

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF KHRUBA
SRIWICHAI'S ROLE IN NORTHERN THAI
BUDDHISM: HIS SACRED BIOGRAPHY,
MEDITATION PRACTICE AND INFLUENCE

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Abstract

Khruba Sriwichai (1878-1938) was a well-known monk in Thailand and especially in the Lanna regions in the northern part of the country. His local fame spread throughout the country among a diverse group of followers. Many people know him for his opposition to the national Thai Sangha and his construction of the 12-kilometre road to Wat Phra That Doi Suthep. There have been many books written about Khruba Sriwichai which are mainly based on personal faith and respect for him. There are also works in English on the life of Khruba Sriwichai by Tambiah, Swearer, Cohen, and Thompson which are mainly concerned with the analysis of his role of *ton bun*, his charisma and his political activities.

Few scholars today describe Khruba Sriwichai as a Buddhist teacher, or as a practitioner of meditation. However, it is clear from contemporary accounts of Khruba Sriwichai that during his lifetime his Buddhist charisma was founded on his spiritual practice and his reputation as a meditation master. His level of Buddhist attainment is reflected not just by his ability to challenge Bangkok (and survive) but also by his revival of northern Thai Buddhism.

The thesis looks at an important key for understanding Khruba Sriwichai and the source of his Buddhist charisma. This key is the investigation of his monastic lineage, his Buddhist teachings, his Buddhist practice, and cult which are based on many primary and secondary resources in Thai and English, as well as information gathered during field research in northern Thailand. In addition to histories and biographies in Thai and English, and contemporary materials about Khruba Sriwichai preserved in the Thai media and Royal Gazettes, there is also a *tamnan* (history) composed in 1878 in Lanna Tai language concerning his life and teachings.

The investigation of these aspects of Khruba Sriwichai shed some light upon the understandings of the reason for his enduring importance for Thai history. Khruba

Sriwichai was not a charismatic Buddhist saint because he challenged Bangkok, or appeared on the covers of political magazines. He was a Buddhist saint because of his accumulation of *pāramī*.

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Introduction

In January 2010, a full page colour picture of Khruba Sriwichai¹, a northern Thai monk (1878-1938) appeared on the cover of a Thai magazine published in support of the former Prime Minister of Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra², called the *Voice of Taksin*. The title on the cover says: “Lanna challenges the evil from the time of Khruba Sriwichai to Thaksin”.³ The association of the northern Thai Buddhist saint Khruba Sriwichai and the politician Thaksin raises many questions about the relationship between religion and Thai politics, something analysed extensively in Tambiah’s *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*.⁴ The political implications of Khruba Sriwichai’s challenge of central Thai authority in 1908-1910, 1911-1921, and 1935-1936 cannot be ignored. However, focusing too much on the political obscures the reason for Khruba Sriwichai’s enduring importance for Thai history, his status as a Buddhist holy man, or *ton bun*, and the source of his personal power or charisma. In this thesis, I will explore the reasons for Khruba Sriwichai’s status as a *ton bun*, his Buddhist lineage, his meditation practice, and

¹ “Khruba” refers to an abbot or a title used for a highly respected monk. This title is mainly used among Tai people in northern Thailand and Lao people in the northeast. In this thesis I will use this title to refer to Phra Sriwichai because he was widely known as Khruba Sriwichai. In addition, there are two ways to spell his name which are ครูบาศรีวิชัย and ครูบาศิริไชย. Here I transliterate from the first word by using the Royal Institute’s Thai Romanization system.

² Here I spell the name Thaksin Shinawatra according to the public usage even though the romanization that I use (Royal Institute’s Thai Romanization) would suggest a different spelling which is Thaksin Chinnawat.

³ *Voice of Taksin*, January 2010.

⁴ Stanley J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). See also Virginia Thompson, *Thailand: The New Siam* (New York: Macmillan, 1941); Stanley J. Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets: A Study in Charisma, Hagiography, Sectarianism, and Millennial Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Donald K. Swearer, “The Monk as Prophet and Priest,” in *The Countries of South Asia: Boundaries, Extensions, and Interrelations*, ed. Peter Gaeffke and David A. Utz (Philadelphia: Department of South Asian Studies, University of Pennsylvania, 1988), 72-90; Paul T. Cohen, “Buddhism Unshackled: The Yuan ‘Holy Man’ Tradition and the Nation-State in the Tai World,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32, no. 2 (June 2001): 227-247.

his reputation for the attainment of the Buddhist *pāramīs* or perfections – “Buddhist charisma.”

Khruba Sriwichai was a well-known monk in Thailand and especially in the Lanna regions in the northern part of the country. His local fame spread throughout the country among a diverse group of followers. His Buddhist status is best understood in terms of the ranking system used to measure the achievements of Thai Buddhist monks described by Gabaude: *Vinaya* hierarchy, Administrative hierarchy and Popular hierarchy.⁵ The *Vinaya* hierarchy is that established by the Buddha and is based on the *vinaya* (discipline) rules. Rank in the Administrative hierarchy is determined by the King, the government, and its administration. The Popular hierarchy contains monks who may not have official rank, but are held in high regard by the general public because of their spiritual achievements and reputation; in short, their accumulation of *pāramī*, or “Buddhist charisma.” Khruba Sriwichai belongs to this third group. According to Gabaude, rank in the Popular hierarchy must “germinate from a genuine soil of its own.” and “the popular hierarchy may even generate an open conflict with the central power, as it did long ago, in the case of Khruba Sriwichai in Chiang Mai.”⁶ For Gabaude and many other scholars, the most important characteristic of monks who are part of the Popular hierarchy is their political challenge of central authority. However, this ignores the fact that monks like Khruba Sriwichai earned their rank in the Popular hierarchy due to their reputation as exemplary practitioners of Buddhism.

Few scholars today describe Khruba Sriwichai as a Buddhist teacher, or as a practitioner of meditation. However, it is clear from contemporary accounts of Khruba Sriwichai that during his lifetime his status in the Popular hierarchy – his Buddhist charisma – was founded on his spiritual practice and his reputation as a

⁵ Louis Gabaude, “Where Ascetics Get Comfort and Recluses Go Public: Museums for Buddhist Saints in Thailand,” in *Pilgrims, Patrons and Place: Localizing Sanctity in Asian Religions*, ed. Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 110.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

meditation master. His level of Buddhist attainment is reflected not just by his ability to challenge Bangkok (and survive) but also by his revival of northern Thai Buddhism. The fact that he was able to mobilize thousands of people to fund and construct a 12-kilometre road to the north's most famous pilgrim temple, Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, is related to the beliefs of his followers in his attainment of *pāramī*. The many amulets bearing his image are also evidence of his reputation as a *ton bun*. Even today, many people come to pray at sites associated with him (Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, his shrine at the bottom of Doi Suthep, Wat Ban Pang), place his photograph on their home altars, and visit the museum dedicated to his life at Wat Ban Pang in Lamphun province.

In this thesis, I will argue that an important key for understanding Khruba Sriwichai, and the source of his Buddhist charisma, is the investigation of his monastic lineage, his Buddhist teachings, his Buddhist practice, and cult. To do this, I have gathered many primary and secondary resources in Thai and English, as well as information gathered during fieldwork in northern Thailand. In addition to histories and biographies in Thai and English, and contemporary materials about Khruba Sriwichai preserved in the Thai media and Royal Gazettes, there is also a *tamnan* (history) composed in 1878 in Lanna Tai language concerning his life and teachings.

The first chapter of this thesis is a literature review of both Thai and English researches of Khruba Sriwichai. These studies fall into three categories. The first category, often written in English, focuses on politics and in particular on Khruba Sriwichai's challenges of the religious authorities in Bangkok in 1920s.⁷ The second category consists of hagiographies of Khruba Sriwichai composed in Thai.⁸ There have been several academic studies of Khruba Sriwichai in Thai.

⁷ Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*. See also Thompson, *Thailand: The New Siam*; Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets*.

⁸ *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]* (Bangkok: Khlang Wicha Press); Charat Khosananan, *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai*

One important study written by Sopha Chanamun analysed Khruba Sriwichai as a *ton bun*, a Buddhist “holy man,” and the importance of this concept of *ton bun* for understanding the controversy surrounding the Reformation of the Sangha in Bangkok in 1905.⁹ In addition I will draw on Weber’s fundamental theory of charisma to explain the concept of Buddhist *pāramī*, Reynolds’ and Keyes’ theories of sacred biography, and Tiyavanich’s framework for conceptualizing the history of the monks in Thailand.

Chapter 2 begins with a brief survey of Thai and Lanna history. This historical background is important for understanding of the life of Khruba Sriwichai. Like Tiyavanich, I use hagiographies written during Khruba Sriwichai’s life by his disciples and fellow monks in addition to the more academic biographies compiled by researchers.

The third chapter will examine the relics of Khruba Sriwichai’s life: his sacred biographies, his monastic dress, and the meditation practices and stories of his disciples and other monks who were part of the northern Thai Buddhist sphere. Based on this information I will argue that there is some evidence that Khruba Sriwichai practiced *yogāvacara* meditation, an esoteric form of Theravāda

ariyasong haeng Lanna [Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist saint of Lanna] (Bangkok: Fueang Fa Press, 2006); *Tamnan Khruba Sriwichai baep phitsadan lae tamnan Wat Suan Dok [The comprehensive history of Khruba Sriwichai and the history of Wat Suan Dok]* (Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University, 1994); *Prawati lae phonngan khong Khruba Sriwichai nak bun amta khong mueang nuea [The biography and achievements of Khruba Sriwichai, the everlasting holy man of the North]* (Chiang Mai: Bonsiri Nganphim, 2000); Thamchati Praphasri, *Khruba Sriwichai chom thap tham haeng Lanna Thai [Khruba Sriwichai, the Dhamma commander of Thai Lanna]* (Nonthaburi: Than Bua Kaeo Press, 2000); Siwa Ronachit, *Phra Khruba Sriwichai* (Bangkok: Phirap Press, 1994); Saithan Sratthatham, *Khruba Sriwichai phu chai det [Khruba Sriwichai who is resolute]*, 2nd ed. (Bangkok: Ban Lan Tham, 2006); Phra Anan Phutthathammo, *Prawati khong Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]* (Lamphun: Volume commemorating construction of Phra Khruba Sriwichai’s museum, 1994); Sommai Premchit, *Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]* (Chiang Mai: Ming Muang Press, 2000); Sanga Suphapha, *Chiwit lae ngan khong Khruba Sriwichai [Life and work of Khruba Sriwichai]* (Bangkok: Khlang Withaya Press, 1956).

⁹ Sopha Chanamun, “Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ haeng Lanna (BE 2421-2481) [Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ of Lanna]” (MA diss., Thammasart University).

Buddhist meditation currently being investigated by a number of Buddhist scholars.¹⁰

The final chapter is concerned with the contemporary cult of Khruba Sriwichai: shrines, museums, and amulets that commemorate his life. The persistence of this cult 71 years after his death is, I argue, a significant indicator of the recognition by Thai Buddhist of Khruba Sriwichai's spiritual attainment and his status as a *Lanna ton bun*.

In this thesis I have generally romanized Thai names according to the Royal Institute's Thai Romanization and Buddhist terms according to their Pāli rather than Thai spelling, i.e. *pāramī* (Thai, *barami*), *bodhisatta* (Thai, *phothisat*), *dhamma* (Thai, *tham*), etc. In addition, there are two dating systems used in this thesis, BE (Buddhist Era)¹¹ and CE (Common Era). The Buddhist Era is used to indicate the dates in the Thai resources and all other dates would be in the Common Era dating system. Last but not least, unless stated, all translations from Thai into English were made by the author.

¹⁰ Kate Crosby, "Tantric Theravāda: A Bibliographic Essay on the Writings of François Bizot and others on the Yogāvacara Tradition," *Contemporary Buddhism: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 1, no. 2 (2000): 141-198; Bizot François, *Le Figuier a Cinq Branches: Recherches Sur le Bouddhisme Khmer, I.* (Paris: Ecole française d'Extreme-Orient, 1976).

¹¹ Here I will use the Thai Buddhist Era (BE) which equals that of the Common Era (CE) plus 543 years.

Chapter One

A Literature Review of Thai and English Materials on Khruba Sriwichai

Introduction

Ton bun, or Buddhist holy men, have been the topic of research by many Thai and Western authors. There have been many books written about the Lanna monk, Khruba Sriwichai. In general, most Thai language biographies of Khruba Sriwichai are hagiographies, based on personal faith and respect for Khruba Sriwichai.¹² There have been some academic studies of Khruba Sriwichai in Thai. One of them was written by Chanamun; the book is an analysis of the concept *ton bun* or “source of merit,” and the importance of this concept for understanding the controversy surrounding the Sangha Reforms in Bangkok in 1905.¹³ There are also works in English on the life of Khruba Sriwichai by Tambiah, Swearer, Cohen, and Thompson.¹⁴ Like the Thai biographies, these works do not focus on his teachings and meditation practices; instead they are concerned with the analysis of his role of *ton bun*, his charisma and his political activities. Most of these studies of Khruba Sriwichai can be categorized into three

¹² *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai* [Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]; Khosananan, *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai ariyasong haeng Lanna* [Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist saint of Lanna]; Prawati lae phonngan khong Khruba Sriwichai nak bun amta khong mueang nua [The biography and achievements of Khruba Sriwichai, the everlasting holy man of the North]; Praphasri, *Khruba Sriwichai chom thap tham haeng Lanna Thai* [Khruba Sriwichai, the Dhamma commander of Thai Lanna]; Ronachit, *Phra Khruba Sriwichai*; Sratthatham, *Khruba Sriwichai phu chai det* [Khruba Sriwichai who is resolute]; Phutthathammo, *Prawati khong Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai* [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna].

¹³ Chanamun, “Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ haeng Lanna (BE 2421-2481) [Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ of Lanna].”

¹⁴ Thompson, *Thailand: The New Siam*; Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets*; Swearer, “The Monk as Prophet and Priest.”; Cohen, “Buddhism Unshackled.”; Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*.

groups. The first group consists of hagiographers: authors who are Buddhist believers, accept the reality of concepts such as *ton bun*, millennialism and *bodhisatta*, and whose primary focus is compiling historical material from the life of Khruba Sriwichai that relates to these concepts. The second group consists of scholars who are concerned with the association between *ton bun* and the challenge of political authority. A third group of scholars analyse the relationship between the *ton bun*, charisma, and the construction and the renovation of sacred space. In this chapter, I will investigate these three different categories of research of Khruba Sriwichai which have done by both Thai and English researchers.

1.1 The definitions of *khruba* and *ton bun*

In order to study about Khruba Sriwichai, a clear understanding of what is meant by the terms *khruba* and *ton bun* is needed. According to the Thai scholar, Singkha Wannasai, the term *khruba* is originally from the Pālī word, *khrūpācāriyo*.¹⁵ *Khrūpācāriyo* is the combination of the two words *khrūpi* and *ācāriyo* which mean “being both teacher and professor”.¹⁶ Wannasai further suggested that the word *khrūpācāriyo* eventually became shorter and it turned into *khrupā* but Thai people pronounce it as *khruba* as it is easier to pronounce. In addition to Wannasai’s interpretation of the word *khruba*, it also seems likely that this word is the combination of the two Pālī terms, “guru” and “pācariya”. As defined in the Pali-English Dictionary, *guru* means “venerable, reverend, a teacher”¹⁷ and *pācariya* means “teacher & teacher’s teacher.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Singkha Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]* (Chiang Mai: Sun Nungsue Chiang Mai, 1979), 5.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, *The Pali Text Society’s Pali-English Dictionary* (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1992), 253.

¹⁸ Ibid., 96.

The term *khru**ba*, according to the Northern Thai Dictionary, refers to “an abbot or a title used for a highly respected monk.”¹⁹ This term can also apply to a revered monk who is more than fifty years old.²⁰ A Thai scholar, Kwanchewan Buadaeng, writes “Khuba is a title of Buddhist monk, literally ‘revered (venerated) teacher’, in the traditional Lanna Sangha.”²¹ Similarly, Swearer states that “the title *khru**bā* is one given by custom to especially venerated monks, usually advanced in age.”²² He further indicates that “in most cases the title *khru**bā* is reserved for ordained monks...the best known *khru**bās* of northern Thailand are venerated for their personal charisma.”²³ Therefore, Swearer concluded, a *khru**ba*, is “a monk whose authority rests more on his own experience than the institution with which he is associated, and whose role and teaching is more exemplary than institutional.”²⁴

*Khru**ba* is not an official title. It is not recognised by the administrative hierarchy nor is it awarded by the central Sangha authority. This title, as Wannasai suggested, is the title awarded by the general public to a monk whom they see as virtuous. Although *khru**ba* is not an official title, it indicates a monk who holds this title is honoured and respected by lay community. There is a direct relationship between the title *khru**ba* and a monk’s moral conduct: if people perceive that a monk is lacking in morality, he will not be awarded with the title

¹⁹ “*khru**bā*,” *The Northern Thai Dictionary* (Chiang Mai: Chiang Mai Rajabhat University, 1996), 120.

²⁰ “*khru**bā*,” *Lanna-Thai Dictionary (Mae Fa Luang version)*, 1990, 211.

²¹ Kwanchewan Buadaeng, “Khuba Movements and the Karen in Northern Thailand: Negotiating Sacred Space and Identity,” Paper presented at the international workshop on the “Cultural Diversity and Conservation in the Making of Mainland Southeast Asia and Southwestern China: Regional Dynamics in the Past and Present”, Luang Prabang, Lao P.D.R., 14-21 February 2002, 3.

²² Swearer, “The Monk as Prophet and Priest,” 76.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

*khru*ba even if he is seventy or eighty years old.²⁵ The title *khru*ba is commonly used in Lanna regions and among Buddhist Tai groups in Burma, Laos, and Sipsong Panna of Southern China.²⁶ According to Buadaeng this title becomes rarely used after the centralization of the Sangha in the early twentieth century. As an alternative, the central Thai title *luang phaw* (“revered father”) or *luang poo* (“revered grandfather”) are now used to refer to meritorious monks.²⁷

The term *ton bun* literally means “source of merit.”²⁸ This term has the same meaning as the Central Thai words, *nak bun* (“meritorious person”) or *phū mī bun* (“person who has merit”). In addition, *ton bun* is known in the Western context as a holy man. Cohen defines *ton bun* as “a person who has accumulated great merit (bun) and perfections (barami) in past lives or in the present life and who, out of compassion, provides opportunities for others to gain merit.”²⁹ He further states that the *ton bun* tradition is a unique Yuan Buddhist (Lanna Theravāda tradition) variant of the *bodhisatta* ideal, expressed typically in the constructing or renovating religious monuments and the sharing of merit with laypeople and followers.³⁰

Buadaeng classifies monks who are renowned as *khru*ba into two groups. The first group consists of “meritorious senior monks who have stayed in monkhood for long time, been seen as meritorious and sacred and whose knowledge and practices are in ‘traditional’ Northern Thai style.”³¹ Here, the reference to the

²⁵ Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khru*ba *Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khru*ba *Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 4.

²⁶ Buadaeng, “Khruba Movements and the Karen in Northern Thailand,” 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁸ “ton bun,” *The Northern Thai Dictionary* (Chiang Mai: Chiang Mai Rajabhat University, 1996), 271.

²⁹ Paul T. Cohen, “A Buddha Kingdom in the Golden Triangle: Buddhist Revivalism and the Charismatic Monk Khruba Bunchum,” *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 11:2 (August 2000): 141.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

³¹ Buadaeng, “Khruba Movements and the Karen in Northern Thailand,” 4.

“traditional Northern Thai style of Buddhism” indicates a form of Buddhist that is quite different from the reformed Buddhism or Thammayut-nikai (Pāli, Dhammayutika-nikāya).³² To illustrate this point further, I shall draw on the work of Kamala Tiyavanich.³³ In her thesis, Tiyavanich points out that in the nineteenth century, the Khon Meuang (the ethnic group in the North) and other various ethnocultural peoples in Siam³⁴ integrated their own regional customs into their practice of Buddhism. For instance, the methods used to teach *dhamma* in the North were different from those used by the reformed Sangha in Bangkok: in the north, “monks were using Jataka and folk stories instead of sermons based on Buddhist doctrine to instruct laypeople.”³⁵

The second group of *khru*ba are monks involved in millenarian uprisings that broke out in times of hardship or political uncertainty. These uprisings were typically led by a Khruba, a Buddhist monk who is believed to be a *ton bun*, literally meritorious person. This second group of *khru*ba led people in Buddhist revival movements and in the construction or renovation of monasteries and other related infrastructure throughout northern Thailand. Because of his association with the renovation and construction of sacred monuments in the peripheral areas of the nation-state, the Khruba’s reputation as a *ton bun* and the number of followers increased.³⁶

³² I will further discuss Thammayut-nikai in chapter 2.

³³ Kamala Tiyavanich, “The Wandering Forest Monks in Thailand, 1900-1992: Ajan Mun’s Lineage” (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1993).

³⁴ Charles F. Keyes, *Thailand: Buddhist Kingdom as Modern Nation-State* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 66. As an indication of the type of pan-Thai nationalism he sought to promote, Phibun, shortly after taking office, had a law enacted that changed the name of the country from Siam to Thailand. This change of name marked a new phase in the process, begun under King Mongkut, of transforming the traditional Siamese state into a modern Thai nation-state.

³⁵ Tiyavanich, “The Wandering Forest Monks in Thailand, 1900-1992,” 26.

³⁶ Buadaeng, “Khru

1.2 The belief in *ton bun*, millennialism, and *bodhisatta*

The belief in *ton bun*, millennialism, and in the imminent arrival of the Metteyya Bodhisatta has a long history in Theravāda Buddhism. In Thailand, religious histories, or *tamnan* dating from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, refer to holy men, or *ton bun*.³⁷ In his study, Charnvit Kasetsiri suggested that it seems that these holy men (either monks or people who lived a different way of life from ordinary laymen) were the most important leaders of society in the early stages of Thai history.³⁸ Wilson also investigated the role of holy men in the history of Thailand and Laos from an historical context. She concluded that the legitimacy of holy men in the society has changed over time. Holy men in the early history of both the Thai and the Laos, Wilson suggests, were legitimate and respected local leaders. Nevertheless, when political systems became more centralized in Ayutthaya and Bangkok, these *ton bun* began to lose their former authority.³⁹ By the late 18th century, the new source of central legitimacy associated with Bangkok began to challenge the traditional Buddhist authority represented by *ton bun* such as Khruba Sriwichai.⁴⁰

In her MA thesis, Chanamun analysed the use of the term *ton bun* by two particular groups of people: monks and laypeople. Laypeople use the term *ton bun* to refer to the king of the Lanna regions in northern Thailand and to denote a military leader during war time. This use is related to the millennialist belief in the degeneration of Buddhism over a 5,000-year period. At the end of this 5,000 year cycle, it is believed that *ton bun* will be born to preserve Buddhism and to

³⁷ Charnvit Kasetsiri, *The Rise of Ayudhya: A History of Siam in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Kuala Lumpur and New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁹ Constance M. Wilson, "The Holy Man in the History of Thailand and Laos," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 28:2 (September 1997): 361-362.

⁴⁰ Swearer, "The Monk as Prophet and Priest," 78. Swearer notes that further evidence of Khruba Sriwichai's importance is that fact that "everyone in the north, especially in the Chiangmai valley, knows the story of his life, or at least episodes from it, and probably will be wearing a protective Sīwichai amulet or medallion on their amulet chain hanging around their neck.

make it thrive until the arrival of the Boddhisatta Metteyya. *Ton bun*, in this case, refers to a monk who is known for his accomplishment in spiritual practices, and strict observance of the *vinaya*. These special characteristics make up his charisma, and attract many people to have faith in him.⁴¹ Northern Thailand has a long tradition in the belief of *ton bun* and Khruba Sriwichai was praised as the most famous *ton bun* of the recent times by many people.

It is interesting to note that the belief in *ton bun* and the belief in the inevitable decline of Buddhism are closely related. In addition, the expectation of this degeneration brings forth the expectation of a saviour. Hence, the belief system in a future saviour or the Buddhist millenarian thinking is established. According to Tambiah, millennial Buddhism “rests upon conceptions and prophecies concerning the coming righteous ruler and the coming savior Buddha, the two personages co-appearing or being fused in one.”⁴² He further associates Khruba Sriwichai with the “phenomenon of millennial Buddhism of the kind ... that looks to the coming universal king (*cakkavatti*), righteous ruler (*dhammarāja*), and coming Buddha (*Maitreya*).”⁴³

Underlying the millennial expectation, on the one hand, is a belief in *Samsāra* or the cycle of rebirth, scholars have noted that Buddhist millennialism gives much needed hope for Buddhists—as Malalgoda wrote: “to visualize periods of intense spiritual awakening in the world when under the personal guidance of Buddhas the worldly beings acquire greater chances of achieving salvation.”⁴⁴ On the other hand, Buddhist millennial thinking is often an outcome of social crisis coming into contact with political power. According to Keyes, “millennialism

⁴¹ Chanamun, “Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ haeng Lanna (BE 2421-2481) [Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ of Lanna],” 2.

⁴² Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets*, 319.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 306.

⁴⁴ Malalgoda, “Millennialism in Relation to Buddhism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 12:4 (October 1970): 428-429.

can never itself be religious change; rather millennialism as a religion is invariably a transitory phenomenon.”⁴⁵ Keyes further emphasizes that “millennialism is a symptom of profound social crisis that must be resolved if a society is to persist.”⁴⁶ Taking this into consideration, we can come to the conclusion that a society experiencing Buddhist millenarian thinking is experiencing social crisis such as state modernization. I will illustrate this briefly with the case of Khruba Sriwichai in section 1.3.

While some research associate Khruba Sriwichai with millennial Buddhism or the expectation of the coming of Metteyya, others compare him to a *bodhisatta* or “the person who wishes to become a Buddha in the future”. In fact, there is a thin line between the belief in the coming Buddha named Metteyya and the countless past and future Buddhas. In Theravāda Buddhism, one who wants to become a Buddha has to make “a vow in the presence of some previous buddha of a far distant age, [and] practice[d] the perfections for countless lives” these resolutions entitle one as *bodhisatta*.⁴⁷

Keyes recognizes Khruba Sriwichai as the “savior saint” – a *bodhisatta* who was actively involved in the world and provided a means for ordinary people to make merit through associating with him by constructing and repairing Buddhist monuments and temples.⁴⁸ Likewise, in her MA Thesis, Chanamun suggests that one reason Khruba Sriwichai was regarded as *ton bun* is because of his vow to become a future Buddha. According to Chanamun, a traditional practice for monks in Lanna kingdom was to append a religious vow at the end of a palm leaf

⁴⁵ Charles F. Keyes, “Millennialism, Theravāda Buddhism, and Thai Society,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 36:2 (February 1977): 302.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Rupert Gettin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 32.

⁴⁸ Charles F. Keyes, “Death of Two Buddhist Saints in Thailand,” in *Charisma and Sacred Biography*, ed. Michael A. Williams (Chambersburg, PA: American Academy of Religion, 1982), 173.

manuscript. All the palm leaf manuscripts written by Khruba Sriwichai include a vow to reach enlightenment and become one of the Buddhas in the future. In addition, the Lanna researcher, Wannasai, also documents Khruba Sriwichai's *bodhisatta* vow. In his book, Wannasai translated one palm leaf manuscript, the story of Usabaras, attributed to Khruba Sriwichai including the Bodhisattva⁴⁹ vow.

There are fifteen records of the story of *Usabaras*. I, Sīwichaiya Bhikkhu, was born in the year of tiger, CS (Chulasakaraj) 1240 or BE 2420 and until now it is the year tiger, CS 1288 or BE (Buddhist Era) 2469. I, together with my disciples, laymen and laywomen, have faith in writing this *dhamma* for preserving the religion for five thousand years. It was the day when I was at Wat Sri Don Sai Mūn Bun Rueng and when I constructed the Buddha statue at Wat Phra Singha in⁵⁰ Chiangmai that I wished I would attain enlightenment and become a Buddha.

In this section I have discussed the literature about Khruba Sriwichai that is concerned with his career as a *ton bun*, his *bodhisatta* vow, and his association with Lanna Buddhist millenarianism. In the next section, I will review the research on Khruba Sriwichai's confrontation with Bangkok and the Central Thai Buddhist hierarchy during 1908 to 1936.

1.3 The association between *ton bun* and political authority

In addition to his fame as a charismatic *ton bun* from Lanna, Khruba Sriwichai was also famous for his opposition to the national Thai Sangha. Many scholars have written about the association between *ton bun* and political authority, and have drawn on the example of Khruba Sriwichai to illustrate their arguments. According to Keyes, "his success in emerging unscathed from a series of conflicts with the secular and religious authorities of Thailand also greatly enhanced his reputation and contributed to the quality that led others to see him as

⁴⁹ Chanamun, "Khruba Sriwichai 'ton bun' haeng Lanna (BE 2421-2481) [Khruba Sriwichai 'ton bun' of Lanna]," 33.

⁵⁰ Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, preface.

charismatic.”⁵¹ Likewise, Tambiah also sees Khruba Sriwichai as the monk who is an activist charismatic monk and is “best remembered for his opposition to the national Thai Sangha as promoted from Bangkok and to some of the ordinances it sought to implement in its policy of unification.”⁵² In his study, Tambiah recapitulates the role of the Buddhist holy man:

there is historical evidence to suggest that they [holy men] might have been importantly implicated in the founding of kingdoms, settlements, and towns. The authors of chronicles frequently describe them as agents in the spread and maintenance of Buddhism ...Some of these holy men have been at the hearts of Buddhist cults and movements that have questioned, and even attacked, the established political and religious systems and their values while championing reformist and millenarian goals.⁵³

Clearly, Tambiah’s definition of “Buddhist holy man” can be applied to Khruba Sriwichai’s life and career: he worked on behalf of the renovating mission of Lanna kingdom and as well as the preservation of Lanna Buddhism. Perhaps even more significant was Khruba Sriwichai’s challenge of the national Thai Sangha, described by Thompson as “the most interesting instance of monkish insubordination” to the Siamese Sangha.⁵⁴

Khruba Sriwichai’s challenge of the central Thai Sangha has been interpreted in different ways by scholars. On the one hand, Thompson suggests that “the rift illustrated by Phra Sri Vijaya [or Khruba Sriwichai]’s defection was not doctrinal, and the monks’ participation was probably the product of the unsettled times.”⁵⁵ On the other hand, Chanamun sees his action as a reaction against the reformation of the Buddhist Sangha in Bangkok. Regarding this matter, Chanamun states that the attempt to spread reformed Buddhism from Bangkok to the periphery clearly affected Lanna Buddhism and created the dispute between the Buddhist hierarchy

⁵¹ Keyes, “Death of Two Buddhist Saints in Thailand,” 149.

⁵² Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets*, 306.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 294.

⁵⁴ Thompson, *Thailand: The New Siam*, 642.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 643.

in Bangkok and the Lanna monks in the North. She further asserts that this controversy was illustrated best by the contemporary case of Khruba Sriwichai.⁵⁶ In her study, Chanamun proposed that there are two main reasons why many people praised Khruba Sriwichai as *ton bun*. One of the two reasons is based on his role in this controversy. Chanamun believed that Khruba Sriwichai's charisma increased in response to Bangkok's attempts to control the formerly independent Lanna kingdoms. The royal family of Lanna, merchants, villagers, and the monks' community were affected in one way or another by the reforms imposed by Bangkok. Some accepted these changes while many others opposed them strongly. For those who opposed the reforms, Khruba Sriwichai became a symbol of unity and was recognized as a leader in the struggle to preserve Lanna traditions.⁵⁷

Scholars take two main perspectives in the studies of Khruba Sriwichai's political opposition to Bangkok's Sangha Reforms. The first portrays Khruba Sriwichai as a disobedient monk who "had taken advantage of his popularity to disobey the head priest of the *changvad* [province]."⁵⁸ The second perspective portrays Khruba Sriwichai as the saviour of traditional Lanna Buddhism and culture.⁵⁹ Biographies written from this second perspective tend to assimilate him with a *bodhisattva*:

the kind of *bodhisattva* he was seen to manifest was integrally related to North Thailand's resistance to Bangkok's unification drive and to the erasure of its own religious heritage. And this situation of resistance dovetails with the restoration of the ideal Buddhist realm studded with pagodas and monuments.⁶⁰

⁵⁶Chanamun, "Khruba Sriwichai 'ton bun' haeng Lanna (BE 2421-2481) [Khruba Sriwichai 'ton bun' of Lanna]," 2.

⁵⁷Ibid., 88.

⁵⁸Thompson, *Thailand: The New Siam*, 643.

⁵⁹Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets*; Chanamun, "Khruba Sriwichai 'ton bun' haeng Lanna (BE 2421-2481) [Khruba Sriwichai 'ton bun' of Lanna]."; Keyes, "Death of Two Buddhist Saints in Thailand."; Cohen, "A Buddha Kingdom in the Golden Triangle."; Swearer, "The Monk as Prophet and Priest."

⁶⁰Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets*, 306.

In the next section of this chapter, I will discuss the literature on Khruba Sriwichai that is concerned with his recreation of the Lanna north into a *buddhadesa*, or “Buddha land.”

1.4 *Ton bun*, Buddhist revival and construction of sacred space

According to Buddhist tradition, the primary role of the *ton bun* is to preserve, protect and develop Buddhism until the time of Metteyya. The construction of sacred space is closely associated with However, Buadaeng points out that though there are many studies and analysis about *khruba*, they have mainly focused on the notion of *ton bun*, the charisma of *khruba*, and the political crisis.⁶¹ Accordingly, in her research, Buadaeng attempts to focus on the construction activity of *khruba* movements. She argues that

the construction of sacred space, in separation from that of the centralized Sangha as the official organization of Buddhist monks, conducted by Khuba and the followers, is the meaningful basis for the formation and the continuation of Khuba movements. This construction of sacred space is based on the meanings of sacred space from reworked and reproduced religious texts and local practices.⁶²

Based on her analysis, Buadaeng concludes that “the sacred space has been constructed in competition, contestation and negotiation between the Sangha and the State which have different natures in different historical periods.”⁶³ Therefore, the form and the meaning of *ton bun* and the *khruba* movement may change over time. Buadaeng identifies the notion of the *khruba* movement as “the movement led by a Khuba to construct and renovate Buddhist monasteries in many places.”⁶⁴ She further suggests that there are three main components for the establishment and sustainment of the *khruba* movement which are the belief in

⁶¹ Buadaeng, “Khuba Movements and the Karen in Northern Thailand,” 3.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid. It is interesting to note that the constructing of the sacred space can be seen as one source of legitimacy for the role of *ton bun*.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

ton bun, the construction and renovation of sacred places, and the large number of followers who contribute to the success of the construction project.⁶⁵

In this section, the second component that Buadaeng proposed will be further investigated. According to Buadaeng, the second factor that enables the formation and continuation of the *khrua* movement is “the construction and renovation of monasteries in many places.”⁶⁶ She suggests that once the leader of the movement is regarded as a *ton bun*, it is possible that more people would support and make merits through him by contributing their resources and labours for the construction projects. This successful construction then would contribute the well-known reputation of *khrua* as *ton bun*. She also provides an example of this component by referring to *Khrua Sriwichai*.

When *Khrua Siwichai* became an abbot of *Wat Ban Pang*, in *Li*, the remote district of *Lamphun*, he initiated the construction of *Ban Pang* monasteries in a new place in 1899, based on the justification that he had to move it farther from the community so that he could concentrate on his meditation. However, only after 1920 when he came back from confinement in Bangkok and when his reputation to be a *ton bun* increased, did he begin to travel to renovate and construct important monasteries in various places of *Lanna*: *Chiang Mai*, *Lamphun*, *Lampang*, *Phrae*, *Phayao*, *Chiang Rai*, and *Mae Hong Son*. According to the list in the book on *Biography and Works of Khrua Siwichai and History of Wat SriSoda*, *Khrua Siwichai* had constructed or renovated not less than 52 monasteries including monastery facilities.⁶⁷

In Buadaeng’s perspective, the construction and renovation of monasteries is the key activity which differentiates the *khrua* movement from other religious-political movements.⁶⁸ She further explains the differences in the way that

the *Khrua* movement is rather characterized as the Buddhist revivalism than the millenarism because while millenarian movements totally negate this-worldly

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 5. According to Buadaeng, other religious-political movements may also share the similar belief in *ton bun* and as well as the belief in the coming of the fifth Buddha *Maitreya*.

existence and long for utopia society in next life, the Khuba movement were directed toward this-worldly construction. As Buddhism is seen as deteriorating, with a need for revival, Khuba movements have political implications—in light of their rejection from the centralized Sangha and state.⁶⁹

Like Buadaeng, Cohen argues that “the modern *ton bun* tradition is a form of Buddhist revivalism, not militant millennialism.”⁷⁰ In addition, he suggests that the millennial notions such as the coming of the fifth Buddha only provide “a language for expressing revivalist aspirations and a blueprint of the ideal Buddhist society, that is, one governed by Buddhist morality.”⁷¹ An attempt to revive the Buddhist society is by intertwining “moral regeneration and the construction and repair of ‘sacred things’.”⁷² The latter is best illustrated with Khruba Sriwichai’s endeavour to restore the Lanna kingdom by constructing and renovating sacred places in Lanna regions with the support from thousands of varied ethnic groups.

1.5 The fundamental theory of charisma

Much of the research on Khruba Sriwichai refers to his charisma: he is described as different from ordinary monks, and as a leader who was opposed to central Sangha authority. In this section, I will review the literature on charisma, and the relationship between charisma and Khruba Sriwichai. Charisma, as defined by sociologist, Max Weber, is “a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.”⁷³ Khruba Sriwichai’s charisma can be seen from his role as a *ton bun* who is believed to endow with miraculous power and the *bodhisatta* ideal which

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Cohen, “A Buddha Kingdom in the Golden Triangle,” 142.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, ed. S.N. Eisenstadt (Chicago and London: University Of Chicago Press, 1968), 48.

expressed typically in the constructing and renovating religious monuments and the sharing of merit with followers.

In addition, the title *khru*ba suggests that he was venerated for his ‘personal charisma’. To illustrate this point further, I shall draw on the study of Swearer.⁷⁴ In his article, Swearer suggests that the monastic types, which are *phra* and *khru*ba, “bear some relationship to Max Weber’s categories of priest and prophet.”⁷⁵ The concept of priest, according to Weber, is “associated with some type of social organization, of which they are employees or organs operating in the interests of the organization’s members.”⁷⁶ The priest’s charisma or power is determined by “his professional equipment of special knowledge, fixed doctrine, and vocational qualifications,”⁷⁷ or known as ‘institutional charisma’. The institutional charisma of the priests bring them into contrast with prophets, “who exerts their influence by virtue of personal gifts (charisma) made manifest in miracle and revelation.”⁷⁸ With regard to *khru*ba, Swearer suggests that the well-known *khru*bas of northern Thailand are respected for their personal charisma rather than their institutional charisma. Among the best known northern *khru*bas, Khruba Sriwichai is regarded as “the most famous northern monk in the 20th century.”⁷⁹ His personal charisma was widely renowned not only in the Lanna kingdom but also throughout the country.

Most of the studies of the life of Khruba Sriwichai explore his association with Buddhist millennialism, the challenge of the centralised political authority in Bangkok, and the construction and renovation of sacred space in northern

⁷⁴ Swearer, “The Monk as Prophet and Priest,” 76.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 28.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 29.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Swearer, “The Monk as Prophet and Priest,” 76.

Thailand. However, there is one other aspect that is an important key for understanding Khruba Sriwichai and the source of his personal charisma: his spiritual practices. In this thesis, I will argue that Khruba Sriwichai's status as a *ton bun*, a charismatic Buddhist leader, was founded on his reputation as a meditation master, who had accumulated much *pāramī*, Buddhist perfection, through his spiritual practices.

1.6 The theory of sacred biography and the framework for conceptualizing the history of the monks in Thailand

Most the studies of history of the Thai Buddhist are based on “the observations and reflections of ecclesiastics at the center, that is Bangkok.”⁸⁰ There has been a tendency to ignore the importance of the monks on the “periphery” (monks who spent their lives in rural and mountainous areas outside of the Bangkok and central regions). One reason for this neglect is because there is little information about these monks in official accounts of Thai Buddhism. The only evidence that has survived is located in autobiographies and biographies written by disciples rather than scholars, two literary genres seem to be less reliable than official histories. Often these accounts of the life of rural monks contain references to supernatural events; often historians have tended to ignore or downplay such information as unreliable superstition.

Some scholars, like Tiyavanich, have challenged this dismissal of sacred biography as historical evidence and have insisted that the study of sacred biography is essential for understanding Buddhism. According to Reynold's theory of sacred biography, the Buddha's biography is an exemplar or an ideal for all subsequent Theravāda Buddhist sacred biographies⁸¹ and “within the entire

⁸⁰ Tiyavanich, “The Wandering Forest Monks in Thailand, 1900-1992,” xiii.

⁸¹ Frank E Reynolds, “The Many Lives of Buddha: A Study of Sacred Biography and Theravāda Tradition,” in *The Biographical Process: Studies in the History and Psychology of Religion* (The Hague: Moulton, 1976), 37.

history of religions there is no sacred biography which has had a wider dissemination or made a greater impact than that which recounts the life of the Buddha.”⁸² Likewise, Keyes believed that the account of a saint’s life can never be straightforward or ordinary, because all the actions must be interpreted with reference to how these actions associate the sacred or holy.⁸³ Keyes suggested that “the religious perspective in which the actions of a saint are interpreted is conditioned by the beliefs held about the fundamental truth proclaimed by the founder(s) of the religion”⁸⁴ and applied Weber’s theory of the prophet to the concept of the *ton bun*. According to Weber, there are two kinds of prophets: the ethical prophet who “imposes demands on certain categories of men in such a way that not only do they have an opportunity, but it is rather their *duty* to follow his precepts”⁸⁵ and the exemplary prophet who “provides a model for a way of life which can be followed by others, embodying in a religious sense what is defined as a higher level of personal virtue”⁸⁶ like the Buddha. In this way, Keyes argues, a man can be recognized as a Buddhist saint only when his actions are seen to have been modelled from the life of the Buddha himself and also his teachings about the achievement of the cessation of suffering for oneself and others.⁸⁷ Therefore, it is unsurprising to find similarities between monastic biography and the life of the Buddha.

Nevertheless, sacred biography becomes more elaborated as time passes. As a result, many modern scholars tend to uncover only the facts from these sacred biographies. Reynold states that in recent years, there has been a tendency in modern scholars to demythologize biography and turn away from the

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Keyes, “Death of Two Buddhist Saints in Thailand,” 152.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, xxxv.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Keyes, “Death of Two Buddhist Saints in Thailand,” 152.

extraordinary or phenomenal elements.⁸⁸ He further provides examples as follows:

the Jātakas stories have been deemphasized, and where references have been made to jātakas they have been treated almost exclusively as moral fables; the fantastic or miraculous elements in the Buddha's life have been passed over or given a purely 'symbolic' interpretation and significance; and the stories of the relics and images have been ignored or, in some cases, subjected to a radical historicization.⁸⁹

The same pattern of demythologizing also appears in the biography of a monk. Many modern scholars try to keep the facts simple and nothing magical when writing a life story of a monk.

This process of demythologizing the biography of a monk's life also reflects in the study of Thai Buddhism. According to Tiyanich, many scholars maintain the perspective that "Buddhism in Thailand should be understood in terms of its center—both its geographical and political center, Bangkok, and its doctrinal center, the Pali canon as interpreted by monastic authorities in Bangkok."⁹⁰ This Bangkok Theravāda viewpoint is "an urban, literate, middle- and upper- class view of Buddhism. It favors texts, doctrines, and orthodoxy, and it ignores or devalues local Buddhist traditions."⁹¹ In her research, Tiyanich, proposes a new framework for conceptualizing the history of the monks in Thailand. She suggests that many historians "ignored peripheral monks and rural attitudes and values, considering them to be of marginal interest or insignificant, even though these monks have always formed a numerical majority in the sangha."⁹² As a result, her study is based on life stories, autobiographies, and personal interviews

⁸⁸ Reynolds, "The Many Lives of Buddha: A Study of Sacred Biography and Theravāda Tradition," 57.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Kamala Tiyanich, *Forest Recollections: Wandering Monks in Twentieth-Century Thailand* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 2.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Tiyanich, "The Wandering Forest Monks in Thailand, 1900-1992," xiii.

of the wandering monks in Thailand with their own local Buddhist traditions. In addition, Tiyavanich believes that there is no better approach to investigate a wandering monk's personality than through such records because only autobiographies or biographies written by disciples (or sacred biographies) provide many aspects and intimate details of a monk's life. Through studying from such texts, in Tiyavanich's words, "we gain some knowledge of what went on in the minds of wandering monks. The sources open a window onto the thudong monk's life, a window never opened in the commentaries and analyses of outsiders. They lend a freshness and vitality to history of Thailand which is often missing in other sources."⁹³ Therefore, as Tiyavanich suggested, it is important to study the autobiographies of wandering monks because they are essential for an understanding of the influence of Buddhism in the periphery parts of Thailand which are not dominated by Bangkok.

1.7 Conclusion

This survey of the Thai and English academic studies about Khruba Sriwichai shows that scholars have focused on three aspects of his life: (1) his career as a millenarian *ton bun*, (2) his challenge of political authority, and (3) his construction and renovation of temples and monasteries in Lanna region. These studies draw on a variety of sources: sacred biographies as well as historical records.

Despite the fact that these sacred biographies contain accounts of miraculous deeds performed by Khruba Sriwichai, there has been no investigation of the association between these miraculous deeds and Khruba Sriwichai's Buddhist lineage and practice. Instead, scholars have chosen to emphasise the political implications of his challenge of the Central Thai religious authorities. This is a serious gap in the scholarship on Khruba Sriwichai, as the miracles, Buddhist

⁹³ Ibid., xv.

practice and lineage are key elements for understanding his status as a northern Thai *ton bun*. In the next chapter, I will investigate information about these key elements in the sacred biographies of Khruba Sriwichai written by his disciples and fellow monks.

Chapter Two

Biography of Khruba Sriwichai

Introduction

In Thailand, writing and publishing monastic biographies is a common practice. An author will decide to research and write about the life of an exemplary monk in order to make merit. Pious, wealthy people will sponsor the republication the story of a monk's life from an older source in order to spread the *dhamma* to the general public, as well as make merit. Among the numerous biographies of Thai monks, there are many written about Khruba Sriwichai.

In general, most Thai language biographies of Khruba Sriwichai can be considered to be “hagiographies,” religious biographies based on personal faith and respect for Khruba Sriwichai.⁹⁴ They portray Khruba Sriwichai as an extraordinary monk who had attained the Buddhist *pāramīs* or perfections along the path of his monkhood. The style of these biographies parallels the Buddha's biography: the extraordinary events at the time of his birth, the unusual behaviour in his childhood, and the miraculous event at the time of his cremation.⁹⁵ Swearer observes that “the traditional accounts of Khruba Sriwichai's early career depict him as an exemplary Buddhist monk. He lived a simple life, ate only one

⁹⁴ *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai* [Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]; Khosananan, *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai ariyasong haeng Lanna* [Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist saint of Lanna]; Prawati lae phonngan khong Khruba Sriwichai nak bun amta khong mueang nua [The biography and achievements of Khruba Sriwichai, the everlasting holy man of the North]; Praphasri, *Khruba Sriwichai chom thap tham haeng Lanna Thai* [Khruba Sriwichai, the Dhamma commander of Thai Lanna]; Ronachit, *Phra Khruba Sriwichai*; Sratthatham, *Khruba Sriwichai phu chai det* [Khruba Sriwichai who is resolute]; Phutthathammo, *Prawati khong Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai* [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna].

⁹⁵ Reynolds, “The Many Lives of Buddha: A Study of Sacred Biography and Theravāda Tradition.” It is interesting to note that this reflects Reynold's theory of sacred biography where he states that the Buddha's biography is an exemplar or an ideal for all subsequent Theravāda Buddhist sacred biographies.

meatless meal a day, and refrained from such habit-forming practices as chewing betel and fermented tea leaves (miang), and smoking. He was wise, compassionate, steadfastly righteous, and, above all, generous.”⁹⁶

A few Thai biographers, such as Wannasai, have carefully avoided hagiography. In his discussion of the biographical styles used to tell the life story of Khruba Sriwichai, Wannasai notes that biographies of Khruba Sriwichai have usually reflected the writers’ personal Buddhist beliefs as well as their respect for Khruba Sriwichai. Most of Khruba Sriwichai’s biographers used their writing to praise him rather than relate facts about his life. According to Wannasai, the excessive praise of Khruba Sriwichai might do more harm than good.⁹⁷ In his preface, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna*, he emphasises that unlike Khruba Sriwichai’s hagiographers, he has used accurate evidence to write Khruba Sriwichai’s biography in order to portray the monk as an *khon thammada tae than di duai khunatham thao nan*⁹⁸ (ordinary person but with great morality). Wannasai notes in his introduction that although there are many life stories of Khruba Sriwichai, they all based on a small number of sources. He concludes that the only “real” evidence that has survived about Khruba Sriwichai are the records about his trial by the Bangkok authorities, and accounts of his construction and renovation of monasteries.⁹⁹

In the literature review in chapter 1, I discussed Tiyavanich’s framework for conceptualizing the history of the monks in Thailand. In this chapter, I will revisit that framework and use it to investigate the life story of Khruba Sriwichai. According to Tiyavanich, in order to comprehend the life story of a Thai Buddhist

⁹⁶ Swearer, “The Monk as Prophet and Priest,” 79.

⁹⁷ Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 3.

⁹⁸ Ibid., preface. “khon thammada tae than di duai khunatham thao nan” (คนธรรมดา แต่ท่านดีด้วยคุณธรรมเท่านั้น)

⁹⁹ Ibid., 3.

monk, it is important to first review the structure of the society during his time and to investigate a monk's personality than through their sacred biographies. Although they may contain some miraculous elements, they provide information considered important by individuals living at that time. In particular, these sacred biographies are a useful source for the meditation practice of Khruba Sriwichai. Wannasai's approach to the biography of Khruba Sriwichai differs from Tiyavanich. Therefore, I will combine both techniques for approaching the life story of Khruba Sriwichai in order to get the fullest picture possible. In this chapter, I will first provide a brief history of Lanna kingdom and outline the situation in 19th century Thailand. I will follow with the life story of Khruba Sriwichai, using various sources including autobiography, hagiography and historical accounts and try to gain a better understanding of how his miraculous deeds relate to the concept of *ton bun* in northern Tai Buddhism.

2.1 Thailand in the nineteenth century

In the early nineteenth century, Thailand had not yet become a centralized state with the defined borders shown on a modern map, and it was still known as Siam. In those days, the region consisted of several kingdoms which had different histories, literatures, languages, and religious customs. Theravada Buddhism was a popular religion that was well established in both urban, educated elites and rural communities.¹⁰⁰ The main populations in Siam were adherents of Theravāda Buddhism, and the Theravāda Buddhist Sangha was the central religious institution of their societies.¹⁰¹ However, different kingdoms followed Buddhist traditions in different ways.¹⁰² In the nineteenth century, prior to the creation of "Thai Buddhism" by Prince Wachirayan, the various ethnic peoples in Siam, including the Siamese in central Thailand, the Lao in the Northeast, the Khon

¹⁰⁰ Keyes, *Thailand*, 37.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 17.

Muang in the North, and other non-Tai groups such as the Mon and Khmer, all accepted the Buddhist teachings according to their own regional or cultural dispositions.¹⁰³ These different Buddhist traditions were one of the characteristics of the traditional Siamese state. Nevertheless, Siam was forced to confront the challenge of Western colonial expansion during the reign of King Mongkut (1851-1868) and that of his son King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910). The process of encountering this challenge initiated the transformation of Siam from a traditional into a modern nation-state.¹⁰⁴

During the process of creating a modern Thai nation-state, Thai nationalism was promoted throughout the country. According to Keyes, Thai nationalism represented a selective reinterpretation of various traditions and the promotion of this reinterpretation as being the tradition of all “Thai” in common. This reinterpretation started with Buddhist reforms set in place by the Thai king Mongkut.¹⁰⁵ Before he was enthroned as a king, Mongkut was in the monkhood for nearly three decades. As a monk, he had undertaken intensive study of the Pāli scriptures and learned sangha traditions in other countries and therefore, he was aware of the fact that Buddhist practice in Siam integrated many local traditions that were not traceable to early Buddhism as found in the scriptures.¹⁰⁶ For this reason, he had an inspiration to purify the Sangha in Siam and he initiated a new reformed Buddhism called the Thammayut-nikai: “the *nikāya* of those monks who follow the dhamma.” He referred to the rest of the monks who continued to follow traditional practices as Mahanikai (Pāli, Mahā-nikāya), the “great”, or “majority” *nikāya* and he considered this other sect as an “order of long-standing habit”, meaning that monks and laypeople in this tradition blindly followed the

¹⁰³ Ibid., 58; Tiyavanich, “The Wandering Forest Monks in Thailand, 1900-1992,” 4.

¹⁰⁴ Keyes, *Thailand*, 42.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 57.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 41.

Buddhism of their ancestors.¹⁰⁷ The Thammayut-nikai rejected many local Buddhist practices, and strictly followed practices prescribed by the *vinaya*. Although this new reformed Buddhism was not linked with any of the diverse forms of Buddhism found among the various regions, it was used as the foundation for a reform of the entire Sangha in Siam during the reign of King Chulalongkorn.¹⁰⁸

In the late nineteenth century, King Chulalongkorn began to impose the reformed Buddhism on the periphery in order to create a modern Thai nation-state. The King put Prince Wachirayan, a son of King Mongkut and a brother of King Chulalongkorn, in charge of the Buddhist reforms.¹⁰⁹ From the 1890s on, Prince Wachirayan began his work by bringing monks in Siam into a unified Sangha in which the new reformed Buddhist tradition would be practiced and communicated to the laypeople.¹¹⁰ In order to bring monks from different traditions in the outlying regions under Bangkok's control, King Chulalongkorn passed a new law in 1902. The Sangha Act of 1902 aimed to create a national Sangha hierarchy under a supreme patriarch (Thai, *sangkharat* or Pāli, *saṅgharāja*) appointed by the king. Prince Wachirayan was responsible for implementing this law and in doing so he appointed provincial Sangha heads whose roles were similar to those of the governors and commissioners.¹¹¹ Keyes suggests that “perhaps the most important element in the sangha organization act of 1902 was the provision that no monk could ordain other men into the sangha unless he were vested with the authority to do so by the patriarch.”¹¹² This new ordination tradition meant that

¹⁰⁷ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 161.

¹⁰⁸ Keyes, *Thailand*, 57.

¹⁰⁹ Tiyavanich, “The Wandering Forest Monks in Thailand, 1900-1992,” 5.

¹¹⁰ Keyes, *Thailand*, 58.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

only monks who recognized the central authority of the sangha were able to perform ordinations, whereas in the past, any monk who had been in the sangha for ten years was qualified to perform ordination.¹¹³

The Sangha Act of 1902, which outlawed ancient local practices and replaced well-respected traditionalist monks with those appointed by the new authority in Bangkok, created considerable resentment especially in northern Thailand. This resentment developed into a serious crisis in the early 1920s when Khruba Sriwichai came into conflict with the national Sangha authorities and the Siamese state because he ignored the new regulations for the ordination of monks and novices.¹¹⁴ Khruba Sriwichai asserted that he had the right to ordain under both local Buddhist tradition and the pristine tradition founded by the Buddha, i.e. the *vinaya*.¹¹⁵ Cohen states that “his recalcitrance makes sense in terms of the religious environment of northern Thailand at the time,”¹¹⁶ and an understanding of northern Thailand or Lanna region at the time of Khruba Sriwichai is important.

2.2 Background of Lanna

The kingdom of Lanna was gradually established during the mid-thirteenth century as the Tai ruler Mangrai brought various warring areas of northern Thailand under his control. In 1292 CE, Mangrai established a central political and

¹¹³ Ibid. See also I. B. Horner, trans., *The Book of the Discipline (Vinaya-Piṭaka)*, vol. Mahāvagga (London: Luzac & Company LTD., 1971), 77. “Monks, one who is of less than ten years' standing should not ordain. Whoever (such) should (so) ordain, there is an offence of wrong-doing. I allow you, monks, to ordain through one who is of ten years' standing or through one who is of more than ten years' standing.”

¹¹⁴ Keyes, *Thailand*, 59.

¹¹⁵ Cohen, “Buddhism Unshackled,” 2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

religious centre in the new city of Chiang Mai.¹¹⁷ The kingdom of Lanna literally means “the Land of a Million Rice Paddies” and included the regions in the north of Thailand and some parts of Myanmar, China, and Laos.¹¹⁸ The Tai people living in these various regions share many political, cultural and religious similarities.

During the fourteenth to fifteenth century, the Lanna kingdoms flourished along with the kingdoms of Sukothai and Ayuthaya.¹¹⁹ In the late 1360s, the Lanna king Kue invited the monk named Sumana from the central Thai capital of Sukhothai to bring a Sinhalese forest-dwelling monastic lineage to Lanna. The arrival of Sumana in Lanna initiated the flourishing of the Mahāvihāra interpretation of Theravāda Buddhism in the kingdom. This order shortly became known as the flower-garden order (*pupphārāmaṅgala*) because their head monastery was the Flower Garden Monastery (Wat Suan Dok).¹²⁰ The Sinhalese form of Buddhism in Lanna was strengthened during the reign of the ruler Sam Fang Kæn (1401-1441) because a group of twenty-five monks from Lanna went to Sri Lanka to be reordained. In addition, they brought another forest-dwelling lineage (*araññavāsī*) from Sri Lanka back to Thailand with the chief monastery at the Red Forest Monastery (Wat Pa Daeng), located farther from the city of Chiang Mai than Wat Suan Dok.¹²¹

The fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries are considered to be the “Golden Age of Lanna.” This was a period of political expansion and as well as the highest point of Buddhist cultural production, and many original Pāli works were composed by Lanna scholars, including pseudocanonical, cosmological, and

¹¹⁷ Daniel M. Veidlinger, *Spreading the Dhamma: Writing, Orality, and Textual Transmission in Buddhist Northern Thailand* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010), 3.

¹¹⁸ Donald K. Swearer, Sommai Premchit, and Phaithoon Dokbuakaew, *Sacred Mountains Of Northern Thailand And Their Legends* (University of Washington Press, 2005), 21.

¹¹⁹ Suraphon Damrikun, *Phan din Lanna*, 2nd ed. (Bangkok: Mueang Boran Press, 2002), 8-9.

¹²⁰ Veidlinger, *Spreading the Dhamma*, 3.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

commentarial works.¹²² A Golden Age is often followed by a decline of cultural products and politics, and around the sixteenth century, the Lanna kingdom collapsed and fell under the control of the Burmese until the eighteenth century. From the late 1770s, Kawila, a warrior who was supported by the central Thai or Siamese powers, had freed much of Lanna from the Burmese and by 1804 CE, he had taken Chiang Mai, Chiang Saen, and other northern cities. Kawila began to reconstruct the kingdom and ruled as a vassal of the Chakri king in Bangkok. Lanna was a vassal of Bangkok until 1933 when it was integrated as a part of Siam and was divided into provinces of Siam.¹²³

Because of the long history of Lanna kingdom, people in this region have distinctive language, culture, traditions, and beliefs which are different from others and they identified themselves as “Khon Muang”.¹²⁴ Apart from the unique name for their identities, Lanna also has its own distinctive Theravāda tradition which is known as “Yuan Buddhism”.¹²⁵ According to Cohen, the term Yuan Buddhism was coined by the missionary William Dodd in 1923.¹²⁶ This Yuan Buddhist tradition was nurtured between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Lanna and was also shared by other Tai-speaking people who came under Lanna’s political influence.¹²⁷ Yuan Buddhists have a common script known as *tham* or Tua Müang (local letters). It was used mainly for religious texts in Pāli and also most of the palm-leaf manuscripts and many inscribed Buddha

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., 3-4.

¹²⁴ Damrikun, *Phan din Lanna*, 8-9.

¹²⁵ Cohen, “Buddhism Unshackled,” 2.

¹²⁶ Cohen, “A Buddha Kingdom in the Golden Triangle,” 141.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

images employ this script.¹²⁸ In addition, Yuan Buddhists have a widespread belief towards popular animistic religiosity and as well as a belief in *ton bun*.¹²⁹

As stated before, the various ethnic peoples in Siam accepted the Buddhist teachings according to their own regional or cultural practices. Khon Muang in Lanna is one example of these different ethnic groups. Before the centralization of the sangha, Yuan Buddhists respected monks for their practical knowledge and moral conduct and the monks in this Buddhist tradition had their own hierarchy or lineages.¹³⁰ One of the objectives of the Sangha Act of 1902, according to Tiyanich, was to abolish such local lineages.¹³¹ Many monks from various ethnic groups refused to follow the reformed Buddhism and continued with their local lineage and one of these monks was Khruba Sriwichai.¹³²

2.3 A survey of sacred biographies of Khruba Sriwichai

Khruba Sriwichai was born on Tuesday, 11th June 1878 in the village of Ban Pang, Li District situated in Lamphun province of northern Thailand.¹³³ He was born to a peasant family and it was said that on this particular day there was a heavy rain and a thunderstorm. He was then given the name of Fuen, “quake” or

¹²⁸ Swearer, Premchit, and Dokbuakaew, *Sacred Mountains Of Northern Thailand And Their Legends*, 3.

¹²⁹ Cohen, “A Buddha Kingdom in the Golden Triangle,” 141.

¹³⁰ Tiyanich, “The Wandering Forest Monks in Thailand, 1900-1992,” 37.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 43.

¹³³ Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 7.

Fahong, “thunder”.¹³⁴ The extraordinary events at the time of his birth signified for many people that he was a *phu mee boon*, “a person having merit.”¹³⁵

As a child, Fahong was said to have compassion to all beings. Most Thai biographers expressed this compassion with the same account.¹³⁶ When he was young, he would release and free those animals that his father caught for cooking. He told his father that he was afraid that the fish would get hurt when it was hit on its head. He was also described as a child who had interest in Buddhism since he was young. He would follow his parents to the temple on the Buddhist holy days and he was interested in the Buddhist chanting even though he did not understand the meaning. Here, Khruba Sriwichai was portrayed as an extraordinary boy since the day he was born which is one element of the sacred biography which parallel with the life story of the Buddha. The later biographies of the Buddha, such as the *Lalitavistara*, portray the Buddha as an extraordinary being from the day he was born. After he emerged from his mother’s side, he immediately walked seven

¹³⁴ Suphapha, *Chiwit lae ngan khong Khruba Sriwichai [Life and work of Khruba Sriwichai]*, 18-19.

¹³⁵ Premchit, *Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 6. Premchit further explains this extraordinary event for his birth that in the Thai society, there is a traditional belief that when *phu mee boon* is born, the weather would be abnormal such as earthquake, thunder, and lightening. Whoever born during the time of this situation and he or she becomes an important person in the society, people tend to link the event when he or she is born in the life story. However, if one who is born in an unusual weather but does not become a significant person in the society, the story of an extraordinary birth would not be retold by people.

¹³⁶ Suphapha, *Chiwit lae ngan khong Khruba Sriwichai [Life and work of Khruba Sriwichai]*, 21-23; Premchit, *Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 7; Tamnan Khruba Sriwichai baep phitsadan lae tamnan Wat Suan Dok [The comprehensive history of Khruba Sriwichai and the history of Wat Suan Dok], 2; Khosananan, *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai ariyasong haeng Lanna [Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist saint of Lanna]*, 11-12; *Prawati lae phonngan khong Khruba Sriwichai nak bun amta khong mueang nuea [The biography and achievements of Khruba Sriwichai, the everlasting holy man of the North]*, 1-3; Praphasri, *Khruba Sriwichai chom thap tham haeng Lanna Thai [Khruba Sriwichai, the Dhamma commander of Thai Lanna]*, 47-49; “Prawati Khruba Sriwichai Wat Ban Pang [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, Wat Ban Pang],” in *Wanapim Lanna: Wanakam thi ti pim duai akson tham Lanna 60 lem [Lanna literary work: 60 literary works printing with Tham Lanna scripts]*, vol. 7 (Chiang Mai: Chiang Mai University, 2009), 15. These biographies portray Khruba Sriwichai in his childhood as an extraordinary boy who had a great compassion to all animals.

steps with lotus blossomed supernaturally under his foot for every pace.¹³⁷ He was born with the “thirty-two physical marks (*lakṣaṇa*) of a superman (*mahāpuruṣa*),”¹³⁸ which indicated that “the child is destined to become either a universal monarch (*cakkavattin*) or a buddha.”¹³⁹

Most of the accounts of Khruba Sriwichai’s life describe Khruba Sriwichai’s compassion with these anecdotes.¹⁴⁰ However, there is one biographer who claimed to have an interview with Khruba Sriwichai’s nephew, Singkham Inma. According to this biographer, Wannasai,

Khruba Sriwichai’s childhood was just the same as his friends. I asked Singkham Inma, his nephew, whether Khruba Sriwichai’s biography that I heard and read was true that when he was young he would release the animals that his parents caught for cooking. Singkham replied that he never heard Khruba Sriwichai told him about this story but there were other accounts that Khruba Sriwichai told him such as when he was a teenager he liked playing Thai instruments and singing northern Thai poems.¹⁴¹

In northern Thailand it was traditional for most boys over the age of seven to enter the Sangha to be educated. During this period, they would learn the northern Thai system of writing and the Buddhist texts. In addition to the fundamental education that they would attain, they would also learn other subjects such as traditional healing, construction, astronomy, and magical spell for

¹³⁷ Donald S. Lopez, *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 21.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁴⁰ Suphapha, *Chiwit lae ngan khong Khruba Sriwichai [Life and work of Khruba Sriwichai]*, 27-30; Premchit, *Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 7; Tamnan Khruba Sriwichai baep phitsadan lae tamnan Wat Suan Dok *[The comprehensive history of Khruba Sriwichai and the history of Wat Suan Dok]*, 2; Khosananan, *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai ariyasong haeng Lanna [Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist saint of Lanna]*, 11-12. According to these biographies, when Khruba Sriwichai was young he would release and free those animals that his father caught them for cooking.

¹⁴¹ Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 8.

protection.¹⁴² Like the other boys, Fahong ordained as a novice at the village temple, Wat Ban Pang when he was eighteen years old.¹⁴³

Many biographies describe his intention of becoming a monk in a Buddhist moral way. It was said that when he was eighteen years old, he realized that his family poverty in his present life were a consequence of misdeeds in his past life when he did not follow the Buddhist teachings. He felt that even though he stayed with his parents and took care of them, he would be able to take care of them only in this present life. If he wanted to help his parents to have a better life in next life, he should follow the Buddha's path and become a well behaved monk. Therefore, he decided to enter the Buddhist community.¹⁴⁴

In 1899, Fahong ordained as a monk at Wat Ban Hong Luang and took a new religious name, Sirivijayobhikkhu but people called him according to Lanna language as "Phra Siwichai" (Thai, Sriwichai).¹⁴⁵ He learned Buddhist teachings and as well as magic and spells. According to his biographer, Wannasai, Khruba Sriwichai like most monks at that time, had great respect for *saiyasat* or the science of magic and spells and believed that this knowledge would bring him happiness and delight. In his biography, Wannasai suggests that this particular knowledge leads learner to the secular life rather than spirituality and indicated

¹⁴² Chanamun, "Khruba Sriwichai 'ton bun' haeng Lanna (BE 2421-2481) [Khruba Sriwichai 'ton bun' of Lanna]," 26-27.

¹⁴³ Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 8.

¹⁴⁴ Suphapha, *Chiwit lae ngan khong Khruba Sriwichai [Life and work of Khruba Sriwichai]*, 27-30; Khosananan, *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai ariyasong haeng Lanna [Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist saint of Lanna]*, 13-16; Premchit, *Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 7-8; *Prawati lae phonngan khong Khruba Sriwichai nak bun amta khong mueang nuea [The biography and achievements of Khruba Sriwichai, the everlasting holy man of the North]*, 3; Sratthatham, *Khruba Sriwichai phu chai det [Khruba Sriwichai who is resolute]*, 12-13; Ronachit, *Phra Khruba Sriwichai*, 17.

¹⁴⁵ Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 9.

that Khruba Sriwichai had an intention of leaving the monkhood because not only was he interested in magic and spells, but he also had tattoos on his legs.¹⁴⁶

In his sacred biographies, only a short account of Khruba Sriwichai's meditation practice can be found. Most of these report that after Khruba Sriwichai was ordained as a monk, he studied with his first teacher, Khruba Khattiya¹⁴⁷ at Wat Ban Pang. After a while, he went to study with Khruba Upala at Wat Doi Tae, situated in Lamphun province. Khruba Upala had the reputation of being rigorous meditation master and was highly venerated by local villagers.¹⁴⁸ Khruba Sriwichai stayed at Wat Doi Tae for the period of 3 months during the rainy season retreat and then went back to Wat Ban Pang.¹⁴⁹ A more detailed analysis on the meditation practice of Khruba Sriwichai will be further discussed in chapter 3.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Khruba Khattiya was a wandering *dhutanga* monk from Lamphun province. He took a rest at the foothills of the current Wat Ban Pang. The villagers were very pleased to see a monk. They invited Khruba Khattiya to stay at the village and built him a monk's house and a temporary hall for performing Buddhist rituals. He became the abbot of Wat Bang Pang.

¹⁴⁸ Phutthathammo, *Prawati khong Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]*, 10. During the field research, I came across the Khruba Upala's writings at the museum of Khruba Sriwichai in Wat Ban Pang. The title given to these manuscripts was "Textbooks of Khruba Upala, Wat Doi Tae, which Khruba Sriwichai used for studying." These writings were written in Lanna scripts. I have obtained copies of these texts which have yet to be translated.

¹⁴⁹ Premchit, *Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 9; Sratthatham, *Khruba Sriwichai phu chai det [Khruba Sriwichai who is resolute]*, 15-16; Praphasri, *Khruba Sriwichai chom thap tham haeng Lanna Thai [Khruba Sriwichai, the Dhamma commander of Thai Lanna]*, 55-56; *Prawati lae phonngan khong Khruba Sriwichai nak bun amta khong mueang nuea [The biography and achievements of Khruba Sriwichai, the everlasting holy man of the North]*, 5-6; *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]*, 13-14; *Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai: Prawati kan srang thang khuen Doi Suthep lae prawati Wat Phra That Doi Suthep [A History of Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist Saint of Northern Thailand: A story of making way up to Doi Suthep and a historical chronicle of Wat Phra That Doi]* (Chiang Mai: Suthin Press, 2005), 5; Khosananan, *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai ariyasong haeng Lanna [Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist saint of Lanna]*, 17; *Ruam phap chut lae prawati yo 80 phra kammattan [The pictures collection and the brief biographies of 80 meditation masters]* (Bangkok: Lokthip, 1984), 207.

After the abbot of Wat Ban Pang, Khruba Khattiya, passed away, Khruba Sriwichai became the new abbot. Not long after that he considered building a new temple because the current temple was located near the community and it was not suitable for monks to practice meditation. Together with his fellow monks, he searched for a suitable place for building a forest temple. He chose a place located on a mountain. Khruba Sriwichai built this new temple in 1904 and named it as Wat Sri Don Chai Sai Mun Bun Rueng but villagers still called it as Wat Ban Pang.¹⁵⁰

Several of the sacred biographies discussed in further detail in chapter 3 reports that before Khruba Sriwichai began the construction he made a wish to receive an omen to confirm his mission. On that night, he received the omen in the form of a dream of a brighten full moon, which he interpreted the vision as a sign and confirmation of his mission to construct the new temple.¹⁵¹ It is interesting to note that among many biographies, there is one source that mentioned this account differently. In her MA thesis, Chanamun states that Khruba Sriwichai received a vision of beautiful radiant moonlight while he meditated in the forest.¹⁵²

According to Chanamun, *nimit* (a sign or an omen) is the result of a meditation technique in which a meditator makes a wish to perceive the vision or an inner

¹⁵⁰ Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 10. Villagers used to the image of Khruba Sriwichai as the abbot of Wat Ban Pang, therefore they called this new temple by this same name.

¹⁵¹ *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]*, 15; *Tamnan Khruba Sriwichai baep phitsadan lae tamnan Wat Suan Dok [The comprehensive history of Khruba Sriwichai and the history of Wat Suan Dok]*, 6; Khosananan, *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai ariyasong haeng Lanna [Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist saint of Lanna]*, 20; Ronachit, *Phra Khruba Sriwichai*, 21; Phutthathammo, *Prawati khong Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]*, 10; Suphapha, *Chiwit lae ngan khong Khruba Sriwichai [Life and work of Khruba Sriwichai]*, 27; Premchit, *Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 11.

¹⁵² Chanamun, “Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ haeng Lanna (BE 2421-2481) [Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ of Lanna],” 36.

insight. It is also believed that someone who can perceive the sign through the meditation experience; he or she has a lot of merit. Chanamun suggested that one reason for Khruba Sriwichai's success in building and renovating sacred places and temples are based on the faith of local villagers. These villagers believed that if Khruba Sriwichai saw a sign after his meditation, the construction project would be successful and he would always accomplish his work.¹⁵³

Chanamun further stated that during his meditation, Khruba Sriwichai would perform *adhittithāna pāramī* (perfection of determination)¹⁵⁴ to observe his own merits whether or not his action would be accomplished. The following is his wish which was from the compilation of *kammaṭṭhāna* that was collected by Khruba Sriwichai.

...in order to observe one's merits, meditation is needed. During the meditation, "Phu Ang Kha Khu Rung Ang Khu, Phu Ang Kha Khu Rung Ang Khu" are the mantra one needs to recite. At the same time, one should count prayer beads for one hundred beads and purify one's mind. When the time is ready, one would realize this by oneself. After that one should make a wish to perceive the sign. If one sees the preaching hall, stupa, or Buddha statue, these definitely were the things that one built before. If one sees the sunlight or the moonlight, this is because one has lots of merit.¹⁵⁵

Wannasai, who wrote the life story of Khruba Sriwichai as an ordinary person, also mentioned Khruba Sriwichai's practice of making a wish before he began the construction project.

On the night that he arrived at the construction site, Khruba would meditated and *tung satcha atthithan* (made a truthful wish) that he would be able to accomplish this construction or not. Khruba would know by his own *jhana* (insight) whether he would complete the mission or not. Khruba would complete his mission most of the time. However, there was one time which was the last construction of Khruba. It was during the beginning of 2481 BE. I was still a novice. Khruba was

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Perfection of determination is the steady determination to do good deeds.

¹⁵⁵ Chanamun, "Khruba Sriwichai 'ton bun' haeng Lanna (BE 2421-2481) [Khruba Sriwichai 'ton bun' of Lanna]," 36.

at the bridge construction site. I asked Khruba that “will this bridge be successfully constructed?” Khruba replied, “no, it will not” “if it will not be successfully constructed, why do you construct it?” “because the noble family of Lamphun and the sangha requested, and I cannot refuse.” This last piece of his construction project of building a bridge was, indeed, unsuccessful.¹⁵⁶

Villagers recognised Khruba Sriwichai as a meritorious person, a *ton bun*, because of this wish and the resulting meditative vision. They were happy to support his construction works. As his reputation spread, he became the centre of widespread public attention. Tribal peoples such as Karen, Meo, and Muser, who had never respected Buddhist monks, became his followers and also donated their labour to support Khruba Sriwichai’s construction projects. Khruba Sriwichai was known for his ability to organize large numbers of people in efforts to construct or renovate significant religious monuments in northern Thailand from the beginning of his religious career to its end at his death. Phra Thammaratchanuwat, a highly respected northern Thai monk, writes in the preface of Suphapha’s book that “Khruba Sriwichai had done many good deeds to Buddhism. His goodness could hardly fade away from northern people’ minds and especially for his many construction and renovation works. It seems that there were no other monks in this region who had done such thing like Khruba Sriwichai.”¹⁵⁷ Not only did Khruba Sriwichai accumulate *pāramī* through the work of recreating the Buddha land in northern Thailand, but he also devoted his energies to making it possible for ordinary laymen and laywomen to attain merit and enhance their spirituality.

Khruba Sriwichai’s reputation, as Keyes suggests, “was enhanced by the degree of asceticism that he maintained throughout his life, a degree quite unusual for northern Thai monks of the period.”¹⁵⁸ Phikkhu Panyananta, the nationally known Buddhist monk and writer, says in his preface to Suphapha’s biography that Khruba Sriwichai “strictly followed the Vinaya (the Buddhist disciplines). He

¹⁵⁶ Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 15.

¹⁵⁷ Suphapha, *Chiwit lae ngan khong Khruba Sriwichai [Life and work of Khruba Sriwichai]*, i.

¹⁵⁸ Keyes, “Death of Two Buddhist Saints in Thailand,” 156.

was contented with what he had and preferred solitude. He customarily had only three pieces of clothing. He only had one meal a day and subsisted on vegetables and avoided all kinds of meat... It can be said that he conducted according to the path of Phra Maha Kassapa Thera, the monk who strictly followed the practice of *dhutanga* (strict ascetic practices).”¹⁵⁹ He further states that Khruba Sriwichai “considered most of his actions for the common good. He did nothing for benefiting himself because he was not a monk of rank but was only a monk of people. His life was existed only for the public welfare... As a result, he was always moving around and doing useful things wherever he went... If one looks at his accomplishments for the public benefit, one would know that these are not just a small benefit and his works should be rejoiced by Buddhists that a monk with the wide heart of a *bodhisatta* had been born into the world.”¹⁶⁰ Khruba Sriwichai’s reputation as a strict follower of the *vinaya* and as a leader for recreating the Buddha land enhanced his status as a *Lanna ton bun*.

Khruba Sriwichai’s actions did not, however, please everyone. He had major conflicts with the central authorities of the Thai Sangha and the Thai government several times. These conflicts were the result from the sociopolitical changes that were taking place at the time. As discussed above, in 1902, King Chulalongkorn passed a new law to integrate monks and temples throughout the country into a single unified organization in the efforts to implement this law, the old ordination tradition in Thailand in which any monk who had been in the sangha for ten years was qualified to perform ordinations, was replaced by new regulations under the Sangha Act of 1902. The new regulations required any senior monk who wished act as an *upajjhāya* (preceptor) and perform ordinations to first gain the permission of the district abbot and the government district officer, appointed by Bangkok.

¹⁵⁹ Suphapha, *Chiwit lae ngan khong Khruba Sriwichai [Life and work of Khruba Sriwichai]*, x.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, xi.

Because of his reputation, many parents brought their children to be ordained as novices by Khruba Sriwichai. In 1908, he was accused by the head monk of Li district of acting as an illegal *upajjhāya* as he did not have a permission to perform ordination under the new Sangha Act.¹⁶¹ Several biographies report that Khruba Sriwichai had already asked permission from the district officer and the head monk of Li district, but he did not receive any reply. As the *phansa* (*vassa* or Buddhist rains retreat) was approaching, Khruba Sriwichai decided not to wait for official permission, reasoning that according to the *vinaya*, Buddhist ordination did not require the permission of the secular government or of *upajjhāya* outside his own lineage. The only prerequisite for a valid Buddhist ordination is the permission from the parents of the ordained, and the presence of an *upajjhāya* from that lineage.¹⁶² Khruba Sriwichai believed that despite the new Sangha Act, he had the right to act as *upajjhāya* and perform ordinations as he had been ordained as a *bhikkhu* for more than ten years in accordance with the regulations in the *viyana*.¹⁶³ Therefore, Khruba Sriwichai went ahead and performed the ordination without the official permission. As a consequence, he was confined for four day at the temple of the district abbot in Li and underwent interrogation.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ “Upajjhāya,” *The Pali Text Society’s Pali-English Dictionary*, <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/pali/>. *Upajjhāya* is defined as a spiritual teacher or preceptor, master

¹⁶² Chanamun, “Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ haeng Lanna (BE 2421-2481) [Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ of Lanna],” 79; *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]*, 32-33; Suphapha, *Chiwit lae ngan khong Khruba Sriwichai [Life and work of Khruba Sriwichai]*, 68-69; Ronachit, *Phra Khruba Sriwichai*, 22-23; Tamnan Khruba Sriwichai *baep phitsadan lae tamnan Wat Suan Dok [The comprehensive history of Khruba Sriwichai and the history of Wat Suan Dok]*, 11; Khosananan, *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai ariyasong haeng Lanna [Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist saint of Lanna]*, 32-33; Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 13; Premchit, *Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 30.

¹⁶³ Horner, *The Book of the Discipline (Vinaya-Piṭaka)*, Mahāvagga:77. “Monks, one who is of less than ten years' standing should not ordain. Whoever (such) should (so) ordain, there is an offence of wrong-doing. I allow you, monks, to ordain through one who is of ten years' standing or through one who is of more than ten years' standing.”

¹⁶⁴ Khruba Sriwichai was not arrested in the civil court. His confinement took place in monasteries and his interrogation was by monks. He was never being defrocked.

The interrogation was conducted by the provincial abbot in Lamphun, Phra Yan Mong Khon, and he was not found guilty and released. This first confinement occurred in 1908.¹⁶⁵

Not long after his first confinement, Khruba Sriwichai was again called to answer charges because he did not participate in the administrative meeting that was held by Bangkok officers. He was confined at Wat Chai in Lamphun for twenty-three days. Again, he underwent interrogation conducted by Phra Yan Mong Khon and was not found guilty.¹⁶⁶ He was confined a third time in 1911 for two years at Wat Phra That in Lamphun. At this time, he was banned from acting as an *upajjhāya*.

Because of these charges and confinements, Khruba Sriwichai's reputation grew and people began to say that he was a *bodhisatta* with miraculous powers.¹⁶⁷ Many stories about his extraordinary abilities began to surface. For example, the account of Khruba Sriwichai when he renovated Wat Phra Singha contained a miraculous element. His sacred biographies report that during the time Khruba Sriwichai renovated Wat Phra Singha, he was worried that he would not have enough money for the construction. He spoke about his concerns to his followers. He also stated that if the angels knew about his good intention, they might guide him a place of the treasure. Not long after he had spoken his words, there was a miracle happened. The workers who were digging the ground for the construction found two ancient clay pots, full of gold. People who saw this event was really surprised and believed that it was due to Khruba Sriwichai's magical power.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 13.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

¹⁶⁷ Swearer, "The Monk as Prophet and Priest," 79.

¹⁶⁸ Suphapha, *Chiwit lae ngan khong Khruba Sriwichai [Life and work of Khruba Sriwichai]*, 203; Khosananan, *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai ariyasong haeng Lanna [Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist saint of Lanna]*, 94-95.

In addition, there were other rumours that due to Khruba Sriwichai's special powers, when he worked in the rain or sun, he did not get wet or hot. It was also said that he was able to discern people's thoughts. In his study, Wannasai wrote that Khruba Sriwichai always denied that he was able to perform miracles. In 1937, when Wannasai talked with Khruba Sriwichai, he asked him about one of the miracles reported to have occurred when Khruba Sriwichai and his followers went into the forest. There was a heavy rain, and everyone got wet except Khruba Sriwichai. Wannasai asked Khruba Sriwichai whether this miracle that he had heard was true or not. Khruba Sriwichai replied him, "Yes it is true. I did not get wet because I had an umbrella."¹⁶⁹ Although Khruba Sriwichai denied having special powers, he was accused of falsely claiming supernatural powers when he was summoned to Bangkok for interrogation by the Sangha Supreme Council in 1919. There, eight charges were brought against Khruba Sriwichai:

1. He positioned to himself as *upajjhāya* and ordained monks without permission.
2. He was insubordinate to the district abbot in Li, Phra Khru Maha Rattanakon.
3. Bangkok officers held the administrative meeting in Li District to inform the rules and regulations for monks to follow. Representatives from every temple participated except Khruba Sriwichai.
4. The Bangkok government notified all the temples to celebrate the coronation of King Rama VI. Every temple organized the celebration except Khruba Sriwichai's temple.
5. The district abbot in Li believed that many temples violated the new Sangha regulations because of the influences from Khruba Sriwichai. He asked the head monk of Lamphun Province, Phra Khru Sliwilas, to warn Khruba Sriwichai of his behaviour. However, Khruba Sriwichai remained disobedient.

¹⁶⁹ Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 17.

6. The officers asked Khruba Sriwichai to investigate the census but he refused to do so.
7. The district abbot in Li arranged a meeting for the abbots of every temple to attend. However, many abbots did not attend as they took Khruba Sriwichai as an exemplar.
8. There was a rumour that because of his accumulation of merit that Khruba Sriwichai had in his possession a golden sword fell from the sky onto his altar. It was not clear to the authorities if this rumour was the result of Khruba Sriwichai's boasting, or if it was just gossip. However, Khruba Sriwichai was considered to be the main cause of this rumour, which many people believed.¹⁷⁰

The interrogation was conducted by Prince Wachirayan who stated that

...if his[Khruba Sriwichai] charges are to be compared with others I personally feel that the officers saw that Khruba Sriwichai has many followers and they are afraid that Khruba Sriwichai might be *Phe Boon*. Therefore, they want to place charges against him but it cannot be under a criminal charge. As a consequence,¹⁷¹ [Khruba Sriwichai] was charged under the sangha regulation.

The outcome of this trial was the decision that he was not guilty of any of the charges. According to Chanamun, the main reason for this outcome was because the government was afraid of starting a political uprising in the northern provinces.¹⁷² Khruba Sriwichai returned back to Lamphun as a hero and as Thompson describes, “a crowd of ten thousand gave the hero-priest an enthusiastic welcome, all nationalities vying with each other to do him honour. He

¹⁷⁰ Chanamun, “Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ haeng Lanna (BE 2421-2481) [Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ of Lanna],” 82.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid., 83.

walked on a carpet made of the silk head-dresses of his Shan admirers, who carried him over the muddiest passages.”¹⁷³

After he came back from confinement in Bangkok in 1920, his reputation increased so much that he attracted many followers. With their support, he began to renovate many of Lanna’s most important sacred sites which had fallen into decay. According to the records, Khruba Sriwichai constructed and renovated no less than 52 monasteries including monastery facilities in Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, Phayao, Chiang Rai, and Mae Hong Son.¹⁷⁴ Among these sacred places, there are famous monasteries which contain the Buddha’s relics or footprints. The most famous work that Khruba Sriwichai performed was the construction of the road to a historical temple in Chiang Mai, Wat Phra That Doi Suthep.

Wat Phra That Doi Suthep or the Temple of the Holy Relic of Doi Suthep is an important historical temple of Chiang Mai. According to the *tamnan*, the holy relic was brought from Sukhothai by Phra Sumon Thera who went to learn Buddhist studies in Sri Lanka. King Kue Na, the ruler of Chiang Mai in Mangrai dynasty, invited Phra Sumon Thera to come to Chiang Mai to propagate Buddhism. In 1371, the pagoda was built under his command to house this holy relic.¹⁷⁵ Later in 1525, during the reign of King Phra Muang Ketkloa, “the structure was heightened and modified as presently witness. The pagoda is in bell-shape, in unique Lanna style, as multi-faceted structure.”¹⁷⁶ Wat Phra That Doi Suthep is believed to be the model of other similar places of worship built on top of the hills in Lanna. In addition, the temple is revered as one of the most holy

¹⁷³ Thompson, *Thailand: The New Siam*, 642.

¹⁷⁴ Chanamun, “Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ haeng Lanna (BE 2421-2481) [Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ of Lanna],” 91-92.

¹⁷⁵ Damrikun, *Phan din Lanna*, 183.

¹⁷⁶ Sirisak Khumraksa, *Nung sue chut phan ti kham ru mueang Thai: sasanasin bon din Lanna [Maps of knowledge about Thailand: Buddhist Art of Lanna]* (Bangkok: Plan Readers, 2003), 10.

Buddhist sites in Thailand and one of the twelve sites a faithful Buddhist should visit during his life.¹⁷⁷

In November 1934, during the last stage of his life, Khruba Sriwichai and his followers began the construction of a 12-kilometer road to Wat Phra That Doi Suthep. This project took around five months to complete. Before the completion of the road to Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, those who wanted to go to the temple would take four to five hours by walking. Today, the road makes possible to travel by car which only takes around twenty minutes to reach the temple. The main reasons why pilgrims go to Wat Phra That Doi Suthep are to pay homage to the relic of the Buddha enshrined in the temple and to acquire merit for their relatives.¹⁷⁸ Since the time of Khruba Sriwichai, in addition to paying homage to the relics and making merit for their ancestors, pilgrims and tourists who use the road pay their respects to Khruba Sriwichai. In recognition of this cult, the Department of Fine Arts commissioned a statue of Khruba Sriwichai in 1946. This statue is located at the very beginning of the road. It became an idol worshipped by most Thai visitors to the mountain. They pay respect by lighting a candle, recite a mantra, and place gold leaf on his statue. I will discuss this practice of worshipping the statue of Khruba Sriwichai in chapter 4.

After the construction of the road to Wat Phra That Doi Suthep was completed Khruba Sriwichai was once again sent to Bangkok to answer charges in 1935. According to Chanamun, this conflict came about during the construction of the road.¹⁷⁹ The conflict arose because the head monks in Chiang Mai, who were assigned to their positions by the Bangkok government, were frustrated by being

¹⁷⁷ Olivier Evrard and Prasit Leepreecha, "Monks, Monarchs and Mountain Folks: Domestic Tourism and Internal Colonialism in Northern Thailand," *Critique of Anthropology* 29, no. 3 (2009): 305.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 304.

¹⁷⁹ Chanamun, "Khruba Sriwichai 'ton bun' haeng Lanna (BE 2421-2481) [Khruba Sriwichai 'ton bun' of Lanna]," 83.

sidelined by Khruba Sriwichai, and were jealous of his charisma. For instance, Khruba Sriwichai did not invite these high-ranking monks to join the blessing ritual that took place to inaugurate the construction of the road to Wat Phra That Doi Suthep. Moreover, during the construction project, a great number of monks from fifty temples in Chiang Mai resigned from their positions under the Bangkok-appointed Sangha, and declared Khruba Sriwichai to be their leader. On top of that, Khruba Sriwichai reordained a monk named Phra Aphichai Khao Pi who had been defrocked by the Sangha authorities in Bangkok. All these actions were seen as resistance against the reforms instituted in the Sangha, and Khruba Sriwichai was asked to sign an agreement recognizing the authority of the Thai Sangha.

Finally, in 1935, at a point where his continued defiance would have led to an open rebellion on the part of his reformers, Khruba Sriwichai agreed to sign an agreement, and was released from confinement. He went back to his hometown, Lamphun, on 13th May 1936.¹⁸⁰ Again, the decision to release Khruba Sriwichai reduced the discontent of his supporters and improved relations between northern local people and Bangkok. This strategy was suggested by Bangkok inspector, Mr. Ruam Yottai:

Based on the first report dated on the 28th of June 2475 BE (1932 CE) that I have presented, I was already acknowledged that the head of the local officers in northern region was summoned to acknowledge the official issue. Therefore, it is expected that local people in northern region would not be distressed like before. From now on, it is necessary to generate the method to harmonise between the local people and the officers and the way to make them respect the officers. There is one important person in the northern region. He is a monk. Local people call him Phra Sriwichai. He is widely respected by local people. He is known as a monk who endows with miraculous power in this region. Even the royal families in northern region do not consider as holy as Phra Sriwichai. This can be seen from the renovation competition between him and Than Chao Khun Ubali who is a president of the renovation project of Wat Chedi Luang. In this renovation project, Than Chao Khun Ubali is supported by many royal families and wealthy people. It is widely known that Than Chao Khun Ubali is also considered as a person who endows with miraculous power for constructing and renovating the Buddhist sacred places such as the construction of the Buddha statue in Lopburi

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 85.

and other places and he always completes his project. However, when he comes to Chiang Mai to renovate Wat Chedi Luang, even if with the great amount of money supports from many royal families and wealthy people and it has been three years since, the construction of the great vihara is not completed and the renovation of the ruined pagoda has not even started, the supported money is all finished.

For Phra Sriwichai, he starts his renovation old temple project after Than Chao Khun Ubali. This temple is located at the beginning of the road to Doi Suthep. Phra Sriwichai receives a few money supports from royal families and wealthy people. He mostly depends on the money support from local people who have great respect towards him. Phra Sriwichai completes the construction project within one year. Phra Sriwichai knows that the officers or the government does not concern about him. He, himself, is modest and secluded. He does not like to associate with high rank or wealthy people. His mode of practices is only benefit to the general public. This is why he is seen as holiness by local people.

In my opinion, I think the officers should look after Phra Sriwichai. Please do it in the correct way and it would benefit us because we would be able to harmonise the northern local people.¹⁸¹

Khruba Sriwichai died around 60 or 61 years of age in his home village at Wat Ban Pang, the first temple that he built. The date of Khruba Sriwichai's death is still controversial. Wannasai recorded that he passed away on 22nd of March, 1938.¹⁸² Some biographers recorded the date as 20th of February, 1938.¹⁸³ While others record the date as 21th of February 1938.¹⁸⁴ Though the dates of his death are different, there is a consensus for his sickness. Khruba Sriwichai had very bad

¹⁸¹ General Information Bureau , Codes used A.B.C. 5th. Ed. & Bentley's. Cable AR. "Khowklang, Bangkok." Siam (29/475)

¹⁸² Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 29.

¹⁸³ Suphapha, *Chiwit lae ngan khong Khruba Sriwichai [Life and work of Khruba Sriwichai]*, 329; Sratthatham, *Khruba Sriwichai phu chai det [Khruba Sriwichai who is resolute]*, 110; Ronachit, *Phra Khruba Sriwichai*, 99; *Prawati lae phonngan khong Khruba Sriwichai nak bun amta khong mueang nuea [The biography and achievements of Khruba Sriwichai, the everlasting holy man of the North]*, 26.

¹⁸⁴ *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]*, 145; Premchit, *Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 53; Khosananan, *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai ariyasong haeng Lanna [Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist saint of Lanna]*, 143; Phutthathammo, *Prawati khong Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]*, 179.

hemorrhoids and died due to exhaustion and sickness. As a monk, Khruba Sriwichai spent many hours sitting, something that was made worse by his popularity. According to Wannasai, because he had to welcome so many laypeople, bless them and accept their offerings for his construction projects, a new word was developed in Lanna Language to describe this sitting activity: *nung nak*.

In Thai Buddhist tradition, the duration of the funeral process for those who are important takes longer, as the body has to be kept for people to visit and pay respect.¹⁸⁵ In the case of Khruba Sriwichai, his body was kept for around 8 to 9 years. The cremation of Khruba Sriwichai took place in 1946. In his sacred biographies, it is recorded that on this cremation day, a miraculous event happened. It is said that early that morning, it was a nice day with a clear sky. However, at the moment of the cremation, the clear sky became suddenly dark and the sun disappeared, and there was rain, although it was not the rainy season. This unusual event signifies the charisma of Khruba Sriwichai as a *phu mi bun* or meritorious person.

2.4 Conclusion

The investigation of the sacred biographies of Khruba Sriwichai written by his disciples and fellow monks gives a clear picture of the beliefs held about *ton bun* during the early 20th century in northern Thailand. These biographies depict Khruba Sriwichai as someone who has accumulated great merit and perfections – Buddhist *pāramī* - in his past lives which resulted in his present life. The evidence for Khruba Sriwichai's accumulation of *pāramī* include: miraculous events on the day of his birth, reports of his great compassion towards his parents and other

¹⁸⁵Charles F. Keyes, "Tug-of-War for Merit: Cremation of a Senior Monk," *Journal of the Siam Society* 63 (1975): 44-59; Charles F. Keyes, "The Cremation of a Senior Monk," ed. Frank E. Reynolds and Jason A. Carbine (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 124-135.

living beings (fish, buffalo, birds, mice, and etc) during his childhood, his academic abilities as a young monk, and his diligence in seeking out a meditation master (Khruba Upala). Further evidences for his *pāramī* are his successful building projects: the road to Doi Suthep, the renovation of Wat Phra Singha, the renovation of Wihan Luang in Wat Suan Dok, and etc.

Scholars have tended to ignore these sorts of details in his biographies as hagiographical excess. In fact, one of the biographers who actually knew Khruba Sriwichai before he became a Khruba was keen to emphasise that he was just a very good man. However, these hagiographical details not only provide information about the characteristics of a Lanna *ton bun* in the early 20th century, they are also a database of northern Thai beliefs about the accumulation of *pāramī* and the relationship between *pāramī* and Buddhist practice. As Reynold notes in his study, such hagiographical accounts of monks are meant to parallel the life of the Buddha since “a man can be recognized as a Buddhist saint only insofar as his actions are seen to have been movements along the path exemplified in the life of the Buddha himself and later taught by him as part of the message regarding the attainment of the cessation of suffering for oneself and for others.”¹⁸⁶ In the next chapter I will analyse the information about Khruba Sriwichai Buddhist practice that has survived in his biographies, photographs, and media reports.

¹⁸⁶ Keyes, “Death of Two Buddhist Saints in Thailand,” 152.

Chapter Three

Khruba Sriwichai's Meditation Practice and His Teachings

Introduction

The English word “meditation” comes from the Latin word *meditat-* which means “contemplate.”¹⁸⁷ Today the word meditation is used to signify a whole set of Eastern techniques of spiritual practices, such as the Indian Buddhist practice of *jhāna*, “a shift in awareness typically carried out intentionally, in silence, and while holding the body in a static position (most characteristically sitting with legs crossed).”¹⁸⁸ Meditation is also used to refer to the Sanskrit and Pāli noun *bhāvanā*, which means “production or cultivation.”¹⁸⁹ One who meditates can gain the insight and view the world as it actually is. Wisdom will arise and they will see “all beings and their problems, including oneself and one’s own nature, without hatred, boredom or contempt.”¹⁹⁰ With their mind purified, they will eventually be liberated from suffering and attain enlightenment or the state of Nirvana which is the ultimate goals of Buddhism. Buddhist meditation practices, thus, constitute the very core of the Buddhist approach of life and especially for a monk who decides to follow the same path as the Buddha. Meditation practices are essential because they serve to promote the spiritual development of the practitioners and ultimately eradicate *dukkha* or suffering.

¹⁸⁷ “meditate,” *Oxford Dictionaries*, Accessed March 19, 2011, http://oxforddictionaries.com/view/entry/m_en_gb0508820#m_en_gb0508820.

¹⁸⁸ Robert Buswell, ed., “Meditation,” *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004).

¹⁸⁹ Sarah Shaw, *Buddhist Meditation: An Anthology of Texts from the Pāli Canon* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 3.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, meditation was an important part of Khruba Sriwichai's Buddhist practice. His biography describes how he went to study meditation with the meditation master Khruba Upala after his ordination. We know that before he began a building project, he meditated at the site; based on his meditation experiences he was able to plan successfully for the project. Khruba Sriwichai is still remembered in Chiang Mai today as a meditation master rather than a scholar¹⁹¹ and as the abbot of Wat Mueang Man told Tambiah: "he had no learning but he was an adept at meditation."¹⁹²

Despite the importance of meditation for Khruba Sriwichai, there is not much information about the kind of meditation he practiced. There are a number of reasons for this. The first is that much of the published material on the life of Khruba Sriwichai has focused on his political activities and building projects, rather than his Buddhist practice. The second is the esoteric nature of meditation in and of itself: it is something experienced within. And third, there is an ancient tradition in the Buddhism of mainland Southeast Asia of oral transmission of meditation teaching from teacher to student.

In this chapter I will attempt to complete the unfinished biography of Khruba Sriwichai with indirect evidence of his meditation practices. I will first look at the history of orthodox Theravāda Buddhist meditation; the information contained in meditation manuals such as the *Visuddhimagga* and the *Vimuttimaggā*. Second, I will look at the history of the hetero-orthodox

¹⁹¹ Traditionally, in Thai Buddhism there have been two main vocations for monks: the study of the Buddhist texts, *gantha-dura* (Thai: *kantha-dura*) and the vocation of meditation, *vipassanā-dhura* (Thai: *wiphasana-thura*).

¹⁹² Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets*, 174. Here Tambiah interviewed the abbot of Wat Mueang Man, Phrakhrū Phiphat Ganavipāla, about his teaching techniques whether he permitted his pupils to read books. The abbot replied that "he permitted no books, not even books on the subject of meditation. Books provide "theoretical knowledge" and consulting them interferes with practice. He illustrated this point with the example of Khruba Sriwichai.

meditation practice, called the *yogāvacara* meditation that flourished in the northern Tai regions. Third, I will examine the relics of Khruba Sriwichai's life: his sacred biographies, his monastic dress, and the meditation practices and stories of his disciples and other monks who were part of the northern Thai Buddhist sphere. I will ask if, based on this evidence, it is possible to state what kind of meditation Khruba Sriwichai's practiced.

3.1 History of 'orthodox' Theravāda Buddhist meditation

Buddhist meditation originated in India with the Buddha, who used meditation as a way to escape from the cycle of rebirth. After leaving his father's palace, he spent six years of practicing different systems of meditation and religious austerities with various teachers.¹⁹³ Enlightenment was achieved when he sat in meditation under the Bodhi tree on the full moon of Viśākha (Vesak) day. For the next forty-five years until the time he entered into *parinibbāna*, the Buddha taught his followers "not just meditation but the system that he develops which is embodied in the middle way, the path that does not go to the extremes of sensual pleasure nor self-mortification."¹⁹⁴

Many schools of Buddhism have developed since the time of the Buddha. Khruba Sriwichai belongs to the "Southern" School of Buddhism known as "Theravāda" and predominant in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia and relies on the Buddhist canon written in Pāli.¹⁹⁵ The Buddha's teachings were not recorded as written texts but were orally transmitted for many centuries. During the process of transmission the Buddha's teachings would certainly have gone through the process of accretions and modifications.

¹⁹³ Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 21.

¹⁹⁴ Shaw, *Buddhist Meditation*, 3.

¹⁹⁵ Pāli is a sacred language which developed from the local Indo-Aryan language, spoken in northern India during the time of the Buddha. Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 21.

Hence, the Theravāda meditation systems are not only based on “canonical and commentarial guidelines, but also include newer features, derived from a long process of acculturation and development.”¹⁹⁶

During the first millennium CE, there were many schools of Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia. However the second millennium saw a series of state-sponsored Buddhist reforms. In Sri Lanka under king Parākramabāhu I during the 12th century, an attempt was made to standardize the many Sri Lankan *nikāyas* (monastic lineages) of Polonnaruva into one specific *nikāya*, the Mahāvihāra school of Theravāda. One outcome of the unification of the Sri Lankan *nikāyas* was “a review of canonical and commentarial materials, and the production of subcommentaries and handbooks in relation to those materials, mainly taking the 5th century commentator Buddhaghosa (to whom most of the commentaries were ascribed) as the authority on orthodoxy.”¹⁹⁷ Close contact between Sri Lanka and mainland Southeast Asia resulted in the Mahāvihāra-nikai becoming increasingly influential on the mainland as well. During the 19th century, a reformed school of Buddhism called the Thammayut-nikai became influential in Thailand; they criticized traditional Thai Buddhism as unorthodox, and promoted the Sinhalese textual tradition of the Mahāvihāra-nikai as a new standard.¹⁹⁸

Mongkut instituted many changes to make the Thammayut-nikai more authentic than the Mahanikai. In 1893, Mongkut was appointed abbot of Wat Bowoniwet monastery in Bangkok, which became the centre of the Thammayut-nikai.¹⁹⁹ He introduced some new monastic practices including “a new style of wearing robes (covering both shoulders, a Mon practice), new ordination rituals, a new

¹⁹⁶ Sarah Shaw, *Introduction to Buddhist Meditation* (London: Routledge, 2009), xv.

¹⁹⁷ Crosby, “Tantric Theravāda,” 144.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Donald K. Swearer, “Thailand,” ed. Robert E. Buswell, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 832.

pronunciation of the Pali scriptural language, new routines (including daily chanting), and new religious days to observe.”²⁰⁰ This new style of wearing robes clearly distinguishes practitioners of traditional Buddhism from the followers of reformed Buddhism. Of particular relevance for this study of Khruba Sriwichai is Bizot’s argument that the non-reformed style of monastic robes worn by monks belonging to the Mahanikai “is linked to the embryonic imagery as well as the heart syllable symbolism found in *yogāvacara* texts.”²⁰¹ Bizot proposes that “the traditional monastic dress is more elaborate than reform monastic dress”²⁰² something that I will discuss further in the section 3.3.2.

According to Tiyanavich, Mongkut considered true religion as a matter of rational doctrine and belief; he despised “all traditions in which folk stories and parables were used to teach the dhamma and local culture was integrated with Buddhism.”²⁰³ Mongkut judged the traditional practices of Thai Buddhism against a strict interpretation of the Pāli canon and believed that folklore had nothing to do with Buddhism and were just “local stories full of demons, gods, miracles, magic, rituals, and exorcism.”²⁰⁴ As a result, the Thammayut-nikai monks spent most of their time studying the Pāli canon and commentaries, especially the mastery of the vinaya and spent less time practicing meditation, which Mongkut regarded as “mystical.”

The Sinhalese textual tradition, as mentioned above, was mainly based on the materials from Buddhaghosa, the 5th century Indian commentator and scholar who lived in Sri Lanka. One of his works is the manual of meditation, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*. Today, the *Visuddhimagga* is thus often

²⁰⁰ Tiyanavich, *Forest Recollections*, 6.

²⁰¹ Crosby, “Tantric Theravāda,” 160.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Tiyanavich, *Forest Recollections*, 7.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

regarded as the standard text on the subject of meditation because it gives comprehensive guidance as well as doctrinal background to the meditations recommended by the Buddha.²⁰⁵ The *Visuddhimagga* recapitulates the teaching of the Buddha contained in the early Buddhist Canon.²⁰⁶ The list of meditation subjects currently used in Theravada Buddhist countries is Buddhaghosa's forty *kammaṭṭhānas*.²⁰⁷ In this list, forty subjects are used as the basis for meditation practice which classified according to types, stages, or moods of a person and as well as the levels of meditative attainment to which each subject can lead when correctly mediated upon. Another important meditation manual is *Vimuttimagga* or *The Path of Freedom*. This manual was written by Upatissa. According to Shaw, Upatissa is a mysterious figure with no information of where or when he lived. Though the origin of his manual is still a controversy, Shaw proposed that both *Vimuttimagga* and *Visuddhimagga* complement one another and they both are significant for the better understanding of the canon on the meditation methods.²⁰⁸

Both manuals provide many techniques and approaches for meditation practices. One particular technique might suit one's own personality better than other techniques. Therefore, it is not a question of which approach is better but rather which is the most suitable and can quickly assist the meditator in pursuing the ultimate goal. Despite the fact that there are many ways to practice meditation, the final result and the benefit of meditation is the same. The benefit of meditation, in terms of Buddhist tradition, is a path to achieve enlightenment, which is the only way to escape from *samsāra*. In Buddhism, all beings are trapped in *samsāra*. *Samsāra* "is a term referring to the beginningless cycle of birth, death, and

²⁰⁵ Shaw, *Introduction to Buddhist Meditation*, 68.

²⁰⁶ Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification – Visuddhimagga*, 4th ed., trans. by Bhikkhu Nānamoli (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1979), ix.

²⁰⁷ Shaw, *Buddhist Meditation*, 7.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

rebirth.”²⁰⁹ This cycle of rebirth includes heaven, humans, animals, ghosts and hell. Although gods can live in heaven and enjoy their lives in the paradise for a long period of time, eventually they have to come back in the cycle of rebirth and perhaps some of them might have to spend a long period of time in the hell. The key to escaping *samsāra* is to make one’s mind pure by eradicating the delusion. This can be achieved through meditation.

In Theravāda Buddhist meditation, there are two strands of meditative practice: *samatha* (calm) and *vipassanā* (insight). The sharp distinction between these two methods, as Swearer proposed, is the work of later Theravāda because earlier Pāli sources mute this distinction.²¹⁰ *Samatha* is the cultivation of the concentration which seeks to attain the calmness and tranquility of the mind. *Vipassanā* or insight meditation promotes the direct understanding of the true nature of things as they really are. Although there is a distinction between these two meditative practices, both terms are often tied together which is *samatha-vipassanā* because “*vipassanā* insight can be produced only by calm concentration of mind.”²¹¹ In addition to the equal importance of the two meditation methods, Shaw also notes that “the Buddha said that *samatha* and *vipassanā* should be ‘yoked together’. They are sometimes compared to two wings of the same bird, or two sides of a plank of wood.”²¹² It is interesting to note that the term *samatha-vipassanā* appears as a compound word in many modern meditation practice manuals and also in the sacred biographies of Khruba Sriwichai.

²⁰⁹ Robert Buswell, ed., “Samsara,” *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), s.v.

²¹⁰ Donald K. Swearer, “The Way to Meditation,” in *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 207.

²¹¹ Winston L. King, *Theravada Meditation: The Buddhist Transformation of Yoga* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), 90.

²¹² Shaw, *Introduction to Buddhist Meditation*, 11.

3.2 History of ‘hetero-orthodox’ Theravāda Buddhist meditation, the Yogāvacara tradition.

According to Crosby, Tantric Theravāda is “an esoteric tradition of texts and practices within the Theravāda of mainland Southeast Asia that is far removed from the rationalistic monolithic Theravāda presented in many secondary sources.”²¹³ This new understanding of Theravāda was brought to the attention of western scholars by François Bizot who produced a series of studies of this esoteric tradition over the past three decades. Most of the *yogāvacara* material that Bizot studied is from Cambodia; he also looked at material from Laos, Burma, northern Thailand and central Thailand. Because of its practices and its principal philosophy, this tradition can be identified as tantric or the *yogāvacara* tradition. Crosby defines the *yogāvacara* as “practitioner of spiritual discipline (i.e. of meditation).”²¹⁴

It is difficult to prove the origins of the *yogāvacara* tradition because over the past few centuries a lot of information has disappeared as a result of the destruction of monastic libraries by war and the deterioration of manuscripts due to natural causes. Another factor is the introduction of print technology into Southeast Asia from the 19th century onward: new versions of the *Tiṭṭaka* proliferated but the traditional manuscripts disappeared.²¹⁵ And as both Crosby and Gethin note that the increasing influence of the Thammayut-nikai “resulted in the gradual decline of many of the older esoteric traditions and practices of South-East Asian Theravada associated with the Mahānikāya lineage.”²¹⁶

²¹³ Crosby, “Tantric Theravāda,” 141.

²¹⁴ Ibid. The detailed features of the *yogāvacara* material which have led to it being described as tantric Theravāda is on page 141 and 142.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 144-145. Governments such as the French in Indochina tended to favour reformed Buddhism as well, see Penny Edwards, *Cambodge the Cultivation of a Nation, 1860-1945 (Southeast Asia: Politics, Meaning, and Memory)* (Honolulu, HIU: University of Hawaii Press, 2007).

²¹⁶ Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 257.

Due to the scarcity of evidence for the *yogāvacara* form of Cambodian Theravāda, its origins remain unclear. Nonetheless, there is some evidence that *yogāvacara* Buddhism was practised throughout much of mainland Southeast Asia up until the 19th century. In his studies, Bizot explores many possible sources for the tradition.²¹⁷ He asserts that one reason for the rarity of *yogāvacara* manuscripts compared with orthodox works is because of “the primarily oral transmission, given the esoteric nature of the material.”²¹⁸ It is noteworthy that this same reason can be used to explain the rarity of the materials relating to the meditation practices of Khruba Sriwichai.

With regard to the presence of the *yogāvacara* in Thailand, Crosby also mentions two other scholars whose studies are relating with the *yogāvacara* tradition in northern Thailand. Firstly, Lagirarde offers evidence to attest that this esoteric tradition in Cambodia researched by Bizot is also in the northern Thailand or the region of Lanna. Crosby summarizes Lagirarde’s studies as follows:

While this association between Lanna and Cambodian Buddhism is later established by the *Saddavimala* study, Lagirarde focuses on a Lanna parallel to the *mūl brah kammaṭṭhān*, published by Bizot from Khmer sources as the *Figuier à cinq branches*. The Lanna version, witnessed by a number of manuscripts, is called the *Pvārabandh*, ‘the noble garland’ or ‘the excellent work’. The earliest dated manuscripts are all 19th century. Lagirarde’s suggestion that they go back to the period when Thais and Cambodians received their Buddhism from the Mons towards the 13th – 14th centuries is based on statements by Bizot in his *Pabbajjā*.²¹⁹

According to Crosby, further evidence for the association between the *yogāvacara* tradition and Lanna is a meditation manual, *The Way to Meditation*, translated by Swearer. This translation is from Pāli and northern Thai of a section of an essay on meditation written by Bhikkhu Pannawong (1871-1956). Swearer

²¹⁷ Crosby, “Tantric Theravāda,” 146. Further reading for possible sources for the *yogāvacara* tradition is on page 146.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 167.

asserts that Bhikkhu Pannawong's meditation techniques represent the Buddhism of northern Thailand prior to the modern influence of the insight meditation of Thai students of the Burmese meditation teacher Mahasi Saydaw, whose insight (*vipassanā*) method became popular throughout the Theravāda world in the latter half of the 20th century.”²²⁰ Crosby asserts that although the connection between Bhikkhu Pannawong's meditation texts and the *yogāvacara* meditation is not instantly noticeable and may not be relatively close, there are two reasons for reference.

Firstly, the liturgy used in preparation for the meditation is extremely close to that found in the Sri Lankan Pali text the *Samatha-vipassanā-bhāvanā-vākkapparakarāṇa*. It is likewise similar to that found in *Le Chemin de Lanṅā*. Similarities include the homage to the five gems, rather than the standard three, found throughout the *yogāvacara* tradition. The five gems are the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, plus the meditation subject and the meditation teacher. Secondly, it advocates the repetition of the sacred formulae thousands of times found in the *yogāvacara* meditation. This northern Thai meditation text clearly has inherited features in common with the *yogāvacara* tradition,²²¹ although the extent of the common ground is not clear from the short manual.

The first reason that Crosby mentions will be further investigated in this next section as it is relevant to the meditation practices associated with Khruba Sriwichai.

3.3 Khruba Sriwichai's meditation practice and experience

In Theravāda Buddhism, meditation is regarded as a path that must be followed to successfully reach enlightenment.²²² Despite its importance for Khruba Sriwichai's reputation as a Buddhist holy man, few biographers and scholars have investigated

²²⁰ Ibid., 187. It is interesting to note that this particular meditation technique is similar to the meditation practices founded in *Ti raluek chalong khrop 100 pi Phra Khru Suphatarasilakun* (Luang Pu Khruba Chao Duang Di), a book written by a disciple of Khruba Sriwichai.

²²¹ Ibid., 187-188.

²²² Kate Crosby, “Devotion to the Buddha in Theravada and its Role in Meditation,” in *The Intimate Other: Love Divine in Indic Religions*, ed. Anna S. King and John Brockington (New Delhi: Orient Longman Private Limited, 2005), 259.

Khruba Sriwichai's meditation practice. In this section I will investigate the questions of how, when, and where Khruba Sriwichai practiced meditation and as well as his meditation goals. Because there are only a few primary sources about Khruba Sriwichai that specifically mention meditation, I will also consider indirect evidence from his sacred biographies, his monastic dress, the meditation practices of his disciples and of other monks who were part of the northern Thai Buddhist sphere during his lifetime. I will ask if, based on this evidence, it is possible to state what kind of meditation Khruba Sriwichai's practiced.

3.3.1 Evidence from his sacred biographies

There are short accounts of Khruba Sriwichai's meditation practice in his biographies. Most of these report that after Khruba Sriwichai was ordained as a monk, he studied with his first teacher, Khruba Khattiya at Wat Ban Pang. After a while, he went to study with Khruba Upala at Wat Doi Tae, situated in Lamphun province. Khruba Upala had the reputation of being rigorous meditation master and was highly venerated by local villagers.²²³ Khruba Sriwichai stayed at Wat Doi Tae for the period of 3 months during the rainy season retreat and then went back to Wat Ban Pang.²²⁴ There is very little direct

²²³ Phutthathammo, *Prawati khong Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]*, 10. During the field research, I came across the Khruba Upala's writings at the museum of Khruba Sriwichai in Wat Ban Pang. The title given to these manuscripts was "Textbooks of Khruba Upala, Wat Doi Tae, which Khruba Sriwichai used for studying." These writings were written in Lanna scripts. I have obtained copies of these texts which have yet to be translated.

²²⁴ Premchit, *Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 9; Sratthatham, *Khruba Sriwichai phu chai det [Khruba Sriwichai who is resolute]*, 15-16; Praphasri, *Khruba Sriwichai chom thap tham haeng Lanna Thai [Khruba Sriwichai, the Dhamma commander of Thai Lanna]*, 55-56; *Prawati lae phonngan khong Khruba Sriwichai nak bun amta khong mueang nuea [The biography and achievements of Khruba Sriwichai, the everlasting holy man of the North]*, 5-6; *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]*, 13-14; *Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai: Prawati kan srang thang khuen Doi Suthep lae prawati Wat Phra That Doi Suthep [A History of Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist Saint of Northern Thailand: A story of making way up to Doi Suthep and a historical chronicle of Wat Phra That Doi]*, 5; Khosananan, *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai ariyasong haeng Lanna [Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist saint of Lanna]*, 17; *Ruam phap chut lae prawati yo 80 phra kammatan [The pictures collection and the brief biographies of 80 meditation masters]*, 207.

information about of what kind of meditation Khruba Sriwichai learned from Khruba Upala. However the careful analysis of his sacred biographies provides some clues.

Document 1: รวมภาพชุดและประวัติย่อ ๘๐ พระกรรมฐาน, *Ruam phap chut lae prawati yo 80 phra kammatan*

Document 1 is a collection of the biographies of eighty Phra *Kammaṭṭhāna* (meditation masters) in Thailand. The book, held in the Fine Arts Department of the National Library of Thailand was published in 2527 BE by Lokthip (โลกทิพย์) a magazine that contains articles about Buddhist teachings and mysterious mental powers. The book contains the photos and biographies of 80 prominent meditation masters around Thailand, including Khruba Sriwichai and includes a two-page summary of his life.

บวชเป็นสามเณรแล้ว ก็ได้เริ่มฝึกสอนสมณะและวิปัสสนากรรมฐานกับพระอาจารย์เลยทันที ถ้าแม่มีเวลาว่างจากภารกิจใดๆ ท่านจะขึ้นไปบนยอดเขา ฝึกวิปัสสนากรรมฐานเพียงลำพัง²²⁵

ครูบาศรีวิชัย ได้มาอยู่จำพรรษาที่ท่านพระครูบาอุปละ ได้ศึกษาวิชาต่างๆ เช่น การเจริญจิตภาวนากรรมฐาน วิชาเวทมนตร์คาถา ด้วยความขยันหมั่นเพียร ศึกษาเล่าเรียนอย่างเอาใจใส่ และสามารถจำได้อย่างรวดเร็ว²²⁶

After he became a novice, he immediately learned *samatha* and *vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna* with his teacher. If he had free time, he would go to the top of a mountain to practice *vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna* alone.²²⁷

²²⁵ *Ruam phap chut lae prawati yo 80 phra kammatan [The pictures collection and the brief biographies of 80 meditation masters]*, 207.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

Khruba Sriwichai learnt *bhāvanā kammaṭṭhāna* and *wetmon gāthā* (*veda mantra*, or “magic spells”) with Khruba Upala during the Buddhist *phansa* or the Buddhist rain retreat. He was diligent and could memorize in a short time.²²⁸

Document 2: สารประวัติครูบาศรีวิชัย นักบุญแห่งล้านนาไทย, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna*

Document 2 is a biography that is based on *khrao* (northern style poem) written about the life story of Khruba Sriwichai. *Khrao* was composed in the Lanna language by the monk Phra Suthonphotchanakit in 2463 BE. It was made into a book, and copies were presented to Khruba Sriwichai, who gave the books away to his supporters. Document 2 was published in 2522 BE when Sun Nungsue Chiang Mai decided to republish the poem so a new generation of Thai Buddhists could learn about Khruba Sriwichai. The core of the book consists of Wannasai’s translation of the original poem from the Lanna language and script into standard Thai. Wannasai also included additional material based on interviews with relatives and disciples of Khruba Sriwichai. In the foreword on page ii, Wannasai states that his biography differs in many details from some of the hagiographies written about Khruba Sriwichai’s. Rather than portraying Khruba Sriwichai as a saint, Wannasai describes him as an ordinary human, although a human being who possessed great virtues. However, Wannasai does not totally “demythologise” the story of Khruba Sriwichai: he includes information about the many miracles that were attributed to Khruba Sriwichai during his lifetime.

According to Wannasai, the poem was the first biography ever written about Khruba Sriwichai. When it was composed on 5th of August 2463 BE, Khruba Sriwichai was around 42 years old. As noted above, monks who are granted a title

²²⁸ Ibid.

as “Khruba” should be more than 60 years old. The title of the poem, “*tamnan rueng Phra Sriwichai Wat Ban Phang*”,²²⁹ or “*A history of Phra Sriwichai Wat Ban Pang*” reflects the fact that at that time, Phra Suthonphotchanakit, who knew Khruba Sriwichai well, did not consider him to be a “*khruba*.”²³⁰

Wannasai included a brief account of the author of the poem, the monk Phra Suthonphotchanakit in the preface. He was born in 2408 BE and passed away on March 11th, 2480 BE at the age of 72. His former name as a layman was Bunma. Bunma lived in Muang Chiang Saen, Chiang Rai province. He immigrated to Chiang Mai in 2424 BE. He was talented in composing the northern Thai style poems and was well-known in Chiang Mai for his poems. Phra Ratchaya Chao Dara Ratsami, one of the princess consorts of Chulalongkorn, King Rama V of Siam, asked Bunma to compose plays. She was very pleased with his plays that she appointed him as Thao Suthonphotchanakit. Thao Suthonphotchanakit was ordained as a monk when he was 48 years old in 2460 BE. Three years later, Phra Suthonphotchanakit composed the life story of Khruba Sriwichai. In the poem he writes:

พระศรีวิชัยจึงเดินทางไปวัดดอยเต่า ตามคำแนะนำของครูบาสมณะผู้เป็นอุปัชฌายะเมื่อไปถึงครูบาอุปละ
แล้ว แทนที่ท่านครูบาจะอนุญาตให้สึก ท่านกลับสอนให้รู้จักการปฏิบัติในสมถกรรมฐาน พระศรีวิชัยได้
ศึกษาและปฏิบัติตามที่ครูบาอุปละแนะนำสั่งสอน จนเป็นที่เข้าใจและปฏิบัติได้ดี จึงกราบลาครูบาอุปละไป
ศึกษาต่อที่ครูบาวัดดอยคำ ในด้านการปฏิบัติและปริยัติเพิ่มเติมอีก แล้วกลับไปศึกษาต่อกับครูบาสมณะวัด
บ้านโฮ่องหลวง ผู้เป็นอุปัชฌายะของท่าน²³¹

²²⁹ Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 3.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

Phra Sriwichai therefore travelled to Wat Doi Tae, as advised by Khruba Samana who was his preceptor. When he met Khruba Upala, instead of being permitted to leave from monkhood, Khruba Upala taught him the practice of *samatha kammaṭṭhāna*. After Phra Sriwichai had learnt and practiced excellently from Khruba Upala's teachings, he then went to further learn *paṭipatti* and *pariyatti* with Khruba Wat Doi Kham. After that he went back to Wat Ban Hong Luang with Khruba Samana who was his preceptor.²³²

Document 3: พระครูบาเจ้าศรีวิชัย นักบุญแห่งลานนาไทย, *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai*

Document 3 was published by the Buddhist Club of the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand in 2542 BE.²³³ The president of the Buddhist Club, Mr. Wirawat Chalayon, asked permission from the abbot of Wat Phra That Saeng Kaeow Mong Kol, Phra Anan Phutthathammo, to publish the life story of Khruba Sriwichai. The contents in Document 3, therefore, were almost identical with the work of Phra Anan Phutthathammo (Document 11). The objective for publishing this work, as stated by Mr. Wirawat, was that the Buddhist Club considered the life story of Khruba Sriwichai and his teachings as valuable and that they would benefit the members of the club to learn how to conduct themselves in a good way.

เมื่ออุปสมบทแล้ว ก็กลับมาอยู่ปฏิบัติอุปัฏฐากครูบาชิตยะได้ ๑ พรรษา แล้วท่านก็ขอลาไป วัดคอยเตะ เขต อำเภอมะท้าว ซึ่งสมัยนั้นชาวลำพูนนับถือท่านว่าเป็นผู้มีความเฉลียวฉลาด ปฏิบัติเคร่งครัดพระครูบาอุปละได้ เมตตาถ่ายทอดครองวัตรปฏิบัติวิชาอาคมให้พระศรีวิชัยสมควรแก่ภูมิธรรมเป็นเวลา ๑ พรรษา จึงได้อำลามา

²³² Ibid.

²³³ It is traditional in Thai culture for secular organisations such as the Electricity Authority to sponsor religious publications as a meritorious deed; see Grant Olson, "Thai Cremation Volumes: A Brief History of a Unique Genre of Literature" *Asian Folklore Studies*, no. 51 (1992): 279-94.

ผู้วัดบางปาง ตั้งจิตอธิษฐานปฏิบัติทบทวนภูมิธรรมพิจารณาวัตรปฏิบัติธรรมโดยเคร่งครัดเสมอต้นเสมอปลาย และท่านได้นับถือพระครูบาอุปละเป็นอาจารย์ผู้สั่งสอนกัมมัฏฐานเป็นองค์สุดท้าย²³⁴

After the ordination, Phra Sriwichai came back to serve and attend Khruba Khattiya for one *phansa* and then he asked permission to go to Wat Doi Tae, Amphur Mae Ta. In those days, the inhabitant in Lamphun respected Khruba Upala for his intelligence and rigorous practicing. Khruba Upala transmitted his teachings and *vijjā āgama* (*vidya-agama*; “knowledge of magic”) to Phra Sriwichai for one *phansa*. Then he went to Wat Ban Pang and made a vow to observe the precepts and practice strictly. He also respected Khruba Upala as his last teacher who taught him *kammaṭṭhāna*.²³⁵

Document 4: ตำนานครูบาศรีวิชัยแบบพิสดาร และ ตำนานวัดสวนดอก, *Tamnan Khruba Sriwichai baep phitsadan lae tamnan Wat Suan Dok*

Document 4 is from a publication by the Social Research Institute of Chiang Mai University about palm leaf manuscripts that are important for the study of northern Thai Buddhism. Document 4 consists of two palm-leaf manuscripts about Khruba Sriwichai and the history of Wat Suandok. The manuscripts have been transliterated into Standard Thai and published in 2537 BE. The author of these two manuscripts is not named. According to Associate Professor Sommai Premchit, the editor of Document 4, it was traditional for authors in those days to remain anonymous as it was considered boastful and immodest for writers to mention their own name.²³⁶ Premchit compared this manuscript to other palm-leaf texts about Khruba Sriwichai’s life story. In addition to praising Khruba Sriwichai as one of the most meritorious monks in northern Thailand or “*nak*

²³⁴ *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]*, 12-14.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

²³⁶ *Tamnan Khruba Sriwichai baep phitsadan lae tamnan Wat Suan Dok [The comprehensive history of Khruba Sriwichai and the history of Wat Suan Dok]*, ก.

bun haeng Lanna” (the holy man of Lanna), the manuscript is very long and full of many details.²³⁷

พระศรีวิชัยเจ้าภิกษุตนนั้น ก็ตั้งใจรักษาสิกขาบทวินัย รักษาศีล 227 บริสุทธื้แท้แลครั้นต่อมา ท่านก็ได้ไปเรียนเอาสมถกรรมฐาน วิปัสสนากัมมัฏฐาน และสิกขาบทวินัย กับครูบาอุปละ ที่วัดบ้านทาดอยเต (อำเภอแม่ทา) เมืองลำพูน²³⁸

Phra Sriwichai earnestly observed his 227 precepts. He went to study *samatha kammatṭhāna*, *vipassanā kammatṭhāna* and Buddhist disciplines at Wat Doi Tae (Amphur Mae Ta) Muang Lamphun.²³⁹

Document 5: พระครูบาเจ้าศรีวิชัย อริยสงฆ์แห่งล้านนา, *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai ariyasong haeng Lanna*

Document 5 was written by Charat Khosananun in 2549 BE. In his preface, he wrote a short summary glorifying Khruba Sriwichai’s life story. According to Khosananun, Khruba Sriwichai had a unique way of teaching the principles of Buddhism which was straightforward. “Therefore, it would be suitable for us to take his valuable teachings as our refuge.”²⁴⁰

เมื่อท่านได้รับถ่ายทอดความรู้จากพระครูบาชัฏติยะ จนจบแล้วจึงได้นมัสการกราบลาพระครูชัฏติยะ แล้วเดินทางไปเป็นศิษย์ของพระครูบาอุปละ วัดบ้านทาดอยเต วัดพระธาตุดอยเต ตำบลท่าทุ่งแปง จังหวัดลำพูน ซึ่งสมัยนั้นการศึกษาพระพุทธศาสนาในเขตอำเภอแม่ทานี้เจริญมาก มีพระครูบาเก่งๆหลายรูป พระครู

²³⁷ Ibid., ง.

²³⁸ Ibid., 4.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Khosananun, *Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai ariyasong haeng Lanna [Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist saint of Lanna]*, preface.

บาสมเด็จพระวัดคอกครั้ง ได้เคยเป็นสังฆราชของนครลำพูนในสมัยก่อน และท่านเหลืลูกศิษย์ไว้หลายรูป โดยเฉพาะพระครูบาอุปละ วัดบ้านทาทยแดและพระครูบาวัดคอกคำ ๒ วัดนี้มีชื่อเสียงด้านปริยัติ และปฏิบัติอย่างยิ่ง พระครูบาอุปละ ได้เมตตาสั่งสอนวิธีการปฏิบัติสมถกัมมัฏฐาน และวิปัสสนากัมมัฏฐาน เมื่อท่านได้ร่ำเรียนกับพระครูบาอุปละ จนสมควรแก่ภูมิธรรมเป็นเวลา ๑ พรรษาแล้ว จากนั้นท่านได้กราบลาพระครูบาอุปละไปศึกษาต่อกับพระครูบาวัดคอกคำเพื่อเรียนปฏิบัติ และปริยัติเพิ่มเติมอีกแล้วกลับมาศึกษาต่อที่วัดบ้านโฮ้ง หลวง กับพระครูบาสมณะผู้เป็นพระอุปัชฌาย์²⁴¹

After Phra Khruba Khattiya transmitted his knowledge to Phra Sriwichai, he then asked Phra Khruba Khattiya for permission and travelled to Phra Khruba Upala to be his student at Wat Ban Ta Doi Tae, Wat Phra Thāt Doi Tae, Tambon Ta Tong Pang, Lamphun Province. In those days, the learning of the Buddhist teachings in this region flourished and there were many great Khruba. Phra Khruba Somdej Wat Doi Khrung used to be the head monk of Lamphun Province and he chose many monks to be his disciples in particular Phra Khruba Upala, Wat Ban Ta Doi Tae and Phra Khruba Wat Doi Kham. These two temples were prominent for *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti*. Phra Khruba Upala kindly taught the practice of *samatha kammaṭṭhāna* and *vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna*. After Phra Sriwichai profoundly learnt from Phra Khruba Upala for the period of one *phansa*, he then went to learn more on *paṭipatti* and *pariyatti* with Phra Khruba Wat Doi Kham. And finally he went back to Wat Ban Hong Luang to study with his preceptor, Phra Khruba Samana.²⁴²

Document 6: ประวัติ และผลงาน ของ ครูบาศรีวิชัย นักบุญอมตะของเมืองเหนือ, *Prawati lae phonngan khong Khruba Sriwichai nak bun amta khong mueang nuea*

²⁴¹ Ibid., 17.

²⁴² Ibid.

Document 6 was printed and distributed in 2543 BE by a pious, wealthy Chiang Mai family. This particular family respected and had faith in Khruba Sriwichai both for his meditation practice and for his determination to develop communities for the public's benefit. They wrote that Khruba Sriwichai was unlike any other monk. Even though Khruba Sriwichai had passed away 62 years earlier, his goodness was unforgettable. His strict observance of the Buddhist precepts meant that many people revered him. Therefore, on the occasion of the year 2543 BE, which had been a prosperous year for their family, the family decided to show their gratitude by publishing the biography of Khruba Sriwichai, recording his good deeds, his meditation practice, and his prayer.²⁴³

ครูบาขัติยะ เป็นพระอาจารย์รูปแรกของพระศรีวิชัย ได้ถ่ายทอดวิชาความรู้ต่างๆจนหมดสิ้นแล้ว ครูบาขัติยะ จึงเห็นว่าควรจะส่งพระศรีวิชัยไปศึกษาเล่าเรียนวิชาอาคม จากครูบาอื่นที่มีความรู้มากกว่าท่าน ในยุคนั้น มีสำนักครูบาอุปละ วัดดอยเตด ปัจจุบันอยู่ในเขต อ.แม่ทา ลำพูน มีชื่อเสียงถือว่าเป็นสำนักวิปัสสนากัมมัฏฐาน ที่เก่งที่สุด ครูบาอุปละนั้น ถือว่าเป็นผู้มีวิชาอาคมสูง เป็นที่เคารพยกย่องของผู้คนทั่วไป เมื่อครูบาขัติยะ สนับสนุนเช่นนั้น พระศรีวิชัย จึงมีความปลื้มปีติดีใจ นำข่าวนี้อไปบอกแก่โยมพ่อโยมแม่ และขอลาไปศึกษา ณ วัดดอยเตด²⁴⁴

Khruba Khattiya was the first teacher of Phra Sriwichai. After Khruba Khattiya passed on all his knowledge to Phra Sriwichai, he considered sending him to learn *vijjā āgama* with other Khruba that had more knowledge than him. In those days, there was a temple of Khruba Upala, Wat Doi Tae, which currently situated in Amphur Māe Ta, Lamphun. It was known as the best temple for

²⁴³ *Prawati lae phonngan khong Khruba Sriwichai nak bun amta khong mueang nuea [The biography and achievements of Khruba Sriwichai, the everlasting holy man of the North]*, preface.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna. Khruba Upala was regarded as a monk who had the high *vijjā āgama* and was venerated by many people.²⁴⁵

Document 7: ครูบาศรีวิชัย จอมทัพธรรมแห่งล้านนาไทย, *Khruba Sriwichai chom thap tham haeng Lanna Thai*

Than Bua Kaeo Press wrote in the preface of Document 7 that this particular book was different from other biographies of the monks because the author, Thamchati Praphasri, included information in his book about social history as well as the life story of Khruba Sriwichai to create a bigger picture of Lanna society during that time.²⁴⁶

ในสมัยนั้นชื่อของพระครูบาอุปละ วัดคอกยเต โดดเด่นเป็นพิเศษในเมืองลำพูน เนื่องจากความเคร่งครัดในวัตรปฏิบัติและความรอบรู้ จนแตกฉานในพระธรรมคำสอนของพระผู้มีพระภาคเจ้า พระสิริวิชโยจึงตั้งใจไว้ว่าจะเดินทางมาศึกษาธรรมกับท่านครูอุปละในวันหนึ่งข้างหน้า ครั้นได้โอกาสท่านจึงได้นมัสการลาพระครูบาชิตยะเพื่อจุดประสงค์ ดังกล่าว

ครูบาชิตยะอำนวยพรให้ศิษย์ สิริวิชโยภิกขุจึงเดินทางมุ่งหน้ามาฝากตัวเป็นศิษย์ของพระครูอุปละ ซึ่งท่านก็ได้มีเมตตาถ่ายทอดวิชากรรมฐานให้อย่างเต็มความสามารถ นับเป็นก้าวแรกของการเป็นพระนักปฏิบัติของสิริวิชโยภิกขุ²⁴⁷

ท่านได้ตั้งอกตั้งใจปฏิบัติตามคำสั่งสอนของอาจารย์อย่างเคร่งครัด จนเกิดความมั่นอกมั่นใจว่ามีได้ก้าวเดินผิดพลาดในโลกธรรม เป็นการแน่นอนแล้ว จึงนมัสการลาอาจารย์รูปสุดท้ายในชีวิต เพื่อกลับมายังบ้านปางท่านมีเจตนากลับมาครั้งนี้ก็เพื่อทบทวนความรู้ที่ได้รับมาให้แน่ใจก่อนที่จะก้าวเดินต่อไปข้างหน้า²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Praphasri, *Khruba Sriwichai chom thap tham haeng Lanna Thai [Khruba Sriwichai, the Dhamma commander of Thai Lanna]*, preface.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 55-56.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

In those days, the name of Phra Khruba Upala of Wat Doi Tae was prominent in Lamphun because of his strict observance and his wide knowledge in the Buddhist teachings. Phra Sriwichai determined that one day he would go to study *dhamma* with him. When there was an opportunity, Phra Sriwichai asked permission from Phra Khruba Khattiya to follow this goal.²⁴⁹

Phra Khruba Khattiya gave his blessing to his student. Phra Sriwichai then went to Phra Khruba Upala and devoted himself to becoming his disciple. Phra Khruba Upala made an effort to kindly pass on his knowledge about *kammaṭṭhāna*. This was the first step for Phra Sriwichai to become a meditation master.²⁵⁰

Document 8: ครูบาศรีวิชัย “คนบุญ” แห่งล้านนา (2421-2481), *Khruba Sriwichai “ton bun” haeng Lanna (BE 2421-2481)*

Document 8 is the MA thesis of Chanamun, a student from the Art Department of Thammasart University. Her thesis is an analysis of the role of the *ton bun* or “holy man,” and the importance of this concept for understanding the controversy surrounding the Reformation of the Sangha in Bangkok in 1905.²⁵¹ It is interesting to note that in her thesis, Chanamun used Ajahn Singkha Wannasai’s work (Document 2) as her main source for the section of Khruba Sriwichai’s life story.

ดังนั้นการที่พระศรีวิชัยเดินทางสู่สำนักวัดดอยแต เพื่อศึกษากับครูอุปละครั้งนั้น น่าจะมีผลต่อวิถีชีวิตของพระศรีวิชัยมิใช่น้อย เพราะจากการได้ศึกษาเพิ่มเติมความรู้ทั้งทางด้านปฏิบัติและปริยัติ โดยเฉพาะการ

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Chanamun, “Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ haeng Lanna (BE 2421-2481) [Khruba Sriwichai ‘ton bun’ of Lanna],” abstract.

มุ่งเน้นการปฏิบัติธรรมโดยการบำเพ็ญสมาธิภาวนา ทำให้พระศรีวิชัยเลิกความสนใจในความรู้ด้านไสยศาสตร์เสีย แล้วมุ่งเน้นปฏิบัติด้านสมาธิธรรมประการเดียว ที่สำคัญคือ ผลของการศึกษาเล่าเรียนกับครูบาอุปละ ทำให้พระศรีวิชัยตัดสินใจอยู่ในร่มเงาของผ้ากาสาวพัตร์ต่อ²⁵²

Since the time that Phra Sriwichai went to Wat Doi Tae to study with Khru Upala, his life changed. Because of his better understanding both in *paṭipatti* and *pariyatti* in particular with the practice of *samādhi bhāvanā*, Phra Sriwichai had no more interest in *saiyasat* (magic). He then focused only on the practice of *samādhi dhamma*. It is important to note that the period of time he spent with Khru Upala led Phra Sriwichai to decide to stay as a monk.²⁵³

Document 9: พระครูบาศรีวิชัย, *Phra Khruba Sriwichai*

Siwa Ronachit is a famous Thai novelist who has published many remarkable works for over 30 years and was granted the award as a national artist for Thai literature in 2534 BE. In addition to being a novelist, he is also known for his writing on political issues and for his critical analysis. Document 9 is a well-known work on this particular area.²⁵⁴

พระศรีวิชัย อุปสมบทที่วัดบ้านปาง แต่หลังจากนั้นได้ฉันภัตตาหารตามสมควร ขออนุญาตไปจำอยู่วัดดอยเต่า ตำบลท่าทุ่งแฝง อำเภอกิ่งแม่ทา เพื่อศึกษาวิชากรรมมูลฐานกับ พระครูบาอุปละ กระทั่งออกพรรษาแล้วจึงกลับมาจำพรรษาอยู่วัดบ้านปางตามเดิม²⁵⁵

²⁵² Ibid., 31.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ronachit, *Phra Khruba Sriwichai*, preface.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 19.

Phra Sriwichai was ordained at Wat Ban Pang and after that he asked permission from the abbot to go to Wat Doi Tae, Tamboon Tong Fang, Amphur Mae Ta for learning *kammaṭṭhāna* with Phra Khruba Upala until the end of the Buddhist *phansa*. He then went back to stay at Wat Ban Pang.²⁵⁶

Document 10: ครูบาศรีวิชัย ผู้ใจเด็ด, *Khruba Sriwichai phu chai det*

In the preface of Document 10, Saithan Srattatham states that Khruba Sriwichai had such a good reputation that every time his name was mentioned, people recognised that he was the “holy man” of northern Thailand. He used the donations he received from his followers to construct many beneficial and valuable projects for the country and especially for Buddhism. Of particular relevance his construction was the road to Doi Suthep in Chiang Mai. His life story was very interesting that Srattatham composed Document 10 from various sources. Srattatham hoped that his writings would more or less benefit to the readers.²⁵⁷

หลังจากบวชแล้ว ครูบาศรีวิชัยได้กราบลาพระอธิการจัตติยะสมภารวัดบ้านปาง เพื่อไปอยู่ปฏิบัติกรรมฐาน
กับพระครูอุปละ ที่วัดคอยเต่า อำเภอแม่ทา²⁵⁸

After his ordination, Khruba Sriwichai asked the permission from Phra Khattiya, the abbot of Wat Ban Pang, to go practice *kammaṭṭhāna* with Phra Khru Upala at Wat Doi Tae, Amphur Mae Ta.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Srattatham, *Khruba Sriwichai phu chai det [Khruba Sriwichai who is resolute]*, preface.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 15.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

Document 11: ประวัติของพระครูบาเจ้าศรีวิชัย นักบุญแห่งลannaไทย, *Prawati khong Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai*

Document 11 was published as a souvenir on the occasion of celebrating the museum of Khruba Sriwichai at Wat Ban Pang, Lamphun Province. This particular biography was composed by Phra Anan Phutthathammo in 2537 BE. In his preface, he wrote that

the life story of Phra Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna, that you are reading now was written because of faith and respect towards his virtue, his superb characteristics, and his perfections. Even though I have inferior abilities in many areas (I have had to ask the novices for advice with the language skill), the six-years period that I have spent researching and collecting Khruba Sriwichai's personal belongings, and the museum (the important place for keeping belongings related to the life story of Khruba Sriwichai) can guarantee that this biography of Khruba Sriwichai would be able to take the readers back to the past to follow the path of Khruba Sriwichai. After all, I believe that this duty has been destined for me to bring all participants to involve in this merit making.²⁶⁰

เมื่ออุปสมบทแล้ว ก็กลับมาอยู่ปฏิบัติอุปัฏฐากครูบาชิตะไต้ 1 พรรษา แล้วท่านก็ขอลาไปศึกษากัมมัฏฐาน และวิชาอาคมกับพระครูบาอุปละ วัดคอยเตา เขตอำเภอแม่ทา ซึ่งสมัยนั้นชาวลำพูนนับถือท่านว่าเป็นผู้มี ความเฉลียวฉลาด ปฏิบัติเคร่งครัดพระครูบาอุปละได้เมตตาถ่ายทอดครองวัตรปฏิบัติวิชาอาคมให้พระศรี วิชัยสมควรแก่ภูมิธรรมเป็นเวลา 1 พรรษา จึงได้อาลามาสู่วัดบ้านปาง ตั้งจิตอธิษฐานปฏิบัติทบตวนภูมิ ธรรมพิจารณาวัตรปฏิบัติธรรมโดยเคร่งครัดเสมอต้นเสมอปลาย และท่านได้นับถือพระครูบาอุปละเป็น อาจารย์ผู้สั่งสอนกัมมัฏฐานเป็นองค์สุดท้าย²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ Phutthathammo, *Prawati khong Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]*, preface.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 9-10.

After the ordination, Phra Sriwichai came back to serve and attend Khruba Khattiya for one *phansa* and then he asked permission to go to learn *kammaṭṭhāna* and *vijjā āgama* with Phra Khruba Upala at Wat Doi Tae, Amphur Mae Ta. In those days, the inhabitant in Lamphun respected Khruba Upala for his intelligence and rigorous practicing. Khruba Upala transmitted his teachings and enchantment to Phra Sriwichai for one *phansa*. Then he went to Wat Ban Pang and made a vow to observe his precepts and practice strictly. He also respected Khruba Upala as his last teacher who taught him *kammaṭṭhāna*.²⁶²

Document 12: ชีวิตและงานของครูบาศรีวิชัย, *Chiwit lae ngan khong Khruba Sriwichai*

This document was written by Sanga Suphapha because he believed that the life story of Khruba Sriwichai would be beneficial not only for people in Thailand but also for people around the world. For this reason, he decided to preserve Khruba Sriwichai's valuable life story so that it would not disappear from memory. He researched and collected the evidences for more than 10 years; he found that some parts of Khruba Sriwichai's life story were missing, and this took a long time to find the evidence. Nonetheless, with help from many people, he finally completed his book and it was published as Document 12 in 2499 BE.²⁶³

พระศรีวิชัย ได้พยายามศึกษาพระประวัติธรรมอย่างจริงจัง ในด้านการปฏิบัติก็เป็นที่เลื่องลือว่าเคร่งครัดในพระวินัยยิ่งกว่าพระสงฆ์องค์ใด ในวัดบ้านหงส์ ซึ่งตนบวชอยู่ พระศรีวิชัยได้รับการถ่ายทอดความรู้จากอาจารย์ชิตจินหมดสั้น จึงคิดขยับขยายหาอาจารย์เพื่อการเล่าเรียนต่อไป ต่อมาไม่นานก็ได้ทราบข่าวว่าอาจารย์อุประแห่งบ้านนาแค เป็นผู้เคร่งวินัย เชี่ยวชาญในทางสมณะกรรมฐานและวิปัสสนากรรมฐาน จึง

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Suphapha, *Chiwit lae ngan khong Khruba Sriwichai [Life and work of Khruba Sriwichai]*, 4-5.

กราบลาพระอาจารย์ชติเดินทางไปเป็นศิษย์แก่พระอุปัชฌาย์บ้านนาแต้ทันที สองสามเดือนให้หลัง เมื่อรู้
แนวทางปฏิบัติก็เดินทางกลับยังวัดเก่า²⁶⁴

Phra Sriwichai was determined to study the Buddhist teachings rigorously. It was well-known that he strictly observed the Buddhist disciplines better than other monks. At Wat Ban Hong, where Phra Sriwichai was ordained, he obtained all the knowledge from Acharn Khat. He then decided to go somewhere else to do further study. Not long after that he heard that there was Acharn Upala of Wat Ban Na Tae, who strictly observed the discipline and masterly practiced *samatha kammaṭṭhāna* and *vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna*. Therefore he asked permission from Phra Acharn Khat to become the disciple of Phra Upala of Ban Tae. Two or three months later, after obtaining the knowledge of *samatha kammaṭṭhāna* and *vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna* practice, he went back to his previous temple.²⁶⁵

Document 13: ประวัติครูบาศรีวิชัย นักบุญแห่งล้านนา, Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna

According to the foreword of Sommai Premchit, Document 13 was published as a result of the intentions of the owner of Ming Muang Press in Chiang Mai, Phongthep Manuphiphatpong. Phongthep told Sommai that his wife would like to publish a book about the meditation master for donating and as well as making merit. The author of Document 13, Sommai, considered their good intention and therefore he volunteered to write a book for them. They chose to write about Khruba Sriwichai because of his works which still can be seen until today such as the constructions in the temples and especially the road to Doi Suthep. The road to Doi Suthep was his great accomplishment because he did

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 31.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

not use the funding from the government to construct the road and on top of that the construction completed earlier beyond expectation. Therefore, by writing this biography, readers would learn more or less about Khruba Sriwichai and his virtues.²⁶⁶

นอกจากนี้ยังได้ไปเรียนเอาสมณะกรรมฐานและวิปัสสนากรรมฐาน กับครูบาอุปละ ที่วัดบ้านทาดอยเต อำเภอแม่ทา จังหวัดลำพูน²⁶⁷

Moreover, Phra Sriwichai went to learn *samatha kammaṭṭhāna* and *vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna* with Khruba Upala at Wat Ban Ta Doi Tae, Amphur Mae Ta, Lamphun Province.²⁶⁸

Document 14: วรรณพิมพ์ล้านนา: วรรณกรรมที่ตีพิมพ์ด้วยอักษรธรรมล้านนา ๖๐ เล่ม ประวัติท่าน พระสีวิไชย วัดบ้านปาง, *Wanapim Lanna: Wanakam thi ti pim duai akson tham Lanna 60 lem prawati than Phra Sriwichai Wat Ban Phang*

Document 14 was the 36th document in “๕-๖๐วรรณพิมพ์ล้านนา,” a project of systematically translating and digitising ancient documents from Lanna into Standard Thai for the new generation of Lanna scholars. The manuscript that they used for Khruba Sriwichai’s life story was from the library of Phra Chaiwit Dhammarato of Wat Tha Thom, Chiang Mai. The original document was written in the northern Tai language using *tham* script (one of the northern Thai scripts) and printed in book form on paper at American Press, Wat Singkham, in Chiang Mai. The pages are approximately 6x9 inches, and it is 55 pages in

²⁶⁶ Premchit, *Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, preface.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 9.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

length. There is no publication date, however on the last page of the book, a record of money donated for the project gives a date of 2472 BE.²⁶⁹

The author of the manuscript was Chao Suriyawong Siriro. He stated in his forward that

...I, Chao Suriyawong Siriro, live in Ban Chedikhawan of Chiang Mai, had collected and gathered information from Khruba Sriwichai since his birth until the year of tiger, eleventh day of the waxing moon in the ninth month, CS (Chulasakarat) 1240 or equivalent to 2421 BE [1878 CE].²⁷⁰

เมื่อเด็กชายผู้นั้นมีอายุ ๑๘ ปีก็คิดจะบวช จึงไปอยู่ที่วัดบ้านปางและรับใช้ “ทูลเจ้าชัต” คือภิกษุชื่อชัตและปรีรุ่ง
ขึ้นก็บวชและเป็นเณรได้ ๒ ปีแล้วอุปสมบทมีสมญาว่า “พระสีวิไชย” ได้เรียนหนังสือและสมถกัมมัฏฐาน
และวิปัสสนาสิกขาวิชานัยกับพระอุปละวัดบ้านธา คอยแพ เมืองลำพูน²⁷¹

When the boy turned 18 years old, he was thinking of becoming a monk. He then went to Wat Ban Pang and attended “Tu Chao Kat” who is a monk. The next year he ordained as a novice for 2 years and when he ordained as a monk, he was given a new religious name as “Phra Sriwichai”. He studied and learnt *samatha kammathan* and *vipassanā sikkhā* with Khruba Upala at Wat Ban Ta, Doi Tae, Mueng Lamphun.²⁷²

The publishers of Document 14 note in their introduction on page 4221 that the author of the manuscript, Chao Suriyawong Siriro, believed in Khruba Sriwichai’s supernatural powers: “the life story was written as best one could and it also gave an account of his constructions for the Buddha relics which

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 4221.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 4222.

²⁷² Ibid.

were respected by many people in the northwest region. And these works were beyond the ability of an ordinary man to do.”²⁷³

Document 15: ประวัติครูบาศรีวิชัย นักบุญแห่งล้านนาไทย ประวัติการสร้างทางขึ้นดอยสุเทพ และ ประวัติวัดพระธาตุดอยสุเทพ, *Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai Prawati kan srang thang khuen Doi Suthep lae prawati Wat Phra That Doi Suthep*

According to Phra Rat Sitthachan, the abbot of Wat Phra That Doi Suthep Worawihan, the temple had published and distributed many biographies of Khruba Sriwichai along with the chronicle history of Wat Phra That Doi Suthep. However, those books contained only a brief story of his works. Later, the temple was given a detailed account of Khruba Sriwichai’s accomplishment in constructing the road to Wat Phra That Doi Suthep. For that reason, the temple decided to publish the book and distributed them so that readers would know the detailed history of Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, and also to praise the virtues of Khruba Sriwichai, who devoted himself to the public’s benefit. In order to make the life story of Khruba Sriwichai become well-known amongst the foreign visitors who daily paid their visit to this temple, Mr. Sombun Punsuwan was assigned to translate the biography into English. Document 15 was published into bilingual Thai-English version with the sponsor from Salisbury family and friends in 2548 BE.²⁷⁴

ครูบาอุปละ ได้เมตตาถ่ายทอดครองวัตรปฏิบัติวิชาวากมให้พระศรีวิชัย สมควรแก่ภูมิธรรม เป็นเวลา ๑ พรรษา จึงได้มาสู่วัดบ้านปาง ตั้งจิตอธิษฐานปฏิบัติทบทวนภูมิธรรมพิจารณาวัตร ปฏิบัติธรรมอย่าง

²⁷³ Ibid., 4221.

²⁷⁴ *Prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai: Prawati kan srang thang khuen Doi Suthep lae prawati Wat Phra That Doi Suthep [A History of Khruba Sriwichai, the Buddhist Saint of Northern Thailand: A story of making way up to Doi Suthep and a historical chronicle of Wat Phra That Doi]*, preface.

เครื่องรัดเสมอต้นเสมอปลาย ครูบาศรีวิชัยได้อือเอาครูบาอุปละ เป็นอาจารย์ผู้สั่งสอนกัมมัฏฐานเป็นองค์
สุดท้าย (องค์แรก ครูบาขัตติยะ องค์ที่ ๒ ครูบาสุมนะ องค์ที่ ๓ ครูบาอุปละ)²⁷⁵

After Khruba Upala passed on his knowledge of observance of precepts and *vijjā āgama* to Khruba Sriwichai for 1 *phansa*, Khruba Sriwichai then went back to Wat Ban Pang. He strictly followed the Vinaya (the Buddhist disciplines). Khruba Sriwichai respected Khruba Upala as his last *kammaṭṭhāna* teacher. (1st teacher, Khruba Khattiya, 2nd teacher, Khruba Samana, 3rd teacher, Khruba Upala).²⁷⁶

In the fifteen biographies of Khruba Sriwichai that I have investigated, listed in the above chart, there is no consensus about his meditation practices. In fact, some of these documents contain contradictory information: Document 1, 3, 11, and 15 state that Khruba Sriwichai learned *wetmon gāthā*, *vijjā āgama* from Khruba Upala, while Document 8 states that after practicing *samādhi bhāvanā* with Khruba Upala, Khruba Sriwichai no longer practiced *saiyasat*.

One possible reason for the contradiction lies in the difficulty in translating Pāli and Thai words for meditation into English. The word “meditation” in English is based on the Latin word *meditat-* which means “contemplate.”²⁷⁷ In English, the word “meditation” is used as a generic term to signify a wide range of contemplative practices, including Buddhist meditation. However, in Pāli and in Thai, there are many different words that refer to specific forms of practice such as *kammaṭṭhāna*, *bhāvanā*, *samatha kammaṭṭhāna*, *vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna*, and *samatha*. To further complicate matters, the precise relationship between the meditation terms and the practice that they describe can vary, depending on the

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 5.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ “meditate,” *Oxford Dictionaries*, Accessed March 19, 2011, http://oxforddictionaries.com/view/entry/m_en_gb0508820#m_en_gb0508820.

teacher. For instance, *samatha kammaṭṭhāna* and *vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna* are two different strands of meditative practice. *Samatha kammaṭṭhāna* is the cultivation of the concentration which seeks to attain the calmness and tranquility of the mind. *Vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna* or insight meditation promotes the direct understanding of the true nature of things as they really are. Swearer proposed that the sharp distinction between these two methods is the work of later Theravāda because earlier Pāli sources mute this distinction.²⁷⁸

Another reason for the contradiction is the personal beliefs of the writers towards Khruba Sriwichai. The biographers knew that Khruba Sriwichai was a famous practitioner of Buddhist meditation, and they wanted to express this in their writings by using meditation terminology that they were familiar with. However, this meditation terminology may not have been the same used by Khruba Sriwichai. Despite these contradictions, valuable information can be drawn from the analysis of these fifteen biographies of Khruba Sriwichai.

From the biographies and the various terminologies used for describing his meditation practice we can conclude that Khruba Sriwichai was a meditator and was considered to be a meditation master by his disciples. The biographies also tell us more or less who taught him meditation. We know that he learned his meditation techniques from Khruba Upala and as suggested in Document 7, this training was the first step for Khruba Sriwichai towards becoming a meditation master.²⁷⁹ We also know that he may have learned additional techniques from Khruba Wat Doi Kham. Both of these teachers are part of the Lanna sphere, and we can assume therefore that Khruba Sriwichai was also firmly established in the Lanna traditions of meditation.

²⁷⁸ Swearer, “The Way to Meditation,” 207.

²⁷⁹ Praphasri, *Khruba Sriwichai chom thap tham haeng Lanna Thai [Khruba Sriwichai, the Dhamma commander of Thai Lanna]*, 55-56.

Even though some of these documents contain contradictory information, we learn that Khruba Sriwichai also learned *wetmon gāthā* and *vijjā āgama* with Khruba Upala. On one hand, the association between Khruba Sriwichai and “magic spells” provide a clue as to why Khruba Sriwichai was suspected of being the leader of a rebellion against the national Thai Sangha. On the other hand, references to “magic spells” and “knowledge of magic” may be signs of Khruba Sriwichai’s supernatural power, or *pāramī*, gained during his meditation practice.

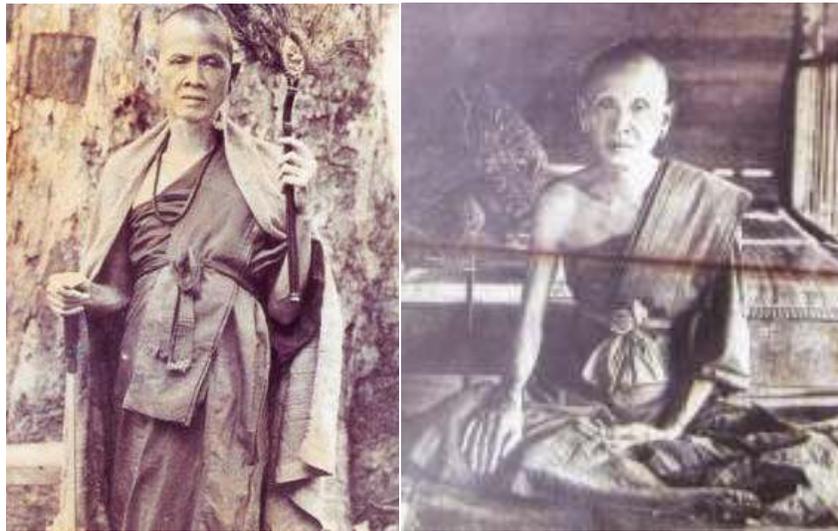
The biographies give us details about where Khruba Sriwichai went to learn meditation Wat Ban Hong, Wat Ban Ta and Wat Doi Kham and the many places he travelled during his lifetime. But there is no mention of meditation or ascetic practices in forests or graveyards in which monks in the forest tradition often go to meditate. Therefore, we can assume that Khruba Sriwichai practiced his meditation in his place of residence and was not a wandering *dhutanga* monk who meditated in graveyards or dwelled forest areas.

Out of the fifteen documents, Document 2 is the oldest; the original poem was composed in 2463 BE or eighty-one years ago by a Lanna monk who knew Khruba Sriwichai personally before he became a *khruba*. Document 2 can be considered as a very useful and authentic source. It is also interesting to note that Document 2 provided more information about Khruba Sriwichai’s meditation practice than any of the other materials. An additional piece of information in this document is that “after Phra Sriwichai had learnt and practiced excellently from Khruba Upala’s teachings, he then went to further learn *paṭipatti* and *pariyatti* with Khruba Wat Doi Kham.”²⁸⁰ Likewise, another early biography, Document 5, written in 2549 BE, reports that Khruba Sriwichai learnt *paṭipatti* and *pariyatti* with Khruba Wat Doi Kham, something not mentioned in the other documents.

²⁸⁰ Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, 10.

Another important fact that emerges from the biographies is that Khruba Sriwichai learned *wetmon gāthā* or *vijjā āgama* with Khruba Upala. There are four documents that refer to this learning. The oldest document among the four is Document 11, written in 2537 BE by Phra Anan Phutthathammo, which states that “Khruba Upala transmitted his teachings and enchantment to Phra Sriwichai.”²⁸¹ The Thai terms “enchantment” “magic” suggest an association between Khruba Sriwichai and the *yogāvacara* tradition. However, these terms *wetmon gāthā* and *vijjā āgama* do not appear in Document 2 (the oldest composed in 2463 BE) or in Document 4 (the second oldest manuscript, dated in 2472 BE.); it is possible that any association was a later development.

3.3.2 Evidence from his monastic robes



The photos of Khruba Sriwichai in his traditional robes with the chest band, the shawl, and the stick

After the establishment of the Thammayut-nikai, Mongkut introduced some new monastic practices including “a new style of wearing robes (covering both

²⁸¹ Phutthathammo, *Prawati khong Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]*, 9-10.

shoulders, a Mon practice).”²⁸² This new style of wearing robes clearly distinguished practitioners of traditional Buddhism from the followers of reformed Buddhism.²⁸³ Of particular relevance for this study of Khruba Sriwichai is Bizot’s argument that the traditional style of monastic robes worn by monks belonging to the non-reformed Mahanikai²⁸⁴ “is linked to the embryonic imagery as well as the heart syllable symbolism found in *yogāvacara* texts.”²⁸⁵ Bizot proposes that “the traditional monastic dress is more elaborate than reform monastic dress.”²⁸⁶ The fact that Khruba Sriwichai wore the traditional of Lanna style robe demonstrated both his rejection of the reformed Buddhism and his affiliation with the *yogāvacara* meditation lineage.

Before examining the association between Khruba Sriwichai’s monastic robe and the *yogāvacara* lineage, I will briefly look at the regulations for monastic robes in the Pāli Vinaya, and next at the differences between the non-reformed Mahanikai and Thammayut-nikai.

According to the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, a monk’s robes should comprise of three pieces or garments (Pāli, *ticīvara*, Skt, *tricīvara*): an undercloth wrapped around the waist to cover the lower body (Pāli, *antaravāsaka*), an upper garment draped over the left shoulder or a robe (Pāli, *uttarāsanga*), and a duplicate of the second draped over the other two for warmth or ceremony, or a shawl (Pāli, *saṅghāṭi*).²⁸⁷

²⁸² Tiyanich, *Forest Recollections*, 6.

²⁸³ Here, the followers of reformed Buddhism refers to either Thammayutnikai or the reformed Mahanikai who studied Pāli and wanted to be modernist and not supernatural.

²⁸⁴ Here, the non-reformed Mahanikai refers to the monks who wear the traditional style of monastic robes whereas the reformed Mahanikai refers to the monks who follow Thammayut-nikai’s style of wearing robes. Further research is needed for this topic.

²⁸⁵ Crosby, “Tantric Theravāda,” 160.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ A. B. Griswold, “Prolegomena to the Study of the Buddha’s Dress in Chinese Sculpture: With Particular Reference to the Rietberg Museum’s Collection,” *Artibus Asiae* 26, no. 2 (January 1, 1963): 87-88.

Then it occurred to the Lord: “Even those who in this *dhamma* and discipline are sons of respectable families, susceptible to cold, afraid of cold, even these are able to keep themselves going with three robes. Suppose I were to set a limit, were to establish bounds as to robes for monks-were to allow three robes?” I allow you, monks, three robes: a double outer cloak, a single upper robe, a single inner robe.”²⁸⁸

In addition to the *ticīvara*, the Buddha also allowed monks to have additional accessories.²⁸⁹ For example, a belt (Pāli, *kāyabandhana*), or “a narrow strip of cloth with or without a string at each end to tie together in a bowknot”²⁹⁰ is used for keeping the undercloth secured more tightly. This is optional for monks to use and it also depends on the rules of the monastery. Another example is a sash which can be “either a broad piece of cloth or a narrow one like the belt.”²⁹¹ The sash is also known as a chest band. The sash may be worn around the chest or around the waist. It differs from the belt in the way that it is worn outside the robe instead of inside it: “when the robe is in the open mode and the shawl worn as a shoulder-stole, the sash may be worn around the chest to keep the stole in good order.”²⁹² This additional garment is significant in the Theravāda tradition in Thailand because it noticeably distinguishes monks in Mahanikai from the monks who follow Thammayut-nikai.

Bizot writes that the non-reformed Mahanikai monks of Lanna and as well as in Burma, Cambodia, Laos, and Sipsong Panna wear a “lateral vestment” in which the left shoulder and left arm are covered and the shawl is folded as a shoulder-stole and is held by the chest band (*vatt badh druñ*). When these monks leave the

²⁸⁸ Horner, *The Book of the Discipline (Vinaya-Piṭaka)*, Mahāvagga:411.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., Mahāvagga:423. “I allow you, monks, to allot the three robes, not to assign them; to allot the cloths for the rains during the four months of the rains, after that (time) to assign them; to allot a piece of cloth to sit upon, not to assign it; to allot a sheet, not to assign it; to allot an itch-cloth while the disease lasts, after that (time) to assign it; to allot a cloth for wiping the face, not to assign it; to allot a cloth for the requisites (of water-strainers and bowls), not to assign it.”

²⁹⁰ Griswold, “Prolegomena to the Study of the Buddha’s Dress in Chinese Sculpture,” 91.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

monastery, they also wear a shawl to cover the two shoulders, a bonnet, and carry a stick. According to Bizot, the tradition of wearing the chest band dates before the 16th century.²⁹³

A characteristic of the Thammayut-nikai is the absence of the chest band. In their attempt to purify Thai Buddhism by carefully applying the rules from the *Tipitaka*, the Thammayut-nikai rejected the use of the chest band and stated that in fact the garment was for *bhikkhunī*.

ประคอกไม่มีในบาลีว่า เป็นบริวารของภิกษุ พระพุทธรูป ของเก่าก็ไม่ได้คาดประคอกมีแต่สำหรับภิกษุณี “สงกจฺจิกา” แปลว่า ผ้ารัดหรือโอबरักแร้ ได้พบในปกรณัมชื่อจุลคัมภีร์ แก้อรรถแห่งบาลีวินัยมหาวรรค อรรถนาในปูนหลังแห่งฎีกาและอนุฎีกาลงมา กล่าวถึงประคอกเรียก “อุรพฺพนุชน” ว่า ออกจาก “อัสพฺพนุชน” ที่แปลว่าอังสะในบาลี ทรงอนุญาตของสิ่งหนึ่งเรียกว่า “อัสวทุชน” แปลว่า ของอันเนื่องกับป่า ทรงอนุญาตติดต่อกันมากับอุงบาตรและอุงสำหรับ เก็บบริวารอื่น ปรารถการนำอุงนั้นไปไม่สะดวก จึงเข้าใจว่าสายของ อุง เช่นสายโยคสำหรับอุงบาตรสำหรับ คล้องจะยอบ่า แต่เมื่อเข้าใจ ว่าเป็นอังสะ ก็มีทางจะสันนิษฐานว่าในเวลาที่ยังคงอย่างจีบเดิมคงจะแก้อังสะออกรัดคอกก่อนภายหลังจึงมีขึ้น เป็นบริวารต่างหากทีเดียว²⁹⁴

It is possible to distinguish monks who followed traditional Buddhism from monks who followed reformed Buddhism by their monastic robes. From looking at the photographs of Khruba Sriwichai, it is obvious that his monastic robe is the traditional robes of the non-reformed Mahanikai monks of Lanna with the chest band, the shawl, and the stick. It is, therefore, certain that Khruba Sriwichai did

²⁹³ He states that the distinctive sculptural styles of the North depicted the Buddha with the chest band. In addition, he believes that the source of this iconography was the ancient central images of Wat Phra Yun in Lamphun of which remain copies made in the 16th century. The chest band is characteristic of the traditional Mahanikai not only in the Lanna regions but also in Burma until its disappearance at the end of the 18th century, and in Cambodia up until 1975. The tradition of wearing the chest band remained strong in Laos, Sipsong Panna (south Yunnan of China), and the Shan countries (south of eastern Burma).

²⁹⁴ *François Bizot, Le Bouddhisme des Thaïs: Brève Histoire de Ses Mouvements et de Ses Idées des Origines à Nos Jours (Bangkok: Cahiers de France, 1993), 85.* The statement that the chest band is in fact the garment for *bhikkhuni* needs further research and it is beyond scope of this MA thesis.

not belong to the Thammayut-nikai or to the reformed Mahanikai.²⁹⁵ In conclusion, the traditional monastic robes worn by Khruba Sriwichai demonstrate his affiliation with the ancient *nikāyas* and suggest that he practiced *yogāvacara* meditation.

3.3.3 Evidence from meditation practices and stories of his disciples and other northern Thai monks

Additional evidence that associates Khruba Sriwichai with the *yogāvacara* tradition is a translated work, *The Way to Meditation*, by Swearer. This translation is from Pāli and northern Thai of a section of an essay on meditation written by Bhikkhu Pannawong (1871-1956). Crosby notes that “according to Swearer, his [Bhikkhu Pannawong] meditation techniques represent the Buddhism of northern Thailand prior to the modern influence of the insight meditation of Thai students of the Burmese meditation teacher Mahasi Saydaw, whose insight (*vipassanā*) method became popular throughout the Theravāda world in the latter half of the 20th century.”²⁹⁶ It is interesting to note that this particular meditation technique is similar with the meditation practices founded in the book dedicated to Khruba Sriwichai’s disciple which claimed to be the meditation technique that Khruba Sriwichai practiced. Crosby asserts that although the connection between Bhikkhu Pannawong’s meditation texts and the *yogāvacara* meditation is not instantly noticeable and may not be relatively close, there are two reasons for reference.

Firstly, the liturgy used in preparation for the meditation is extremely close to that found in the Sri Lankan Pali text the *Samatha-vipassanā-bhāvanā-vākkapparakaraṇa*. It is likewise similar to that found in *Le Chemin de Lanḱā*. Similarities include the homage to the five gems, rather than the standard three, found throughout the *yogāvacara* tradition. The five gems are the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, plus the meditation subject and the meditation teacher. Secondly, it advocates the repetition of the sacred formulae thousands of times

²⁹⁵ For more about the reformed Mahanikai, see François, *Le Figuier a Cinq Branches: Recherches Sur le Bouddhisme Khmer, I*.

²⁹⁶ Crosby, “Tantric Theravāda,” 187.

found in the *yogāvacara* meditation. This northern Thai meditation text clearly has inherited features in common with the *yogāvacara* tradition, although the extent of the common ground is not clear from the short manual.²⁹⁷

The first reason that Crosby mentions will be further investigated as it is also relevant to the meditation practices associated with Khruba Sriwichai practiced.

The last evidence that I will discuss here concerns the meditation practices and stories of Khruba Sriwichai's disciples and other monks who were part of the northern Thai Buddhist sphere. As mentioned in section 4.2, there is a hetero-orthodox Theravāda meditation practice known as *yogāvacara* tradition. Here I shall draw on the work of Bizot, Crosby, and Swearer regarding this tradition and also examine the similarities among the *yogāvacara* tradition, the 'pre-modern' meditation manuals, and Khruba Sriwichai's disciples' texts.

During the field research, I had an opportunity to visit the temple of Khruba Sriwichai's disciple, Wat Ta Champi, situated in Chiang Mai. The abbot of the temple is Luang Pu Khruba Duangdi Supaṭṭo (hereafter, Khruba Duangdi) who is one hundred and three years old. Unfortunately, he was at the hospital on the day that I went. Although I did not have a chance to talk with him personally, a monk at the temple gave me some books of Khruba Duangdi. One of these books is indeed significant for this research. The book was written in honor of Khruba Duangdi's reaching 100 years of age in 2006 and it contains the biographies of both Khruba Duangdi and Khruba Sriwichai. More importantly, the book contains information about the meditation practice of Khruba Duangdi which he learned from his teacher, Khruba Sriwichai:

The practice of *samatha kammatan* and *vipassanā kammatan* of *yokhawachon*²⁹⁸ (monks who learn *vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna*) and practitioners

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 187-188.

²⁹⁸ It is interesting to note here that the Thai word “โยคาวจร” can be written in Pāli term as *yogāvacara*. It seems likely that the *yogāvacara* tradition that Bizot discovered had its root from this term. “โยคาวจร” means one who has an endeavour. It usually refers to a monk who learn *vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna*.

in this volume is from Luang Pu Khruba Duangdi Supatto which was passed on by Khruba Sriwichai, *nak bun* (holy man) of Lanna. These teachings of Khruba Sriwichai were from many meditation teachers in the past and he used these knowledge to teach his followers. Those who learned these meditation techniques from Khruba Sriwichai continued practicing until these days and recorded them as the manuscript.

Luang Pu Khruba Duangdi Supatto is one of Khruba Sriwichai's disciples who continually practice and record this meditation tradition in Lanna script for his students and those who interest in meditation to learn and to keep these teachings alive.²⁹⁹

The preparatory worship that precedes the meditation practice in this memorial book is somewhat similar with the liturgy used in preparation for the meditation that found in the texts *Samatha-vipassanā-bhāvanā-vākkapparakaraṇa (Vak)*, *Le Chemin de Lan̄kā*, and *The Way to Meditation* studied by Bizot, Crosby, and Swearer. The similarity between the preparatory worship in these three texts and the *yogāvacara* tradition, as Crosby points out, is “the homage to the five gems, rather than the standard three.”³⁰⁰ Likewise, the mediation manual of Khruba Sriwichai in the memorial book also contains the homage to the five gems which are the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, the meditation subject and the meditation teacher.³⁰¹

Another similarity in the preparatory worship is the dedicatory preparations. In the summary of *Vak* by Crosby, the instruction states that “the practitioner gathers the offerings for worship: flowers, incense, rice, water, candles.”³⁰² Similar with *Vak*, the translated work by Swearer, *The Way to Meditation* also indicates that

²⁹⁹ *Ti raluek chalong khrop 100 pi Phra Khru Suphatarasilakun (Luang Pu Khruba Chao Duang Di) [In memory of 100 years old celebration of Phra Khru Suphatarasilakun (Luang Pu Khruba Chao Duang Di)]* (Chiang Mai: Wat Tha Cham Pi, 2006), 23.

³⁰⁰ Crosby, “Tantric Theravāda,” 187.

³⁰¹ *Ti raluek chalong khrop 100 pi Phra Khru Suphatarasilakun (Luang Pu Khruba Chao Duang Di) [In memory of 100 years old celebration of Phra Khru Suphatarasilakun (Luang Pu Khruba Chao Duang Di)]*, 24.

³⁰² Kate Crosby, “Devotion to the Buddha in Theravada and its Role in Meditation,” in *The Intimate Other. Love Divine in Indic Religions*, ed. Anna S. King and John Brockington (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Limited, 2005), 263.

Whoever practices meditation, whether a yogin, layperson, or a monk, who desires the fruits of meditation from both trance (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) should begin with certain dedicatory preparations. Take puffed rice and flowers and divided them into five groups. Then take five pairs of candles, or if not five then three; if you do not have three then two or even one will be all right; if you cannot afford candles, then only take the puffed rice and flowers.³⁰³

Almost identical instruction is also described in the 100th year memorial book.

Gathers five flowers or five bunches of flowers, five candles, and five incenses. Place them in the same tray but divided them into five groups or five directions. These offerings are regarded as the essential preparation for the meditation practitioner to prepare because it is a tradition to offer these offerings and pay homage to the five gems before begin the meditation practice.³⁰⁴

Document 11 contains a significant evident for this particular topic of Khruba Sriwichai's meditation practice and his teachings. In the last part of this long biography which includes many photos of Khruba Sriwichai and the sites associated with his life, there is a record of *dhamma* preaching about the merit one will attain from observing the precepts, and a collection of teachings about *samatha kammaṭṭhāna* and *vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna* collected by Khruba Sriwichai.

This compilation of *kammaṭṭhāna* was collected by Khruba Sriwichai at Wat Phra Sing Luang Nopphaburi Chiang Mai. It was first printed in 2475 BE with 1,000 copies and reprinted on the 10th of June, 2532 BE with 10,000 copies. The intention of publishing this work was also written here.

ข้าพเจ้า พระศรีวิชัยชาชนะภิกขุ อยู่วัดพระสิงห์หลวงนพบุรีเชียงใหม่ ได้พิมพ์หนังสือกัมมัญฐาน ถวายเป็น
ทานคุณุหัตถ์ ชายหญิงและนักบวชทั้งหลาย³⁰⁵

³⁰³ Swearer, "The Way to Meditation," 209.

³⁰⁴ *Ti raluek chalong khrop 100 pi Phra Khru Suphatarasilakun (Luang Pu Khruba Chao Duang Di) [In memory of 100 years old celebration of Phra Khru Suphatarasilakun (Luang Pu Khruba Chao Duang Di)]*, 24.

³⁰⁵ Phutthathammo, *Prawati khong Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]*, 225.

I, Phra Sriwichaiyachanaphikkhu reside at Wat Phra Sing Luang Nopphaburi Chiang Mai have published the *kammaṭṭhāna* book for donating to the laymen, laywomen, and every monks.³⁰⁶

The following is the preparatory before the meditation.

yokhawachon, a layperson and a monk who intends to practice *kammaṭṭhāna* should place one's mind in a respectful, subtle and profound manner. If one would like to do *samatha kammaṭṭhāna* and *vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna*, the followings are the instructions. Put your effort in finding puffed rice, flowers, and candles and place them into a bowl. Arrange them into five groups. Then place them in front of the Buddha statue or the stupa of the Buddha's relics. After pay respect faithfully, kneel down and place all fingers and palms together in the shape of a lotus bud and prostrate three times with two forearms, two knees, and the forehead touching the ground. When you place your fingers together to pay respect, do not twine the fingers. Then hold the bowl above your eyebrows and recite the following verse.³⁰⁷

This is the verse for making a wish before meditation.

If one want to meditate, wherever it is peaceful for eyes and ears go to that place. Then sit in the position of placing the right tiptoe at the joint between the left upper leg and lower leg and placing the left heel close to the right shin. Place both of the legs on the seat; sit in an upright manner; place the fingers and palms together on the forehead and recite the verse for making a wish before meditation.³⁰⁸

Sadhu sadhu, the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, the *kammaṭṭhāna*, and the teachers who are all *kammaṭṭhāna dayaka* (one who teaches *kammaṭṭhāna*) which are my refuge. I would pray for the recollection of the Buddha for the delightful contemplation in order to eradicate the sufferings.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 226.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 227.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

The above preparatory and the verse for making a wish before meditation is again similar with the liturgy used in preparation for the meditation and the homage to the five gems in the *yogāvacara* tradition. It is interesting to note that the recollection of the Buddha written in the verse for making a wish before meditation is also mentioned by Khruba Sriwichai's disciple as a technique that Khruba Sriwichai used for his meditation.

Khruba Ariyachat Ariyachitto, although not a direct disciple, traces his lineage back to Khruba Sriwichai because his teacher, Khruba Chum Photiko was a direct disciple of Khruba Sriwichai. Khruba Ariyachat is a current abbot of Wat Saeng Kaeo Photiyan which is located in Chiang Rai province, northern Thailand. It was assumed that Khruba Chum was Khruba Sriwichai's close disciple because he obtained Khruba Sriwichai's cane and a peacock fan after he passed away. Consequently, it is possible that Khruba Chum might have learned a meditation technique from Khruba Sriwichai. Based on these two suppositions, the meditation techniques of Khruba Sriwichai might have transferred to Khruba Ariyachat.

On the 26th November 2010, Mr. Kampol Treesahakiat, my research assistant, had an opportunity to interview Khruba Ariyachat in person. According to him, Khruba Ariyachat is presently famous in the north. There are many people from different parts of Thailand who go to pay respect Khruba Ariyachat and also ask him to provide aid and relief. Mr. Kampol stated that during the Kathina ceremony³¹⁰ on the 6th and 7th of November 2010, there were more than 10,000 Buddhists who came to the temple to join the ceremony. With regard to the meditation practice of Khruba Sriwichai, Khruba Ariyachat said that the technique that Khruba Sriwichai used for meditation was the common technique which was widely used in Lanna region. This meditation method is the recollecting the Buddha as the meditation subject because the Buddha is virtuous.

³¹⁰ Kathina ceremony or the robe offering ceremony is conducted at the end of the Buddhist lent. It is an annual ceremony and it is one of the important ceremonies for Thai Buddhism.

Once reaching the state of inner brightness, then the stage of contemplation or *vipassanā* will commence by means of the cultivation of mindfulness. First is to observe, and then comprehend, after that relinquishes which is so called *paññā* or wisdom

Khruba Ariyachat also explained one reason why Khruba Sriwichai is still present in the minds of many Lanna people. It is because of his moral conducts that even though he encountered with many obstacles, he could overcome these hindrances by forgiving those who framed him. Therefore, many people were impressed by his virtue and at the same time his thirty perfections became more perfected. This powerful presence of Khruba Sriwichai through his contemporary cult will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

3.4 Conclusion

The question of what kind of meditation Khruba Sriwichai practiced is complex for the reasons that (1) much of the published material on the life of Khruba Sriwichai has focused on his political activities and building projects, rather than his Buddhist practice, (2) the esoteric nature of meditation itself: something experienced within, and (3) the ancient tradition in the Buddhism of mainland Southeast Asia of oral transmission of meditation teaching from teacher to student. To answer this question I have analysed many sources such as his biographies, photographs, and media reports for both written and visual references to meditation practice.

Based on evidence from his biographies, we can conclude that Khruba Sriwichai was a meditator and was considered to be a meditation master by his disciples. We also know that he learned his meditation techniques from Khruba Upala, and may have learned additional techniques from Khruba Wat Doi Kham. Both of his meditation teachers were part of the traditional Lanna Buddhist sphere during the 19th century when *yogāvacara* meditation was practiced in the region. As their pupil, Khruba Sriwichai would have also been firmly established in the *yogāvacara*

tradition. Photographs of Khruba Sriwichai show that he wore the ancient style of monastic robes belonging to the non-reformed Mahanikai. Bizot has argued that these traditional monastic robes are “linked to the embryonic imagery as well as the heart syllable symbolism found in *yogāvacara* texts”³¹¹ If Bizot’s supposition is correct, this is further evidence that Khruba Sriwichai was affiliated with the *yogāvacara* meditation lineage. Last but not least, preparatory Khruba Sriwichai’s meditation manual in Document 11 and the memorial book of Khruba Duangdi contains verses for the preparatory worship that mention homage to the five gems, another characteristic of the *yogāvacara* tradition. In the next chapter, I will argue that there is a relationship between Khruba Sriwichai’s meditation attainment, his Buddhist charisma, or *pāramī*, and his cult (shrines, museums, and amulets associated with him).

³¹¹ Bizot, *Le Bouddhisme des Thaïs: Brève Histoire de Ses Mouvements et de Ses Idées des Origines à Nos Jours*; Crosby, “Tantric Theravāda,” 160.

Chapter Four

Khruba Sriwichai's Contemporary Cult

Introduction

In the previous chapter I have argued that based on indirect evidence from his biographies and contemporary accounts and photographs, Khruba Sriwichai practiced a form of *yogāvacara* meditation that he learned from his teachers Khruba Upala and Khruba Wat Doi Kham, and that he transferred those meditation techniques to his disciples. In this chapter I will look at the connection between meditation and Buddhist *pāramī* and I will argue that the level of Khruba Sriwichai's meditation achievement is reflected by his great personal charisma, or Buddhist *pāramī*. In the first part of this chapter I will look at the concept of Buddhist *pāramī* and the relationship between *pāramī*, power, and Buddhist meditation practices. Next, I will explore the history of the cult of Khruba Sriwichai during his lifetime and today. In addition to the material objects and stories that he left behind, I will also look at a series of interviews with devotees at the Khruba Sriwichai's shrine at Doi Suthep. I will argue that for Thai Buddhists, the combination of all these signs are indications of the level of Khruba Sriwichai's attainment of *pāramī*.

4.1 The concept of Buddhist *pāramī*

For Thai Buddhists, the numerous shrines, the museums full of Khruba Sriwichai's personal belongings, the great number of amulets associated with his career, and the large number of followers who still place their faith in him 71 years after his death affirm the great personal charisma and Buddhist power of Khruba Sriwichai. This charisma and Buddhist power is best explained by the

Buddhist concept of *pāramī*, which I am defining in this thesis as “Buddhist charisma.”

According to Weber, charisma is “a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.”³¹² Charismatic Buddhist monks like Khruba Sriwichai, are believed to be endowed with miraculous or *pāramī* accumulated during this and previous lifetimes.

Pāramī are the perfections that one who wish to become the Buddha has to accumulate until achieving the enlightenment. In order to become the Buddha, he had to make “a vow in the presence of some previous buddha of a far distant age, [and] practice[d] the perfections for countless lives.”³¹³ The accounts of the accumulation of *pāramī* by the historical Buddha over successive lives were recorded in the *Jātaka* or the stories of the historical Buddha’s former lives in the Theravāda Buddhist tradition. According to Jory, the *Jātaka* were once the primary foundation of teachings for the Thai practice of Theravāda Buddhism especially in the upcountry areas.³¹⁴ The overwhelming popularity of the *Jātaka* in northern Thailand is incontrovertible based on the evidences from the great number of *Jātaka* manuscripts and as for Chiang Mai region, “a recently compiled catalogue of regional manuscript literature reveals a flourishing tradition of Jataka manuscript composition during this period, with the Vessantara Jataka again the most popular work in terms of the numbers of extant manuscripts.”³¹⁵ Accordingly, many Buddhists in northern Thailand have obtained the Buddhist

³¹² Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, 48.

³¹³ Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 32.

³¹⁴ Patrick Jory, “Thai and Western Buddhist Scholarship in the Age of Colonialism: King Chulalongkorn Redefines the Jatakas,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61, no. 3 (2002): 892.

³¹⁵ Patrick Jory, “Thai and Western Buddhist Scholarship in the Age of Colonialism: King Chulalongkorn Redefines the Jatakas,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61, no. 3 (2002): 911.

concept of *pāramī* from the *Jātakas*. For these Buddhists, the story of the life of Khruba Sriwichai is like one the *Jātakas*: a record of the accumulation of *pāramī*.

The word *pāramī* or *pāramitā* in today's context, as defined in the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, is “completeness, perfection, highest state.”³¹⁶ Its meaning has changed over time from “highest position or complete achievement in any undertaking,”³¹⁷ to “excellence or completion in the mastery of certain Buddhist teachings.”³¹⁸ In the latter Buddhist texts, such as *Buddhavaṃsa*, *Apadāna*, or *Cariyāpiṭaka*, a group of ten *pāramī* or the ten virtues necessary for enlightenment are mentioned.³¹⁹ This interpretation of *pāramī* as the ten perfections which are the requisites of Buddhahood is the most popular meaning in Thailand and it is the major theme in the *Jātaka* stories.³²⁰

In many of the *Jātaka* stories, one of the ten *pāramīs* or *dasapāramī*³²¹ is illustrated as the quality that the Buddha practiced and perfected in his previous existences. It is believed that in order to attain enlightenment, the Buddha required to perfect these ten *pāramīs* which had to be accumulated in many life times. Similarly, in his sacred biography, Khruba Sriwichai is believed to fulfil the *dasapāramī* during his lifetime.³²²

³¹⁶ G.P. Malalasekera, ed., “Pāramitā,” *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism Vol. VII*.

³¹⁷ Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, “Pāramī: A Buddhist Concept in the Thai Context,” in *Buddhist Legacies in Mainland Southeast Asia : Mentalities, Interpretations and Practices*, ed. François Lagirarde and Paritta Chalermpong-Koanantakool (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2006), 19.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Jory, “Thai and Western Buddhist Scholarship in the Age of Colonialism,” 892.

³²¹ The ten *pāramīs* (*dasapāramī*) are “(1) generosity (*dāna*), (2) morality (*sīla*), (3) renunciation (*nekkhamma*) (4). Wisdom (*paññā*), (5) energy (*virīya*), (6) patience (*khanti*), (7) truthfulness (*sacca*), (8) resolution or determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*), (9) loving-kindness (*mettā*) and (10) equanimity (*upekkhā*.” Cited in Malalasekera, “Pāramitā.”

³²² *Tamnan Khruba Sriwichai baep phitsadan lae tamnan Wat Suan Dok [The comprehensive history of Khruba Sriwichai and the history of Wat Suan Dok]*.

Of particular relevance for Khruba Sriwichai's meditation achievement is the *paññā pāramī* that he accumulated through his meditation practice. *Paññā* means "wisdom, being endowed with knowledge or insight."³²³ One who meditates can gain the insight and view the world as it actually and thus wisdom will arise like an *arahant*, "who tends to be a simple meditating monk," but in fact "such a monk represents supreme moral qualities in his enlightened state that are said to be those of exceptional virtue and wisdom. Some of them go beyond the ordinary and human, and as a consequence are believed to be endowed with extraordinary powers, albeit disinterested in them."³²⁴ This wisdom or insight can be used to explain the achievement of Khruba Sriwichai in his construction and restoration projects since it is generally believed that one can miraculous powers through "rigorous ascetic practices and intensive meditation."³²⁵ Before he began a building project, Khruba Sriwichai meditated and based on his meditation experiences he was able to plan successfully for the project. Because of his *paññā pāramī*, he was famous and became widely known in northern Thailand as the *ton bun* of Lanna.

In chapter 1, I discussed the concept of *ton bun* and stated that Khruba Sriwichai was recognized as the most famous *ton bun* by many people in northern Thailand based on three reasons. First, he was considered as a *bodhisatta* who preserved Buddhism in particular Lanna Buddhist tradition in order to make it prosperous until the time of the next Buddha. Second, he worked hard to support Lanna culture, and to preserve Lanna Buddhism even though this involved him in conflict with the national Thai Sangha. Lastly, he was the leader for the construction and renovation of more than 100 Buddhist temples and other important places in Lanna. To fully comprehend the connection between *ton bun*

³²³ Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, "Pāramī: A Buddhist Concept in the Thai Context," 26.

³²⁴ Hiroko Kawanami, "Charisma, Power(s), and the Arahant Ideal in Burmese-Myanmar Buddhism," *Asian Ethnology* 68, no. 2 (2009): 215.

³²⁵ Ibid.

and *pāramī*, one has to understand the meaning of *ton bun*. *Ton bun* literally means “source of merit” and as defined by Cohen *ton bun* is “a person who has accumulated great merit (*bun*) and perfections (*barami*) in past lives or in the present life and who, out of compassion, provides opportunities for others to gain merit.”³²⁶ Based on the evidence from his biographies, Khruba Sriwichai accumulated great merit and perfections or *pāramī* in this present life. It is also noteworthy that this particular concept of accumulating *pāramī* through building the Buddhist temples and the practice of wishing to become one of the future Buddhas has been one of the Thai Buddhist traditions since the Sukhothai period.³²⁷

In chapter 2, I discussed Khruba Sriwichai’s meritorious acts of construction and renovation in Lanna, another way to accumulate *pāramī*. With regard to the Buddhist concept of *pāramī* in the Thai context, Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn discusses *pāramī* in the four periods of Thai history. The concept of *pāramī*, as studied by Her Royal Highness, was widely known in Thailand before the Sukhothai period. During the Sukhothai period, some of the inscriptions evidently show that the king was likened to the Buddha-to-be, having greater virtues than other people. Here the notion of *pāramī* “was not the result of a single act but could be accumulated. The political implication is that the king could rule the country through his possession of *pāramī*, which constitutes his superhuman power.”³²⁸ In the time of Rattanakosin period, the concept of the king’s *pāramī* was also developed, for instance:

in inscription number 138, King Rama III built the Phra Samut Chedi in Samut Prakan province as an act of merit making. His goal was not to get

³²⁶ “ton bun.”

³²⁷ Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, “Pāramī: A Buddhist Concept in the Thai Context,” 23.

³²⁸ Ibid.

imperial or heavenly treasure but to attain ultimate perfection as Bodhisatta in order to be a savior of the masses.³²⁹

This act of accumulating *pāramī* through building the temples was not only performed by the kings but also by other people such as Prince Issaranuraksa who built the ordination hall wishing to attain Nirvana at Wat Rangsisutthawat (now part of Wat Bowonniwet, Bangkok)³³⁰ and “Chao Phraya Phra Khlang built the monastery and wished that he would be able to perform *pāramī*” at Wat Yothanimit³³¹ It is interesting to note that this tradition of building the temples for the accumulation of *pāramī* parallels Khruba Sriwichai’s wish to become one of the future Buddhas after he constructed the Buddha statue.

I, together with my disciples, laymen and laywomen, have faith in writing this *dhamma* for preserving the religion for five thousand years. It was the day when I was at Wat Sri Don Sai Mūn Bun Rueng and when I constructed the Buddha statue at Wat Phra Singha in Chiang Mai that I wish I would attain enlightenment and become a Buddha.³³²

Apart from the *pāramī* that he obtained from constructing the sacred places and the *paññā pāramī* that he obtained from his meditation practices, Khruba Sriwichai was believed by his followers to have fulfilled the rest of the *dasapāramī* during his lifetime. For these followers, his attainment of the *pāramī* is a form of Buddhist charisma, something that manifests in the buildings projects, shrines, museums and the amulets associated with Khruba Sriwichai. The persistence of Khruba Sriwichai’s contemporary cult suggests that his *pāramī* had not faded over time. In this next section, I will discuss the manifestation of Khruba Sriwichai’s *pāramī* in his contemporary cult and amulets.

³²⁹ Ibid., 24.

³³⁰ Ibid., 28.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Wannasai, *Sara prawati Khruba Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna]*, preface.

Asking why Khruba Sriwichai became an object of worship so long after his death is asking how *pāramī* transmits from Khruba Sriwichai into material objects. The transmission of the *pāramī* from a person to an object is illustrated in the ritual known as *Buddhābhiseka*. *Buddhābhiseka* is a consecration ritual designed to sacralise amulets.³³³ In his study, *Hypostasizing the Buddha: Buddha Image Consecration in Northern Thailand*, Swearer suggests that “the northern Thai *Buddhābhiseka* reveals what ‘presencing’ the absent Buddha means.”³³⁴ The *Buddhābhiseka* hypostasises the presence of the Buddha in two primary manners:

by encoding the statue with the Buddha’s life story and by infusing into the image the power the *Tathāgata* accrued during his lifetime, variously indicated by such terms as *pāramī*, *ñāna*, and *guṇa*. This power becomes available much as it did during the Buddha’s lifetime when, as in the case of King Pasenadi, the Buddha’s followers perform ritual acts in his presence or in the presence of his surrogate, namely, the Buddha image.³³⁵

Likewise, the consecration ritual of Khruba Sriwichai’s amulets also actualises the presence of Khruba Sriwichai. It is believed that the power or *pāramī* that Khruba Sriwichai accumulated during his lifetime transferred into his images and amulets. Even though this power is invisible, many followers and worshipers of Khruba Sriwichai claim to experience his *pāramī* through these material objects. The key factor in the consecration ritual is meditation by experienced meditating monks. The detailed process of transmitting *pāramī* from the meditated monks to the objects is observed by Swearer:

At that time nine or more monks sit in meditation around the *rājāvati* [or royal fence] with the *sai siṅcana* cord [or sacred thread] extending from alms bowls placed in front of them to the Buddha images and amulets being consecrated. The monks invited to meditate for this occasion are often renowned for their attainment of extraordinary powers associated with trance states (*jhāna*). By recalling or recollecting these attainments during their meditation, the monks

³³³ B. J. Terwiel, *Monks and Magic: An Analysis of Religious Ceremonies in Central Thailand* (Sweden: Studentlitteratur, 1975), 70.

³³⁴ Donald K. Swearer, “Hypostasizing the Buddha: Buddha Image Consecration in Northern Thailand,” *History of Religions* 34, no. 3 (February 1, 1995): 269.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

transfer them to the image. At the same time many of the lay congregants sit in meditation, some having encircled their heads with *sai siñcana* cords hanging down from the linked squares forming a ceiling over the images... In such a numinous, luminal environment, the transformation of material object into living reality seems palpably true. By this sustained, focused act of attention, the image as ritual object becomes sacred.³³⁶

The concept behind this consecration ritual is that *pāramī* or Buddhist power is developed through meditation; this power can be transmitted into the sacred objects. This concept of the transmission of *pāramī* is significant for elucidating the belief that shrines, images, and amulets associated with Khruba Sriwichai are sacred. Based on this transferring *pāramī* concept, it can be assumed that the power obtained from Khruba Sriwichai's meditative accomplishments was infused into the objects associated with him such as his hair, his relics and his rosary. Once these objects are incorporated in the sacralisation of the amulets, the power is also transmitted into them. This process would not be efficacious without the consecration ritual and most importantly the meditation by the experienced meditated monks. The consecrated images and amulets then become a living representative of Khruba Sriwichai, his life story, and his power and eventually develop into the cult of Khruba Sriwichai. I will further explore the history of the cult of Khruba Sriwichai during his lifetime and today in the next section.

4.2 The cult of amulets in Thailand

Amulet, as defined in the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, is “a name given to an object which is supposed to possess supernatural power to protect human beings from troubles and calamities.”³³⁷ Such sacralised objects can be of many forms: small images of the Buddha or famous monks or even famous kings, votive tablets (Thai, *phra phim*), medallions of persons and emblems with imprints, and

³³⁶ Ibid., 274-275.

³³⁷ G.P. Malalasekera, ed., “Amulet,” *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism Vol. I*.

as Terwiel noted that there is a wide range of objects which can serve as amulets.³³⁸

In Thailand, it is common to find a person who wears a necklace with amulets attached: these amulets are treated with respect and worshiped by the wearer. This belief in amulets is presumably adopted in Buddhism during its propagation in order to adjust itself to the local tradition because “the original teaching of the Buddha did not admit faith in amulets.”³³⁹ For this reason, the cult of amulet is considered by rationalists as superstition. In his work, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets*, Tambiah provides the view of orthodox towards the amulets that “an orthodox gloss on the role of sacred objects is that they act as “reminders” of the Buddha’s victories over desire and ignorance and cause inspiration and gladness to arise from such recollection.”³⁴⁰

Historically, the sacralisation of amulets is the old local traditions in Thailand where Buddhist monks used amulets as a mean of teaching *dhamma* to laypeople. Kamala asserts that local monks understood the characteristics of ordinary people that they needed to possess sacred objects for their “psychological security”,³⁴¹ and thus people made use of amulets in which it was guided by the practice of moral virtues at the same time. On the contrary, rationalists criticized the cult of amulets as magic or superstition. State Buddhism or the reformed Buddhism under the leadership of King Mongkut opposes this practice. They rejected the making of amulets. However, the practice did not completely abolish, instead it had become products of commerce by the second half of the twentieth century. In

³³⁸ Terwiel, *Monks and Magic*, 75. Terwiel further cited Wood that “It would be possible to write a biggish book about charms to ward off sword or bullet wounds. There are dozens of different kinds- tattoo marks, written formulas, knotted strings, tiny images of Buddha, precious stones, dried seeds, needles in the body, and others too numerous to mention.”

³³⁹ Malalasekera, “Amulet.”

³⁴⁰ Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets*, 201.

³⁴¹ Kamala Tiyavanich, *Sons of the Buddha: The Early Lives of Three Extraordinary Thai Masters* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2007), 3.

the past, sacred objects were made by hand. Today, they are produced by machines and those who have money can simply buy these sacralised objects without committing to the practice of moral virtues. As Tiyanavich concludes, the “amulets that were once simply given away by local masters, as reminders of the teachings and the protections offered to practitioners of the Dhamma, are now sold as commodities or collectors’ items.”³⁴²

According to Tambiah, this change in the significance of the amulets is the “process of vulgar materialization”³⁴³ which is inevitable in the Thai case and it certainly has further consequences. The first consequence that Tambiah points out is that “the amulet moves from a context of donation and love (*mettā*) to a context of trade and profit...When it does so, it also stimulates the production of fakes” – because the more amulets are made, the more they are faked³⁴⁴ (later, I will discuss the case of fake amulets of Khruba Sriwichai). Another consequence that Tambiah mentions in his study is that “the more they are purchasable for money, the more they deteriorate in their mystical powers.”³⁴⁵ In other words, when new amulets are produced, many others tend to be forgotten and less wanted. In addition, the more amulets one possesses, the more power one has. It is believed by many Thai men who wear amulets that “the richer and more powerful he is, the better and more numerous the icons protecting his person and helping him to overcome others.”³⁴⁶

The two examples above suggest another way to understand the value of amulets: the link between spiritual attainment, Buddhist *pāramī* and its transmission into physical objects amulets.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets*, 336.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 335.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 336.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

4.3 The contemporary cult of Khruba Sriwichai and the miracles

The tradition of building a sacred site dedicated to a famous and a virtuous monk has long been one of the Thai Buddhist practice. According to Gabaude, the construction of stupas for saints is as old as Buddhism, if not older. After the Buddha's *parinibbāna*, there was a practice of building protective monuments to enshrine the relics of the Buddha and also a habit of building a small stupa for a ruler or a prominent monk or even for a commoner. Gabaude further explains the four traditional classifications for monuments which commemorate the Buddha or any other worshipful person:

(1) the *dhātu cetiya*, which contains one or several body relics; (2) the *paribhogacetiya*, which contains objects used by the worshipped; (3) the *dhammacetiya*, which contains a portion of the Dhamma, or the teaching of the Buddha; and (4) the *uddesikacetiya*, which contains objects such as images of the venerated person.³⁴⁷

Khruba Sriwichai was one of the famous monks who were commemorated by his faithful disciples through the act of building these four kinds of traditional monuments. In this section, I will explore the contemporary cult of Khruba Sriwichai through his shrines, his monuments and his amulets.

4.3.1 Shrines

During his lifetime, Khruba Sriwichai succeeded in mobilizing thousands of people in the Lanna region to renovate more than one hundred temples and construct other important places. He earned respect from a large number of people in this region and until today, numerous images and statues of Khruba Sriwichai continue to bear witness to his fame in the north. No other monk in northern Thailand has as many shrines as Khruba Sriwichai. His popularity in the north parallels that of Luang Pu Thuat of Wat Chang Hai in the south and Luang Phor

³⁴⁷ Gabaude, "Where Ascetics Get Comfort and Recluses Go Public," 115.

To Phrom Ma Rung Si of Wat Rakhang in Bangkok.³⁴⁸ For Thai Buddhists, the presence of many shrines and large numbers of worshipers dedicated to a particular monk is an indicator of the level of *pāramī* possessed by that monk.

4.3.1.1 Shrine at the entrance to the hilltop Doi Suthep

One of the best known shrines dedicated to Khruba Sriwichai is located at the foot of Doi Suthep Mountain in Chiang Mai. There is a large bronze statue of the monk at the shrine that was commissioned by the Department of Fine Arts in 1946 as a memorial to his road to the summit of Doi Suthep Mountain. Before the construction of the road, religious pilgrims had to climb for four to five hours to reach the Wat Phra That Doi Suthep (Temple of the Holy Relic) at the top of Doi Suthep Mountain. This historical temple is a symbol of Chiang Mai, was built in 1371³⁴⁹ and it is a home of the Buddha's relic which was brought from Sukhothai.³⁵⁰ In 1934, Khruba Sriwichai inaugurated a project to construct a road to make access to the sacred site more convenient for pilgrims. The 11-kilometre road was completed within five months due to the strong support of Khruba Sriwichai's followers. Because of the new road, more people could pay respects to this relic. Today, there are approximately 120,000 visitors to the temple per month according to the research on the domestic tourism in northern Thailand in 2009.³⁵¹

Before ascending the road, most Thai visitors stop at Khruba Sriwichai's shrine to kneel and pay respect in front of the statue by lighting a candle and incense,

³⁴⁸ In addition to numerous shrines of Luang Pu Thuat and Luang Phor To Phrom Ma Rung Si, there are many amulets associated with them which are also very popular and priceless.

³⁴⁹ Evrard and Leepreecha, "Domestic Tourism and Internal Colonialism in Northern Thailand," 304.

³⁵⁰ Khumraksa, *Nung sue chut phan ti kham ru mueang Thai: sasanasin bon din Lanna [Maps of knowledge about Thailand: Buddhist Art of Lanna]*, 10.

³⁵¹ Evrard and Leepreecha, "Domestic Tourism and Internal Colonialism in Northern Thailand," 304.

reciting a worship verse, offering flowers and placing gold leaves on his statue. They pray to him, ask for his assistance, and make vows. It is believed that the wishes of anyone who goes to worship and make good wishes will be fulfilled.³⁵²

After one's wish has been fulfilled, it is a tradition that one would offer the votive offering or the offerings which have been made in anticipation of the achievement of a particular wish. Of particular relevance for votive offerings is that this particular shrine of Khruba Sriwichai is regularly packed with the offerings. Such votive offerings can be of many sorts: boiled eggs, fruits, soft drinks, flowers, statue of elephants, horses, and tigers which are made of wood, and the traditional Thai dancing.

To fully comprehend what beliefs the worshipers hold about the miraculous power of Khruba Sriwichai, one can learn from the interviews of the worshipers which were conducted by my research assistant. On 28th of June, 2010, Mr. Kampol Treesahakiat, my research assistant, conducted the interviews at this particular shrine of Khruba Sriwichai. The criteria that were used to select people for interviews are a diversity group of worshipers who are different in their age, gender, and occupation. The differences among these worshipers would reflect a diverse attitude towards the belief in Khruba Sriwichai. The interviews were conducted in an informal way. Mr. Kampol simply talked with the worshipers with the interest in Khruba Sriwichai's miraculous power and asked them some questions such as how often they come to worship at the shrine, what experience they have after they make their wishes, and how do they know Khruba Sriwichai. The followings are a report of the interviews.

1. A working woman whose age is around thirty years old said that Khruba Sriwichai is a great figure of Chiang Mai therefore many visitors come to worship. She believed that he was a holy man because whenever she asks

³⁵² Wilak Sripasang, *Ton bun Lanna: Prawati Khruba chabup an muan 2 [Lanna holy man: A history of Khruba]* (Chiang Mai: Si San Phan Mai, 2010), 55.

for Khruba Sriwichai's assistance, her wish would be fulfilled. She would offer the votive offerings mentioned above to Khruba Sriwichai. She usually comes to Khruba Sriwichai's monument one or two times per month.

2. A man who is in his thirties stated that he came to worship Khruba Sriwichai and ask him to protect his eight-months old daughter. He further said that there is no one in Chiang Mai that does not know Khruba Sriwichai.
3. A thirty-five years old woman who sells flowers, candles, and incense at the shrine of Khruba Sriwichai said that she worships Khruba Sriwichai everyday and whenever she makes a wish, her wish would be fulfilled every time. She also asserted that there are worshipers who come to pay respect at this shrine all day all night and especially during the holidays, there are a great number of visitors. In addition, she insisted that those who asks for Khruba Sriwichai's assistance, they would always achieve their particular wish. Most of them ask for their better health, the achievement in their studies and as well as the success in their careers.
4. An old man in his sixties said that he comes to make a wish at Khruba Sriwichai's shrine once a year.
5. A university student said that he intends to worship Khruba Sriwichai once a week and he feels at ease every time he worships Khruba Sriwichai. He usually makes a wish to have money in his wallet all the time. He heard from his relatives that Khruba Sriwichai is holy.
6. A woman in her fifties said that she comes to worship Khruba Sriwichai once a month because she feels comforted.
7. Three high school students stated that their parents took them to worship Khruba Sriwichai since they were young. They knew that Khruba Sriwichai leaded the construction of the road to Doi Suthep. They come to worship him once a week because every time they come, good things would happen in their lives.

8. Two university students who came to offer the votive offerings which were boiled eggs, soft drinks, flowers, candles, and incense stated that their friend made a vow to Khruba Sriwichai and they came to offer these offerings instead of him. After they offer these offerings, they would not take them back but sometimes they see vagabonds take the eggs. These two university students come to worship Khruba Sriwichai once a month.
9. There is a family who comes to offer the votive offerings by performing the traditional Thai dancing by a daughter. They also bring boiled eggs, flowers and a statue of tiger as the offerings.

The ideas and behaviour of these informants show that Thai Buddhists still have a strong belief in Khruba Sriwichai's power to assist and protect them, the importance of the votive offerings which need to be offered after the wishes are fulfilled, and the devotion and respect to Khruba Sriwichai which has been passed down from generation to generation.

4.3.1.2 Shrine at Wat Suan Dok

There are many shrines dedicated to Khruba Sriwichai in Chiang Mai and nearby provinces where he led construction and restoration projects. One example is at Wat Suan Dok, in Chiang Mai. Wat Suan Dok or Wat Buppharam contains the holy relic of the Buddha which was brought from Sukhothai by Phra Maha Sumana in 1369. At that time, the holy relic was divided into two parts; one was enshrined at Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, and the other enshrined at the main pagoda of Wat Suan Dok.³⁵³ The temple was deserted and fell into decay before it was renovated in 1931 by Khruba Sriwichai. A new *vihāra* was built during the renovation and it was known as Wihan Luang. This large and open hall with sloping roof became a functional place for both monks and laypeople to perform

³⁵³ Khumraksa, *Nung sue chut phan ti kham ru mueang Thai: sasanasin bon din Lanna [Maps of knowledge about Thailand: Buddhist Art of Lanna]*, 16.

the Buddhist rituals. In addition, Khruba Sriwichai had “satellite pagodas” built surrounding the main *vihāra*.

To commemorate his great service in renovating Wat Suan Dok, a shrine with a bronze statue of Khruba Sriwichai in a meditation position was built next to a stupa containing a portion of his relics. In front of this monument is a square plaque inscribed with a brief account of Khruba Sriwichai’s life, and praise of his great contributions to the Lanna region and especially to the temple.

4.3.1.3 Shrine at Wat Phra Singha

Another significant temple of Chiang Mai that was renovated by Khruba Sriwichai and his followers is Wat Phra Singha. It is located within the city walls of Chiang Mai and it is believed that the ruler of Chiang Mai, King Phayu, had it built in 1344 to enshrine the ashes of his deceased father. Unlike Wat Suan Dok, Wat Phra Singha was not deserted because it was patronized by all subsequent rulers of Chiang Mai. The most recent renovation was during the time of the last ruler, Chao Kaew Nawarat, under the leadership of Khruba Sriwichai in 1924-1926.³⁵⁴ A shrine of Khruba Sriwichai, with a large bronze statue of him in standing position, is located in front of the *vihāra*.

4.3.1.4 Powerful presence of Khruba Sriwichai through his portraits

The three shrines of Khruba Sriwichai mentioned above are only a few examples; there are many more shrines in Chiang Mai and nearby provinces. For generations, local people have worshipped and remembered Khruba Sriwichai at these shrines. For instance, one informant, a young high school student who never met Khruba Sriwichai, worships at his shrine once a week because her parents took her there when she was young. She believes that every time she worships Khruba Sriwichai, fortunate events happen to her. In this section, I will explore

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 13.

the contemporary cult of Khruba Sriwichai. Stengs's study of the cult to the fifth king of Siam provides a useful model for understanding this cult with its focus on portraits (statues, amulets) of Khruba Sriwichai.³⁵⁵

During the 1990s, the figure of King Chulalongkorn evolved from a historical figure into a prominent and venerated saint. According to Stengs, this evolution took place during a period of “fundamental social, cultural, and economic change in Thailand and may therefore be understood as a period of profound processes of local identity formation.”³⁵⁶ Similar changes were taking place at the time when Khruba Sriwichai became widely well-known in the North. The Lanna kingdom had been under the control of Myanmar until the eighteenth century and then became a vassal of Bangkok until 1933, which resulted in the decline of its culture and local traditions. In order to revive Lanna, processes of local identity had to be reformed. One of these processes was the evolution of Khruba Sriwichai from a northern Thai monk into a symbol of the Lanna Buddhism. Thus, as stated by one of the interviewees, there is no one in Chiang Mai who does not know Khruba Sriwichai.

The worship of King Chulalongkorn, according to Stengs, “thrives on the presence of portraits.”³⁵⁷ Wherever one goes in Thailand in public places, or in private homes, there is always an image of the king in various forms such as a portrait, statue, or statuette.³⁵⁸ This powerful presence of King Chulalongkorn through his portraits is analysed by Stengs. According to her analysis, a portrait is

³⁵⁵ Irene Stengs, “Modern Thai Encounters with the Sublime: The Powerful Presence of a Great King of Siam through his Portraits,” *The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 4, no. 2 (July 2008): 160-170.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 163-164.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 164.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

similar to the function of a “cult object”³⁵⁹ in the way that it “makes the person depicted present while remaining far away in space or time.”³⁶⁰ By applying Benjamin’s theory of the cult of the remembrance, Stengs argues that portraits may have a *personal* cult value in a ‘cult of remembrance.’ Hence, this cult value exists only for those who *know* the person portrayed and are emotionally involved with the depicted, and it gives the portrait an aura for them alone.”³⁶¹ In addition, Stengs proposes an explanation of how King Chulalongkorn is presently remembered and how this memory is formed.

On the level of the individual worshiper, the “remembrance of King Chulalongkorn” does not refer to people’s personal memories of a person they have known, but, instead, must be understood in terms of “transferred knowledge”: although never having met the king in person, people know who he was, what his achievements and qualities were, and why this makes him a significant figure in their personal day-to-day lives.³⁶²

Likewise, the veneration of Khruba Sriwichai thrives in the presence of his portraits in the form of amulets, statues, photographs. The powerful presence of Khruba Sriwichai is existed in his portraits through a personal cult value of those who know Khruba Sriwichai and are emotionally involved with him. Hence, this cult value gives an aura to Khruba Sriwichai’s portraits. Furthermore, to understand why Khruba Sriwichai remains an object of worship so long after his decease, one has to bring into view the analysis of Stengs on the remembrance of King Chulalongkorn and the concept of transferred knowledge. It is most likely that the majority of worshipers of Khruba Sriwichai nowadays have never met him in person but they all know him and as well as his achievements and virtues. Therefore, this transferred knowledge makes Khruba Sriwichai a significant figure in his worshipers’ lives.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 165. According to Stengs, “cult objects are the immediate manifestation of the powers they represent and which themselves remain unapproachable: through the object powers that essentially can never be met directly are nevertheless immediately there.”

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

4.3.2 Museum

Wat Ban Pang, of which Khruba Sriwichai was the abbot for many years, is possibly the most interesting place to learn about him through his images, his statues and, especially, his museum. Wat Ban Pang or originally known as Wat Sri Don Chai Sai Mun Bun Rueng, the name which was given by Khruba Sriwichai, was constructed in 1901 by Khruba Sriwichai and his fellow monks with the intention of building a peaceful and suitable place for meditation. Wat Ban Pang is located about 100 kilometres south of Chiang Mai along the road to the district town of Li in Lamphun province.

During my field research, I had an opportunity to visit this particular temple. Once I entered the temple, I immediately saw a marble construction with its tower decorated with countless of fragments of mirrors stands prominently besides the traditional temple buildings. This building is the museum which was constructed under the leadership of Phra Anan Phutthathammo on the 11th of June 1989. As mentioned before in Chapter 3, Phra Anan is a monk who wrote a biography of Khruba Sriwichai and published it as a souvenir on the occasion of celebrating the museum of Khruba Sriwichai. He spent his six-year period doing the research, collecting Khruba Sriwichai's personal belongings, and building the museum where a large collection of paraphernalia is exhibited.³⁶³ This beautifully constructed museum signifies Phra Anan's strong belief in and great respect for Khruba Sriwichai.

The entrance of this museum is protected with the two statues of a tiger Khruba Sriwichai's birth year. The stairs leading up to the museum are decorated with the rails on both sides comprising of the body of the Naga (serpent king), in waving form signifying movements. The Naga staircase represents the religious Lanna arts and belief in which the Naga is "usually built along the walls or rails, found

³⁶³ Phutthathammo, *Prawati khong Phra Khruba Chao Sriwichai nak bun haeng Lanna Thai [The biography of Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Thai Lanna]*, preface.

on the stairs of hilltop shrines. When covering a great length, the body of the Naga is made in waves, signifying movement. This is built in accordance with the belief that the Lord Buddha descended from heavens by Naga stairs.”³⁶⁴ In front of the staircase, there is a small shrine for worshipping Khruba Sriwichai before entering the museum. The devout visitors can make a donation for incense and candle. Here monks, laymen and laywomen worship Khruba Sriwichai by lighting candle and incense, prostrating themselves, and recite Khruba Sriwichai’s *kham wai* (prayer).

Khruba Sriwichai’s *kham wai* is a standard verse that is used to worship Khruba Sriwichai at every shrine. According to Wilak Sripasang, a Thai biographer who wrote a book about Khruba Sriwichai’s life story and amulet cult, this *kham wai* was transliterated by Assistant Professor Bampen Rawin who was the dean of the Humanities Department at Chiang Mai University at that time. Sripasang had obtained a copy of the mulberry paper manuscripts from Wat Phra Singha with the heading “Kham Wai Khruba Chao Sriwichai” (Khruba Sriwichai prayer),³⁶⁵ he then requested Assistant Professor Rawin to transliterate from Pāli language written in *tham* script into Thai language. The following is this particular worship verse with my English translation:

อะยังวูจะจติ สิริวัชชะจะนะ จะ มหาเถโร อุตตะมัง สีละ นะระเทเวหิ, ปุชิตโต โสระโห, ปัจจะยา
ทิมหิ, มหาลาภา, ภาวันตุเม, อะหัง วันทามิ สัพพะธา, อะหัง วันทามิ สีระสา, อะหัง วันทามิ
สัพพะโส, สาธุ สาธุ สาธุ อนุโมทนามิ ฯ

ตั้งข้าพเจ้าจะกล่าวต่อไปนี้ พระมหาเถระเจ้ารูปใด ผู้มีนามว่าศรีวิชัย อันอุดมผู้อันนรชนและเหล่า
ทวยเทพทั้งหลายบูชาแล้วผู้ยิ่งใหญ่ตลอดกาลทั้งปวง ด้วยการนอบน้อมนั้นเป็นปัจจัย ขอลากัน
ใหญ่ จงบังเกิดมีแก่ข้าพเจ้า ข้าพเจ้าขออภิวัตซึ่งพระมหาเถระเจ้ารูปนั้นตลอดกาลทั้งปวง ข้าพเจ้า

³⁶⁴ Khumraksa, *Nung sue chut phan ti kham ru mueang Thai: sasanasin bon din Lanna [Maps of knowledge about Thailand: Buddhist Art of Lanna]*, 9.

³⁶⁵ Sripasang, *Ton bun Lanna: Prawati Khruba chabup an muan 2 [Lanna holy man: A history of Khruba]*, 56.

ขออภิวัตซึ่งมหาเถระเจ้ารูปนั้นด้วยเสียรเกล้า ข้าพเจ้าขออภิวัตซึ่งพระมหาเถระเจ้ารูปนั้นโดย
ประการทั้งปวง สาธุ สาธุ สาธุ (ดีละ ดีละ ดีละ) ข้าพเจ้าขออนุโมทนาฯกราบ ไหว้

For the words that I am about to speak, the monk whose name is Sriwichai who is praised by both human and angels, because of the great respect, may I'll be wealthy. I shall pay respect to this monk forever. I shall pay respect to this monk with all my life. I shall pay respect to this monk entirely.³⁶⁶

Once after entering the upper floor of the museum, the wax statue of Khruba Sriwichai which sits on a chair with his hand holding a fan seems to greet the visitors as if it is alive. This verisimilitude of Khruba Sriwichai has an effect on many visitors' sentiment and it also reveals the presence of his *pāramī*. In addition, there are two other statues of Khruba Sriwichai standing nearby. The upper floor of the museum contains many images associated with Khruba Sriwichai's life which are his portraits, his photographs at the construction sites, and the imprints of his feet and hands. The more impressive objects in the upper floor of the museum are the bas-relief carving on the heavy teak doors depicted the important episodes of his life. One example is the famous welcome episode when Khruba Sriwichai returned from Bangkok and a crowd of eight thousand was awaiting him at the railway station. This episode signifies the charismatic quality of Khruba Sriwichai.

The lower floor of the museum showcases Khruba Sriwichai's renovation and construction movements in the North. The collection of paraphernalia associated with the construction project and the revision of the northern Thai version of the *Tripitaka* project are exhibited. Such belongings are the carrier bicycle used for taking food to Khruba Sriwichai and the labourers, the rattan bench he used for resting, the chair he sat on while supervising the construction process the sedan chair used to carry him to work sites, and the chair he sat in when inscribing palm-leaf manuscripts (this last chair is covered with one baht and fifty satang

³⁶⁶ *Ti raluek chalong khrop 100 pi Phra Khru Suphatarasilakun (Luang Pu Khruba Chao Duang Di) [In memory of 100 years old celebration of Phra Khru Suphatarasilakun (Luang Pu Khruba Chao Duang Di)], 14.*

coins left by visitors as offerings.) The show piece from the construction project is the old green classic car that was used to inaugurate the Doi Suthep road in 1935. Another display shows the leather cushion that Khruba Sriwichai used for his meditation practice, and the collection of *samut koi*, the folded manuscripts made from mulberry tree pulp recorded Khruba Upala's teachings are also on display. This display of leather meditation cushion and the collection of *samut koi* manuscripts are further evidence of the link between Khruba Sriwichai's meditation practice, and his teacher Khruba Upala.

In 2007, an enormous statue of Khruba Sriwichai was cast in the posture of meditation. The statue is 15 metres wide measured from his right knee to his left and 19 metres high.³⁶⁷ The statue was created and commissioned by the temple with the intention of making the great merit for King Bhumibol Adulyadej or the current king and as well as glorifying Khruba Sriwichai, the holy man of Lanna, by making him a subject of veneration for the devout worshipers who respect his virtues.³⁶⁸ In order to obtain the money for the casting of the statue, the temple produced a special version of Khruba Sriwichai's amulets made from clay mixed with herbs and Khruba Sriwichai's hair. This particular version of amulet is known as "Thin Kam Noed Bung Koed Sup 50"³⁶⁹ or literally means "the land of birth, arise the wealth 50" which I will further discuss in the next section.

Not far from the statue is the building enclosing the stupa of Khruba Sriwichai. The stupa is a golden square structure and it contains the relics of Khruba Sriwichai. In the same building, there is another wax statue of Khruba Sriwichai in a sleeping posture which looks very realistic. At the time of my visit, I had an opportunity to meet a group of hill tribes who respectfully worshiped Khruba Sriwichai's stupa. This group of women said that they have faith in Khruba

³⁶⁷ "Tued Patihat Khruba Sriwichai Tawan Song Klot [Astonishing sun halo miracle of Khruba Sriwichai]," *Chiang Mai News*, June 11, 2007.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

Sriwichai and often come to worship him even though they have never met him in person, but they know him through their parents. The concept of transferred knowledge through the generations is again demonstrated in this case of the devout hill tribes.

As mentioned earlier, the veneration of Khruba Sriwichai thrives on the presence of portraits which can be in various forms such as an image, a statue, and an amulet. Here at Wat Ban Pang, the amulets of Khruba Sriwichai are displayed in the glass cabinets in front of the museum. The devout visitors can buy various kinds of amulets with different fixed prices. The types of amulets include clay tablets with the imprinted of Khruba Sriwichai's portrait, small resin statues of Khruba Sriwichai in his meditation posture, and medallions or coins of Khruba Sriwichai and emblems with imprints. The powerful presence of Khruba Sriwichai through his portraits in the form of amulets will be discussed in the next section.

4.3.3 Amulets

In his book about the life of Khruba Sriwichai, Sripasang provides brief, yet significant, information on Khruba Sriwichai's cult of amulets. He states that there are many sacred relics of Khruba Sriwichai created during his lifetime and after his death such as his hair, his photos, his rosary, his handprint and footprint on the cloth, the amulets with his portrait, and etc.³⁷⁰ Sripasang does not know where the tradition of making a votive tablet or *phra phim* by including the hair and he observed that before the year 1957, the only amulet that contained hair in the Lanna region was Khruba Sriwichai's votive tablet. Sripasang assumed that the tradition of hair worship is from a traditional legend that the Buddha came to the Lanna region during his lifetime, and visited many sacred places. Wherever he met local people, he gave them his hair. The Buddha also prophesied that in the future, Buddhism would flourish in Lanna region and the ruler of this

³⁷⁰ Sripasang, *Ton bun Lanna: Prawati Khruba chabup an muan 2 [Lanna holy man: A history of Khruba]*, 61.

kingdom would build sacred places to enshrine his hair and his relics. Therefore, many stupas which contained the Buddha's relics in Lanna region are believed to be the places which also enshrine the hair of the Buddha. The importance of hair relics in Lanna may be the reason why Khruba Sriwichai's followers kept his hair and venerated it.

In his biography, Sripasang explained how the devotees obtained and kept Khruba Sriwichai's hair. When Khruba Sriwichai shaved his head, the devotees used lotus leaf or white cloth to collect the falling hair. Then the devotees distributed Khruba Sriwichai's hair among themselves. In order to enshrine the hair, some people included the hair as one of the ingredients for the clay votive tablets. Some kept it in bamboo tubes, which is the practice that is mentioned in the legend. Others kept it in other containers such as an antique powder can or a box of hair oil. Those who possessed the hair relics treasured them.³⁷¹

According to an article published in 1998 by Surachat Lakmanut, *phra khong kesa*, votive tablets made that contained Khruba Sriwichai's hair, for the first time by four novices at Wat Ban Pang in 1933. In his article, Lakmanut states that he had an opportunity to interview one of the novices who made the *phra khong kesa*, Pho Uinannuan Pintakaew, who was seventy-nine years old in 1998.³⁷² According to Pho Uinannuan, the first *phra khong kesa* were made while Khruba Sriwichai was away from Wat Ban Pang leading the construction of the road to Wat Phra That Doi Suthep. At that time there were four monks and four novices residing at Wat Ban Pang, and they were short of food because when Khruba Sriwichai was away from the temple, few people came to offer food. In addition, at this time it was the dry season when there was little food available for the

³⁷¹ Ibid., 63.

³⁷² Surachati Rakmanut, "Phra khong kesa Khruba Chao Sriwichai Siriwichayo: prawati lae ti ma khong phra phong khluk rak kesa Khruba Sriwichai haeng Wat Ban Pang Amphoe Li Changwat Lamphun [Phra khong kesa Khruba Sriwichai: A history and an origin of phra phong khluk rak kesa Khruba Sriwichai of Wat Ban Pang, Li District, Lamphun Province]," *Sara Sapha Watanatam Chang Wat Chiang Rai*, November 1998, 11.

villagers to offer. The four novices, who were in their teens, discussed this problem and tried to find a way to increase food offerings to the temple in Khruba Sriwichai's absence.³⁷³ One of the four novices, Samanera Nuan (Pho Uinannuan today), suggested that they make votive tablets by adding the hair of Khruba Sriwichai as one of the ingredients. Apparently, the four novices already kept Khruba Sriwichai's hair from cleaning the sink after Khruba Sriwichai shaved his head on the day before every full moon which they distributed to the faithful villagers who often asked for Khruba Sriwichai's hair for worshipping.

After they agreed on making the votive tablets, the four novices then went to the *vihāra* and searched for damaged palm-leaf manuscripts. They burned the manuscripts into ash and mixed them with ash from flowers, candles, and incense used by Khruba Sriwichai for offerings. The reason for using the palm-leaf manuscripts was because of the belief that the scripts in these manuscripts were sacred and together with the ash from devotional offerings, were all from the considered as auspicious things. The three main ingredients of this particular votive tablet were: the ash from the torn palm-leaf manuscripts, the powder from the flowers, and *nam rak*, a kind of water that was used for coating the wood. The model for the votive tablet was the Buddha image votive tablet, *phra khong* that one of the novices borrowed from his father. The novices used leftovers cement for making a mould. After they mixed all the three ingredients and pressed them in a mould, then they placed four to five hair of Khruba Sriwichai on each votive tablet.

In total, the four novices made around 1400 votive tablets. Apparently the four novices kept their work secret from the four monks at Wat Ban Pang. The writer does not explain why they had to keep this as a secret but it can be assumed that the making of the votive tablets was very new at Wat Ban Pang. These four novices might have been the first to make these votive tablets and they were afraid that if the elder monks knew, they might not approve of this action.

³⁷³ Ibid., 11-12.

Samanera Nuan first gave a man one of the *phra khong kesa* in exchange for food, and told him not to tell any of the monks. Soon after this, other villagers around the temple heard about this votive tablet and came to the novices and asked for the votive tablet in exchange of food.

Rumours about the miraculous power of *phra khong kesa* spread widely because of an incident experienced by two villagers. A few days after these two men obtained *phra khong kesa*, they went out to do their farm work as usual. On their way back home, the two men encountered a tiger, and had to fight for their lives. They miraculously escaped with some minor injuries and bruises. They believed that this miracle was due to the power from *phra khong kesa* and the *pāramī* of Khruba Sriwichai. After hearing about this phenomenon, many villagers came to Wat Ban Pang to obtain the powerful *phra khong kesa*.

It is interesting to note that the account of encountering a tiger also plays an important part in the story of the forest monks who wandered in the wilderness. In order to overcome fear from facing the tiger, forest monks needed to concentrate their mind by meditation in order to keep calm and react to the critical situation with mindfulness. One example is from the account of a forest monk named Fan Ajaro (1898 – 1977) in Kamala’s study of the wandering monks in twentieth-century Thailand. During his meditation practice on the mountain in Udon Thani, Fan encountered a tiger.

Within seconds he concentrated his mind so it wouldn’t react to the situation. The animal raised its head out of the thick brush. “It’s a tiger all right,” he thought, “and judging from the size of its head it must be huge.” Seeing the tiger he felt a chill run up his spine. Sweat broke out on his face. Intuitively he knew that if he turned his back and started running he would be killed. The tiger would certainly attack him. So he focused his mind to face the critical situation calmly, even though his breathing was not as relaxed as usual. The tiger took one glance at him, gave a loud growl, and leaped into the forest.³⁷⁴

³⁷⁴ Suphon Nachom, *Chiwa prawat lae patipatha Phra Ajan Fan Ajaro [Biography of Phra Ajan Fan Ajaro]* (Bangkok, 1977), 39, cited in Kamala Tiyavanich, *Forest Recollections: Wandering Monks in Twentieth-Century Thailand* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997), 83.

The villagers also found that the sacred power from *phra khong kesa* protected them from danger and also had the power to influence others. When Khruba Sriwichai came back to Wat Ban Pang after he finished the construction project of the road to Doi Suthep, he was surprised to see 30 large jars of rice and other offerings at the temple. Khruba Sriwichai asked the four novices about this. Though the novices trembled with fear, they told Khruba Sriwichai the truth about *phra khong kesa*. Khruba Sriwichai did not punish them but instead was glad that he would have food for people who would come to help him construct the *vihāra* at Wat Ban Pang.

Most of the first 1400 *phra khong kesa* made in 1933 belonged to the elders who assisted Khruba Sriwichai during his lifetime, and they have been passed on to their descendants. Lakmanut reported that during his research, he saw many of these first votive tablets of Khruba Sriwichai, and that all the owners affirm that they have experienced the miraculous power of *phra khong kesa*.

In addition to the votive tablet with the hair as an ingredient or *phra khong kesa*, there is another version of votive tablet that included the ash of Khruba Sriwichai, namely “Phra Khruba Lang Yon”. This particular version of tablet was made of the baked clay that mixed with the ash of Khruba Sriwichai. The ash of Khruba Sriwichai was obtained from his cremation ritual on the 21th of March 1944 at Wat Cham Devi located in Lamphun Province.³⁷⁵

Sripasang states that the first production “Phra Khruba Lang Yon” took place on the 22th of November 1944 and continued until the beginning of 1948.³⁷⁶ Subsequently, there were three more productions of the same votive tablet. All the four versions of “Phra Khruba Lang Yon” are relatively similar in size but

³⁷⁵ Sripasang, *Ton bun Lanna: Prawati Khruba chabup an muan 2 [Lanna holy man: A history of Khruba]*, 73.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

different in colour such as green, black, red, yellow, gray, and white. They depict Khruba Sriwichai in his meditation posture. His rosary and his chest belt were clearly portrayed in some of the tablets. This version of the votive tablets was believed to be as sacred as the one with Khruba Sriwichai's hair as ingredient. Its specific power was also similar with *phra khong kesa* as it was believed to protect the wearer from danger and give the power to influence others.

The last example of Khruba Sriwichai's amulet that I will discuss is the cloth with his handprint and footprint. This sacred cloth is known as *pha pa tha*. It is a small piece of white cloth with the image of hands and feet of Khruba Sriwichai. Some pieces contain the sacred alphabets while the others contain the name of Khruba Sriwichai written in *tham* scripts. Some pieces have only the footprint while the others have both handprints and footprints. An informant who knew Khruba Sriwichai told Sripasang that these pieces of white clothes were often obtained from the cloth when he covered himself while shaving his head.³⁷⁷

It is generally believed that the owners of *pha pa tha* were those who were very close to Khruba Sriwichai and were his assistants, donors, or meritorious persons. Sripasang states that his grandfather possesses one of the *pha pa tha* which he kept under his pillow and put under his hat whenever he travelled to other provinces. The *pha pa tha* is said to protect the wearer during travel, provide prosperity for business, and draw the love of both humans and angels.³⁷⁸

In the beginning of this chapter I quoted a statement by Tambiah who argued that the significance of the amulets has been shifted from a context of donation and devotion to a context of commerce and profit; the more amulets are made, the more they are faked. It is not surprising that there are many fake amulets of Khruba Sriwichai. When the enormous statue of Khruba Sriwichai was cast at

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 93.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 94.

Wat Ban Pang, the temple also produced a special version of clay *phra phim* of Khruba Sriwichai named “Thin Kam Noed Bung Koed Sup 50” for the purpose of raising the money. At the same time, a group of counterfeiters were planning to produce fake Khruba Sriwichai’s amulets. In order to prevent this from happening, three days after the *phutthaphisek* ritual, the temple’s committee decided to take the 20,000 finished clay tablets to Bangkok, where an identifying barcode was placed on each tablet and registered to ensure its authenticity. Additionally, the mould of this particular clay tablet was destroyed in front of all the participants at the *phutthaphisek* ritual.³⁷⁹

Even though it has been more than 70 years since the death of Khruba Sriwichai, his miraculous power is still witnessed by many people until today. A recent miracle occurred at Wat Ban Pang on the 9th of June 2007 during the sacralisation ritual of the clay tablets depicted the image of Khruba Sriwichai namely “Thin Kam Noed Bung Koed Sup 50”. Two days later, the story of this miracle was published in the Chiang Mai News newspaper. The heading of the story was titled as “Astonishing sun halo miracle of Khruba Sriwichai.” The sun halo is an optical phenomenon believed by many Thai Buddhists to signal an auspicious moment, and it is often associated with an important event or a sacred person.³⁸⁰ According to the reporter, the miracle happened during the ritual of inviting the soul of Khruba Sriwichai to participate in the ceremony. It was reported that during this ritual, the sunny sky suddenly became dark and a halo appeared around the sun. The participants astonished by this phenomenon which they attributed to the *bun pārami* of Khruba Sriwichai that the sun halo appeared.³⁸¹

³⁷⁹ “Tued Patihat Khruba Sriwichai Tawan Song Klot [Astonishing sun halo miracle of Khruba Sriwichai].”

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at the concept of charisma and Buddhist *pāramī*, and demonstrated the extent of Khruba Sriwichai's contemporary cult: the museums, shrines, amulets and *kham wai* that bear his name, image or are associated with his life decades after his death. I have argued that for Thai Buddhists, such a cult is best understood as a gauge of a monk's spiritual attainment rather than political or worldly power. In particular, the numerous visionary building projects from the renovation of Wat Bang Pang to the construction of the road to Wat Doi Suthep which involved the active participation through labour and material support of thousands of people over a specific period of time, are best understood as the religious response by his followers to Khruba Sriwichai's level of *pāramī*, and reflect the circular logic described by Aung Thwin: "the monk who can organize building projects does not just make merit but demonstrates that he already has a font of merit that empowers him."³⁸²

³⁸² John Marston, "Constructing Narratives of Order: Religious-Building Projects and Moral Chaos," in *At the Edge of the Forest: Essays on Cambodia, History, and Narrative in honor of David Chandler*, ed. David Porter Chandler and Anne Ruth Hansen (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 2008), 187.

Conclusion

While doing this research dissertation, I often find myself asked “why is it important to learn about Khruba Sriwichai’s meditation practice and understand his Buddhist charisma?” I suggest that the answer to this question is that it is very important for practitioners of meditation as well as other Buddhists and historians of Thailand. In Thailand, there are many studies and biographies of famous monks, but often the most important aspect of the monk is neglected: their religious practice. Many Thai Buddhists who read these biographies and worship these monks because they believe that they have the power to provide them with protection and prosperity and they tend to lean on from the assistance of the monks’ power. Exceptional monks like Khruba Sriwichai are powerful because – similar with the Buddha – they lead exemplary lives, and Buddhist should try to follow their example.

The investigation of Khruba Sriwichai’s meditation practice is an important key for understanding the reason behind his holiness. Because scholars have focused too much on political events in his life, the reason for Khruba Sriwichai’s enduring importance for Thai history, his status as *ton bun* and the source of his personal charisma are obscured. Khruba Sriwichai was not a charismatic Buddhist saint (*ton bun*) because he challenged Bangkok, or appeared on the covers of political magazines. He was a Buddhist saint because of his accumulation of *pāramī*. In this thesis, I have completed the unfinished biography of Khruba Sriwichai, by exploring the reason behind his status as a *ton bun*: his Buddhist lineage, his meditation practice, and his attainment of Buddhist charisma, or *pāramī*.

In chapter 1, I have surveyed the Thai and English academic studies about Khruba Sriwichai which shows that scholars have focused on three aspects of his life: (1) his career as a millenarian *ton bun*, (2) his challenge of political authority, and (3) his construction and renovation of temples and monasteries in Lanna region.

These studies draw on a variety of sources: sacred biographies which contain accounts of miraculous deeds performed by Khruba Sriwichai and as well as historical records but there has been no investigation of the association between these miraculous deeds and Khruba Sriwichai's Buddhist lineage and practice. Instead, scholars have chosen to emphasise the political implications of his challenge of the Central Thai religious authorities. This is a serious gap in the scholarship on Khruba Sriwichai, as these supernatural elements are the key to understanding his status as a northern Thai *ton bun*.

In chapter 2, I have investigated the sacred biographies of Khruba Sriwichai written by his disciples and fellow monks. These biographies depict Khruba Sriwichai as someone who has accumulated great merit and perfections – Buddhist *pāramī* - in his past lives which resulted in his present life. The evidence for Khruba Sriwichai's accumulation of *pāramī* include: miraculous events on the day of his birth, reports of his great compassion towards his parents and other living beings (fish, buffalo, birds, mice, and etc) during his childhood, his academic abilities as a young monk, and his diligence in seeking out a meditation master (Khruba Upala). Further evidences for his *pāramī* are his successful building projects: the road to Doi Suthep, the renovation of Wat Phra Singha, the renovation of Wihan Luang in Wat Suan Dok, and etc. These hagiographical details not only provide information about the characteristics of a Lanna *ton bun* in the early 20th century, they are also a database of northern Thai beliefs about the accumulation of *pāramī* and the relationship between *pāramī* and Buddhist practice.

In chapter 3, I have analysed the information about Khruba Sriwichai Buddhist practice that has survived in his biographies, photographs, and media reports. Based on evidence from his biographies, we can conclude that Khruba Sriwichai was a meditator and was considered to be a meditation master by his disciples. We also know that he learned his meditation techniques from Khruba Upala, and may have learned additional techniques from Khruba Wat Doi Kham. Both of his

meditation teachers were part of the traditional Lanna Buddhist sphere during the 19th century when *yogāvacara* meditation was practiced in the region. As their pupil, Khruba Sriwichai would have also been firmly established in the *yogāvacara* tradition. Photographs of Khruba Sriwichai show that he wore the ancient style of monastic robes belonging to the non-reformed Mahānikāyā. Bizot has argued that these traditional monastic robes are “linked to the embryonic imagery as well as the heart syllable symbolism found in *yogāvacara* texts”³⁸³ If Bizot’s supposition is correct, this is further evidence that Khruba Sriwichai was affiliated with the *yogāvacara* meditation lineage. Last but not least, my preliminary research in Khruba Sriwichai’s meditation manual shows that it contains verses for the preparatory worship that mention homage to the five gems, another characteristic of the *yogāvacara* tradition.

In chapter 4, I have argued that there is a relationship between Khruba Sriwichai’s meditation attainment, his Buddhist charisma, or *pāramī*, and his cult (shrines, museums, and amulets associated with him). The powerful presence of Khruba Sriwichai through his contemporary cult is an important indicator of his meditation attainment and his great personal Buddhist charisma. The contemporary cult of Khruba Sriwichai such as his amulets, images, and statues also supports the fact that Khruba Sriwichai practiced meditation through the depiction of his meditation posture. In addition, the large numbers of followers who still place their faith in him 71 years after his death also suggests his Buddhist *pāramī* that even though he was not alive, he was still an object of worship. Last but not least, his Buddhist *pāramī* which built up from the power of meditation also reflects the circular logic described by Aung-Thwin that “the monk who can organized building projects does not just make merit but demonstrates that he already has a font of merit that empowers him.”³⁸⁴

³⁸³ Bizot, *Le Bouddhisme des Thaïs: Brève Histoire de Ses Mouvements et de Ses Idées des Origines à Nos Jours*; Crosby, “Tantric Theravāda,” 160.

³⁸⁴ Marston, “Constructing Narratives of Order: Religious-Building Projects and Moral Chaos,” 187.

In conclusion, I believe that this research will shed some light upon the understandings of the reason for Khruba Sriwichai's enduring importance for Thai history and the importance of his meditation will be placed into the spotlight for further analysis in which the further research on Khruba Upala needs to be done to determine more about this lineage of Lanna Buddhism that Khruba Sriwichai was a part of.

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