THAMMASAT REVIEW
PRINT ISSN: 0859-5747 ONLINE ISSN: 2630-0303
Volume 27 No 1 (January-June) 2024 [Page 311-332]

Sacred Mountains in Thailand and Japan: A Comparative Study of Mt. Doi Suthep and Mt. Yoshino-Omine

Worrasit Tantinipankul* and Warong Wonglangka

Faculty of Architecture, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Received 9 February 2024; Received in revised form 5 June 2024
Accepted 18 June 2024; Available online 28 June 2024

Abstract

This article investigates the historical development of ritual practices at two revered mountains, Doi Suthep-Pui in Thailand and Yoshino-Omine in Japan. Situated along the Thongchai Mountain range, Doi Suthep-Pui has been a sacred site since the pre-Buddhist era, intricately woven into the cultural identity of Chiang Mai and the history of the Lan Na Kingdom. The region embodies a syncretic landscape where indigenous beliefs converge with Theravada Buddhism. Meanwhile, Yoshino-Omine, at the heart of Japan's earliest Buddhist civilization, integrates Shugendo Buddhism with Shinto beliefs. Drawing on fieldwork and secondary literature, this article compares the legends, myths, beliefs, and rituals associated with these sacred mountains. It also scrutinizes the impacts of state interventions in religious traditions, particularly in the context of modernization and national religious reforms, examining the divergent trajectories of Thailand and Japan in the post-World War II period. Engaging with theoretical debates about religious syncretism, the aim is to provide insights into how these interventions have differentially shaped the syncretic ritual practices of Doi Suthep-Pui and Yoshino-Omine. By contextualizing Doi Suthep and Mount Yoshino-Omine within a broader historical and conceptual framework, this article aims to elucidate the dynamic interplay between religious traditions, state power, and local agency in shaping sacred geographies. With Doi Suthep and its pilgrimage route listed on the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage since 2015, Chiang Mai's heritage authorities can draw many lessons about managing the syncretic living heritage of the mountain from a study of Yoshino-Omine, which was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004. To properly acknowledge the syncretic cultural landscape of Chiang Mai, I argue that Thailand needs to decolonize its approach to heritage interpretation and management.

Keywords

Syncretism, Buddhism, Living Heritage, Sacred Mountains, Conservation

*** Corresponding author**: tantini3@gmail.com **DOI**: 10.14456/tureview.2024.13

Introduction

This article presents a comparative historical analysis of the myths and ritual practices at two sacred mountains: Doi Suthep-Pui in Thailand and Yoshino-Omine in Japan. Both sacred mountains feature syncretic beliefs and practices which merge beliefs in the spirits of place with Buddhist practices of pilgrimage and veneration. The aim of this comparative study is to shed light on the historical and sociopolitical contexts that have shaped the perception of syncretic beliefs and practices found at these sacred mountains over time. Thailand and Japan have distinct historical trajectories, colonial encounters, and religious influences, all of which have impacted the cultural landscape, including the veneration of sacred mountains. By contextualizing the reverence for Doi Suthep and Mount Yoshino-Omine within a broader historical and conceptual framework, this article aims to elucidate the dynamic interplay between religious traditions, state power, and local agency in shaping sacred geographies. I argue that this comparative analysis of how syncretism has been perceived and managed at these sacred mountains offers important insights for heritage conservation efforts in Thailand—particularly for Chiang Mai, which was inscribed on the UNESCO tentative list of World Heritage in 2015.

Doi Suthep-Pui is one of the most revered and visited mountains in Thailand. This mountain ridge is one of the sacred sites along Thanon Thongchai Mountain range connecting to the Shan Hills of Myanmar and the southeastern foothills of the Himalayas. The highland plateau—abundant with natural resources of tropical forests, streams, and minerals—was first inhabited by indigenous Lawa who regarded it as a dwelling place of tutelary spirits in the pre-Buddhist era. Following the founding of Chiang Mai as the capital of the Buddhist kingdom of Lan Na in 1296 CE, the sanctity of the mountainous terrain—extending from Doi Suthep-Pui to Mount Doi Luang Chiang Dao—was interwoven into the cultural and religious identity of Chiang Mai. Through an amalgamation of indigenous beliefs in nature's guardian spirits and Theravada Buddhism, Chiang Mai became a syncretic Theravada Buddhist landscape defined by its ritual and mythic relationship to the tutelary spirits of the mountains.

Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004, Yoshino-Omine stands as one of the most ancient sacred mountain sites in the world, pivotal in the genesis of Japan's earliest Buddhist civilization. Situated on the Yamato plain and centrally located in the Nara region, Yoshino-Omine is renowned for the distinctive tenets of Shugendo Buddhism, which amalgamates Shinto beliefs in the omnipotence of the gods of the Yoshino-Kumano Mountain range with Boddhisatva deities in the Mahayana Buddhist pantheon. Millennia-old rituals venerating syncretic gods, coupled with ascetic pilgrimages to secluded shrines within the dense forest, parallel the beliefs and practices found at Doi Suthep-Pui, albeit marked by

variances arising from the differences between the Mahayana and Theravada strands of Buddhism.

Drawing on fieldwork and secondary literature, this comparative study examines the legends, myths, beliefs, and ritual practices associated with the veneration of gods inhabiting the sacred mountains by local communities at both locales. Moreover, it scrutinizes the conflicts that have arisen from state interventions in religious traditions, particularly within the context of the evolution of the modern nation-state, commencing from Japan's Meiji Restoration which began in 1868 CE, and Thailand's concurrent Chakri Reformation. Despite Thailand and Japan's political alignment during World War II, the post-war period delineated divergent trajectories in shaping state policies concerning religious and cultural affairs. This article offers a comparative analysis of how modernization and national religious reforms differentially impacted the syncretic ritual practices of Doi Suthep-Pui and Yoshino-Omine.

Following an overview of the conceptual framework and methodology, the first part of this article will trace the history of myth and ritual practices at each of the sacred mountains. The second part of the article turns to the modernizing political and religious reforms in the 19th century, which instigated major changes in both countries and set Chiang Mai's Doi Suthep and Mt. Yoshino on divergent paths. Syncretic Buddhist beliefs and practices were regarded as a threat to the state and modern nation-building, and both governments instituted reforms to purify their state religion and abolish syncretic practices in Chiang Mai and Yoshinoyama. The final section discusses and describes the syncretic rituals and practices at both sites in the present day, which reflect new policies in the 20th century that allowed for a partial revival of syncretic practices in Chiang Mai's Doi Suthep-Pui mountain and a more robust revitalization of Shugendo rituals and beliefs at Mt. Yoshino. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork at both sites throughout 2023, this section will demonstrate how local communities and various government and non-government stakeholders have reclaimed and reasserted their syncretic Buddhist beliefs and practices related to the sacred mountain.

Methodology

Qualitative research was undertaken in Japan and Thailand throughout 2023 with the support of the Sumitomo Foundation. During the first phase of the research between late January and early February, the author visited Nara, Japan to establish contact with the local community-based conservation advocacy group of Nara Machizukuri. The author also visited Kinpusenji in Yoshinomyaya, the leading temple of Shugendo Buddhist sect in Yoshino, to observe the Spring ritual of Setsubun. The Vice President of the Nara Machizukuri, Mr. Uejima Haruhisa, introduced the author to the chief curator of Kinpusenji Temple. In mid-April, the author visited Yoshino again and observed the festive flower offering ceremonies of Hanaku Eshikii. The author also held a focus group meeting with four members of the Nara

Machizukuri group to discuss the conservation management of both tangible and intangible heritage in Nara and Chiang Mai. In November, the author conducted in-depth interviews with key local agencies, including the National Park's Town of Yoshino Office and Yoshinoyama Hoshokai Foundation. The author also conducted follow-up interviews through email correspondence. For the in-depth interviews, the author was assisted by a Japanese translator.

In Chiang Mai, the author attended the rituals of Inthakhin in mid-May and Pu Sae Ya Sae in early June and interviewed local stakeholders involved in those rituals. The author interviewed the local clans who perform rituals, administrative members of key Buddhist temples, the 7th Office of the Fine Arts Department in Chiang Mai, and the Suthep-Pui National Park Office to understand different stakeholder perspectives. The author also conducted extensive archival and secondary research about the local practices and history of Buddhist-animistic belief systems in both Chiang Mai and Nara.

After consolidating the initial findings, the author presented the research in November 2023 to members of the Nara Machizukuri to garner feedback and cross-check data. In January and February 2024, the author also presented the findings in Chiang Mai to various government and non-government heritage stakeholders, including archaeologists, cultural landscape conservationists, the Doi Suthep-Pui National Park Deputy Director, the Vice Chairman of Chiang Mai Chamber of Commerce, the spokeswoman of a local NGO called Greenery-Beauty-Scent and the abbot of Wat Phalad on Doi Pui.

Conceptual Framework: Religious Syncretism as a Dynamic Historical Process

Broadly understood as the blending or merging of different religious beliefs, practices, or cultural elements into hybridized forms of religious expression, syncretism has long been at the center of theoretical debates among anthropologists, sociologists, and religious studies scholars. Critics maintain that syncretism is an inherently problematic and pejorative concept since it presumes that mixing local elements with world religions is a process of corruption or dilution of the original or orthodox teachings. This understanding of the term derives from its early uses in Christian theology when religious scholars classified syncretic forms of Christianity as "deviant" and symptomatic of disorder and confusion (Leopold & Jensen, 2004; Stewart & Shaw, 1994).

Despite this heavy etymological baggage, the concept of syncretism is a useful heuristic device for understanding a range of social phenomena. Indeed, the usefulness of the concept lies in its potential to engage with questions of cultural change. Unlike 19th and early 20th century anthropological theories which sought to describe and classify the essential cultural and religious character of ethnic groups, critical engagements with religious syncretism can help us better understand that culture is not a neatly bounded whole with a

timeless essence but rather the outcome of dynamic, historical processes shaped by structures of power and agency as well as the complex nature of the human mind.

In his study of religion, the cognitive anthropologist Pascal Boyer argues that syncretism can be understood as a cognitive mechanism whereby groups of people incorporate elements from a new religion that can fit into their existing religious categories, which he calls "inference systems" (2001, p.17). Of course, this process does not take place in a political vacuum, and elements are selected in a broader context of inter-group rivalries or inter-ethnic tensions. Boyer gives the example of the Javanese *slametan* ritual which is held to strengthen relations between village factions or to thank the gods and spirits. The *slametan* features a mixture of Muslim prayers along with invocations of ancestor spirits, Muslim saints, Hindu-Javanese heroes, and even Adam and Eve. As Boyer (2001) explains, in this case, the spiritual leader of the *slametan* integrated elements from multiple belief systems as a tactic of mitigating potential conflict by maintaining ties with all the associated institutions (p.269). Stated simply, "[W]hat is at stake in the diffusion of religious concepts is very much a matter of social interaction, of coalitions and politics, filtered through people's social mind concepts" (Boyer, 2001, p. 269).

Even though Boyer regards religious syncretism as an intrinsic feature of society and the human mind, he also acknowledges that social groups are predisposed to essentialize and naturalize their belonging to a particular group, be it the clan, ethnic group, or nation. As explained by Leopold and Jensen (2004), it is for this reason that syncretism "may sometimes evoke fear of 'contamination' or 'interpenetration' of the essence of a known life form" (p.4). The tensions associated with syncretism are explored by Stewart and Shaw (1994), who define 'anti- syncretism' as "the antagonism to religious synthesis shown by agents concerned with the defense of religious boundaries" (p.6). Anti-syncretism tends to be concerned with notions of the purity or authenticity of religious interpretations and practices, and it is frequently expressed by dominant nationalist, nativist, and fundamentalist movements that seek to expunge what are perceived as impure or mixed religious traditions. At the same time, anti-syncretism can also be deployed by marginal groups or ethnic minorities seeking to reassert an "authentic" identity in the face of cultural assimilation by a dominant group.

In the case of Thailand and Japan, this article will show how the syncretism/anti-syncretism dynamic played out through each state's religious policies during the era of modernization and nation-building, leading to the erasures of "impure" local beliefs and practices related to the sacred mountain. The article will also discuss the factors that led to the revival of these syncretic practices at different points in the 20th century, and how this revitalization intersects with recent trends in heritage management which seek to recover and valorize the layers and dimensions of living heritage.

Doi Suthep: A Sacred Mountain of Ancestral Spirits and the Buddha's Relics

The earliest historical records of Mt. Doi Suthep describe the mountain as inhabited by indigenous ancestral spirits . The first known inhabitants of the mountain valleys in this region were ethnic Lawa—a Mon-Khmer group who settled in present-day Chiang Mai. Although the Lawa did not leave any written records, they are mentioned extensively in semi-historical chronicles authored by Lan Na Buddhist monks, who described them as the original inhabitants who built the first moated settlements at the foot of Doi Suthep and on the west bank of the Ping River (Wichienkeeo, 2000). One of the chronicles recounts the legend of a Lawa couple named Pu Sae and Ya Sae and their son who lived with them at the foot of Doi Suthep mountain. In the legend, Pu Sae and Ya Sae were cannibals who devoured people in the region until one day, they encountered the Lord Buddha who had flown to the region to spread the Dharma. The Buddha succeeded in convincing Pu Sae and Ya Sae to stop eating humans, and their son, Vasuthep, ordained briefly as a monk. After disrobing, Vasuthep became a hermit and lived in a cave in Doi Suthep mountain, which was named after him. Pu Sae and Ya Sae came to be regarded as tutelary spirits of Chiang Mai, ensuring its abundance and prosperity. Their spirit shrine is situated at the foot of Doi Kham, and every year a mediumship rite is held where a buffalo is sacrificed for their spirits (Chotisukharat, 1971; Wichienkeeo, 2000; Rhum 1987; Tanabe 2000).

The chronicle also describes the Lawa as the original recipients of a sacred city pillar called the Inthakhin pillar from the Hindu Lord Indra. The Inthakhin Pillar represents the central node of the city's ritual geography. Currently at Wat Chedi Luang temple, the pillar houses the spirit of the city's mythical Lawa founder, Chao Luang Khamdaeng, who is believed to have established a city called Nopburi at the foothills of Doi Suthep before the founding of Chiang Mai by King Mangrai in 1296 CE. According to local legends such as the Suwanna Khamdaeng Chronicle, Chao Luang Khamdaeng[1] originally came from Chiang Dao—a mountain range to the north of Chiang Mai that is the watershed for the Mae Ping

[1] According to the legend of Chiang Dao, Chao Luang Khamdaeng was a young prince from the eastern kingdom of Payao who marched west to fight with the army from Southern China around 400 CE. After defeating the enemy, Lord Indra wanted him to bring Dharma to the region of Chiang Mai and therefore sent a white deer to lure him. He chased the white deer to Mt. Doi Luang Chiang Dao and found a charming lady in front of the cave. He fell in love with her and decided to reside in the cave. Later, he led people to settle down and established small towns around Mt. Doi Suthep-Pui, today the city of Chiang Mai. He then returned to live in the cave of Mt. Doi Luang Chiang Dao and after his death, he became the highest guardian god of this mountainous region.

River basin (Swearer, 2004). The Chiang Mai chronicle explains that when the Lan Na king Mangrai established the new city of Chiang Mai in the 13th century, he built it over the Lawa city of Nopburi and adopted the Lawa annual ritual of worshipping the pillar, including spirit mediumship rites that took place on the grounds of the monastery. These spirit mediumship rites were a means of asserting political legitimacy by claiming lineage with the founder's spirit, who was deemed responsible for the prosperity and security of the city (Tanabe, 2000).

As Theravada Buddhism further expanded into Northern Thailand during the 14th–16th centuries, Chiang Mai became the center of Mon Sinhalese Buddhist practices. Consequently, Mt. Doi Suthep became the home of numerous historic temples supporting peripatetic forest monks who roamed in the forest and practiced meditation (Swearer, 2004). Mt. Doi Suthep has been revered as a site of Buddhist pilgrimage since the reign of King Kue Na (r. 1355-1385 CE) when the Lord Buddha's relics were installed under the stupa at the peak of the mountain in 1384 CE. The temple of the Lord Buddha Relics stupa was established around 1547 CE according to *Tamnan Phra That Doi Suthep* (Legend of the Buddha Relics of Doi Suthep) (1929), strengthening the pilgrimage activities between the city of Chiang Mai and Mt. Doi Suthep. The pilgrimage route to worship the Lord Buddha Relics at the peak of Mt. Doi Suthep evolved into a pilgrimage network that includes another eleven Lord Buddha Relics stupas scattered in highland Southeast Asia.

As is evident from the description above, even as Theravada Buddhism became the dominant religion in Lan Na, this did not lead to the erasure of animist belief systems and ritual practices related to the ancestral spirits. On the contrary, Lanna kings who came to rule in the region in the 13th century retained indigenous animist beliefs and practices, thus creating a syncretic body of performances that reinforced their own spiritual authority and political power.

Furthermore, we have seen how the ritual complex relating to Doi Suthep Mountain embodies both animist beliefs about the spirits of place and Theravada Buddhist beliefs about the sacred Buddha relics. Annual rituals to propitiate the spirits of the mountain and religious pilgrimages to venerate the Buddha's relics at monasteries on Doi Suthep mountain represent a symbolic expression of Chiang Mai's spiritual and material dependence on Doi Suthep for its prosperity, continuity, and protection. As stated by Swearer (2004), "mountain and city are inextricably bound together and […] their fates are mutually interdependent. This symbiosis depends on the fact that the mountain as a unique locus of the sacred, a special symbol of transcendence, is perceived as different from, yet essential to, the identity of the city" (p.35).

Thus, when King Kawila revived Chiang Mai back to its status as the capital of Lan Na Kingdom in the 18th century after defeating the Burmese occupiers, he also sought to reaffirm the symbolic importance of Doi Suthep mountain and the Buddha relic enshrined in a

stupa by Chiang Mai's King Kue Na in 1383 CE. In 1806, the king offered donations and constructed a vihara on the west side of Wat Doi Suthep. He also erected a parasol at the holy reliquary and built the main vihara on the east side of Doi Suthep mountain (Wyatt & Aroonrut, 1998). In addition, King Kawila moved the Inthakhin pillar to its present location at Wat Chedi Luang as part of his restoration of the city. The myth and ritual complex commemorating the mythical figure of Chao Luang Khamdaeng and other protective deities at Inthakhin was also revived, including spirit mediumship rites and fortune-telling. This revitalization of the Inthakhin ceremony was highly significant in that it represented the reaffirmation of the city's ancestral connection to indigenous Lawa, as well as the mountain range and its watershed, which were seen as the sources of Chiang Mai's wealth and well-being. Through these syncretic meritorious acts recognizing both the spirits of place and the Buddha's relics, King Kawila forged his place on the sacred mountain of Doi Suthep and within the old city, thereby cementing his legitimacy as the new ruler of Chiang Mai.

Mountains of Yoshino, Nara Prefecture, Kii Mountain Range: Shugendo Buddhism and Shinto Kami Demons

As in Chiang Mai, the premodern, sacred mountain landscape of Nara featured an amalgamation of animist beliefs and Buddhist practices. In the case of Mt. Yoshino, Mt. Omine and Kumano, syncretic beliefs were associated with the sorcerer-monk and founder of Shugendo Buddhism—En No Gyoja (born as En No Osunu in 634 CE)—who was renowned during the medieval Nara period (7^{th}-8^{th} centuries) for his ascetic practices in this mountain and for achieving magical powers to subjugate demons and exorcize evil spirits. The pilgrimage route connecting Mt. Yoshino, Mt. Omine, and Kumano was established when En No Gyoja became famous for his ascetic practices in this region.

The Shugendo Buddhist ascetic practice of pursuing a pilgrimage journey from Mt. Yoshino to the pure land of Mt. Omine and Mt. Kumano is highly syncretic, reflecting indigenous Shinto beliefs rooted in the spiritual power of nature. Shugendo represents a fusion of Shinto, Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucian practices, characteristic of Japan's syncretic pre-modern cultural landscape. The principal icon of Shugendo worship is the Zao Gongen[2] kept in the chamber of Zaodo Hall at Kinpusenji Temple. The seven-meter-tall image is believed to have been carved by En No Gyoja from Cherrywood to represent a Shinto deity, or Kami, whom he encountered at Mt. Yoshino-Omine. En No Gyoja tamed the wrathful deity who then became a Boddhisattva and fearless protector of Shugendo. The statue is the tallest wooden figure of Zao Gongen in Japan and reflects the unique Japanese style of craftsmanship aimed at embodying the local mystical power of a Kami deity. The Zaodo Hall of Kimpusenji is the second largest timber structure in Japan after the grand hall

[2] Gongen is the manifestation of the Buddha in the form of a Kami deity.

of Daibutsu at Todeiji Temple in Nara. Many have claimed that more than 100 temples were founded by En No Gyoja's fellows in this area.

At Kinpusenji, monastic and lay communities inherited and transmitted the legends associated with En No Gyoja. In these legends, the demons or ogres subdued by En No Gyoja became supporters of Shugendo activities and their descendants became part of the local communities. In one legend, En No Gyoja encountered a family of ogres who menaced local villagers living in the mountainous area. The ogre husband was named Zenki and the wife was named Goki. They had five children. Venerable Gyoja hid their children and released them after he taught Zenki and Goki to be kind to other human beings. Zenki and Goki became his followers and committed themselves to the support of Shugendo pilgrimage, while the ogres' children became the owners of local inns and shops along the pilgrimage routes in this mountainous area (DeWitt, 2016; Swanson, 1987, p.75).

A legend recorded in the Engi scroll of Shokyo-in the Temple of Hongu[3] recounts the story of the Kumano Mountain Gongen who was believed to be a king of Magadha—one of sixteen Mahajanapadas (great kingdoms) in India circa the 6th century BCE. Facing a threat from inside his royal court of 999 concubines, the king, his queen, and their son fled from India on chariots with the assistance of an ascetic man. They went to reside at Kumano Mountain, becoming deities of Kumano.

Another legend related to Kumano tells the story of the first emperor of Japan, Emperor Jimmu (660-585 BCE), who led his army to conquer the area of the Yamato plain. At first, he was defeated by local chieftains and lost his brother. He was led by a three-legged crow named Yatagarasu to retreat eastward in the deep mountain of Kumano. With the guidance of Yatagarasu, who was also a manifestation of a Kami god of Kumano, Emperor Jimmu fought his way from the east to the west through Yoshino and conquered the Yamato plain. His first imperial court was built on the present-day plain of Kashihara in Southern Nara (Ring, et al, 1996).

In the 9thcentury, a Shingon esoteric monk named Shōbō, following in the footsteps of En No Gyoja, went to Yoshino to establish Shugendo training in this sacred area. From that time, it became a region where religious austerities were commonly performed. Shugendo became the most widespread Buddhist pilgrimage practice among the noble and royal members in the Nara and Heian periods. After the Heian period, Shugendo at Yoshino and Kumano was institutionalized and developed strong ties with important Tendai Buddhist

[3] This legendary narrative was drawn from the image of the Kumano Gongen on Engi scroll displayed in the permanent exhibition of "Kii Spirits" at Wakayama World Heritage Center. The exhibition indicates that the Engi scroll is kept at Shokyo-in temple in Hongu, Wakayama Prefecture. The author visited Wakayama World Heritage Center on January 26th, 2023.

temples in Kyoto and the esoteric Buddhist sect of Shingon in Koyasan. Some Shugendo temples claimed to have armed monks (Adolphson, 2007).

The Shugendo sect prospered during the 8th-12th centuries with the support of the feudal class in Kyoto and through its connections with Tendai and Shingon Mahayana Buddhism which were introduced to Japan around this period. Aristocrats and members of the imperial court at Kyoto visited Yoshino and pursued the pilgrimage route as a form of spiritual training for Buddhist rebirth and to gain political legitimacy. Moreover, the imperial pilgrimage practices of this period led to the expansion of pilgrimage culture throughout Japan. In the 14th century, Japan was plunged into civil war—a six-decade-long struggle marked by the existence of two separate imperial courts. The northern emperor, subject to the control of the Shogun in Kyoto, coexisted with the legitimate southern emperor, who retained possession of the imperial regalia at Yoshinoyama (Sansom, 1961).

In the Edo period (1603–1868), when Japan was ruled by the military government of the Tokugawa Shogunate, Shugendo expanded to embrace commoners and villagers (Eckelmann, 2020). Despite the stability characterizing the Edo period, a notable transformation occurred with the relocation of the political center from Osaka in the western region to Edo (Tokyo) in the eastern region of the main island. Klonos (2019) argued that Shugendo was in decline in the Edo period, since the Shugendo urban temples of both Tendai and Shingon sects in the Kansai Region were far from the government at Edo and the new government also imposed strict controls over interpretations of the Buddhist doctrine as Japan became more isolationistic. Nevertheless, a highlight of this period recognizing Shugendo practice was that in 1799 CE, the Emperor Kokaku proclaimed En No Gyoja as the Great Bodhisattva Jinben.

Comparing Syncretic Beliefs and Practices at Doi Suthep and Mt. Yoshino in the Pre-Modern Period

By the 13th century, Theravada Buddhism from Sri Lanka had firmly taken root in the Lan Na region. The capital city of Chiang Mai emerged as a prominent center, leading to the expansion of the Sinhalese Theravada doctrine across the highland Southeast Asian region. Theravada Buddhism is an orthodox approach adhering to the original Dharma teachings of the Lord Buddha. The goal of Theravada Buddhist practice is to achieve enlightenment by reaching Nirvana and ending the cycle of Samsara (death and rebirth). The central icons of Theravada Buddhism are the image of Shakyamuni Buddha and relics of the Lord Buddha, which were often enshrined in stupas. In the Lan Na region, the relic stupas were built on the top of mountain peaks and pilgrimages were sponsored by the feudal leaders of the major city-states to venerate the Buddha relics at festive events commemorating the day of the Buddha's enlightenment.

As discussed in the previous section, however, in the pre-modern period, despite the expansion of Theravada Buddhism in Lan Na from the 13th century forward, Lan Na kings did not abandon the cults of tutelary spirits and spirit mediumship practices. On the contrary, these tutelary spirits were incorporated into a subordinate position within the Theravada Buddhist symbolic and ritual order, with guardian deities becoming the protectors and devotees of the Buddha. Historically, most of the Buddhist temples in Chiang Mai had spirit houses called *hor phi suea wat* to worship the temples' tutelary spirits (Center for the Promotion of Art Culture and Creative Lanna Chiang Mai University, 2012). As we saw with the Inthakhin pillar and the ancestor spirits (Pu Sae Ya Sae) associated with the mountain, the principal ritual practices of Chiang Mai were mostly syncretic rituals of Buddhist merit-making, chanting and the worshipping of local deities followed by spirit mediumship rituals.

In keeping with Boyer's (2001) conceptualization of syncretism as a symbolic mechanism for mitigating conflict and building coalitions across groups, religious syncretism served as a mechanism of ethnic inclusion and political legitimacy for the rulers of Chiang Mai. Before 1873, the Lan Na Kingdom was a semi-independent state under Siamese suzerainty. Lan Na rulers received military support from the central Siamese court, but they managed the internal affairs of the kingdom independently. Buddhism in Chiang Mai was highly diverse, as it featured the unique practices of approximately 18 monastic lineages (Khruathongkhiaw, 2012). The practices of the monks in the Lan Na Region were influenced mainly by the Sinhalese but also drew influences from local Lawa, Tai, Mon, Shan, Burmese, and Chinese of the Mahayana-Vajrayana Sect (Phramaha Punsombat Pabhakaro, 2012, p.1).

Turning to the case of pre-modern Japan, Mahayana Buddhism diverged significantly from Theravada Buddhism, in as much as it reinterpreted the Buddhist canon, fostering a belief in the profound compassion of Lord Buddha. This perspective gave rise to diverse forms of Bodhisattva deities—enlightened beings who postponed their journey to Nirvana, remaining in the world to alleviate the suffering of the masses. Introduced to Japan in the 6th century, Mahayana Buddhism became integrated into Shinto, the indigenous belief system, which venerates and worships the spirits and forces of nature. In the medieval period, the Shinto indigenous belief in deities of nature and ancestral spirits called Kami were gradually amalgamated into the worship of Boddhisattva Buddhist gods and became Japanese Gongen. As a result, the main images of worship in Buddhist temples are various forms of Boddhisattvas such as Gongen and Kannon (the goddess of mercy) rather than the icons of Lord Buddha Sakkayamuni. As in Chiang Mai, religious syncretism was a mechanism for establishing political legitimacy, insofar as aristocrats and members of the imperial court at Kyoto gained political status by visiting Yoshino and pursuing the pilgrimage route as a form of spiritual training for Buddhist rebirth.

Despite the differences between Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism, there were many commonalities in the beliefs and practices related to Doi Suthep and Mt. Yoshino in the premodern period. Key similarities were as follows: the worship of tutelary gods and ancestral deities of the mountain; legends of indigenous guardian forces; pious Buddhist monks and ascetic pilgrimage; and spirit shrines located within Buddhist temples. These shared elements highlight the cultural and spiritual commonalities between Chiang Mai and Yoshino in the premodern period, demonstrating how guardian deities, legends, rituals, and ascetic practices shaped the syncretic religious landscapes of both regions. The next section of the article will explore how modernizing reforms impacted these beliefs and practices.

Anti-Syncretism and Modernizing Reforms in 19th-Century Thailand and Japan

With the arrival of Western colonial powers in the Asia Pacific during the 19th century, both Japan and Thailand initiated a process of modernization that included anti-syncretic religious reforms. Faced with the colonial threat, the Siamese ruling elite began to modernize the old constellation of feudal chiefdoms into a modern nation-state. Siam's annexation of the largest vassal state of Lan Na started in 1873 with the first Chiang Mai Treaty. By 1890, the Siamese government had fully colonized Chiang Mai and its former Lan Na principalities.

In 1846, the Thammayutika, a royal reform movement advocating strict adherence to Vinaya rules and an orthodox interpretation of the Buddhist canon was established by Vajrayana (in Thai-Wachirayan). A royal prince and monk, also ascended to the throne as King Mongkut (r. 1850-1867) of Siam. In 1902, the first monastic asset regulation and religious laws were enacted by Mongkut's son, King Chulalongkorn (r.1868-1910), establishing a Buddhist government called the Sangha. These reforms legalized the power of attorney of abbots, standardized the practice of monks, classified the royal temples, and established a system of patriarchal ranking for the entire kingdom. As part of these reforms, the local and syncretic Buddhism in Chiang Mai was gradually absorbed by the reformist central Buddhist authority.

In 1896, the royal temple with the largest relic stupa at the center of Chiang Mai, Wat Chedi Luang, was taken over by Thammayutika reformist monks to be a modern public school (Phramaha Punsombat Pabhakaro, 2022, p.2). The royal reformist Buddhist monks with their rational approach were the key collaborators in transforming local Buddhist practices into a standardized rationalized practice of the royal-led central Thai monastic order. After the re-establishment of Wat Chedi Luang as an active temple in 1928, the animistic practice of spirit possession of guardian deities and related activities was banned by

the municipality as they were deemed as inappropriate acts (Prasongbandit, 2003) which could also represent an expression of local resistance to Bangkok authority (Tanabe, 2000).

Following the reforms, the rituals of mediumship for the deities of nature and former kings were prohibited in the precinct of the temple and Inthakhin shrine. The spirit mediums were forced to move their rituals to the shrine of the deity guarding the Chaeng Sri Phum bastion at the northeast corner of the city. The worship of the guardian spirit of Pu Sae, the deity protecting the forest and Mt. Doi Suthep was moved from the eastern foothill of Doi Suthep at Suthep Road to unite with Ya Sae at Doi Kham Hill further south. The spirits representing nature were deliberately moved from the urban center to the periphery, cutting ties between the sacred mountain and the city. The invocation of the guardian spirits of place as part of Buddhist rituals was reduced significantly, from mediumship rites to symbolic offerings of tribute.

In the case of Japan, significant changes came in 1853 with the arrival of fleets of American explorers whose vessels were powered by steam engines. The American quest to end Japan's isolation caused turmoil in the Samurai class and overturned the feudal system in 1867. In 1867, the Meiji Restoration began when Tokugawa Yoshinobu resigned, and the executive power was returned to Emperor Meiji. A western-modeled government was formed and policies of modernization were mandated. In 1868, the government issued an ordinance to distinguish Shinto and Buddhism or "Shinbutsu bunri." The Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines that had been integrated into temple-shrine complexes were forced to be divided or turned into Shinto shrines or abolished. Buddhist monks performing both Buddhist and Shinto rituals were forced to disrobe or convert to Shinto priests (Swanson, 1981).

In 1872, the government passed a law to ban Shugendo and sparked the anti-Buddhist movement "Haibutsu kishaku" that lasted until 1874. During this period, it is estimated that between 18,000 Buddhist temples and 25,000 branches of Shugendo were eradicated (Breen, 2000; Kyoto Shunju, 2015). Numerous Buddhist books, statues, and artifacts which today would be considered national treasures were destroyed or displaced. In contrast, Shinto was proclaimed a state religion, and the emperor was worshiped as the highest Kami. The state Shinto agency was created and all the shrines in Japan were classified into the classes of imperial, national, and local ranking.

During this period, the main Shugendo temples in Mt.Yoshino were still centered on the syncretistic worship of Zao Gongen, which amalgamated Kami deities with Buddhism. Because the Shugendo temples could not be divided or turned into Shinto shrines they were forced to shut down. The modern government viewed the practice of Yamabushi for austerity and beliefs in the magical powers of the god Boddhisattva Gongen as superstitious and backward. Yoshino's Shugendo, Kinpusenji, and Ominesenji temples were closed in 1874 but Shugendo-supporting communities petitioned the government to reopen them in the 1880s

under the Tendai Buddhist School. The worst case was Anzenji Temple which was closed and left to deteriorate in the deep forest. Yoshimozu Shrine was the Shugendo temple affiliated with the former Imperial Palace of the southern court Emperor Go-Daigo but it was converted into a Shinto Shrine. The Yoshino Shrine was established at the foothill of Yoshinoyama by the order of Emperor Meiji to honor the legitimate Emperor Go-Daigo and his empress.

As this brief comparative account of the colonial period illustrates, the modernizing, anti-syncretic reforms of religion had dramatically different impacts. In the case of Thailand, reforms focused on the unification of the nation through the rationalization and centralization of Theravada Buddhism under the authority of the Sangha. In Chiang Mai, these reforms served to marginalize the local tutelary spirits and the guardian spirits of the mountain most closely associated with the formerly autonomous Lan Na kingdom, as these beliefs were a potential threat to Bangkok's dominance. By contrast, in Japan, the anti-syncretic reforms focused on eradicating Buddhism which was associated with feudal samurai lords. With the Meiji restoration, the Japanese government instead promoted Shinto beliefs in the kami, with the emperor as the highest kami. At Mt. Yoshino, this led to the closure of Shugendo Buddhist temples and the marginalization of the syncretic Gongen deities.

The Revival of Buddhist Syncretism in Post-WWII Japan

The aftermath of the war put Japan and Thailand on radically different paths. Following the end of WWII, the U.S. occupied Japan to dismantle the militaristic and authoritarian elements that had contributed to Japan's involvement in the war. Religious reforms were part of this broader effort to reshape Japanese society. The goal was not to eliminate religion but to limit the influence of Shinto, which had been co-opted by the state to promote nationalism and loyalty to the emperor. The Occupation authorities sought to separate religion from the state and to promote freedom of religious expression. In 1945, the Shinto Directive was issued, which ordered the separation of Shinto and the state, disbanded or reorganized certain Shinto institutions, and promoted religious freedom. Furthermore, Article 20 of the 1947 Japanese Constitution also guaranteed freedom of religion and prohibited the government from engaging in religious activities. In effect, these reforms allowed for the return of syncretic beliefs and practices, including Shugendo.

With the new religious law, Shugendo was able to register as an independent Buddhist Sect and Kinpusenji Temple became the head of the sect. The supporters and fellows of Shugendo in Mt. Yoshino–Omine revived their ritual practices, rediscovered historic documents, and rebuilt pilgrimage routes in active collaboration with other Shugendo practitioners in Kyoto and Kumano region which are under the Tendai Buddhist sect and those in Koyasan with the esoteric Shingon Buddhist practice. The Zaodo Hall and Niomon Gate were listed as National Treasures. The 3 statues of Zao Gongen at Zaodo and 2 Kongo

Rishiki statues at Niomon were listed as Important Cultural Properties. The Zaodo Hall of Kinpusenji and the route to Ominesanji Temple at Mt. Omine's peak became the central points for studying the ascetic practice of Shugendo nationwide.

Another significant outcome of the new religious law was the decentralization and democratization of the maintenance and conservation of Yoshino's Shugendo temples and related cultural practices. The campaign for the cultural preservation of Yoshino was initiated by local communities at the behest of temple leaders. Temple leaders motivated their supporters to contribute to maintaining cleanliness, order, and active attendance at ritual and festival events. Both local and prefectural state agencies collaborated clowith temple communities to coordinate the annual management of historic sites, establishing various sub-committees for this purpose.

The central state agency overseeing the policies for the protection of historic properties is the Agency for Cultural Affairs in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). The Nara Prefecture's Culture, Education, and Creative Living Department or "Bunkasai" takes the conservation policies from the Agency for Cultural Affairs and implements them through the Board of Education and Culture in the municipalities such as the city of Nara and the town of Yoshino. The boards of Education and Culture of municipalities also coordinate with local communities and Buddhist temples or shrines to understand the historical contexts and social conditions of the sites before starting any conservation project. The Bunkasai offices in the city of Nara or the town of Yoshino also work with local non-profit organizations such as Yoshinoyama Hoshokai (maintaining the Sakura trees in Yoshino) and Nara Machizukuri (conservation of historic wooden houses in the Naramachi historic area).

The Yoshino-Kumano National Park is under the Ministry of Environment. Its local branch of the Yoshino Management Office under the Kinki Regional Environment Office is also responsible for maintaining the safety of the pilgrimage route and providing public restrooms in collaboration with the Environmental Office of Nara Prefecture. The Yoshino Management Office also maintains the signage and information maps of the park, including marking the level of difficulty for hiking activities along the pilgrimage route. The management of National Parks in Japan is also flexible in terms of ownership, allowing other entities to own land within the boundary of the National Park. The park officers also have collaborated with Shugendo temples and communities to maintain the safety of the pilgrimage route. Another notable collaborative initiative that emerged in this period was the Yoshino Cherry Blossom School, which organized activities with local schools and documented the rich history of Yoshino and its cherry trees. The persistent strength of the community-based

system in conservation and maintenance laid the foundations for its application for UNESCO World Heritage status.

With the growing support of mountain worshipers, the chief priests of Kinpusenji also unified forces with Shugendo fellows of Kumano and Koyasan for a successful bid to put the 3 groups of pilgrimage routes and historic temples plus shrines in these sacred mountains together as a UNESCO World Heritage Site of Kii Mountain Range (McGuire, 2013). Its nomination was approved by UNESCO in 2004 making it the first World Heritage Site in Japan initiated by a local movement.

The Continuity of Anti-Syncretism in Post-WWII Thailand

While the U.S. occupation initiated the separation of religion from state power in post-war Japan to weaken the military authority of the state, it spared the nationalist movement and centralized Buddhist religious reforms in Thailand due to Cold War politics. The Thai nationalist policies promoting Buddhism as the state religion and the king as the protector of Buddhism suited the U.S. anti-communist agenda in Southeast Asia. The U.S. believed that supporting these traditional institutions would counter communist influence, as communism was regarded as antithetical to religious and monarchical values, leading to support for these institutions from the 1950s-1980s (Chaloemtiarana, 2007) .

During the Cold War period in Chiang Mai, syncretic beliefs and practices associated with Mt. Doi Suthep and the tutelary spirits of the city were marginalized and overshadowed by the reformist state-sponsored Buddhist Sangha. In contrast to the decentralization of religion in Japan, Thailand's royal reformist-leaning central Buddhist government continued to manage all temples throughout the country according to a hierarchical ranking system of abbots, patriarchs, and monastic governors regardless of their ties with local communities. The law also empowered the position of abbots as the sole individuals legally responsible for the management of the temple's assets, including the land and Buddhist monuments. In many cases, the centralized management by reformist abbots resulted in the alienation of local communities. This was evident in the example of Wat Chedi Luang monastery, which was taken over by reformist Thammayutika monks in 1928. Throughout the Cold War period and until the present, animist practices involving spirit mediumship rites have been prohibited.

Another central state authority that contributed to the alienation of local communities was the Fine Arts Department (FAD). The first law for the protection of national heritage was proclaimed in 1935, three years after the revolution that overthrew the absolute monarchy, endowing the FAD, currently in the Ministry of Culture, with the authority to safeguard historic sites as national treasures. As I have discussed in a previous article (Tantinipankul 2023), the FAD subscribes to a rationalist "authorized heritage discourse" (Smith, 2006: 4) which privileges nationalist narratives of history over syncretic local beliefs and practices. Adding

yet another layer of external control, the The National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Act was promulgated in 1961, giving the central agency of the Department of Forestry in the Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment, sole ownership and management of reserve forest areas and national parks in Thailand, including the forests around Doi Suthep.

The National Park Act and the 2nd Ancient Monuments Act, both enacted in 1961, gave state conservation and forestry authorities a degree of leverage to challenge the power of abbots. Nevertheless, the state support for conservation continues to be highly centralized, and the FAD regional offices lack the skilled labor and expertise to engage with communities to deepen their understanding of syncretic rituals and beliefs or cope with the conservation of historic Buddhist sites in Chiang Mai. As a result, the primary task of conservation falls on the abbots or the administrative monks who are legally empowered by the Sangha to manage their temples. Local communities have no choice but to comply, as they lack the legal rights to continue the mediumship rituals that they once practiced in the Buddhist temple.

In contrast with Japan, political decentralization in Thailand came very late. Following bloody anti-coup riots in 1992 and the promulgation of a new "People's Constitution" in 1995, the government introduced a law establishing a system of sub-district municipalities (*tambon*). In addition to their other duties, these municipalities were tasked with coordinating between government agencies, local communities, academics, and private businesses to revive the local culture and maintain traditional events. However, municipalities are unable to be involved in all aspects of heritage conservation since the public facilities are still in the hands of the central agencies. Road networks, public land, electricity, water pipelines, the police force, and other public services are under the control of the central agencies. Moreover, as discussed above, most of the rituals that take place in the temple precincts still require the consent of the abbots who are appointed by the central monastic government and the National Office of Buddhism.

Since the decentralization in the late 1990s, local agencies, municipalities, academics, and communities have successfully revived some of the ritual practices in Chiang Mai and Doi Suthep Mountain, but they could not fully recover the rituals involving the spirits of guardian deities inside the Buddhist temples. Most of the key Buddhist administrators are Buddhist reformists, and thus regard rituals related to the spirits as superstitious. As such, it is a great challenge for local communities and municipalities to reintegrate the indigenous belief system and local heritage into the space of the Buddhist temple. The most controversial but important animistic ritual of Chiang Mai is the worship of Mt. Suthep's guardian spirits Pu Sae and Ya Sae described previously, which involves the devouring of the flesh and blood of a buffalo by a spirit medium. The annual event has transitioned from the on-site killing of a young buffalo to presenting only the animal's skull adorned with its

skin, flesh, and blood to the spirit medium at the site. Nevertheless, it continues to face widespread criticism for being perceived as a barbaric and regressive practice.

Conclusion

As I have shown above, in the premodern period, Mt. Doi Suthep-Pui and Mt. Yoshino-Omine bore many similarities in terms of the syncretic integration of Buddhism with the animistic beliefs and practices associated with sacred mountain landscapes. In both cases, local tutelary deities associated with the mountain were subsumed within the Buddhist cosmology to become the protectors of the Buddhist religion. While in Shugendo Mahayana Buddhism, the mountain deity was merged with the Buddha in the form of the Zao Gongen, in Lan Na Theravada Buddhism the mountain spirits took a subordinate role as disciples and guardians of the Sakkayamuni Buddha. The rituals of Liang Dong at Mt. Doi Suthep and Setsubun at Mt. Yoshino constituted symbolic re-enactments of the story of the Buddha encountering and subduing the capricious spirits of the mountain.

Beginning in the late 19th century, modernizing reforms and nationalist policies had major impacts on these syncretic Buddhist-animist rituals. Following the Meiji Restoration in Japan, Buddhism was targeted as a foreign cult while the indigenous worship of Shinto was elevated to boost nationalism, under the figure of the Emperor as the supreme kami. As a result, Shugendo temples and their related syncretic practices were banned. Around the same time in Thailand, the royal-led reformist Buddhist movement gained momentum and became a core pillar of Thai religious nationalism, consequently marginalizing the indigenous worship of spirits, which was seen as backward and a potential threat to the nation.

The end of the war in 1945 was another turning point, and Cold War politics had a major impact on the two countries' different government policies regarding religious affairs. With U.S. support for the separation of state and religion and the new religious freedoms enshrined in the constitution, Buddhist temples of different sects in Japan gained independence. Religious associations and government agencies were further decentralized in the late 1980s-1990s thus fostering stronger community organizations. The syncretic Shugendo rituals of Mt. Yoshino were revitalized and strengthened. Rituals at Mt. Yoshino were organized by the Kinpusenji Temple and its supporting groups of Shugendo followers, neighboring residents, and businesses. Local government agencies such as the municipality played a supporting role in managing public facilities such as road safety and information for visitors.

In contrast, Thailand took a starkly different trajectory. Seeking to strengthen Thailand as a bulwark against communism during the Cold War period, the U.S. fully

supported the centralized institutions of the monarchy and Buddhism as a defense against communism. As a result, the centralized bureaucratic system endured, and successive royalist military dictatorships held a tight grip on politics. Moreover, while the Thai constitution espouses religious rights, Theravada Buddhism is the *de facto* state religion and is tightly controlled by the central Buddhist Sangha. As such, the separation of animist rituals from Buddhist sacred space persists until today. While there have been local movements to revitalize Lan Na's syncretic practices, there is still a strict demarcation between animist and Buddhist spaces of ritual practice, as is evident with the relegation of spirit mediums to marginal spaces such as the edge of the city or the forest. The result is the fragmentation and segregation of ritual practices that once reflected the uniqueness of the mountainous Buddhist culture of Chiang Mai.

In terms of heritage conservation, this comparative study of syncretic beliefs related to the sacred mountain in Chiang Mai and Yoshino offers several valuable insights. First, heritage conservation education should include case studies and coursework about the historical and political dimensions of syncretism and anti-syncretism. Rather than promoting the state's anti-syncretic "authorized heritage discourse," heritage professionals should support the interpretation of syncretic Buddhist heritage in a way that respectfully sheds light on the history and meaning of these beliefs and practices.

A second lesson is the importance of developing strong communication and effective collaboration between the different stakeholders. As we saw in the case of Yoshino, the revitalization of syncretic Shugendo temples and rituals involved a range of local and state stakeholders working together to ensure the revitalization and continuity of ritual practices and the maintenance and management of the mountain pilgrimage routes. This degree of cooperation can only happen if decision-making is decentralized to the local level and in the hands of stakeholder communities. Otherwise, there are too many influential state institutions vying for control, as in the case of the Sangha and the Fine Arts Department in Thailand.

A third insight of the study relates to the necessity of "decolonizing heritage" in Thailand. As argued by De Jong (2022) and Knudsen et al. (2021), decolonizing heritage involves a critical examination of the power structures and narratives embedded in cultural heritage practices and institutions, to create space for multiple perspectives in the interpretation and representation of heritage. While Thailand was never directly colonized by external powers, the ruling elite in the central Bangkok court emulated European colonies in their efforts to incorporate a multi-ethnic kingdom comprised of vassal states into a unified nation-state. As we saw above, the process of centralizing administrative reforms and cultural homogenization in the 19th and 20th centuries in Thailand resulted in the marginalization of syncretic narratives and ritual practices which blended Buddhist beliefs with local guardian

deities and spirits of place. As I have argued, the community-led revitalization of syncretic Shugendo rituals and pilgrimage routes associated with Mt. Yoshino illustrates the possibilities of decolonizing heritage after a period of state-led, anti-syncretic unification. Indeed, the aim of this comparative research has been to share these findings with relevant stakeholders in Thailand, with the hope of instigating a process of reflection, recognition and respect for Chiang Mai's syncretic beliefs and practices associated with the sacred mountain of Doi Suthep.

References

Adolphson, M. S. (2007). *The teeth and claws of the Buddha: Monastic warriors and sōhei in Japanese history*. University of Hawai'i Press.

Boyer, P. (2001). *Religion explained: The evolutionary origins of religious thought* (Nachdr.). Basic Books.

Breen, J., & Teeuwen, M. (Eds.). (2000). *Shinto in history: Ways of the kami*. University of Hawai'i Press.

Center for the Promotion of Art Culture and Creative Lanna Chiang Mai University. (2012). Lan Na Kham Mueang Chom Rom Khon Hak Mueang: Phi Suea (Lanna Local Word and Urban Fan Club: Guardian Spirits). *Matichon Weekly,* (2149) (29thOctober-4thNovember 2021).

Chaloemtiarana, T. (2007). *Thailand: The politics of despotic paternalism* (2nd printing). Silkworm Books.

Chotisukharat, S. (1971). Supernatural Beliefs and Practices in Chieng Mai. *Journal of the Siam Society*, *59*(1), 211-231.

De Jong, F. (2022). *Decolonizing Heritage: Time to R 'pair in Senegal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DeWitt, L. E. (2016). Envisioning and Observing Women's Exclusion from Sacred Mountains in Japan**.** *Journal of Asian Humanities at Kyushu University,* 19-28*.*

Eckelmann, A. (2020). *Connecting the Past and Present of Shugendo – The Revival of Japan's Ancient Mountain Ascetic Tradition, Part One*. https://www.buddhistdoor.net/ features/ connecting-the-past-and-present-of-shugendo-the-revival-of-japans-ancient-mountain-ascetic-tradition-part-one/

Keyes, C. (1975). Buddhist Pilgrimage Centers and the Twelve-Year Cycle: Northern Thai Moral Orders in Space and Time. *History of Religions*, *15*(1), 71–89.

Khruathongkhiaw, N. (2012). *Poet Phaen Yuet Lan Na (Reveal Plan for the Conquest of Lan Na)*. Matichon.

Klonos, G. (2019). The robe of leaves: A nineteenth-century text of shugendo apologetics. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, *46*(1). https://doi.org/10.18874/jjrs.46.1.2019.103-128

Knudsen, B. T., Oldfield, J., Buettner, E., & Zabunyan, E. (2021). *Decolonizing colonial heritage*. Routledge eBooks. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003100102

Kyoto Shunju (2015). *Shogo-in Temple.* https://kyotoshunju.com/temple-en/shogo-in-temple/

Leopold, A. M., Jensen, J. S., & Leopold, A. M. (Eds.). (2004). *Syncretism in religion: A reader* . Equinox.

McGuire, M. P. (2013). What's at Stake in Designating Japan's Sacred Mountains as UNESCO World Heritage Sites? Shugendo practices in the Kii peninsula. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, *40*(2). https://doi.org/10.18874/jjrs.40.2.2013.323-354.

Phramaha Pabhakaro, P., Phrakrusamu Ciradhammo, T., & Peuchthonglang, P. (2022). Thammayut Sect: The Derivation and Difference in Code of Conduct in Lanna. *Paṇidhāna Journal*,18(1), 2-4.

Phramaha Pabhakaro, P., Phrakrusamu Ciradhammo, T., & Peuchthonglang, P. (2022). Dhammayuttika Nikaya: Propaganda and Development in Lanna*. Journal of Philosophy and Religion, Khon Kaen University*. *7*(1), 117.

Phra Thammadilok (Chan Kutsalo) (1995). *ตำนานอินทขิล: ฉบับสมโภช 600 ปี พระธาตุเจดีย์หลวง* [Inthakhin Legend: 600 years anniversary of Chedi Luang Stupa]. Bunsiri Press.

Prasongbandit, S. (2003). *ประเพณีสิบสองเดือน : พิธีกรรมที่เปลี่ยนไป* [Traditions of Twelve Months: Changing Rituals]. Sirindhorn Anthropology Center.

Rhum, M. (1987). The Cosmology of Power in Lanna. *Journal of the Siam Society*, *75*, 91–106.

Ring, T., Salkin, R. M., Schellinger, P. E., La Boda, S., Watson, N., Hudson, C., & Hast, A. (1996). *International dictionary of historic places*. Routledge.

Sansom, G. (1961). *A History of Japan, 1334-1615*. Stanford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503621152

Smith, L. (2006). *Uses of Heritage*. Routledge.

Stewart, C., Shaw, R., & European Association of Social Anthropologists (Eds.). (1994). *Syncretism/anti-syncretism: The politics of religious synthesis* (1. publ). Routledge.

Swanson, P. L. (1981). Shugendo and the yoshino-kumano pilgrimage: An example of mountain pilgrimage. *Monumenta Nipponica*, *36*(1), 55. https://doi.org/10.2307/238408

Swearer, D., Premchit, S. and Dokbuakeaw, P. (2004). *Sacred Mountains of Northern Thailand and Their Legends*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Press.

Tamura, Y., & Hunter, J. (2000). *Japanese Buddhism: A cultural history* (1st English ed). Kosei Pub. Co.

Tanabe, S. (2000). Autochthony and the Inthakhin Cult of Chiang Mai. In *Civility and Savagery: Social Identity in Tai States* (pp. 294–318). Curzon Press. 308-310.

Tantinipankul, W. (2023). Palace, prison, park or palimpsest? The contested heritage of the former palace of Chiang Mai. *MANUSYA: Journal of Humanities*, *26*(1) , 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1163/26659077-26010008

Tamman Phrathat Doi Suthep (Chronicle of Lord Buddha Relics Stupa at Doi Suthep) (1929). Sophonphiphatthanakon.

Wyatt, D. K. & Wichienkeeo, A. (1998). *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*. Silkworm Books.

Wichienkeeo, A. (2000). Lawa (Lua): A Study from Palm-Leaf Manuscripts and Stone Inscriptions. In Y. Hayashi & G. Yang (Eds.), *Dynamics of Ethnic Cultures Across National Boundaries in Southwestern China and Mainland Southeast Asia: Relations, Societies and Languages* (pp. 122–138). Ming Muang Printing House.