend. In this Hoph, there was the Phra Dhatu situating in the boundary of the temple but at the present, the great Buddha image tower is constructed that is called "Ho Naga," covering the old Phra Dhatu. In accordance with the legend for many generations. The abbot hears from his birth until he is grown up. He has seen this Wat Hoph because the territory connects with Nong Kamsaen in the western direction. It is called "the great Ho Naga." At the present the hole of Naga still

¹⁴ Interviewing Tan Viengkam Suttavi, Age 61 years old, Ban Tinpear folk, Maung Hartsaifong, Wiangchan City 1 December B.E. 2558.

exists and there are still the old ponds in the period of the abbot being young in the period of 1968-1970. After his graduation from the primary school, he became a small novice living in Wat Hophā. If the folks disturbed, Khi Nae and Khi Jok floated up existing in the pond. At the present, there is still water in the pond which is called by Hartsaifong people "Naga's Hole." While Ho Mondp or Ho Phra Dhatu constructed covering the original Phra Dhatu, by the past abbot named Phra Ajahn Boonta Tepple who died for many years. But in the past it was the common shrine and Naga's tower, and Naga covering the great Buddha's image but he did not know which period of constructing of the Buddha's image was built. If the Department of Heritage or Department of Culture of the Lao People's Democratic Republic brings the evidence for improving in the archaeological materials and will know which period of construction is, when he was born, this temple still appeared. This temple was called Wat Pa (forest temple), connecting with Nongkamsaen, but in the past it was called "Dontitto." This place was the living of various animals, such as tigers and elephants. The word "Nongkamsaen" or "Nongklongkam" is likely to concern with history or fables. Wat Pa Nongkamsaen or Nongklongkam or the gold castle existing in that Nongkamsaen in this Wat Hophā. The abbot established the pavilion as Phra Dhatu or the shrine tower (assumed to be Phra Dhatu Hophā Hophāe) that the inside the pavilion appeared that there was the great Buddha's image or the huge Phra Naga living in that place. He only constructed the pavilion covering it. In that place, there was only the Buddha's image or the great Phra Naga, not to see Phra Dhatu at all. While in front of the great Buddha's image facing to the people's houses, there was the furnace or the cremation place. In the period of his small novice, Ajahn with him excavated that place; it was seen as the arch, not to be Phra Dhatu in that corner of that temple. This arch in accordance with history, was said that Wat Nag Hophā was the cloth package that concerned with the history between Tin Pear and Maung Ta Khaek or phra Dhatu Ta Khaek in the former time. The war broke out in Lao country, people migrated to Nongkhai living in Viengkook. In the former time, Lao country has the wide territory. All most Esan areas belonged to Lao country. After that Lao country became the colony of Siam and became the colony of France. The great land was divided in the administrative territories; the Lao country has the Khong River flowing in the middle of country. Its landscape was abundance with diversities of natural resources, that is, the chain of the Khong River and the main river of the Nation. Wat Naga Hophā is likely related to the history in assuming that it might be built up in the period of civilization of Maung Hartsaifong in those days.

Conclusion

The primitive legend of the Khong River basin called "Urungga Dhatu" indicated the importance of legend towards the local history. The

data collected from Urungga Dhatu indicated that the legend concealing with the historical facts by having Phra Dhatu Panom as the relationship center of people and various territories in this area. It makes us to assume preliminarily the history of people migration in the basin of the Khong River and the history of propagating influence of Buddhism as the main explanation about the social and cultural changes of communities in the basin of the Khong River.

The content of the legend of Urungga Dhatu mostly has the special feature of locality. The Urungga Dhatu legend leads to construct the relationship with time and places, considering the structural components in the legend of Urungga Dhatu in the historical dimension, society and culture. It was found that there were four main themes in the legend of Urungga Dhatu, that were, 1) to describe the state of geography and the territories, especially the places known by people who constructed the legend which were the land of Lan Chang Kingdom, the land in the Thai Kingdom, especially in the land of Esan, and including the territories of cities around the Khong River; 2) to have the themes of hometown features construction or indicating the matters related to the background and to settle people's hometowns in each location including the sacred places in accordance with the primitive belief and the sacred places according to the Buddhist concept; 3) to indicate the themes of relationship between people and their hometown and also the archaeological remains related to Buddhism, especially the themes related to placing of the Buddha's relics and the establishing of Phra Maha Dhatu Chedi as the center of hometowns that were to place Phra Urungga Dhatu at Phra Dhatu Panom, the Phra Huo Nao (pubis bone) at Phra Bung Puan or Laung mountain, the right Phra Phra Bat (the sole of the foot) at the middle shrine in water (Phra Dhatu La Nong), the 3 Phra Dhatu Khiewphang at Phra Dhutu Phonjikvieng Ngue, and the 4 Phra Dhatu khiewphang at Phra Dhatu Hophu Hopae in Wiangchan (Vientiane); and 4) to demonstrate the details concerning the relatives or lineages of rulers or to call the city legend which is to level the members of the Royal family of the King of the Kingdom of Lao Lanchang.

When considering the structure of the Urungga Dhatu legend, it can be seen that the legend is to find out the knowledge that is valuable and meaningful which values social symbol. At the same time, the legend of Urungga Dhatu is the reflective figure in value, concept, and the belief of people in society and the importance is that the legend results from the roots of the locality and it is the real local home.

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