



Symbolism and Influence: The King of Nagas in Contemporary Thai Buddhist Practice

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Abstract

This research consisted of 4 objectives such 1) Investigate how symbols and signs related to Nagas are culturally constructed and interpreted within Thai society. This includes understanding how these symbols influence beliefs, behaviors, and societal norms, 2) Explore how these symbols influence beliefs, behaviors, and societal norms, 3) Interpret meaning to the King of Nagas in their religious rituals and daily lives, and 4) Analyze the influence beliefs, behaviors, and societal norms. The dissertation entitled “Symbolism and Influence: The King of Nagas in Contemporary Thai Buddhist Practice” involves examining how symbols, signs, and meanings associated with the King of Nagas (Naga) are interpreted and integrated into religious and cultural practices. Both quantitative and qualitative methodology is applied. This research focused on understanding meanings and interpretations of symbols, thus the qualitative approach was the main focus. Designing research on the influence of the King of Nagas on Buddhist behavior in Thai society of the 21st century from a semiotics perspective involved several key considerations. The final results were found that Nagas in Buddhism appear in the form of large snakes, some of which have magical powers that can transform into human form. It is believed that Naga lives in the ground. Some of them live in water, such as streams, rivers, seas, and oceans. Some live on land, such as in caves. The character of the Naga can be collected in 9 ways: 1) It has a crest, 2) It has scales, 3) It has a tail, 4) It has a long body, 5) It looks like a big snake, 6) It looks like a demigod, 7) It looks like a god, 8) It looks like an oppatika, and 9) It can change its shape

Keywords: King of Nagas, Big snake, Oppatika

Introduction

The first step explores the influence of the King of Nagas on Buddhist Behavior in Thai Society. Many generation of Thai people believe in King of Nagas. The King of Nagas pictures or statues appear nearly every where in Thailand, for example, in Buddhist temples, buildings, cinemas, resorts, apartments, and movie theaters. This study delves into the fascinating intersection of Thai Buddhist beliefs and practices with the enduring mythology of the King of Nagas. The King of Nagas, a powerful serpentine deity revered in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions, holds a unique position within Thai Buddhist culture. This research explores how the King of Nagas, through his iconic representation and the narratives surrounding his persona, influences the behavior and worldview of Thai Buddhists in the 21st century. The study employs a semiotic lens to unpack the intricate symbolism and meanings associated with the King of Nagas, examining how these symbols shape perceptions, beliefs, and practices within Thai Buddhist society. The King of Nagas's presence will be explored in Thai Buddhist



iconography, rituals, and storytelling, uncovering the subtle ways his image and narrative weave into the fabric of everyday life (Anan, N.,2020).



Figure 1 King of Nagas

Source: <https://gamma.app/docs/Introduction-Exploring-the-Influence-of-the-King-of-Nagas-on-Budd-3dynzg6bhay987b?mode=doc>

Historical Context: The Significance of the King of Nagas in Thai Buddhist Tradition

The reverence for the King of Nagas, known as Naga Raja in Thai, deeply intertwines with the historical development of Thai Buddhism. The Naga Raja figures prominently in ancient Indian mythologies and Buddhist Jataka tales, where he is often depicted as a benevolent guardian of Buddhist teachings and practitioners. These tales, passed down through generations, have deeply influenced Thai Buddhist beliefs and cultural practices. The Naga Raja is believed to be the protector of Buddhist relics and temples, and his presence is frequently invoked during rituals and ceremonies.(Wongthet, S. 2019).

Background Information

The King of Nagas is a prominent figure in Thai Buddhist iconography and imagery. He is often depicted in a variety of forms, but consistently embodies a powerful and often



benevolent serpentine deity. This imagery plays a crucial role in shaping Thai Buddhist perceptions and beliefs, contributing to the enduring influence of the Naga Raja in contemporary Thai society. One of the most common representations of the Naga Raja in Thai Buddhist art is the “multi-headed serpent”, often adorned with elaborate jewelry and mythical accessories. This form evokes the Naga Raja's power and authority, suggesting his control over the forces of nature and his role as a guardian of the spiritual realm. These images are often found in temples, where they guard the entrances, the base of chedis, or adorn the walls, serving as a constant reminder of the Naga Raja's protective presence. Another iconic representation of the Naga Raja is his association with the seven-hooded cobra, known as “Muchalinda” in Thai Buddhist lore. This image, often depicted in art and literature, symbolizes the Naga Raja's role as a protector of the Buddha and the Dharma (Charoen, K.,2021).

Rituals and Practices involving the King of Nagas: The King of Nagas, deeply embedded in Thai Buddhist beliefs and traditions, is not merely a symbolic figure; his presence is actively invoked in various rituals and practices. These rituals, often imbued with a sense of reverence and awe, serve to connect Thai Buddhists with the spiritual power and protective presence of the Naga Raja, solidifying his role as a guardian and mediator between the human realm and the supernatural. One of the most prominent rituals involving the King of Nagas is the “Naga Puja”, a ceremony performed to honor and appease the Naga Raja. This ritual often involves offerings of incense, flowers, and food, placed before images of the Naga Raja, accompanied by chants and prayers. In some areas of Thailand, elaborate processions are held, with participants carrying images of the Naga Raja through the streets, symbolizing his protective presence over the community. The Naga Raja is also invoked during temple ceremonies, often during the consecration of new temples or the celebration of significant Buddhist festivals. During these ceremonies, the Naga Raja is often depicted in imagery and sculptures, serving as a reminder of his protective presence and the importance of upholding Buddhist teachings. In some areas, there are rituals focused on seeking the Naga Raja's protection from natural disasters, particularly floods, recognizing his connection to the water element. These rituals often involve chanting and offering offerings to appease the Naga Raja and ensure the safety of the community. The Naga Raja's presence is also felt in folklore and storytelling throughout Thailand. Tales of the Naga Raja, often passed down through generations, emphasize his benevolent nature and his role as a protector of the innocent and a punisher of wrongdoing, reinforcing the importance of moral conduct and upholding Buddhist principles (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N%C4%81ga>, 2024).

The King of Nagas, as a powerful and revered figure in Thai Buddhist mythology, exerts a profound influence on ethical and moral conduct within the Thai Buddhist community. His presence in Buddhist iconography and narrative serves as a constant reminder of the importance of upholding Buddhist teachings and principles, shaping the moral compass of Thai Buddhists in the 21st century. The King of Nagas, often depicted as a benevolent guardian of Buddhist teachings, embodies the virtues of compassion, wisdom, and protection. His association with the Buddha's birth story, where he shielded the newborn Buddha from harm, reinforces his role as a protector of the Dharma, embodying the ideal of safeguarding the spiritual path. This symbolism encourages Thai Buddhists to emulate his virtues, fostering a strong sense of ethical responsibility and commitment to the Buddhist teachings. The King of Nagas's association with the natural world, particularly with water, further reinforces the importance of environmental stewardship and ethical treatment of all living beings. His control over the forces of nature emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living beings, fostering a sense of responsibility towards the environment and a commitment to sustainable living. The King of Nagas's presence in temples, often guarding the entrance or the base of the chedi,



signifies the importance of protecting sacred spaces and upholding Buddhist principles within the community. This symbolism fosters a sense of shared responsibility for the well-being of the temple and the community, encouraging ethical behavior and respectful conduct within the sacred realm. Tales and folklore surrounding the King of Nagas often portray him as a protector of the innocent and a punisher of wrongdoing. These narratives underscore the importance of ethical behavior and moral conduct, emphasizing the consequences of actions and the need for compassionate and virtuous living. This reinforces the importance of ethical decision-making and upholding Buddhist teachings in everyday life ("Nāgas". Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online 2024).

In the belief of Thai-Lao joint culture. Nagas are worshipped as the god of water, and there is a belief that Nagas live in the Mekong River. The belief in the King of Nagas appears in India, Thailand, and in Southeast Asia in general, which is related to Brahmanism-Hinduism and Buddhism. Nagas, according to Brahmin belief, are demigods. It has magical powers. The appearance of the Naga is a human of half-human, and half-Naga, or is it a total Naga characteristic. Nagas live in the underworld, which is full of gems, gold, and other worldly treasures. Naga is a servant of Tao Virupak, one of the world's guardians of the West. The Nagas act as guardians on Mount Sumeru to protect the Dao Dung heaven from the demons. The Naga in Buddhism is known as the Mujlint Naga, which appears in the Mujlindha Sutra that during the Buddha's sabbath Vimuttisu, there was a severe thunderstorm, so the dragon circled around the Buddha and spread the cover of the Buddha's head to prevent the rain. After the rain stopped, the dragon uncoiled and transformed into a young man standing in front of Buddha (Meesangrutarakul, W. 2019). However, the King of Nagas, according to the beliefs of the Isaan people, have been characterized as a big snake with a crest, and it has influence and power to be recognized in the form of a human being. It is a belief that is a combination of folk religions between Brahmanism and Buddhism (Meesangrutarakul, W. 2019). Nowadays, it is popular to be revered as a sacred object that can ask for blessings and give good fortune, such as the belief in the serpent in the sacred area of Kham Chanot, where tourists are popular to ask for blessings and try their luck, causing the creation of cultural objects that respond to various forms of speculation, which directly affects the community's economy (Weerasilp, W. 2021). In addition, a large Naga symbol has been created in the area where there are stories or legends about the dragon, such as Phaya Si Sattanakarat in Nakhon Phanom Province, Phaya Sri Bhuchong Mukdanakarat and Phaya Sri Mukda Mahamuni Nilpal Nakarat in Mukdahan Province. Natural tourist attractions. Cultural beliefs and popularity among tourists have led to economic circulation. This leads to the question of how the belief in the serpent is constructed so that it can become a cultural commodity that leads to the economic allocation of the Northeast region (Ekprasert, M., 2020).

Research Objectives

1. Investigate how symbols and signs related to Nagas are culturally constructed and interpreted within Thai society. This includes understanding how these symbols influence beliefs, behaviors, and societal norms.
2. Explore how these symbols influence beliefs, behaviors, and societal norms.
3. Interpret meaning to the King of Nagas in their religious rituals and daily lives
4. Analyze the influence beliefs, behaviors, and societal norms.



Literature Review and Concepts

This chapter reviews belief in the Naga or Nagaraj, Naga in Buddhism, and theories about the Naga. The King of Nagas, a prominent deity in Southeast Asian Buddhist traditions, holds a significant place in Thai cultural and religious practices. This literature review synthesizes research on the King of Nagas, focusing on its roles, symbolic meanings, and cultural impact within Thai Buddhism. The review highlights key themes, such as the Naga's protective role, its symbolic representations, and its influence on contemporary practices and beliefs. However, this chapter focuses on the following lists: 1) The King of Nagas in Thai Buddhism, 2) The Significance of Nagas in Thai Buddhist Tradition, 3) Semiotics Perspective on the Symbolism of Nagas, 4) The King of Nagas and Thai Buddhist Community Dynamics, and 5) Related studies.



Figure 2 the Naga or Nagaraj, Naga in Buddhism



The Naga is considered sacred in Thailand. The belief in the Naga or Nagaraj appears in India, Thailand, and in general in the land of Southeast Asia, which is related to the religions of Brahmanism-Hinduism and Buddhism. The belief about Naga comes from Brahman-Hindu. Nagas, according to Brahman-Hindu beliefs, are demigods. It has magical powers. The appearance of the Naga is a half-human, half-serpent, half-Naga, or is it a total Naga characteristic. Nagas live in the underworld, which is full of gems, gold, and other worldly treasures. In Hindu mythology, the Naga, which sits around Shiva's body, has become a rope for stirring the water in the retired ocean. Vishnu was originally depicted as covered with a serpent or reclining on a serpent, but this iconography also appears in other deities, such as Ganesha, who is depicted as a serpent in various forms, either as a garland around his neck, as a sacred thread, as a serpent around his body, or as a throne for him to sit on. Shiva is also often depicted with a serpent in a garland-like form. Naga in Buddhism appears in the form of large snakes. Some have the magical power to transform into human form.

It is believed that Naga lives in the underworld, like some deities, and in various parts of the human world. Some live in water, such as streams, rivers, seas, oceans, and some live on land, such as in caves. Nagas are followers of Lord Virupaksha, one of the guardians of the West. Naga acts as guardians on Mount Sumeru Mountain to protect the Daowadungsa heaven from demons. The best known Naga in Buddhism is the Mucalinda Naga, which appears in the Mucalinda Sutta. During the Buddha's bliss of liberation, a severe thunderstorm occurred. Mucalinda coiled around the Buddha and spread his hood over his head to protect him from the rain. After the rain stopped, Mucalinda uncoiled himself and transformed into a young man standing before the Buddha with his hands clasped in respect in front of Buddha's face. Naga beliefs have a profound impact on Buddhist practices in Thailand. For instance, the reverence for Nagas extends to the concept of "merit-making," where acts of generosity and devotion towards these beings are believed to accrue positive karma. This belief motivates devotees to participate in rituals and ceremonies dedicated to Nagas, hoping to gain their favor and blessings. Furthermore, Naga beliefs influence the way Thai Buddhists perceive the natural world. The association of Nagas with water and fertility instills a sense of respect and reverence for these elements, encouraging sustainable practices and environmental conservation. This belief highlights the interconnectedness between human beings and the natural world, reflecting a core principle of Buddhist philosophy. (Chanchao, P.,2021, Weerapong, K.,2022 & Nuntapong, S.,2023).

Research Methodology

Designing research on Symbolism and Influence: The King of Nagas in Contemporary Thai Buddhist Practice involves several key considerations. Here's a structured approach to the research design. This research focused on understanding meanings and interpretations of symbols, thus the qualitative approach was the main focus. Designing research on Symbolism and Influence: The King of Nagas in Contemporary Thai Buddhist Practice involved several key considerations. Here's a structured approach to the research design: Formulate a clear research question that focuses on understanding how the King of Nagas influences Buddhist behavior in contemporary Thai society through semiotics. For example,

What are signs and symbols of Nagas constructed and interpreted within Thai society?

What are the different symbolic representations of the King of Nagas in Thai Buddhist temples and artwork?

How does the symbolism of the King of Nagas influence rituals and practices in Thai Buddhist communities in the 21st century?



How do Thai Buddhists interpret and attribute meaning to the King of Nagas in their religious rituals and daily lives?

The research design consisted of 4 methods as follows:

Qualitative Approach: Focuses on understanding meanings and interpretations of symbols.

Semiotic Analysis: Examines signs, symbols, and their cultural significance.

Descriptive: Describes the relationship between Naga symbolism and Buddhist behavior.

Exploratory: Explores how Naga symbolism is understood and practiced in contemporary Thai Buddhism.

Population consisted of 100 people who were monks, administrative agencies, village sages, and participating citizens who had knowledge or experience related to Naga symbolism and its cultural implications. The population in this study refers to the entire group of interest from which data will be collected and analyzed. By carefully defining the population and employing suitable sampling methods, researchers can gather meaningful insights into how the King of Nagas influences Buddhist behavior in contemporary Thai society, contributing to both academic knowledge and cultural understanding.

The sample is a subset of the population that is selected to participate in the study. Given the diversity and complexity of Thai Buddhist society, sampling methods need careful consideration to ensure representation and validity of findings. Samples consisted of 50 people who were 5 monks, 10 administrative agencies, 15 village scholars, and 20 participating citizens who had knowledge or experience related to Naga symbolism and its cultural implications selected by the purposive sampling random by selecting participants who are deemed to be knowledgeable or influential in matters related to the King of Nagas and Buddhist practices.

Research Discussion

The researcher constructed the dissertation tools to analyse the influence of the King of Nagas on Buddhist behavior in Thai society in the 21st century from a semiotic perspective as follows:

1. Study concepts, documents, theories, and research related to the King of Nagas on Buddhist behavior in Thai society.
2. Interview 5 Buddhist monks, 10 administrative agencies, 15 village scholars of Thai Buddhism, and 20 Lay Buddhists who are related to the King of Nagas.
3. Set up a focus group of 8 by inviting 8 village scholars who have experience about the King of Nagas in order to discuss the symbols, signs, and meanings associated with the King of Nagas.
4. Analyze the data with the analytic induction and the content analysis.

There were two types of data collection procedures. They were

Primary Data Collection

- **Interviews:** Conduct semi-structured interviews with:
 - 5 Buddhist monks
 - 10 administrative agencies
 - 15 village scholars of Thai Buddhism
 - 20 Lay Buddhists

Interviews: Conduct semi-structured interviews with 5 monks, 10 administrative agencies, 15 village scholars of Thai Buddhism, and 20 participating citizens who had knowledge or experience related to Naga symbolism and its cultural implications.



There are ten interview questions designed to explore the influence of the King of Nagas on Buddhist behavior in Thai society in the 21st century. These questions aim to capture a comprehensive understanding of how the King of Nagas influences Buddhist practices and beliefs in modern Thai society, incorporating both cultural and semiotic perspectives.

The influence of the King of Nagas (often depicted as Naga, a mythical serpent) on Buddhist behavior in Thai society in the 21st century can be analyzed through a semiotics perspective, which focuses on the study of signs and symbols and their interpretation. In Thai Buddhism, the Naga holds significant symbolic meaning, and understanding its influence requires examining both traditional beliefs and contemporary contexts. This chapter would like to answer the following questions.

1. What are signs and symbols of Nagas constructed and interpreted within Thai society?
2. What are the different symbolic representations of the King of Nagas in Thai Buddhist temples and artwork?
3. How does the symbolism of the King of Nagas influence Buddhist behavior and cultural practices in 21st-century Thai society?
4. How do Thai Buddhists interpret and attribute meaning to the King of Nagas in their religious rituals and daily lives?

Moreover, the researcher would like to answer the following research objectives as well.

1. Investigate how symbols and signs related to Nagas are culturally constructed and interpreted within Thai society. This includes understanding how these symbols influence beliefs, behaviors, and societal norms.
2. Explore how these symbols influence beliefs, behaviors, and societal norms.
3. Interpret meaning to the King of Nagas in their religious rituals and daily Lives.
4. Analyze the influence beliefs, behaviors, and societal norms.

Research Results

Research Question 1

What are signs and symbols of Nagas constructed and interpreted within Thai society?

In Thai society, Nagas (also known as Nāgas) hold significant cultural and religious symbolism. Here are some signs and symbols associated with Nagas in Thailand as follows:

1. Architectural Elements: Nagas are commonly depicted as serpentine creatures with multiple heads. In Thai architecture, they are often seen as decorative elements on temple roofs, staircases, and bridges. These representations symbolize protection and guardianship.

2. Royal and Religious Significance: Nagas are closely associated with royalty and Buddhism in Thailand. They are believed to protect important religious sites and are often depicted in temples and palaces. For example, the Emerald Buddha temple (Wat Phra Kaew) in Bangkok features numerous Naga sculptures.

3. Waterways and Water Protection: In Thai folklore, Nagas are guardians of rivers, lakes, and other bodies of water. They are believed to control the water and protect people from floods and other water-related disasters. Statues of Nagas are sometimes placed near water sources as a form of reverence and protection.

4. Cultural Festivals: During important festivals such as Songkran (Thai New Year), Nagas may be prominently featured in decorations and processions. They symbolize auspiciousness and prosperity for the coming year.

5. Religious Symbolism: In Buddhist mythology, Nagas are believed to live in a heavenly realm or under the earth. They are respected for their supernatural powers and are often depicted as beings that can change shape and size.



6.Modern Interpretations: In contemporary Thailand, Nagas continue to be revered symbols of protection and prosperity. They are sometimes seen in commercial and artistic contexts as well, reflecting their enduring significance in Thai culture.

Overall, Nagas in Thai society embody a rich blend of religious belief, cultural tradition, and architectural ornamentation, making them an integral part of the country's cultural heritage.

Symbols of Nagas in Thai Buddhists are constructed and interpreted within Thai society as follows:

In Thai Buddhism, Nagas (Nāgas) hold deep symbolism that reflects both spiritual and cultural significance. Here are some key symbols associated with Nagas in the context of Thai Buddhism:



Figure 3 Symbols of Nagas in Thai Buddhists
Source:Anan, 2020.

1. **Protection:** Nagas are considered guardians, particularly of Buddhist temples and sacred sites. They are believed to offer protection against malevolent forces and disasters, especially those related to water.
2. **Water and Agriculture:** Nagas are closely associated with water, which is essential for agriculture and livelihoods in Thailand. They are revered for their role in ensuring water availability and fertility of the land.
3. **Karma and Merit:** According to Buddhist teachings, Nagas are beings who can accumulate karma just like humans. Supporting or offending Nagas is believed to have consequences, influencing the well-being and fortunes of individuals and communities.
4. **Respect and Offerings:** Thai Buddhists often make offerings to Nagas to seek their favor and blessings. This includes rituals and ceremonies held near water bodies or in temples where Nagas are depicted or believed to reside.
5. **Buddhist Cosmology:** In Buddhist cosmology, Nagas inhabit a realm known as Nāgaloka. They are supernatural beings with powers and characteristics that can vary, but they are generally regarded as benevolent protectors when treated with respect.



6. **Cultural Integration:** Thai culture integrates the reverence for Nagas into everyday life, such as through art, architecture (e.g., Naga sculptures on temple roofs), and festivals where Nagas are prominently featured.
7. **Mythological Representations:** Nagas are often depicted with multiple heads or as serpentine beings. These representations symbolize their mystical and powerful nature in Thai Buddhist mythology.

Research Question 2

What are the different symbolic representations of the King of Nagas in Thai Buddhist temples and artwork?

In Thai society, the King of Nagas (Naga) is considered a mythological creature rather than a real, tangible entity. Nagas are serpent-like beings that hold significant cultural and religious symbolism in various Asian traditions, including Thai Buddhism. They are believed to inhabit bodies of water such as rivers, lakes, and seas, and are often associated with water-related blessings, fertility, and protection. While Nagas are not considered real in a literal sense, their presence in Thai society is deeply rooted in mythology, folklore, and religious beliefs. They serve as powerful symbolic representations within Thai Buddhist cosmology, often depicted in art, architecture (such as temple decorations), and rituals. The belief in Nagas underscores the spiritual and cultural richness of Thai society, where mythological narratives play a crucial role in shaping collective identity and values. The King of Nagas, a prominent figure in Thai Buddhism, holds a multifaceted role that has evolved significantly in recent years. The role of the King of Nagas in contemporary Thai Buddhist practice encompasses protection, inspiration, and cultural integration. Over recent years, its symbolism has adapted to modern contexts, merging with contemporary media, addressing current issues, and reflecting changes in societal values and urbanization. The King of Nagas from a semiotic perspective represents a rich and multifaceted symbol that communicates cultural, religious, and social meanings within Thai society. Understanding its semiotic dimensions helps illuminate its role in shaping beliefs, behaviors, and collective identities over time.

Research Question 3

How does the symbolism of the King of Nagas influence Buddhist behavior and cultural practices in 21st-century Thai society?

The Symbolic Representations of the King of Nagas influence Buddhist behavior and cultural practices in 21st-century Thai society are as follows:

The King of Nagas, a revered figure in Thai Buddhism, is richly represented in temples and artwork throughout Thailand. This serpent-like deity, with its mythological and semiotic significance, manifests in diverse forms that reflect its importance in religious, cultural, and artistic contexts. This essay explores three primary symbolic representations of the King of Nagas in Thai Buddhist temples and artwork: as protective guardians, in decorative elements, and in mythological storytelling. The King of Nagas holds a multifaceted and significant role in Thai Buddhist temples and artwork. As a protective guardian, decorative element, and mythological figure, the Naga's symbolic representations are deeply embedded in the architectural, artistic, and cultural fabric of Thai Buddhism. From guarding temple entrances to enriching religious narratives through murals and sculptures, the Naga's presence serves to enhance the spiritual experience of devotees while reflecting the rich interplay of religious symbolism and cultural identity in Thai society. These representations not only honor the Naga's traditional roles but also adapt to contemporary contexts, demonstrating the enduring relevance of this revered deity in modern Thai Buddhism.



Research Question 4

How do Thai Buddhists interpret and attribute meaning to the King of Nagas in their religious rituals and daily lives?

It's important to note that beliefs in the influence of Nagas on wealth and prosperity are rooted in cultural and religious traditions and vary among different regions and communities within Thailand. While these beliefs may not have empirical evidence, they play a significant role in shaping cultural identity and practices associated with prosperity and well-being. Nagas in Buddhism appear in the form of large snakes, some of which have magical powers that can transform into human form. It is believed that Naga lives in the ground. Some of them live in water, such as streams, rivers, seas, and oceans. Some live on land, such as in caves. The Naga in Buddhism is known as the Mujlint Naga, which appears in the Mujlindha Sutra that during the Buddha's Vimuttisu time. There was a severe thunderstorm, so the Naga circled around the Buddha and spread the cover of the Buddha's head to prevent the rain. After the rain stopped, the Naga uncoiled and transformed into a young man standing in front of the Buddha with his hands folded in salute. The character of the Naga can be collected in 9 ways: 1) It has a crest, 2) It has scales, 3) It has a tail, 4) It has a long body, 5) It looks like a big snake, 6) It looks like a demigod, 7) It looks like a god, 8) It looks like an oppatika, and 9) It can change its shape (Wichian, 2012). From the above information, it can be concluded that the belief about the Naga has influenced Thailand in various aspects, but the ones that can be clearly grouped as follows: 1) Arts, 2) Traditions and Festivals, and 3) Lifestyle.

Semiotics Perspective on the Symbolism of Nagas

Contribute to academic scholarship in semiotics, cultural anthropology, and religious studies. From a semiotic perspective, the Nagas represent a complex web of symbols and meanings. Their serpentine form, associated with both danger and fertility, carries a dualistic nature, embodying both the primal forces of nature and the potential for spiritual growth. The Nagas' ability to transform between human and Naga forms highlights the transformative nature of Buddhist practice, emphasizing the constant potential for change and evolution. The jewels and adornments often depicted on Nagas symbolize wealth, prosperity, and the attainment of enlightenment. They represent the ultimate goal of Buddhist practice, the liberation from suffering and the realization of one's true nature. This phenomenon from the perspective of tourism has a positive effect on the community's economy, spreading the economies of the region and the country, and is also in line with the 20-year national strategy on tourism that promotes tourism marketing by presenting the uniqueness of Thailand and each locality to be understood on the world stage through the creative and innovative media. The Naga symbolizes protection, fertility, and cultural continuity within Thai Buddhism. Its presence in religious art, rituals, and public spaces reinforces spiritual beliefs and communal bonds. In the modern era, the Naga's symbolism has adapted to urban settings and commercial ventures while maintaining its spiritual essence. This adaptation reflects its enduring relevance and adaptability to changing societal dynamics.

Conclusion

Nagas in Thai Buddhism represent a blend of religious belief, cultural heritage, and ecological reverence, embodying the interconnectedness between spiritual traditions and the natural world. Their symbolism underscores themes of protection, prosperity, and the cycle of karma, deeply influencing Thai religious practices and cultural expressions. The signs and symbols of Nagas in Thai society encompass a rich tapestry of cultural, religious, and



mythological meanings that underscore their enduring significance and reverence. Belief is the holding that something is true even if it can be proven or not because each human being has some beliefs in common, and there are beliefs in some things that are not the same. For example, the story of the Naga is still a controversial issue in society about its existence. However, what cannot be denied is that the belief in the Naga has been with Thai society for a long time, especially the people of the Mekong Basin, who follow Buddhism as their main religion and there is a worship of the Naga like the worship of the local religion causing the belief about the Naga to be in Thailand in terms of art, tradition and festivals, and lifestyle.

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