



การสร้างประวัติศาสตร์ท้องถิ่นเรื่องเจ้าแม่จามรี อำเภอสี จังหวัดลำพูน ผ่านคติชน

Constructing the Local History of Queen Chamari
in Li, Thailand Through Folklore

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บทคัดย่อ

ตำนานเจ้าแม่จามรีเป็นตำนานที่มีการสืบทอดและส่งต่อกันมาอย่างช้านานในพื้นที่อำเภอสี จันทดลำนพูน ประวัติศาสตร์ท้องถิ่นเชื่อว่าเจ้าแม่จามรีเป็นผู้ก่อตั้งเมืองสีในอดีต จึงถือเป็นปฐมกษัตริย์ของเมืองสี ชื่อเสียงเรียงนามของเจ้าแม่จามรีมักถูกเข้าใจผิดและเหมารวมเข้ากับ “พระนางจามเทวี” ปฐมกษัตริย์แห่งนครหริภุญไชย ซึ่งมีประวัติศาสตร์อันยาวนานในพื้นที่จังหวัดลำพูนเช่นเดียวกัน ความสำคัญของเจ้าแม่จามรีต่อคนท้องถิ่นในพื้นที่อำเภอสีปรากฏและถูกสะท้อนผ่านศิลปะ วัฒนธรรม และคติชนหลากหลายรูปแบบในพื้นที่อำเภอสี บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาคติชนในรูปแบบต่าง ๆ ที่ชาวบ้านอำเภอสี จังหวัดลำพูน ใช้เป็นเครื่องมือในการสร้างประวัติศาสตร์ท้องถิ่นของอำเภอสีและสร้างตำนานเจ้าแม่จามรีในฐานะวีรสตรีท้องถิ่น การวิจัยนี้ใช้วิธีการศึกษาจากเอกสาร ตำรา และการลงพื้นที่ภาคสนาม ผลการศึกษาพบว่าชาวสีใช้คติชนในการสร้างประวัติศาสตร์ท้องถิ่นด้วยกัน 4 รูปแบบ ได้แก่ 1) คติชนประเภทเรื่องเล่า ได้แก่ ตำนานประวัติศาสตร์เกี่ยวกับเจ้าแม่จามรี ซึ่งมีการเล่าขานสืบทอดกันมาจากรุ่นสู่รุ่นเพื่อให้คนสีจดจำรากเหง้าของตนเองในฐานะลูกหลานเจ้าแม่จามรี, ตำนานเหนือธรรมชาติ เพื่อบอกเล่าความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ของเจ้าแม่จามรีทั้งในอดีตและปัจจุบัน, และภูมินาม หรือชื่อสถานที่ต่าง ๆ ซึ่งปรากฏในตำนานเจ้าแม่จามรีและยังคงถูกกล่าวถึงอยู่เสมอ 2) คติชนประเภทวัตถุ ได้แก่ ภาพจิตรกรรมฝาผนัง ซึ่งทำหน้าที่บอกเล่าประวัติความเป็นมาของเจ้าแม่จามรีและเมืองสีในอดีต, รูปปั้นและรูปเคารพภายในอำเภอสี, และสถานที่ต่าง ๆ อันเป็นอนุสรณ์สถานของความทรงจำร่วมเกี่ยวกับเจ้าแม่จามรี 3) คติชนประเภทประเพณีพิธีกรรม ได้แก่ งานบวงสรวงเจ้าแม่จามรี ซึ่งเป็นงานบวงสรวงที่จัดขึ้นทุกปีโดยหน่วยงานต่าง ๆ ในอำเภอสี เช่น ชมรมสตรีอำเภอสี เพื่อระลึกถึงเจ้าแม่จามรีในฐานะปฐมกษัตริย์ 4) คติชนประเภทเพลงพื้นบ้าน บทเพลงสรรเสริญเจ้าแม่จามรีถูกแต่งขึ้นในหลากหลายสำนวนเพื่อส่งต่อและสื่อสารความรู้สึกและเคารพบูชาที่มีต่อปฐมกษัตริย์เมืองสี คติชนทั้งสี่รูปแบบนี้มีบทบาทในการสร้างประวัติศาสตร์ท้องถิ่นหรือประวัติศาสตร์ฉบับชาวบ้าน (Folk History) ทั้งในแง่การช่วยรื้อฟื้นเรื่องราวของเจ้าแม่จามรีที่กำลังจะสูญหายไปท่ามกลางประวัติศาสตร์กระแสหลัก และในแง่การสร้างอัตลักษณ์ของคนสีในฐานะลูกหลานเจ้าแม่จามรีที่มีทั้งความอดทนและความฉลาดหลักแหลมเช่นเดียวกับเจ้าแม่จามรี

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Abstract

This article explores various ways in which the people of Li District, Lamphun Province, Thailand, use folklore as a tool to remember and commemorate the local history of Li and the local hero “Queen Chamari.” It applies the concepts of folk history and collective memory to understand various oral traditions performed in the Li community. The results show that folklore operates in both verbal, material, and customary forms of commemoration. Verbal forms include historical legends passed down from generation to generation, supernatural legends connect to both ancient and present time, and place names. The material folklore includes mural paintings at Phrathat Duang Diao Temple, statues of queen Chamari, and particular buildings and sites. For the customary folklore, there are annual worship rituals known as “buang-suang” that take place in various locations throughout town. Folk songs are another folklore genre that is widespread in the local community. All these expressive cultures contribute to the reconstruction of Chamari and the town's history, which is gradually fading from the perceptions of both the young and people from other places, as Li has recently become well-known as the town of Three Khrubas, the revered monks of Lanna tradition. The folklore commemorations described here reflect the people of Li’s dedication to reenacting this forgotten history, and, more importantly, the forgotten identity of Li as a town ruled by a female queen.

Keywords: Queen Chamari, Li, Lamphun, Folk History, Collective Memory

Introduction

On April 21, 2021, the Facebook group “Klum Khon Muang Li,” or “A Group of Li People,” had a new post saying: “Who founded Li, according to history? Please let me know.”

The person who posted went on to say: “The reason I asked is because I feel hurt. The day we pour water to the three *khru*bas should be the day we pour water to the founder. When compared to our founder, Khruba tradition arrived later and is much younger. There are many Li people who are unaware of their own history. History of Li should have been included in the school curriculum. The statue at the traffic light should be of the queen, not Khrubas. Because each Khruba has his distinct hometown, it is puzzling why Li people young, old, and adults all fail to recognize the significance of the Li founder. I'm not saying that the water-pouring ceremony for the three Khrubas is bad, but if Li had never existed, there probably wouldn't be any Khrubas.”

This powerful post has been agreed upon by so many people in the group, raising a question about who the founder is and whether it is true that she has been ignored by many people especially those who write local history curriculum.

Chamari has always been mistaken for Chamadevi, which is a more well-known name. But they are different individuals. Chamari is little known to outsiders, but to the Li people, she is the one and only founder, the true local hero of the community. Why haven't we heard of this name before? Why is Chamari no one and Chamadevi is the subject of so much discussion? Even the Li people express skepticism about that. According to legend, Chamari was the princess of King Khamphira of Luang Phrabang who led people to flee the Chinese invasion in the 16th century. She migrated westward from Luang Phrabang to Xishuangbanna, then moved to Chiang Mai, and finally stopped in southern Lamphun, which is now Li (Disch 2014).



Figure 1. Queen Chamari statue at Phrathat Duang Diao Temple, Li District, Lamphun Province

The history of Chamari has been shrouded in mystery for a very long time, as no one knows anything about her, and even if they have heard her name, they might assume she is the same as Chamadevi, the queen of Hariphunchai, Mon empire, who was believed to be the founder of Lamphun Province (Swearer, & Premchit 1998; Ongsakun 2005).

While the Li people have long remembered their hero, the changing of the society has recently transformed Li into something else, whether it is fused with the story of Chamadevi as previously mentioned, or the town's reputation being replaced by the Khruba tradition in the north. In recent decades, Li has

become "a Khruba town" where pilgrimages are made to honor the three Khruba: Khruba Siwichai, Khruba Khao Pi, and Khruba Wong. Their reputation further distances the faded story of Chamari from people's perceptions. The Li people, on the other hand, have their own ways of keeping Chamari's story alive. They have their own ways of passing on their memories and vernacular history.

This research studies those ways in which people use to remember and commemorate their local hero and explore whether those ways are successful in reconstructing the forgotten history of their queen. It focuses on folklore and oral traditions relating to Queen Chamari. Since there is little literature about Chamari in Thai and international academic circles, this study serves as a starting point for further study of Chamari as a unique local historical figure and as an excellent example of a female ruler in Thai and/or Lanna history.

Li was also chosen as the central focus and field site of this study because although Li is rich in oral traditions that may be of interest to researchers, there is limited scholarship on the region, particularly those in the fields of folklore and oral history. Li itself is periphery both in terms of geography and national recognition. This research could therefore shed light on the everyday experiences of the people of this region and can contribute to the body of knowledge on Li, Lamphun, and northern Thailand.

Objective

The purpose of this research is to investigate the various ways in which the Li people use folklore to preserve their local history of Queen Chamari.



Conceptual Framework

This research explores a recollection of Queen Chamari using the concept of “folk history” suggested by Guy Beiner (2007). This concept proposes that folk history is an alternative version of history that is written by the local community to provide the “history from below” which is “fundamentally democratic” (Beiner, 2007, p.141). To be democratic means that any underrepresented stories and individuals that have been neglected in the official historiography will be stressed and highlighted. To Beiner, “the truly democratic nature of folk historiography was manifested in the ways each locality remembered its own hero” (Beiner, 2007, p.168). Chamari as the local hero of Li people fits this category. This research, therefore, follows the idea that folk history could serve as a framework to study and understand how “local communities could narrate an array of vernacular histories presented from provincial perspectives, thus relocating the focus of historical attention away from the metropolitan center” (Beiner, 2007, p.169).

This study also employs the concept of collective memory to investigate why Li people attempt to commemorate Chamari's history through various forms of folklore. It implies that history and memory cannot be separated and that they both provide meaning to each other. As Raphael Samuel proposes, “memory is dialectically related to historical thought, rather than being some kind of negative other to it” (Raphael 2012, p.X). Considering these mutually reinforcing roles of social memory and folk history, it may be possible to better understand Chamari existence in the Li community.

The conceptual framework could be explained by the following diagram:

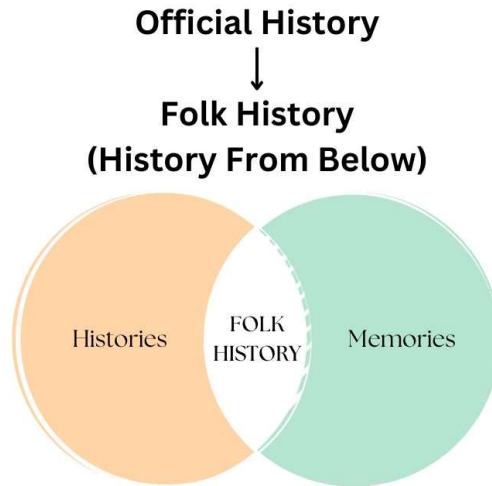


Figure 2. Research Conceptual Framework

This paper follows the classification of folklore genres proposed by Richard M. Dorson in 1972, which divides folklore into four categories: 1) Verbal Folklore, 2) Performing Folklore, 3) Material Folklore, and 4) Customary Folklore. However, this paper acknowledges that the classification system proposed by Dorson is only the principal classification and that there are other classification methods. Above all, this research recognizes that folklore genres are interrelated in reality. According to Charles L. Briggs and Richard Bauman, “Genre is quintessentially intertextual” and therefore folklorists should “place generic distinctions not within texts but in the practices used un creating intertextual relations with other bodies of discourse” (Briggs, & Bauman, 1992, p. 147)

Methodology

1. The primary research methodology used in this study is documentary research. The information is gained from books and articles on related issues.

2. Social media platforms are also used as a research supplement, as it is a new platform where locals frequently interact, particularly during and after a pandemic. This method allows researchers to gain insights into the local community's current trends, thoughts, as well as beliefs and worldviews.

3. It also employs ethnographic fieldwork as another method of data collection.

3.1 The first method is participant-observation. The author gathered information by observing at field sites, particularly at Phrathat Duang Diao Temple, where much information can be obtained, and by participating in Chamari's annual commemorations.

3.2 Interviews are the second method. The study interviewed two people from Li sub-districts. They are Kham Thip-In from Dongdam Sub-district and Wimon Sookdaeng from Nasai Sub-district. These two people were chosen because they both are Li natives, have grown up in the area, while live in different sub-districts. This study supposes that different perspectives, if any, can be gained from people from different locations.

The study area is Li District, Lamphun Province, Thailand and was carried out between February and August 2021. Some follow-up interviews were conducted in February 2023.

Synthetic Research Results

The results show that the Li people preserve their folk history in four ways. First, through verbal folklore. The second way is through material culture. Third, by means of rituals. Fourth, through folk songs. Although folk songs are a

part of verbal folklore, this paper classifies them as a separate genre due to the number of them and the fact that their elements and meanings can be analyzed independently. All of this is carried out and operated through folklore. Folklore becomes a powerful tool for the locals to remember and commemorate their hero and their home.

1. Verbal Folklore

Stories and storytelling are the primary means by which the Li people tell Chamari's history. It is made up of historical legends, supernatural legends and belief stories, and place names.

1.1 Historical Legends

The historical legend of Chamari is well-known among Li community, particularly in the Li Sub-district where Phrathat Duang Diao and Phrathat Ha Duang Temples are located. Both temples are thought to be the locations where Chamari stopped her migration and established her kingdom.

The historical legend of Chamari, as written on the temple wall of Phrathat Duang Diao Temple, begins in the sixteenth century when "Chin Ho," or the Chinese Han, conquered the kingdom of Yonok and killed a great number of people. The Yonok people and King Khamphira who wanted to be free from the Chinese moved out of the kingdom to the south and formed a new kingdom in what is today Luang Phrabang in Lao. King Khamphira had a beautiful daughter named Chamari and a servant named Phanmahat who accompanied her everywhere. When the Chinese learned about the well-known Luang Phrabang, they headed to destroy it again. Khamphira requested that Chamari lead the people out of the kingdom, so Chamari and her followers left Luang Phrabang.

While traveling, Chamari came across an elephant, which she later captured and gave the name Suwan Mongkol. The group of migrants moved from Luang Phrabang to Chiang Rung, Chiang Dao, Chom Thong, and

Thung Hua Chang before reaching the Li River. The elephant eventually came to stop and cried out at the large termite hill. Later, the elephant circled the termite hill and bowed to it in prayer. Chamari then stopped her group there, and that night she saw the bright sphere flying above that termite hill for the first time.

The next day, she began cleaning up the area and clearing land for a city center. She asked the elephant to mark the kingdom's border and her followers to construct a wall out of bamboo sticks. Chamari built the temple and named it Phrathat Duang Diao Temple. She also gave the kingdom the name Lap-Li, which was later shortened to Li. Chamari also had a dream about the bright sphere, in which she saw it fly east of the city center. She then built a temple in the city's east side and named it Phrathat Ha Duang Temple, which means "five sphere temple." People were able to make merit after she built Ha Duang Temple, and the city prospered as a result. Li had been highly successful at the time. There are trade relations with neighboring cities such as Kaeng Soi Village. Unfortunately, Chamari died before she turned sixty, so this was a tragic loss for her people.

The popular version of Chamari's historical legend is shown above. It is attached to the labels and mural paintings at Phrathat Duang Diao Temple. This version is also printed in the annual Chamari worship ritual. Other variants that are told in everyday life in the local community may differ slightly from this mainstream version in terms of details. For example, *Kham Thip-In* from Dongdam sub-district tells the same Chamari story as follows:

“Queen Chamari was the founder of Li. She led the people away from the Burmese. They gradually moved to Li until she arrived at Phrathat Duang Diao. She also had an elephant pal. You can see the elephant in the temple up until now. When the queen arrived at Duang Diao

Temple, she planted a lot of bamboo. She hid the land from the Burmese by using bamboo, because the Burmese had sent an army over here at the time. By that way the Burmese couldn't see Li. But nowadays you can no longer see the bamboo because the villagers wanted the golds that the queen buried under the bamboo, so they cut down those trees."

K. Thip-In (personal communication, February 9, 2023)

In this version, the Chinese Han have been replaced by the Burmese. Another highlight that was not heavily emphasized in the temple version is the bamboo that Chamari grew to hide from the enemy, giving rise to the name Li, which means hidden or mysterious. Wimon Sookdaeng of Nasai Sub-district told a similar story about Chamari hiding from the enemy in the Li landscape, and he also concluded that Lamphun was once a matrilineal community. Li and Lamphun were both ruled by female monarchs before Khruba arrived; Li was ruled by Chamari and Lamphun later came under the rule of Chamadevi. "Li has always been ruled by women," Wimon stated. (W. Sookdaeng, personal communication, March 11, 2021)

Despite slight variations, the two motifs are always present in Chamari stories. First, there was the invasion and exploitation by the stronger kingdoms. Second, Chamari's bravery and wit protected them from the enemy. In the temple's version, there is also a side story about the time after Chamari died and Chao Niu Mue Ngam became the new ruler. The story mentioned the invasion by Sukhothai and their failure because Li grew a thick wall out of bamboo since the time Chamari was still alive. Chamari's wit let Li triumphed in this battle.

With all these motifs, the historical legends of the Chamari always convey a sense of being autochthonous. Although Chamari was not a native of the land, as she was from Yonok and Luang Phrabang, the Li people do not share this sentiment. They believe that Chamari and themselves as her descendants are native to the land and thus have the right to own it and claim the power that comes with it. When asked where queen Chamari is from, Kham replied, "I'm not sure." When asked further if she was from somewhere else, Kham suddenly replied, "No. She is khon Li (Li people)." It could be said that Autochthony in these historical legends is not derived from indigeneity, but rather from the collective memory of Chamari as a courageous and intelligent female leader, of her doing her best to protect the followers, and of the Li people's efforts in establishing and protecting their own community until it flourished.

1.2 Supernatural Legends and Belief Stories

Supernatural legends are an important part of the community's verbal folklore. It consists of stories about the magical and supernatural power of Chamari, both in the form of ancient and contemporary legends. Chamari is said to have done something supernatural or magical to protect the villagers in ancient legends. For example, there was a time when she was performing good deeds and pleading with the deities to help her find a suitable location to establish a city. With her deep meditation and prayers, the elephant came to stop in front of Li. There was also a time when Chamari could see a bright sphere surrounding the termite hill while no one in the camp saw it. Such clairvoyance is unbelievable to outsiders, but for the Li people, it is possible to happen due to the queen's merit and superpower.

There are also legends about something else that is relevant to Chamari. For example, there is a legend about the naga, the mythical creature

who was a serpent god protecting the land, saying that there was a naga residing underneath the termite hill that Chamari's migration group stopped. The supernatural legend about the naga elevates the sacredness of Chamari by implying that the location where Li was discovered is a holy site where a sacred deity, a naga, resides.

The contemporary supernatural legends usually come in the form of memorate (Dundes, 1999; Goldstein, 2007), the personal experience narratives and anecdotes about the supernatural and unexplainable phenomena that the narrators witnessed by themselves. These legends are common in the Li local community, particularly in the vicinity of the two main temples. There was a rumor that people saw the large sphere on a certain Buddhist holy night, which they believe was caused by Chamari's magical power. Some people talk about curses or taboos that will befall those who look down on her or commit wrongdoing to enrage her. Many people mentioned Chamari's sacredness in bestowing the wishes they had requested.

All these legends add to the overall sacredness of Chamari. It is evidence that she continues to live in the community not only as a deceased hero who physically protected the people, but also as a spiritual leader who is becoming a living history. She becomes a local historical figure that people continue to remember, respect, and love.

1.3 Place Names

The place names in the local community can point to Chamari's history in a variety of ways. As Keith Basso suggests, the act of speaking with names is the crucial act of retrieving the history (Basso, 1996). To Basso, "place names are arguably among the most highly charged and richly evocative of all linguistic symbols. Because of their inseparable connection to specific localities, place names may be used to summon forth an enormous range of mental and

emotional associations- associations of time and space, of history and events, of persons and social activities, of oneself and stages in one's life" (Basso, 1996, p.76). The act of mentioning the place name in everyday conversation is thus the ideal way for people to remember Chamari's history.

The first name to be mentioned is Li. The name Li is thought to be derived from the terms "Lap-Li" or "Li-Lap," which mean hidden or mysterious. According to the locals, it dates back to the time when Chamari led the army to the place to hide from the invaders. Chamari and his followers were able to successfully hide due to the land's hilly geography. Some legends describe bamboo as a plant used for hiding, saying that they could completely hide from the invaders thanks to the bamboo. That is why the area was named Li-Lap, which was later shortened to Li. The river Li bears the same name as the town. It has its own history as a location where the group of Chamari migrated along this river until she arrived at her destination.

Phrathat Duang Diao Temple is also in this category. The name Duang Diao derives from the legend that Chamari once saw a bright sphere flying in the night sky above the termite hill. That is why she named the place Duang Diao, which translates to "one sphere." Phrathat Ha Duang shares a similar origin story when Chamari saw a bright sphere flying above a termite hill and circled it five times; as a result, the location was given the name Ha Duang, or "five spheres."

There are numerous additional place names that go with this story. These names are imprinted in people's minds as part of Chamari's migration route. This includes,

- *Doi Lo, Chom Thong, Chiang Mai*: The spot where the elephant fell down the hill, giving that hill the name "lo" or slippery.

- *Doi I-Ui, Chiang Mai*: A long mountain that exhausted the women in the Chamari group to the point where they breathed through their mouths with the sound "hui-hui." The name I-ui was derived from the hui sound.

- *Ban Mae Saem, Lamphun*: A village from which Sam is "Som-Saem," or fixing. The name refers to the moment Chamari stopped the group to fix the elephant's ornament.

- *Thung Hua Chang, Lamphun*: The mountainous region where the elephant refused to bow his head when the rider asked him to.

All of these place names relate to the larger narrative of Chamari. Every time someone recalls these names, they will be transported back in time to a time when Chamari was migrating to Li and something was happening in that specific place, and ultimately the history of the place will be imagined. With place names, Li people are remembering and reconstructing the history of Chamari every day.



Figure 3. Phrathat Duang Diao Temple, Li District, Lamphun Province

2. Material Culture

Material culture, in whatever form it takes, is always one of the most visible manifestations of people's expressive culture. According to Shigeharu Tanabe and Charles F. Keyes, “Material culture - ranging from religious and other monuments such as Buddhist stupas, tombs, and statuary to houses and consumer goods - always provide a basis for constructing the past” (Tanabe, & Keyes, 2002, p.6). Material culture that witnesses the history of Chamari in Li consists of the mural paintings in Phrathat Duang Diao Temple in Li, the statue of Queen Chamari, the sites and the buildings.

2.1 Mural Paintings

The mural paintings in Phrathat Duang Diao Temple are the best place for visitors or passers-by to learn about Chamari's history. Material culture in the form of mural paintings is bound more outwardly to the public and is easier to draw attention from outsiders than verbal folklore such as legends which tend to represent an inward movement. This set of mural paintings consists of ninety-one pieces of painting that depict Chamari's life beginning with the Chinese (Han) destroying the Yonok kingdom where the Tai people lived at the time, continuing through the time that Chamari led the people in moving until they arrived at the riverbank of Li, establishing the Li kingdom, the day she passed away, and the final paintings showing that Chamari was reincarnated as "Thepthida Chamari Maha Devi" or the Great Goddess Chamari. These paintings are hung on the four-sided walls so that, from the first to the last painting, readers can circulate in a clockwise direction around the stupa in the center of these walls.



Figure 4. The mural paintings depicting the life history of Chamari

These mural paintings were organized by the late abbot of Phrathat Duang Diao Temple, Phra Khru Sathit Piyawat (Piyawat Thitsiro), who passed away in 2018. According to Hilary Disch, Phra Khru Sathit Piyawat gathered information about these Chamari stories by interviewing older adults in the Li community (Disch, 2014, p. 119). These paintings are thus a product of the Li people's collective memory that has been materialized into a concrete form of commemoration. The murals were painted in the same style of typical Theravada Buddhist mural paintings that depict the Buddha's life story. Although each painting could perfectly narrate Chamari story by its visual, it does also come with a short caption written by this late abbot under each painting.

These paintings became a significant part of Chamari history over time. When referring to Chamari, many Li people point to the mural paintings and use them as a reference to “the true version of Chamari history.”

2.2 Chamari Statues and Monuments

The statues and monuments of Queen Chamari are yet another indication that Chamari's history is being preserved in the local community. The queen's statue in Duang Diao Temple is the most famous one, as Li people come to pray to it every day. At the spot, there is a prayer where locals pray and ask for their wishes. At the statue, there are also labels with information about her. The altar in front of her statue has flower garlands that people from different locations have placed there. From morning until evening, many visitors of the temple come directly to pray to Queen Chamari's statue. There are also printed images of this statue in 4x6 photo size in the basket in front of the real statue that visitors can collect for free. In this way, Chamari's statue serves as a palimpsest, containing her life story as well as Li history. Every time someone looks at her, reads her biography, or prays to her statue, they are brought back to a time when she ruled the kingdom as a female queen.

In the paper “Les Lieux de Mémoire” (1989), Pierre Nora explores the sites of memory and proposes that the sites of memory such as monuments or memorials could represent the collective memory of the people. The statues and monuments of Queen Chamari in this local community serve the same function. With the statues as a symbolic representation in the community, the collective memory of Queen Chamari as historical figure is remembered and commemorated.

2.3 Historical Sites

Place always plays a major role in Chamari stories. As Keith Basso suggests, a sense of the past and a sense of place are inseparable. Chamari stories are linked to at least two locations in the local community. The first and most important location is Phrathat Duang Diao Temple. It is the location where Chamari made the decision to establish the kingdom. The places where the elephant stopped are also in the vicinity of the temple. People can see and worship

an elephant statue at that location. Phrathat Ha Duang Temple are also evidence of this local history. Although nowadays the temple is decorated with a lot of Khruaba and Chamadevi influences, Li people still see the place as a part of Chamari's success.

Aside from these two main locations, Chamari's influence has spread to other areas. There are places where the story of Chamari is told and she is worshiped, such as Chamari Monastery: Li Founder” (ศาลเจ้าแม่จามรีเทวี: ผู้สร้างเมืองลี้) or Ho Kham Chao Mae Chamari Devi (หอคำเจ้าแม่จามรีเทวี: ผู้สร้างเมืองลี้) in Phrathat Duang Diao Temple where the story of Chamari was told, and she was worshipped.

For the locals, historical sites are more than just buildings and structures with no meaning. They are rather sites of memory, or what Pierre Nora refers to as "lieux de mémoire" (Nora, 1989). They are constructed architecture that serve as a repository for people's collective memory and historical consciousness. Although time passes and people die, these materialized cultures continue to carry people's historical consciousness throughout time.



Figure 5. The monument of the elephant Suwan Mongkol and the spot where he stopped moving and pray to the termite hill.

3. Annual Worship Ritual

Every year, groups of Li people perform a worship ritual to Chamari, known in Thai as "Buang-suang." The Li Women Club is the main group that starts this ritual every year. Sometimes it is held at Phrathat Duang Diao Temple, sometimes at the Li District Office in downtown Li. There are no flexible dates for holding this ritual annually.

There will usually be two separate groups of organizers for such rituals. The first group is in charge of the sacred and sangha ceremony, which includes inviting monks to the ritual and asking participants to make donations and offerings to the monks. The monk would be the group's leader. The second group organizes the mundane aspects of the events, such as the entertainment. It includes northern Thai dances performed by various groups of people to honor Queen Chamari. As a fun activity, each sub-district will occasionally hold a dancing and singing contest.

Before the rituals begin, there are always speakers who discuss the history and significance of Chamari, as well as how Li people, as her descendants, should remember and celebrate her. This serves as a starting point for why an annual celebration must be held: to remember and commemorate Li's leader.

Rather than just launching "buang-suang," the ritual will frequently include "Suebchata." Suebchata is a Lanna tradition that aims to extend people's or cities' lives and souls. It was later incorporated into Chamari worship to make the ritual more sacred and to attract more people.

According to Dorothy Noyes and Roger Abraham's concept of four levels of collective memory, Chamari's annual rituals and ceremonies can be considered "customary memory," a community memory bound to an occasion (Noyes, & Abrahams, 1999, p.79) that "creates the collectivity as an

objective entity that can be remembered" (Noyes, & Abrahams, 1999, p.80). According to Noyes and Abrahams, customary memory and its elements - whether singing, dancing, eating, drinking, or others - "work powerfully on the bodies of participants and, furthermore, impose participation on all present. Unified in practice, the community creates a unity in feeling." The annual Chamari worship ritual also fosters such sense of unity among the Li people. They gather to share the history of their land and their hero, and ultimately to share the feeling and pride of being Li.



Figure 6. A worship ritual at the lawn of Li District office on March 8, 2021

4. Folk Songs

Folk songs about Chamari are prevalent in the Li District, where they are frequently performed at ceremonies honoring Chamari. In everyday life, people share their own written and sung songs on a variety of platforms, including digital platforms such as social media. The Facebook group "Klum

Khon Muang Li" is an excellent example of a resource for learning additional information. There are many versions of Chamari folk songs that discuss the history of Chamari and how Li should remember her.

"Therdthai Phra Mae Chao Chamari," which means "honoring Queen Chamari," is one of the popular songs that has been played repeatedly and is used as a song for a singing competition in the ritual. This song was originally composed by Khru Safe Plukkham, and it is currently sung by different people from Li at different times. Later adaptations of the song's lyrics and music resulted in several musical and lyrical variations, but the overall theme of the song remains the same: Chamari's mercy in establishing the kingdom, building the monasteries, and protecting the people. It also mentions how Li has thrived because of this heroine. The song concludes with an invitation to pray to Chamari and a request to Chamari to always protect the Li people for the Li to be happy.

It can be concluded that folk songs are always a good source of preserving group collective memories. Songs and music have the ability to be both appealing and memorable. When it catches the listeners' attention, it is easier to transmit than other folklore genres that are more inwardly focused. Songs gain a wider audience. And with it, the underlying stories of Chamari are also transmitted.

Discussion

Li people use folklore as a tool to preserve and construct the history of Chamari in four ways. First, by means of verbal folklore, which includes historical legends, supernatural legends, and the act of speaking place names. This oral folklore is the primary and most prevalent means by which locals construct Chamari history. The older adults in the community recall the legends encompassing this queen and have passed them on to the younger generations.

The younger generations use new creative forms such as social media platforms to pass on this historical knowledge.

Second, Chamari's history is transmitted through material culture, which in this case includes mural paintings, statues, and sites. These nonverbal folklore genres serve as "sites of memory" or "lieux de mémoire," as proposed by Pierre Nora (Nora, 1989).

Third, Chamari history is transmitted through rituals and commemorations, specifically the annual worship rituals known as Buang-suang and Suebchata. During such occasions, the roles and significance of Chamari to the Li are recalled and remembered. While they worship the queen, they imagine their leader and themselves as part of this stream of history.

Lastly, the history of Chamari is embedded in Chamari folk songs written and sung in the local community in several versions. These songs tell listeners about who Chamari is, what Chamari did, and how strongly the Li people believe in this person. Therefore, singing is a way of remembering and honoring their queen. And by doing so, they are simultaneously reconstructing their own history each time they sing. Even though they are presented separately in this paper, these four forms of folklore coexist in reality. Genres are interconnected in the local community and are frequently performed together. For example, in the worship ritual, people always sing folk songs of Chamari and tell the stories of her. Therefore, the four forms mentioned above are helping each other in constructing and preserving the local history of Chamari.

These four forms of folklore discussed in this research could be considered a "folk history" because they all, in their own unique ways, recount the "true" and "untold" stories of queen Chamari that were rarely told to the public. By providing the alternative story, they are writing their own historiography that is true and meaningful to them.

In the article “Historical Legends and Historical Truth,” Brynjulf Alver poses a question of “what measure of truth is there in oral traditions?” (Alver, 1989, p.137). Alver proposes in the following section that “the ‘truth’ of historical legends is not identical with the ‘truth’ of legal documents and history books. [...] Historical legends reveal the reactions and reflections of the common folk, their impressions, experiences, and their explanations and evaluation of events that are important to them” (Alver, 1989, p. 149). Following this thought, it can be said that oral traditions, regardless of whether they are accurate to an outsider or not, may reveal something about the people who express them.

Regarding the Chamari case, there are many discrepancies between the official history and the oral history provided by the locals. The legends of Phrathat Ha Duang, for instance, could demonstrate that folk history does not need to be identical to official history, and even if it is like one another, it does not need to emphasize the same thing.

While the history of Ha Duang Temple can be seen elsewhere as the construction of Chamadevi, the Li people believe otherwise. Although it is the same story, the merit of Chamadevi is instead the merit of Chamari in the eyes of Li. They also claim that Chamari, not Chamadevi, was the one who named Prathat Ha Duang. These two contrasting accounts reveal the different perceptions between an insider and an outsider and shed light on how history can be perceived differently by various groups.

For the Li people, the reconstruction of Chamari through folklore not only serves as the foundation of their community, but also as a means of claiming and reclaiming their place and pride within the narratives of Lamphun and Lanna history. Chamari gradually faded away in the perception of people, especially younger generations who attended public schools and only learned about well-known historical figures like Chamadevi or Khruba Siwichai. The more

other traditions replace Chamari, the more likely it is that the Li will perceive themselves as less significant.

Li is also known as a rebel township because the Li River flows north rather than south. With this reputation and connotation, the Li may feel hurt as the person mentioned in the introduction may say. The remembrance and commemoration of historical figures such as Chamari may help to comfort and reassure the Li that they are not as others claim. They are rather human beings with courage and wit.

According to Disch, the stories of Chamari may raise questions about the status of the female queen within the contexts of Buddhism, since the thoughts and theories about "female queenship" have always been neglected in religious studies and academia (Disch, 2012, p. 3). I propose that the reenactment of Chamari story not only benefits scholars but also directly benefits the Li people, whose historicity has been obscured by official historical accounts.

Oral traditions and expressive culture are thus "weapons of the weak" (Scott, 1985) when people whose voices are less heard and whose historiography are potentially underrepresented utilize them to express their historical consciousness and create their own version of history. By continuing to narrate, these oral traditions are condensed and transformed into a new version of history. Raymond Fogelson (1989) refers to these phenomena as "epitomizing events" or "narratives that condense, encapsulate, and dramatize longer-term historical processes" (Fogelson, 1989, p. 142).

Folk traditions thus serve as a successful means for Li people to preserve their vernacular history, which may differ from the official one. It is a history in which the Li people communicate with one another and with outsiders about their folk hero, who has been neglected in mainstream history, in order to ultimately create and re-create their identity as Li people who, like

their queen, are brave, clever, and are capable of overcoming difficulties no matter what life throws at them.

Suggestion

This research will be more comprehensive if it incorporates more ethnographic information. More oral history interviews could be used as a supplement to obtain a more complete picture of how insiders perceive Chamari.

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