

Femininity in Lanna Architecture : An Interpretative Essay

ความเป็นหญิงในสถาปัตยกรรมล้านนา : ความเรียงการสื่อความหมาย*

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Abstract

Gender, one of the key postmodern concepts, refers to unequal power relations between women and men, and its essence in femininity and masculinity, which is embedded in an everyday life but tends to be socially taken for granted especially femininity. All man-made creations including architecture have gender orientation. This dissertation is an interpretative essay which aims to understand femininity in Thai and Lanna contexts and to explore it within the process of social construction through Lanna architecture and space. Three case studies of the northern region with outstandingly feminine evidences of the manifestation of femininity have been selected: Baan Nong Doo-Bo Kaw, Wat Koo Kood and the Phra Nang Chama Thevi monument. They are mainly approached through documentation, on site observation and in-depth interview to assess their significance and value in the first step. Discourse analysis and semiology concept have been adopted to explore how femininity has been constructed through Lanna architecture and space in the final step. The dissertation reveals that femininity has been represented as mother/wife, benefactress and heroine, which link three kinds of building: a house, a temple and a monument through socio-cultural, spiritual and political space. Femininity through Lanna architecture has been displayed in a stereotyped way : women are ignorant, inferior and ambiguity-laden. This does not differed from the display of women through other cultural materials. However, there is need for an alternative concept to redefine femininity's place in valued cultural assets.

บทคัดย่อ

เพศสภาพ หนึ่งในแนวคิดหลักของทฤษฎีหลังสมัยใหม่ ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับความสัมพันธ์เชิงอำนาจที่ไม่เท่าเทียมกันระหว่างหญิงและชายและสาระสำคัญของความเป็นหญิง ความเป็นชาย ซึ่งแฝงฝังอยู่ในชีวิตประจำวันแต่กลับถูกมองข้ามโดยเฉพาะความเป็นหญิง ทั้งที่ในความเป็นจริงแล้ว สิ่งที่มีมนุษย์สร้างขึ้นล้วนแต่มีมุมมองด้านเพศทั้งสิ้นรวมทั้งสถาปัตยกรรม วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้เป็นความเรียงการสื่อความหมายที่มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาความเป็นหญิงในสังคมไทยและล้านนา รวมถึงค้นหาความเป็นหญิงและกระบวนการประกอบสร้างทางสังคมผ่าน

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สถาปัตยกรรมล้านนาและพื้นที่ โดยคัดเลือกสถาปัตยกรรมล้านนาที่มีความเป็นหญิงโดดเด่นเป็นตัวอย่างในการศึกษา 3 แห่งคือ บ้านหนองดู่-บ่อคำว วัดกู่กุดและอนุสาวรีย์พระนางจามเทวี และใช้การรวบรวมเอกสารการสังเกตการณ์ในพื้นที่รวมถึงการสัมภาษณ์เป็นวิธีการหลักในการศึกษาเพื่อประเมินความสำคัญและคุณค่าของสถาปัตยกรรมและพื้นที่ในขั้นตอนแรก ขั้นตอนต่อมาเน้นการวิเคราะห์ว่าทฤษฎีและทฤษฎีสัญศาสตร์เพื่อค้นหากระบวนการประกอบสร้างความเป็นหญิงในพื้นที่และสถาปัตยกรรมล้านนา ผลการศึกษาพบว่าความเป็นหญิงถูกนำเสนอในฐานะมารดา/ภรรยา อุบาสิกาและวีรสตรี ซึ่งเชื่อมโยงกับบ้าน วัดและอนุสาวรีย์ผ่านพื้นที่ทางสังคม-วัฒนธรรม ศาสนาและการเมือง ความเป็นหญิงในสถาปัตยกรรมล้านนาจึงยังคงเป็นภาพเหมารวมที่เต็มไปด้วยความเพิกเฉย ความอ่อนด้อยและความกำกวม ซึ่งไม่แตกต่างจากความเป็นหญิงที่พบในหลักฐานทางวัฒนธรรมประเภทอื่น อย่างไรก็ตามสตรีนิยมสายวัฒนธรรมเป็นแนวคิดหนึ่งที่นิยามความเป็นหญิงใหม่ว่าเป็นทรัพย์สินที่มีค่าทางวัฒนธรรม

Introduction

Gender, one of the key postmodern concepts, refers to unequal power relations between women and men which are socially characterized by sex, a manifestation of the biological body (Groz, 1990). These inherent differences have not been the cause of gender inequity but their socialization has been internalized through social institutions, family, school, temple and been reproduced through media and the process of globalization to affirm their expected roles. For instance the image of women in soap opera is stereotyped as the evil women, the great sacrifice and the tame house wife who is mainly responsible for domestic work and her husband's wellbeing (Modleski, 1979: 14).

However, this is the western concept supported by the feminist movement in the late 19th century to raise the notion of equity in every aspect of life. The struggle in Asia was not quite as severe as it might have been due to the matriarchal structure of society. According to historical evidence, the South East Asian region is believed to have had a matrilineal culture occupying this area dating back to some 5,000 years ago. A tomb and a cave painting were physical evidence, firmly proving that a woman was a leader and a governor of primitive society (Wongthet, S., 2004). Evidences to prove that the woman's status was praised in Thailand reflected through Thai words mostly starting "Mae" (mother) such as "Mae Nam" (a river), "Mae Thor Ranee" (the goddess of earth), "Mae Pho Sop" (the goddess of rice) etc. (Santasombat, 1991), especially unique in Lanna customs.

Lanna custom give particular precedence to the matrilineal aspects and Lanna social structure was mainly controlled by women since the ancestral spirits (*phi poo ya ta yai*) will always be connected with the female line, especially the eldest woman (Pakdeekul, 2009: 42). This led women to receive great respect in Lanna society, particularly in the regular ceremony for the holy spirits, while men were only the women's family asset since they moved into

the bride's house as immigrant labor (Wichienkhiew and Chanhom, 1985a: 65-66) . This social position of Lanna women was such that they were esteemed as the inheritors (Charoenmuang, 2004: 62).

Local legend also affirmed that Lanna was a matriarchal society, as in the narrative concerning the first ruler who was a female called "Phra Nang Chama Thevi" and who established the traditional Kingdom of Hariphunchai in the 12th century (Woraurai, 1982). Lanna history also portrayed the significance of Lanna women's role (Chotisukharat, 2010). History of Queen Maha Thewi Chira Prapha (Ongsakul, 1998: 56) and Queen Wisuttha Thewi were described as the royal lineage and their direct descendents were to rule the Lanna Kingdom (Ongsakul, 2006). However, the role of the Lanna female was depreciated when Brahmanism and Chinese beliefs were spread and became influential over this Kingdom. Patriarchy replaced the old culture and became the major concept reshaping Lanna culture and women's identity (Charoenmuang, 2004: 63). Lanna women became the royal tribute (Huabcharoen, 2008). However, this change has rather impacted women in elite class than the lower one.

Literature is not the only evidence of gender inequity as it also has been found in space (Kaewthep, 2001: 63) including architecture, which can reflect and broaden socio-cultural beliefs in at least two perspectives :

1. As an object (Tangnamo, 2006), a fundamental tool inspired by human memory from the past to the present, inextricably reflecting social beliefs and identity. It is unavoidably associated with place, irresistibly represented in social discourse, myth and subjectivity but it hides other aspects of existence, particularly gender
2. As knowledge and science which men could previously access and occupy while women were merely the followers because of their bodies linking with natural inferiority in an essentialist concept (Hughes, 2000: 13)

Thus, comprehensive research is crucial to display how efficiently a gender point of view and semiotics theory can decode and expose gender myths repetitively reproduced through architecture and place in Lanna culture. In addition, this research would read architecture as visual culture especially focusing on femininity associated with place.

Objectives

1. To understand femininity in Thai and Lanna contexts.
2. To explore femininity through Lanna architecture and space.
3. To understand how femininity is constructed through Lanna architecture and space.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework is derived from the assumption that an architecture is to be considered as visual culture which is a certain repository of myths and social beliefs including those of gender. However, gender is taken for granted and it is therefore problematic to see the relationship between gender and architecture, especially femininity. Semiological theory is applied to read architecture, forms, designs, symbols and space as non-verbal language with connotative meanings. To ground those assumptions, in depth interviews of Lanna experts could partially clarify myths of gender and social beliefs embedded in architecture.

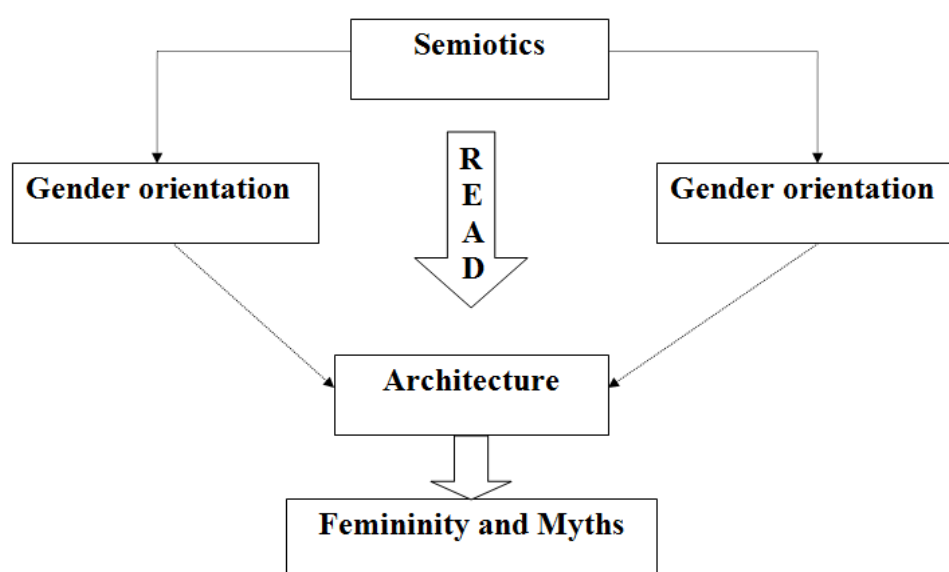


Figure 1 : The conceptual framework

Case Study Selection

Before selecting a site whereby to interrogate an architecture expressing ideas of femininity, a number of criteria should be set. We seek:

- an architecture located in the northern region of Thailand.
- an architecture partially or fully concerned with the Lanna female in a historical or socio-cultural context.
- an architecture that has a particular function.
- an architecture that is still utilised and functioning during the study.
- an architecture where one is permitted to observe and conduct the research.

The cases studies have chosen are as follows:

- a. The temple : Wat Cham Thevi, Lamphun
- b. The monument : Monument of Phra Nang Chama Thevi, Nong DoK Public Park, Lamphun
- c. The house : a vernacular house at Baan Nong Doo-Bo Kaw

Data analysis

Collected primary and secondary data would be firstly analyzed from a gender point of view to see how questions of femininity might be manifested. Gender study would focus on inequity and bias Analysis would then focus on how architecture might be reflecting femininity through symbols, space and beliefs. The connotative functions would then be applied to decode those hidden gender issues and meanings behind the more apparent symptoms. Finally, discourse analysis would critique and strengthen those data to clarify why an architecture might be reflecting femininity in that way, and what kind of knowledge or beliefs support this reflection, for instance.

Femininity in paradigm shift

1. Western view in Ancient Time

Female sculptures usually referred to as “Venus” were a form of memory, proving a predominantly matriarchal society in the primitive cultures. Many theorists argued that this figure was probably created by women displaying their representations as an educational tool for body learning, to teach about physical changes: maturation, menstruation, copulation, birth and lactation in their lives (Ogborn, 2003, online).

a. The Greeks: great inspiration of femininity

Greek women were uneducated except for domestic training. Their role was importantly associated with motherhood and as wives which was reflected through Greek mythology (Blundell, 1995; 25-46) but there was an exceptional case at Sparta which provided military training for women (Paul, 2002: 91).

b. Glorified women in Egypt

Egyptian women had better status when compared to other civilizations. They could own property, borrow money, sign contracts, initiate divorce, go to a court to defend their rights or as a witness and even could be a Pharaoh in particular circumstances. (Thompson, 2010: online).

2. Femininity in Eastern Ancient Time

The belief of matriarchy in primitive society concepts has also been recorded in Asia, where traces are found in a later period (Tan, 1993: 12). There was a tomb and a cave painting depicting a female leader with a musical instrument, to conduct the community rites in a primitive society. These figures could reveal the belief of matriarchal society and gender equality existing in ancient times. (Wongthes, S.,2004: 58).

a. Women : Second class citizens in China

Chinese women were neither allowed to own personal property nor be admitted to school. Their main duty was as a wife who had to have a son to continue the family line. If she was unable to perform that expected task, the husband could have other women (Tan, 1993: 13-15). However, there were many women with talent and competence in various fields like medicine, law, politics, poet, music etc. (Zhuozhi, 1997) but they were not mentioned in Chinese history.

b. Degrading women's value in Brahmanism tradition

Hindu belief was underlined by different biological concepts. Men were seen to exhibit the hard substances and structuring elements (culture) while women had the soft ones and the unstructured parts of a child (nature). Women then were automatically more 'nature' than men. Nature, the uncultured power, was as dangerous as femininity. Moreover, the woman can control her sexuality and fertility which men would like to have but it was totally impossible. Due to fear of women and their particular power, Hindu men then needed to control women at all stages of their lives as subordinated to husbands and sons. Those ideas inform the main Hindu perceptions about women thereafter (Doranne and Wadley, 1977: 115-125).

c. Discrimination based on gender bias in Buddhism

Women in the Buddha's lifetime were able to be ordained and have spiritual potential to attain enlightenment like men (Kabilsingh, 1998: 11-14). However, after the Buddha's nirvana, the women in Buddhism faced injustice related to gender which was significantly written in the *Tripitaka* with delusion, unclear concepts and interpretations in all its concepts and practices (Kulavir, 2009: 69) due to a big gap after the Buddha's nirvana leading to confusion of the *Tripitaka* and subjectivity with gender bias under Indian traditional pressure (Kabilsingh, 1998: 19-21). The status of women in Buddhism was gradually dishonored and disappeared from Indian perceptions.

3. Femininity in Thailand

The upper class and the intellectuals had the authority to formulate an understanding of ‘Thainess’ based on a centrality concept (Saraya, 1986: 1-2) which was linked to Sukhothai, Ayuthaya and Rattanakosin as the ideological centers of the political state and leadership institution and of a national Thai consciousness (Nuchpiem, 2009: 14-15). Femininity in ‘Thai historiography’ is the story of the idealized female and has been represented through the image of the benefactress (*Nang Nopphamat*) and heroines (*Somdet Phra Sri Suriyothai*, *Thaw Thep Kasattri*, *Thaw Srisunthorn* and *Thaw Suranaree*) (Sopha, 1999). Also, the exceptional woman regent, Queen Saowabha was advance as emblematic of the Siamese civilization in the reign of King Rama V (Barmé, 2002: 19-23) while woman’s rights in term of gender equality was the policy of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram (Khamphiban, 1987: 206-207).

However, there are female stories in each region through local legends with the representations of the wife with loyalty towards her husband in *Pha Daeng Nang Ai* (north eastern) (Srisamit, 1998: 62-69), benefactress in *Phra Nang Leud Khaw* (south) and wealthy heroines in the north in the legends of *Phra Nang Malika*, *Phra Nang Jamaree* and *Phra Nang Chama Thevi* (Watthanamahad, 2010: 82-107).

4. Unchanging and repetitive reproduction of northern female femininity

Lanna women had been formally recognized and acknowledged in Thai history in the reign of King Chai Raja of the Ayutthaya era as ‘the woman of Chiang Mai’, as Queen *Maha Thewi Chira Prapha* had switched to the Burmese side (Chotisukharat, 2010: 58). Lanna women became a royal tribute to Siam in the beginning of the Rattanakosin era and this was remarkably demonstrated in the age of King Chulalongkorn who politically married Princess Dararatsamee (Ongsakul, 2006). Siamese gradually perceived that Lanna women were modest but lazy with bun hair and particular costumes, totally differing from Siamese styles (Mepholkit, 2008: 119), and this caused the Siamese to insultingly dub Lanna women as “Lao”, referring to barbarian and non-civilized aspects (Booranakhet, 2009: 77). Lanna femininity had been expanded upon and more widely published through the play *Saw Krue Fa*, as a woman with idealistically natural beauty based on ethnicity, straightforwardness and naïveté (Nanthanawanitch & Suwatthanawanitch, 2010) thence to become sexual objects to be explored by tourism (Photjanalawan, 2010: 144-145).

However, those aspects have contradicted the local beliefs since as a daughter, the Lanna women has rights to choose her partner (Noiunsaen, 2000: 115-116) and to inherit her parents’ wealth (Khamchan, 2005: 41-45). As a wife, the Lanna woman has rights to a two-

third share of assets including other properties in the case of divorce or on the husband's death due to the status of women as “*Mae Jao Reun*” (the house owner) (Na Nakorn, 1978: 14-15).

Femininity has been repetitively reproduced as a mother or a wife, a benefactress and a heroine through narratives, histories, local legends and novels. Of course, these myths would inevitably be reflected through architecture as cultural invention, as in the following figure.

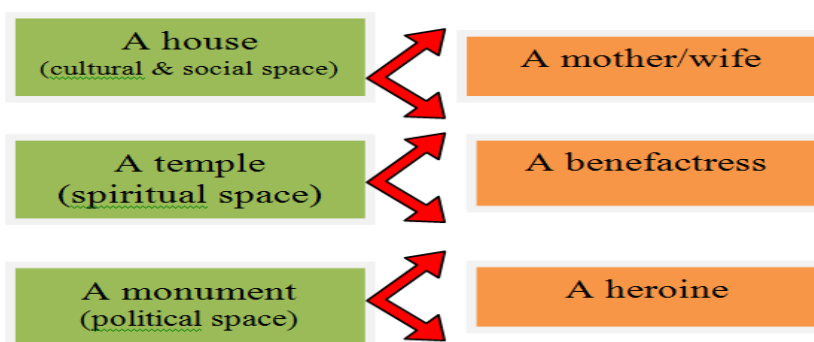


Figure 2 : Femininity through architecture in various spaces

Lamphun historical background

Lamphun has had a long period of settlement which can be categorized into five periods (Ongsakul, 2000) as follows.

1. Prehistoric time, dating back around 3,000 years at Baan Wang Hi, with the evidence of human settlement in the Bronze Age. Lawa and Mon were main ethnic groups of animists in a primitive community which was a fundamental state to be developed into the Hariphunchai kingdom in the following period (Ongsakul, 2000: 13-29).

2. Historical era (13th-19th century BE). The Hariphunchai kingdom had been established by a hermit and the powerful queen, *Phra Nang Chama Thevi*, who had ruled and first established Buddhism in the Kingdom, and this made Hariphunchai become the regional center of Buddhism for eight hundred years (Ongsakul, 2000: 42-49).

3. Lanna influence (19th-24th century BE). The Hariphunchai kingdom was conquered by King Mang Rai, to become a tributary state of the Lanna kingdom and was gradually devalued (Sukhata Jai-in, 2006: 28). Lamphun was deserted and was then abandoned after the domination of the Burmese (Thanasin, 2006: 39-41).

4. Recovery period (24th-25th century BE). Due to the long abandonment, there was no population to restore Lamphun and Chiang Mai. Phaya Kawila had gathered various ethnic groups with great socio-cultural influence on Lamphun since that time (Thanasin, 2006: 41-45).

5. Reformation era. Lamphun became “Monthon” after the political reformation in the reign of King Rama V, then a province of Siam after the 1932 revolution and was officially called “Lamphun” until the present. (Committee of Document and Archive, 2001: 57-60).

Outstanding aspects of Femininity in Lamphun

Lamphun presents a unique understanding and identity of femininity which is so clearly outstanding that can be seen through the Phra Nang Chama Thevi legend in the form of intangible and tangible evidence as follows.

1. Intangible evidence

1.1 The provincial motto refers to Phra Nang Chama Thevi, the outstanding first woman ruler who had an important role as the founder of the Hariphunchai kingdom.

1.2 Musical theatre has underlined Phra Nang Chama Thevi's significance as the Buddhism founder in the Hariphunchai kingdom.

1.3 A television series had interpreted Phra Nang Chama Thevi as the patriot who protected her kingdom from its opponents' invasion.

1.4 A film had presented Phra Nang Chama Thevi as the leader of the Hariphunchai army defeating Lawa troops by her archery.

1.5 A popular song aimed to esteem Phra Nang Chama Thevi's prestige with the role of benefactress and the faithful laywoman.

2. tangible evidence

2.1 Temples and sacred places (Sukhata Jai-In, 2006; 26).

2.1.1 Wat Chama Thevi or Wat Koo Kud was the place where Phra Nang Chama Thevi practiced dharma during her final years of life until her death.

2.1.2 Wat Maha Wan was founded in the Phra Nang Chama Thevi era and to which she brought a unique Buddha image from Lawo called “Phra Rod”

2.1.3 Wat Phra Kong Rue Si, displays images of four hermits who has important roles to found Lamphun in each angle of its stupa.

2.1.4 Koo Chang Koo Maa, the stupa of the elephant and horse, who were believed to have had a powerful and magical force to support Phra Nang Chama Thevi's army.

2.2 Monument

2.2.1 The monument of Phra Nang Chama Thevi was built to commemorate her significance as the first ruler of Harinphunchai kingdom with high competency, righteousness and bravery (Sukhata Jai-In, 2006: 31).

2.3 Everyday buildings and infrastructure

2.3.1 Pra Too Tha Nang (Tha Nang Gate), the main port for Phra Nang Chama Thevi traveling by river transportation, was registered by the Fine Arts Department as a national archaeological site in 1935 (Khamboonreung, 2011, online)

2.3.2 Pra Too Chang See, the city gate on the northern side of Lamphun concerns the elephant of Phra Nang Chama Thevi's son which partially grazed the gate and this action gave the name to the city gate (Khamboonreung, 2010, online).

2.3.3 The road leading to Chama Thevi community is called "Chama Thevi" and is surrounded by places linking to Phra Nang Chama Thevi's life.

Reflection of Femininity in Everyday Buildings : Baan Nong Doo-Bo Kaw

The house is universally considered as the private space and normally occupied by women (Kaewthep, 2001). The analysis of Baan Nong Doo-Bo Kaw would comprise five elements: bedroom, tern, kitchen, terrace and walkway, displaying and affirming that femininity has been naturally embedded in the house.

Hence, the division of basic elements in the vernacular house is based on the functional purpose and those characteristics can also reflect gender. Those areas can be categorized into three types of space : closed space (bedroom), semi-open space (tern and kitchen) and open space (terrace and common area).

Firstly, the bedroom dominates the vaster areas of the house which can imply that it is the most significant space. It is normally the place of the parents who commonly spend their time here at night. The most valuable assets are kept as the storage is here and "Sao Kwan", the main pillar, is established here. The main activities of this significant space are the rest which is provided not only for the body of family members but also for their soul and spirit also the special ceremony in April to worship the spirits of ancestors (Boonmalert, 2011: 601). This room becomes a symbolic and sacred place as rules and taboos have been strictly formulated.

The everyday practices and the irregular events are held in the closed area which likely correlates to femininity as the private space. This concept is supported by the solid partition as the symbol to keep things inside including women, whose are universally best place is universally believed to be "home", to perform the mother and wife role according to

the conventional female stereotype. In contrast, men are free to form those roles expected by wider society (Lamphere, 2005: 86-87).

The next area, of tern and kitchen as a semi-open space, has particular elements associated with different domestic activities and social interaction through inhabitant rites and everyday life activity. Accordingly, this can be seen as the communication space which links with the aspect of femininity according to Snellen's (2006) argument concerning gender differences leading to absolute differences of communication. The way to communicate for females involves articulating thoughts, sharing experiences and telling stories to avoid conflict. This social space mostly requires compromise and cooperation, which rather relies on the woman's identity in communication.

Tern is also the space to repetitively reproduce the image of the good woman who is obedient and submissive to the social norm. Local women would spend their night time, after finishing domestic work, in this area to be courted with the parents' permission. Her proper role is fully supported by household objects, utensils and the shelf of the Buddha image which parallels her domestic works and her role as a benefactress.

A kitchen is confirmed as the place of material activity that continues as a task done more by women than men. The examination of the household division-of-labor precisely identifies that cooking is by women for their family (Murcott, 2005: 96). The woman usually has the authority to design a kitchen, to buy kitchenware and utensils, and materials for cooking which is the convention underlining the service task as proper to women.

Finally, open space at the terrace and common area hardly has significant activities but can imply gender orientation through their locations. The terrace is located at the front part which is between private and public space. The main activity is to welcome visitors with a tankard of water which can imply service which links to the woman. In contrast, the walkway is symbolic of access to all spaces in the house, which activates the power of visitors to participate in any activities, survey and explore inside as long as they do not infringe the house regulations. The curious glance associates with male identity and his gaze, which usually implies relations of patriarchal power and gender bias (Walters, 1995). The visitor is in the superior position, freely "looking" at any area and anybody in the house while the space is like an inferiorly immovable place to let their gaze explore and examine.

Furthermore, there is also a 'the material' link to femininity. The houses have traditionally been made mostly of timber which is a natural product coinciding with natural worship objects in the house construction rites. Accordingly such a main material importantly concerns nature in which the primitive society was believed to be embedded. This society is then imbued with immersion in the very essence of nature, with concerns of safety, the

primary tie and dependency which might be identified with matriarchal society. Certainly, the woman is significant as the original source of nature due to her body and performance (Pathummanon, 2010: 111-112).

Inferior Woman's Representation in Religious Space - Wat Chama Thevi

Wat Chama Thevi located on Chama Thevi Road, comprises seven key elements : Chedi Koo Kud, Rattana Chedi, the ordination hall, trek sala, Phra Nang Chama Thevi's shrine, Kruba Sriwichai's statue and the ubosot. Gender is also found and reflected through a temple which was limited for males only in the traditional way while girls was perceived as the incapable women who were unable to practice Dhamma (Nicholas, 2002: 77). Women are excluded from the monastery realm while the main the main buildings and places in a temple itself mostly focus on male dominated activities: *vihara*, *ubosot* and *sala*. Those buildings and their functions reflect the prejudiced interpretation (by male) of the woman's inability to reach enlightenment. Such a biased interpretation has similarly impacted the monastery which has become a place of discrimination and a perceivably and innately dominant realm of the male.

Besides those tangible manifestations more associated with masculinity, the intangible ones about the epistemology of Buddhist belief also correlate to male identity. Buddhism has a scientific process to find out the answers of life before enlightenment, which is similar to science where the universal is to be understood through observations, experiments, analyses and descriptions. (Kirthisinghe, 1984: 1-7). These aspects are considered as the intrinsic characteristics of masculinity which are widely accepted in terms of the science myth (Turner, 199-: 4). Buddhism has contradicted the concepts of an animism which are the origins of religion and are mostly associated with environment and nature (Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature, 2005: 81-83). Animism is likely to have a feminine character based on the explanation of nature due to their own natural biological inheritances as the reproductive sex which eventually keeps her bearing children in domestic places (Rahmin and Jackson, 2010: 16-17). Meanwhile, primitive society has been grounded in nature and has been represented through vocabularies with the essence of the female (Santasombat, 1991). This reflects the significance of women and their close relation with nature.

Wat Koo Kud also expresses power relationship between superiority (referring to masculinity) and inferiority (linking to femininity) through the statue of Kruba Sriwichai, who was a good and strict practitioner and had been ordained in local beliefs with a unique monk's robe. However, his religious performances and activities were objected to by the Siamese Sangha Administration who had restricted the right to ordain a son. He was declared guilty and was imprisoned again and again. (Chotisukharat, ,2009: 270-282). Kruba Sriwichai, a case study

displays Siam claiming rightful authority based on the concept of colonization to control Lanna as its administrative unit. Lanna and Kruba Sriwichai were then internalized to be submissive while Siam performed the comparable role to a Western power as internal colonizer (Iijima, 2008: 31) correlates to orientalism with the binary opposition of superiority/inferiority and western/eastern (Said, 1978). Moreover, his performance and his continuing presence through local narrative are symbolic of the neglecting power of Siam versus his own good practice based on a local perspective, which probably is the great inspiration to Lanna inhabitants to uniquely retain a dynamic movement for preservation of their identity until the present day through the power of resistance (Foucault, 1997).

Moreover, the mural painting in the ordination hall (vihara) also symbolically represents symbolism of resistance to the power of Siam. There are 17 frames of Phra Nang Chama Thevi biography while the Lord Buddha has only 3 frames. This painting is uncommon if it is compared to the conventional art of Siam which mainly focuses on Lord Buddha's biography, the *Trai Phum* and the elite class's life (Leksukhum, 2005: 106-107). Lanna craftsmen have benefited from the decline of the restrictions on traditional ways in the reign of King Rama III to redefine their identity and integrate into a local interpretation of their cultural roots (Arvorn, 2012: 115). Women and local ways of life with enjoyment and amusement have been represented to express their local politics and communication, to negotiate their identity and roles, and to underline the ignorance of Siam with its centralization.

Finally, the resistance has been displayed through local legend where the local inhabitants still believe in the power of Phra Nang Chama Thevi and Chedi Koo Kud. It is so powerful that it has become the medium of interpretation to define their local history in the officially proclaimed. In this context, women's representation in the religious realm seems then discriminated against and inferior. Resistance in various forms is their political tool to compete with the various forms of hegemonic power.

Constructed Power of Femininity in Political Space : the Monument of Phra Nang Chama Thevi

The Phra Nang Chama Thevi monument, located at Nong Dok Public Park comprise three elements : a statue of Phra Nang Chama Thevi, an arch and bas relief wall and a stucco horse and an elephant. The legend of her glory and victory has been displayed through the statue, underlying the role of the ruler and the queen who ruled the kingdom according to Lanna tradition as accession to the throne has no gender constraints (Rattana, 2010; 25). This is quite uncommon if it is compares to women in other region: *Khun Ying Mo* (north-eastern),

Thaw Thep Kasattri and Thaw Srisunthorn (southern) and *Phra Sri Suriyothai* (Ayutthaya). Her significance is then exaggerated through a two-and-a-half times life size statue on a high platform and double basement to command visitors' proper deference with the implication of her superior position.

Her statue and legend are so powerful that they can transform the function of the place from the public park to sacred site where visitors have to pay respect. Also, a hybridization of religious faith has signified the Phra Nang Chama Thevi image only as the first Queen of the Hariphunchai Kingdom but also the spiritual icon of Lamphun as *Chao Mae*. This is the cultural production in the political space by Lamphun people, which is a similar concept to the King Chulalongkorn phenomenon "*Latthi Sadet Phor Ror Ha*" (Iewsriwong, 1993). The local history and legend have been widely and orally narrated which frame her image like a Bodhisattva, *Kuan Yin*, the Chinese goddess who is abstinent from beef (Skinner, 1957: 85) and the pattern of a cult with a specific object of worship (Phra Sakkarin Yasawatthano, 2012, interview).

The Phra Nang Chama Thevi statue and local legend display the outstandingly unique case of a woman in the political space. In contrast, patriarchal constraint and bias towards the entry of woman in the male realm is also mirrored. Firstly, Thai historiography has academically and culturally limited 'Thai' history and evolution as being from Sukhothai, to Ayutthaya to Rattanakosin (Detchthewaporn, 2012: 93-94) in term of "Royalist-Nationalist History" (Winichakul, 2001). Phra Nang Chama Thevi and Lanna were prejudiced against as not 'Thai'. They were then excluded from the concept of such historiography. Her legend has been recognized only at the local level but not at the national level as her annual ceremony has not been found in annual activities programs recommended by Tourism Authority of Thailand (2009). Moreover, the pattern of Phra Nang Chama Thevi's legend has usually focused on her victory, battle and power which are considered as the male form (Cixous, 1976: 880). Her victory against opponents by magical power through menstruation has been widely acknowledged and glorified, which can imply an inferior woman who can only have a triumph because of supernatural support, not through the strength of biological force like other Thai heroes. Such a woman's appearance in the male realm underlines the extreme juxtaposition which is something in common with public perception.

Later, her appearance is one of prosperous beauty; fleshiness in soft costume, widened hips with large breasts, a posture to invite anybody (Wattanamahad, 2010: 359) carrying the meaning of women's productivity. Also, these organs are the typically sexual symbols of male fantasy socially driving women to have operation as the body project in a

consumerist discourse (Jagger, 2000: 54-55). The statue as a female body is in the field of discourse reflecting women's desire to encourage the feminine self as a goal of womanly achievement and a subject of scrutiny (Winship, 1983). Certainly, women are unavoidable to resist the male gaze including its hidden power on the feminine body and appearance (Lury, 1996). The statue of Phra Nang Chama Thevi additionally displays the implication of such a limitation.

Further, the location and setting of the monument can imply the discrimination as the monument is located in the fringe of the Wat Hariphunchai district, the center of ancient Lamphun and the symbol of monarchy. It can imply lesser importance and the marginality of someone excluded by social process to be relegated to the edge of society (Chalermphao Kor Anantakool, 2002). The surrounding area is the local market likely correlating to the domestic task which affirms this marginalization.

Finally, the space implies unstable meaning due to the transformation of its functional purpose from the public park to sacred site by Phra Nang Chama Thevi's influence which has impacted on its flexible activities. This variation can imply that the role of woman as the ruler or heroine, has been blurred and become unsteady in the political space, evidently supported by the wall with hardly any reference to the Phra Nang Chama Thevi story. The discrimination against women in political space has been repetitively reproduced but the pattern has been ingeniously changed. The number of women in the political space has been increased in the present day (Phoomprapat, 2011:77). However, her political role has been doubtful whether it is due to their competency or to male decision (Jai-In, 2011: 77); so Phra Nang Chama Thevi was chosen by a hermit to be crowned ruler of the Hariphunchai Kingdom.

Conclusion

The place of women in the realm of 'architecture' has been commonly formulated by men strongly supported by the social construction, class and gender expectation, and with the inspiration of religion. Vernacular house and temple are everyday buildings which made women's identity in rural class as ignorance and inferiority. Meanwhile, the monument representing Phra Nang Chama Thevi's story, seems highly praised but ambiguity become women identity in elite class.

Femininity at Baan Nong Doo has been represented the role of a wife and a mother correlating with all rooms and their functions with the domestic tasks but it has been taken for granted. However, the unique Mon tradition enhances the outstanding role of women, although, such an empowerment of women has been gradually declined due to urbanization and social change (Kittiarsa, 2005). This also implies that the role of woman as the cultural

leader of the locality, as a particular identity has been increasingly ignored, coinciding with the biased attempt of at cultural preservation in the present day.

Later, femininity at Wat Koo Kud has been diminished and denigrated by the Buddhist misinterpretation that women are incapable of enlightenment. The role of benefactress, based on *karma* belief links the representation of women with eternal inferiority. However, *Phee Poo Ya* (the ancestor spirit) is the figure of women's resistances both at national and local levels to challenge the power of religion.

Finally, femininity at the monument of Phra Nang Chama Thevi has displayed her as the ruler and the safe guardian which has contradicted the perception of Lanna women in the view of mostly Thais (Boonyasurat, 2012, interview). Her bravery has been blurred through settings and space, which has impacted on her image as ambiguity: honored heroine/*Chao Mae* (female spirit), nationality / locality and significant/ignorant.

Femininity in Lamphun has represented the stereotyped characteristic and been repetitively reproduced through architecture and space. Those myths seem likely frozen and unchangeable. However, the adoption of a cultural feminism concept would encourage women to redefine those identities into more valuable forms, backed up by the great influence of matriarchal beliefs in the northern region. The role of mother/wife is unique and important because only women have reproductive organs: ovary and uterus which makes women able to be heiress in the domestic sphere. In the fact of inferiority in religious space, a female spirit and ancestor, *Chao Mae/Phee Poo Ya*, are the alternative beliefs of local inhabitants to resist Buddhism and the *Sangha*. Moreover, the ambiguity in the political arena also reflects diverse elements of woman, yet it also become a variety of assets in Lamphun as the touristic attractions linked to her outstanding story in a diversity of related places.

This tourism marketing concept has been instituted and disseminated through architecture as visual culture and heritage in the present day, although the conveyed story is highly contradicted by the evidence from primitive culture in term of honoring matrilinearity. The 'hidden power' has gradually depreciated woman's significance through social construction with interpretations to ingeniously redefine and reformulate femininity. Femininity seems then submissive, a cultural trait likely to be reproduced in the traditional concept in a patriarchy stream, unless gender bias can be truly eliminated, which takes a long time and may seem unattainable. Moreover, the learnt lesson might be that, when any place has more outstanding value, there is the more construction of myth as well.

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