

## Social Organization : A Case Study of Chaopho Phrawo Worshipping Ritual in Nongbualumphu Province<sup>1</sup>.

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### Abstract

This paper aims at studying Nongbualumphu people's networking and social organization through the ritual performance of worshipping Chaopho Phrawo's spirit and his followers.

The study reveals that Chaopho Phrawo worshipping ritual is the ritual of worshipping both ancestral spirits and Thaen, the supreme local deity. This ritual is in accordance with ancient Laotian customs called Heet Sibsong. It is performed to present gratitude to local spirits and foretell the abundance of produce and the community's happiness. Furthermore, the ritual reveals Nongbualumphu people's networking and their social organization. The network is woven by sharing among its members the legends of Chaophos' spirits, telling about their statuses and sacredness. Their patients who will turn from ordinary people to be each Chaopho's Momnangs and their male human followers, called Chams after ritual participation. Regarding social organization, it is based on seniority system. Of the 6 groups of the spirits' Momnangs and followers, Chaopho Phrawo's medium is the most powerful. In the ritual context, she is the cultural leader and the central figure uniting all people who share the same ancestors and beliefs in the spirits' sacred power. The power functions as social mores strictly recognized, respected, and practiced by Nongbualumphu people. It is also the social mechanism that keeps people's lives in order and assures peace and happiness in their community.

### บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการประกอบพิธีบวงสรวงเจ้าพ่อพระวอ และเจ้าพ่อบริวาร และโครงสร้างทางสังคมจากระบบเครือญาติ การสร้างเครือข่ายและการจัดระเบียบทางสังคมของกลุ่มชนชาวเมืองหนองบัวลำภู

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า พิธีบวงสรวงเจ้าพ่อพระวอเป็นพิธีบูชาผีบรรพบุรุษและบูชาแถน เป็นการปฏิบัติตามฮีต 12 เพื่อแสดงความกตัญญู และเป็นการเสี่ยงทายความอุดมสมบูรณ์และความสงบสุขของชุมชน นอกจากนี้พิธีบวงสรวงเจ้าพ่อพระวอและเจ้าพ่อบริวาร ยังสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงระบบการสร้างเครือข่ายและการจัดระเบียบของชุมชนเมืองหนองบัวลำภู การสร้างเครือข่ายของกลุ่มชนเชื่อมโยงด้วยความเชื่อในตำนานเรื่องเล่าเกี่ยวกับสถานภาพ ความเป็นวีรบุรุษนักรบ และความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ของเจ้าพ่อแต่ละองค์ และการมีปฏิบัติสัมพันธ์กันด้วยประเพณีกินตอง หรือแต่งงาน โดยคนป่วยแต่งงานกับเจ้าพ่อและ

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เปลี่ยนสถานภาพจากคนปกติเป็นนางสนมของเจ้าพ่อ การสร้างเครือข่ายและการจัดระเบียบสังคมมี 2 ระดับ คือ ระดับครอบครัวและเครือญาติ มีการเคารพนับถือกันตามระบบอาวุโส นางสนมและเจ้าที่ถวายตัวเป็นบริวารด้วยความเชื่อถือและศรัทธา ซึ่งมีทั้งหมด 6 กลุ่ม โดยมีนางเทียมเจ้าพ่อพระวอมีอำนาจสูงสุด และมีนางเทียมเจ้าพ่อบริวารอีก 5 กลุ่ม ส่วนการสร้างเครือข่ายและการจัดระเบียบในระดับสังคม ในพิธีบวงสรวงเจ้าพ่อพระวอมีนางเทียมเจ้าพ่อพระวอเป็นผู้นำทางวัฒนธรรมและเป็นศูนย์กลางที่หลอมรวมผู้คนที่มีความเชื่อในบรรพบุรุษร่วมกันด้วยความศรัทธาในอำนาจศักดิ์สิทธิ์ อำนาจศักดิ์สิทธิ์จึงทำหน้าที่เป็นกฎระเบียบแบบแผนของสังคม ที่ลูกหลานชาวเมืองหนองบัวลำภูจะต้อง ยึดถือและปฏิบัติตามอย่างเคร่งครัด ลักษณะดังกล่าวเป็นกลไกสำคัญที่ช่วยให้กลุ่มชนดังกล่าวดำเนินวิถีชีวิตอยู่ร่วมกันอย่างมีระเบียบวินัย อันก่อให้เกิดความสงบสุขและความเป็นระบบระเบียบของชุมชนและสังคม

## Introduction

Nongbualumphu territory used to be an important province of Vientiane. At that time, some people in Nongbualumphu Province were original Vientiane Laotians who migrated from Vientiane. Therefore, people in Nongbualumphu had the same social, culture, and belief as those in Vientiane or Lan Chang in the past.

When Phrachao Siriboonsarn ascended the throne, he had conflict with Phra Ta and Phra Woraratpakdi, ministers of state in charge of keeping the king's benefits. Phra Woraratpakdi or Phrawo took his family and a number of soldiers to flee from Vientiane and settled at Nongbualumphu. He set himself free from Vientiane and established Nongbualumphu as a territory named "Nakorn Khuankhankabkaewbuaban." Phrachao Siriboonsarn was angry, so he sent his army to attack Nakorn Khuankhankabkaewbuaban for three years. Finally, Nakorn khuankhankabkaewbuaban was defeated. Phra Ta died in the battle. Phrawo with his family and some part of the army fled to resettle in the south.

People in Nongbualumphu still believe that they are offspring of Vientiane Laotians, so they adhered to original Lan Chang culture and belief and behave themselves accordingly. They also believe in ancestral spirits and the spirits of the city.

In his reign, Phrachao Photisarnrat decreed that all citizens not worship spirits. Besides, he ordered that all spirit halls be destroyed. He wanted his citizens to become Buddhists and go to temples to make merits and listen to Dhamma. However, Lan Chang Laotians still adhered to their beliefs in ancestral spirits, Mahesak spirits, and spirits of city god because these beings were important to their agricultural career. They were determined to maintain their ways of lives as they have had practiced for a long time. They still believed and performed rituals to worship ancestral spirits, and Thaen, the supreme local deity. They believed that ancestral spirits would protect them, their family members and the community from sickness, misfortune, and disaster while Thaen would give them rain for their crops, so they would have good harvest and fertility. These long-lasting beliefs in spirits and ancestral spirits as well as their common practice could not be eradicated from the society. Instead, there was an integration or compromise between the original belief in spirits and the faith in Buddhism. Since then the blending of these two has been adopted and practiced until now.

People of Nongbualumphu have strictly practiced according to Heet Sibsong Kongsibsi. During the months of 6-7, people perform rituals to worship guardian angels, Mahesak, the town god, and ancestral spirits to express their gratitude because these spirits protect them and bless them with happiness.

At present, Phrawo shrine or Chaopho Phrawo shrine is located as the city-spirit shrine. As people of Nongbualumphu believe that their ancestors migrated from Vientiane, they respect and believe the sacredness of their ancestral spirits. Consequently, a worshipping ritual has been performed every year.

In addition, there are shrines of Chaophu Loop, Chaophu Song, Chaophu Padaeng, and Chaomae Songnang. People believe that these Chaophu, Chaophu, and Chaomae are Chaophu Phrawo's followers. They helped Chaophu Phrawo to establish Nongbualumphu in the past. Nowadays, on the first Wednesday of June of every year before the rice growing season, people perform ritual to worship Chaophu Phrawo and his followers. There will be mediums of Chaophos to perform the ritual, allowing themselves to be possessed by the spirits of different Chaophos in the ritual arena. Actually, the context and the area where the ritual is performed are normally a simple ground, but on the specific day –the first Wednesday of June, the bodies of the mediums will be possessed by ancestral spirits from different shrines. People of Nongbualumphu who come as participants in the worshipping ritual must conduct themselves properly. They must follow the rules strictly. They must not violate taboos of the ritual. They must not show disrespect to all Chaophos. Everyone must respect every Chaophu, and be humble to be blessed on this auspicious occasion once a year. People participating in this ritual will wait for the prediction about fate, climate and rain which will bring fertility of crops that nourish lives of family members and community. They also wish for peace, safety and security of their own lives and their community.

Chaophu Phrawo worshipping ritual reflects the system of the original belief in ancestral spirits and social structure of people living in Nongbualumphu, including system of relatives, and networking of people in the community. The ritual also reflects statuses and social classes of each Chaophu's spirit, the mediums, and the followers. The reflections are interesting, and they might be factors to help people in the community develop unity and strength which is the main focus of this research study.

### **Research Objective**

The objectives of this study are to study social structure from the system of relatives, networking of the mediums and Chams at the shrines of Chaophu Phrawo, Chaophos' followers, and followers in the context of belief and Chaophu Phrawo worshipping ritual in the community of Nongbualumphu District, Nongbualumphu Province.

### **Scope of the Study**

1. The researcher collected field work data in the community of Nongbualumphu, and the research was conducted from October, 2013 to September, 2014.

2. The researcher investigated networking of the mediums, and Chams of Chaophu Phrawo, Chaophu Loop, Chaophu Song, Chaophu Padaeng, Chaophu Siang, and Chaophu Palah including relatives system, and those involved in the context of Chaophu Phrawo worshipping ritual in the community of Nongbualumphu, Nongbualumphu Province.

### **Research Implementation**

In conducting this research, the researcher did the following.

1. collected field work data in the targeted area. The data included information about customs, traditions, culture, and Chaophu Phrawo worshipping ritual in the community of Nongbualumphu, Nongbualumphu Province. Data gathering involves the following.

#### 1.1 Interview methods

The researcher interviewed Chams, the medium, and the elderly over 60 years old who have been living in the community and who have knowledge about Chaophu Phrawo worshipping ritual

1.2 Observation methods Observation included both participating observation and non-participating observation.

2. Data analysis was based on related theories or frameworks whereas the conclusion was descriptively presented.

## **Result of the Study**

From field work data, investigation from the performance of Chaopho Phrawo worshipping ritual, study of relatives system of the mediums, Chams and the participatory process of other followers' ritual according to the belief and Chaopho Phrawo worshipping ritual in the community of Nongbualumphu, Nongbualumphu Province, the researcher found the results which can be concluded as follows.

### **1. The Performer of the Ritual: Cultural Leader of the Community**

People living in Nongbualumphu Community will perform the ritual to worship Chaopho Phrawo and his followers every year on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> waxing moon's day of June. The main ritual performers are the mediums and Chams at the shrines of all six Chaophos, namely Chaopho Phrawo, Chaophu Loop, Chaopho Song, Chaopho Padaeng, Chaopho Siang, and Chaopho Palah. The mediums, and all Chams are considered the center of cultural authority that offspring and followers in the community pay much respect to. They are the following.

1.1 Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng , aged 89, is the medium of Chaopho Phrawo, the main city spirit of Nongbualumphu. Chaopho Phrawo is Chaopho with supreme power and is the chief of 5 follower Chaophos. Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng, the cultural leader of Nongbualumphu Community, lives in Bandonhaadsawan, Moo 9. She is the fourth inherited medium who has been the medium for Chaopho Phrawo worshipping ritual since A.D. 1990. She also heals sick people.

1.2 Mrs. On Waikaew, aged 73, is the medium of Chaophu Loop. Mrs. On Waikaew, the cultural leader of Ban Wangmuentai Community, lives in Moo 7. She has been the medium since A.D. 1993 as the medium in Chaophu Loop worshipping ritual.

1.3 Mrs. Bang-On Chantawong, aged 74, is the medium of Chaopho Song. Mrs. Bang-On Chantawong, the cultural leader of Ban Donhaadsawan Community, lives in Moo 9. She has been the fourth generation inherited medium since A.D. 1975, and she is the medium for Chaopho Song worshipping ritual.

1.4 Mrs. Moon Sabutkote, aged 61, is the medium of Chaopho Padaeng . Mrs. Moon Sabutkote, the cultural leader of Ban Kokgansang Community, lives in Moo 3. She has inherited as the medium from her grandmother since A.D. 1996, and she is the medium in Chaopho Padaeng worshipping ritual.

1.5 Mrs. Fon Ratanalongmuang, aged 79, is the medium of Chaopho Siang. Mrs. Fon Ratanalongmuang, the cultural leader of Ban Wangmuennua, lives in Moo 4. She has inherited as the medium from her grandmother since A.D. 1963 as the medium in Chaopho Siang worshipping ritual.

1.6 Mrs. Kampoo Gorhan, aged 72, is the medium of Chaopho Palah. Mrs. Kampoo Gorhan, the cultural leader of Ban Wangmuentai, lives in Moo7. She has been inherited as the medium from her grandmother since A.D. 1964, and she is the medium in Chaopho Palah worshipping ritual.

1.7 Mr. Kid U-para, aged 79, lives at Ban Donhaadsawan, Moo 9. He is Cham at Chaopho Phrawo's shrine. His duty is to take care of the shrine and arrange Chaopho Phrawo worshipping ritual annually.

1.8 Mr. Gaad Mongkonsawad, aged 61, lives at Ban Donhaadsawan, Moo 9. He is Cham under Mr. Kid U-para. His duty involves giving services such as taking care of the shrine, preparing sites, facilitating and providing conveniences, implementing the whole process of Chaopho Phrawo worshipping ritual.

Those who are the mediums and Chams must strictly follow the rules. They must not eat meat of big animals such as cows or buffaloes. They must not eat food or drink water offered in funeral. They must not sleep with their husbands or wives on Buddhist day of worship. Besides, male Chams are responsible for playing music using music instruments such as gong, drum, harp, and mouth organ. Some Chams participate in playing music during the worshipping ritual lasting for two days.

## **2. Legend of Chaopho: Story and Status of Ancestors and Network**

Nongbualumphu Community used to be the outpost town of Vientiane in the reign of Phrachao Chaiyachetthathirat. It was the town that involved in setting the troop for several battles. Consequently, people who lived there often moved to other places. As a result, people who are settled in Nongbualumphu Community now are original group of people and other groups of people that migrated to settle there later. Most people know and explain that they have settled here from the generation of grandfather and grandmother according to Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng. (interviewed on May 6, 2014) There are two spirit towers in the community: Chaopho Phrawo's and his followers'. One is situated at the foot of the hill behind Nakae Village and the other is at the city spirit shrine. The story tells about the status of ancestors who were warriors and settlers, their power, and sacredness. It was a confirmation of ideal to make an awareness of being the same ethnic group that can relate each group of people to know where they belong so that they will live in unity and harmony. Each Chaopho has legend or story to reflect his status and importance which people believe it is true. Besides, local history helps confirm that some parts of the story are true.

Networking links beliefs and people's relationship with legends and folktales some of which will be presented in order of status told by the villagers as follows.

### **2.1 Story about Chaopho Phrawo and His Followers**

The story told about Chaopho Phrawo and his followers has important factors to show the statuses of Chaophos in accordance with beliefs and historical data as the following.

#### **2.1.1 Story of Chaopho Phrawo**

Most villagers told the same story that Chaopho Phrawo was the ancestor who migrated groups of people from Vientiane to settle at Nongbualumphu Community where he was the ruler. Chaopho Phrawo was a skillful warrior who fought with enemies several times. After he died, there was a settlement of Nongbualumphu, and people invited Chaopho Phrawo's spirit to be the city spirit of Nongbualumphu. People in Nongbualumphu Community respected and believed in the sacredness of Chaopho Phrawo. They performed worshipping ritual for him every year. Big worshipping rituals in the community have been held twice a year. Chaopho Phrawo is the most powerful ancestral spirit of Nongbualumphu Community.

The story told about Chaopho Phrawo was that he was a ruler, a warrior, and a community leader. He established Ban Pangmuang Nongbualumphu in the past. The story told was related to historical account and most villagers in the community acknowledge it. Nongbualumphu Community was deserted several times and was resettled in the reign of King Rama 4. The group of people during the resettlement was likely to be people from Vientiane and Chaopho Phrawo's followers, who respected his ideal and bravery as a warrior. They invited Chaopho

Phrawo' spirit to be their ancestral spirit and as the city spirit of Nongbualumphu in the past, and Chaophu Phrawo has been with them since then up to the present.

#### 2.1.2 Story about Chaophu Loop

Chaophu Loop was Chaophu Phrawo's follower. Villagers believed that they were warriors joining the same army in ancient time. Chaophu Loop was a warrior migrating from Vientiane together with Phrawoprata. When there was a battle against Vientiane, Chaophu was an important warrior who played the main role in building the community and fighting against the army of Vientiane.

However, according to historical account, when Phrawo set up an army to fight against the army of Vientiane, one part of the account stated, " Muen Loop moved his army to camp in the north, and then led his troop to block the army from Vientiane at Na- dan." (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education, and the Fine Arts Department, 2544: 53)

#### 2.1.3 Story about Chaophu Padaeng

Chaophu Padaeng was Chaophu who requested to join Chaophu Phrawo and be his follower like other Chaophos. According to the story, Chaophu Padaeng was also a warrior who was in charge of the important duty in Boonbungfai Tradition of people in Nongbualumphu Community. People knew that Thao Padaeng is the name related to a local literary work namely Thao Padaeng and Nang Ai.

#### 2.1.4 Story about Chaophu Song

People told that Chaophu Song was a huge warrior who did not come with the army of Phrawo. He came later to be Chaophu Phrawo's follower.

#### 2.1.5 Story about Chaophu Siang

People told that Chaophu Siang was the younger brother of Phrawoprata who migrated from Vientiane. He helped his brother fight whenever enemy attacked Nongbualumphu District. Now he is the city spirit of Ban Wangmuennua, and the follower of Chaophu Phrawo.

#### 2.1.6 Story about Chaophu Palah

People told that Chaophu Palah was Chaophu who migrated from other regions. He asked to be Chaophu Phrawo's follower. Some people told that he was Phrawo's soldier who helped Phrawo fight in the battle in the past.

### 2.2 Status Structure and the Relationship of Chaophos in the Story

The theme of the story told about Chaophu Phrawo and the follower Chaophos include some important elements related to historical information and similar belief, that is, Chaophu Phrawo was the ruler or the hero who established the country. Now he is the city spirit of Nongbualumphu Community.

Chaophu Loop was Chaophu Phrawo's best and important soldier who was skillful in fighting. He fought in the battle when Vientiane attacked Nongbualumphu Community, and he was a soldier follower of Chaophu Phrawo.

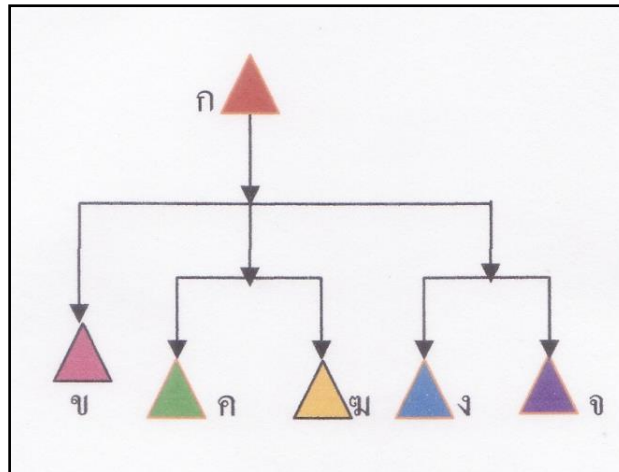
Chaophu Song was a warrior when Chaophu Phrawo established the settlement at Nongbualumphu Community. He was skillful in fighting, and he was a soldier follower of Chaophu Phrawo.

Chaophu Padaeng was a soldier follower who was a warrior and the main character in a local folklore named *Thao Padaeng Nang Ai*. The main character had the status of Bodhisattva, warrior and Thaen. Chaophu Padaeng was also Chaophu Phrawo's soldier follower.

Chaophu Siang was Phrawoprata's younger brother who migrated from Vientiane with his brother. He was a soldier follower who helped fight for the community.

Chaopho Palah was Chaopho who migrated from other regions to join Chaopho Phrawo. People could not clearly tell when these Chaophos joined Chaopho Phrawo. However, most people believed that Chaopho Padaeng was their ancestral spirit in Wangmuentai Village. He had an important status as Chaopho Phrawo's soldier follower.

Regarding status, the importance of each Chaopho represents network linking original belief which has passed on to the present as shown in the following diagram.



**Picture 1:** Diagram showing status and relationship of Chaophos in the story

- ก is Chaopho Phrawo, who has supreme power. His status is the ruler of Nongbualumphu District in history.
- ข is Chaophu Loop, who is a soldier follower and a warrior whose name appeared in historical account at the same time as Phrawophrata.
- ค is Chaopho Padaeng, who is a soldier follower related to the main character in the story told and the local folklore named *Thao Padaeng Nang Ai*.
- ง is Chaopho Song, who is a soldier follower of Chaopho Phrawo.
- จ is Chaopho Siang, who is a soldier follower and Chaopho Phrawo's younger brother.
- ฉ is Chaopho Palah, who is a soldier follower of Chaopho Phrawo.

From the diagram, the researcher classified the soldier followers into 3 groups:

Group 1: Chaophu Loop was the soldier follower whose name appeared in historical account like Chaopho Phrawo; Group 2: Chaopho Padaeng and Chaopho Song, who were Chaopho Phrawo's soldier followers and warriors. However, in considering their shrine setting, they are in different orders, at positions 3 and 4—this might be related to time dimension. The appearance of these two Chaophos, as the researcher observed, Chaopho Phrawo's original shrine was located at the foot of a hill at the end of Nakae Village, and there were only 4 shrines. The researcher assumed that originally there were only 4 Chaophos; Group 3 were Chaopho Siang and Chaopho Palah. It might be the later belief. However, there were stories told about important elements similar to those of other Chaophos. There were 4 original shrines, but there are now 6 shrines at the city pillar.

It can be seen that the belief about Chaopho Phrawo and the follower Chaophos shows status of importance clearly between Chaophos who were rulers and Chaophos who were soldier followers. Chaopho followers were ancestors of people in different communities including Ban Donhaadsawan, Ban Wangmuennua, Ban Wangmuentai,



Ban Kokganchang, Ban Maiwangthong, Ban Laothong, Ban Huaybong, Ban Tantawan, and neighboring communities. People in different communities have mutual consciousness as offspring and followers of Chaopho Phrawo and every follower Chaopho. Such belief and faith are essential part to link the relationship of people in the same social network so that there will be an interaction in the context of sacred ritual representing the unity of people in a community existed in the past and has remained up to the present.

### **3. Networking: Social Organization in the Case of Chaopho Phrawo Worshipping Ritual**

To seek network, power, and social organization culturally in Nongbualumphu Community, people must behave themselves according to Heet Sibsong; especially they have to worship the six ancestral spirits of their community, namely Chaopho Phrawo, who has supreme power, others are Chaophu Loop, Chaopho Padaeng, Chaopho Song, Chaopho Siang, and Chaopho Palah respectively. The holy beings, in people's world view, have important role in organizing society of their own groups. Social organization of people in Nongbualumphu Community is not a set of rules or requirements that must be followed as laws, but it is restriction and standard based on the system of beliefs in ancestral spirits and the system of seniority in relatives as the following.

#### **3.1 Networking and Social Organization in Relatives Groups of the Mediums and Chams**

In Nongbualumphu Community, people give much importance to seniority system, especially grandfathers and grandmothers, aunts, uncles, father, mother, brothers, and sisters, in order of status and age. People in the community live in the way that they depend on one another. Each community or village has a town pillar or Chaopho's shrine as a place of refuge they can hold onto. The medium, the oldest senior, is respected as the medium to unite the belief and faith of offspring and people in the real world so that they can interact with ancestral spirits living in supernatural world through Chaopho Phrawo worshipping ritual.

The medium is the representative of Chaopho at each community. The medium is important because she has cultural power to unite people's mind to be oneness. The medium of each Chaopho has to pass on the responsibility to the next generation, mostly and always within one family line. People believe that it is the will of Chaopho because Chaopho is the one to choose. Therefore, networking of each medium follows the same practice, that is, Chaopho selects offspring in a particular family line to inherit the duty of the medium. The followers can be relatives of the same family line, relatives through marriage or those who volunteer to be followers shown as the following.

##### **3.1.1 Network and Social Organization in the Family Line of Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng**

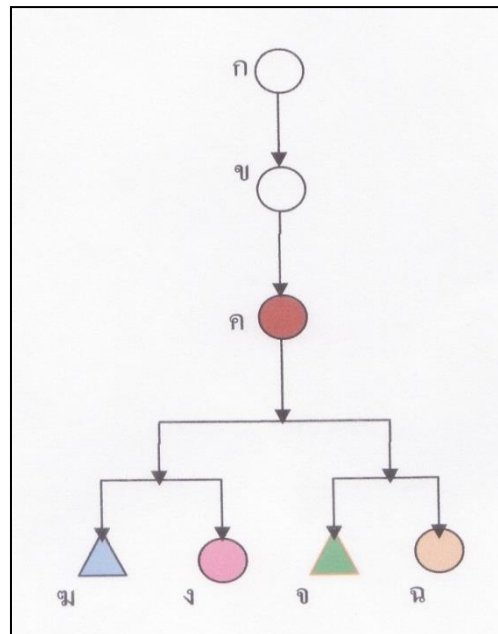
Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng is the medium of Chaopho Phrawo, who has the supreme power in Nongbualumphu. She has offspring who are the mediums of Chaopho's followers including Momnangs and Chams. Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng is the leader to perform activities in traditional events, and important rituals in Nongbualumphu District. People in Nongbualumphu respect her as their cultural leader.

Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng has done her duty as the medium of Chaopho Phrawo since she was 64 years old and for 24 years. The duty has been inherited as shown in the following diagram.

Mrs. Thongbai said that her Chuad (great great grandmother) was the medium, then followed by Mrs. Thongsuk Chaisongkram (not her relative), but was chosen by Chaopho and then Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng.

Now, the network of Mrs. Thongbai is divided into 3 groups: offspring and relatives; Momnangs (the patients that offered themselves to be followers) and Chams in her own family line; and the followers' mediums, Chams and Momnangs of follower mediums considered to be a big group in social level.



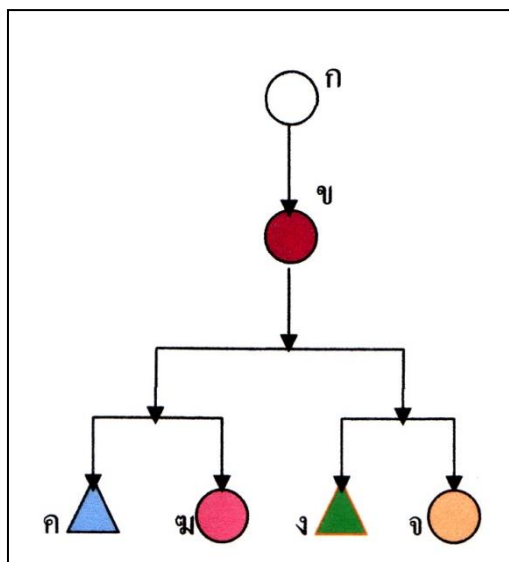


**Picture 2 :** shows network and followers of Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng

- ก is Chuad (great grandmother) of Mrs.Thongbai -- already passed away.  
Someone was the medium, but she cannot remember. She can remember that Chuad is the medium of Chaopho Phrawo.
- ข is Mrs. Thongsuk Chaisongkram –already passed away
- ค is Mrs.Thongbai Kruadaeng --the present medium of Chaopho Phrawo, with supreme power in the group of Chaopho Phrawo’s followers.
- ฅ are male offspring and relatives
- ง are female offspring and relatives
- จ are male patients who volunteer to be Chams— the followers
- ฉ are female patients who volunteer to be Momnangs-- the followers

### 3.1.2 Network and Social Organization in the Family Line of Mrs. On Waikaew

Mrs. On Waikaew is the medium of Chaophu Loop, who has less power than Chaopho Phrawo. Her duty is to use sword to predict fertility and prosperity in the ritual. This activity will be done together with Chaopho Phrawo’s medium. Mrs. On Waikaew is also the cultural leader in traditional events and important rituals in Nongbualumphu Province. She is respected by offspring in Wangmuentai Village, in Moo 7 and other villages. She remembers that she inherited to do her duty as the medium of Chaophu Loop from MaeYa (her mother-in-law)



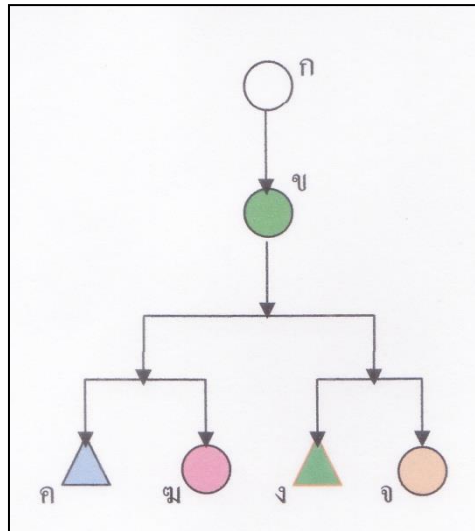
**Picture 3** : shows network and followers of Mrs. On Waikaew.

- ก is MaeYa or mother-in-law . She can't remember who was Chaophu Loop's medium before MaeYa.
- ข is Mrs. On Waikaew, the present medium of Chaophu. She is a big medium with supreme power in Chaophu Loop's medium group.
- ค is male offspring and relatives.
- ง is female offspring and relatives.
- ฉ is male patients who volunteer to be Chams' followers.
- ฉ is female patients who volunteer to be Momnangs' followers.

Net work of Mrs. On Waikaew consists of her offspring and relatives who pay respect to seniority system and groups of those who believe and have faith in Chaophu Loop; many of them come from other communities. These people are considered to be sub-groups of Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng's family line.

### 3.1.3 Network and Social Organization in the Family Line of Mrs. Moon Sabutkote

Mrs. Moon Sabutkote Chang has offspring, relatives, Cham –followers, and Momnangs in her own group. She has an important role in cultural functions as well. Mrs. Moon is Chaophu Padaeng's medium after Mrs. Pattama Sabutkote. (grandmother)



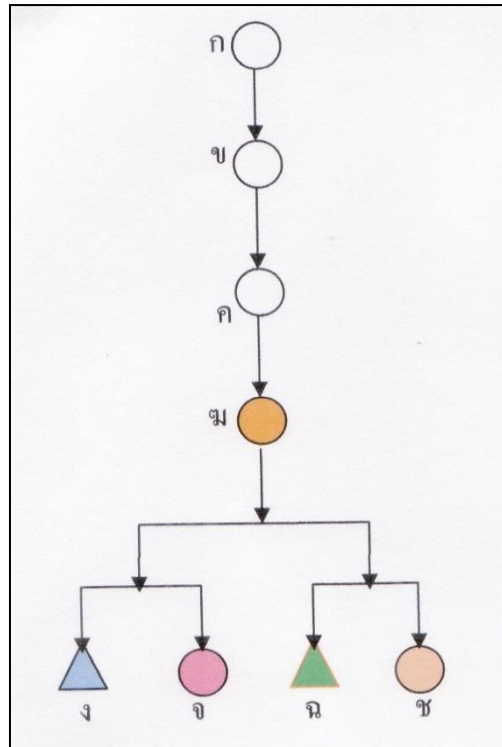
**Picture 4** : shows network and followers of Mrs. Moon Sabutkote

- ก is Mrs. Pattama Sabutkote (grandmother). Mrs. Moon can't remember who was the medium before her grandmother.
- ข is Mrs. Moon Sabutkote, the present medium of Chaopho Padaeng. She is a big medium with supreme power in the medium group of Chaopho Padaeng.
- ค is male offspring and relatives.
- ฌ is female offspring and relatives.
- ง is male patients who volunteer to be Chams' followers
- จ is female patients who volunteer to be Momnangs' followers.

Network of Mrs. Moon consists of offspring, relatives, Chams , and Momnangs who volunteer to be followers. They are sub-groups, all of which are followers of Chaopho Phrawo.

### 3.1.4 Network and Social Organization of Mrs. Bang-On Chantawong's Family Line

Mrs. Bang-On Chantawong is the medium of Chaopho Song. She has power secondary to Chaophu Loop. She has her own offspring, Cham-followers, and Momnangs'. She has a cultural important role like other Chaophos. Mrs. Bang-On cannot remember the first medium's name. The second was Mrs. Yee, the third –Mrs. Pad, and she –the fourth, as shown in the following chart.



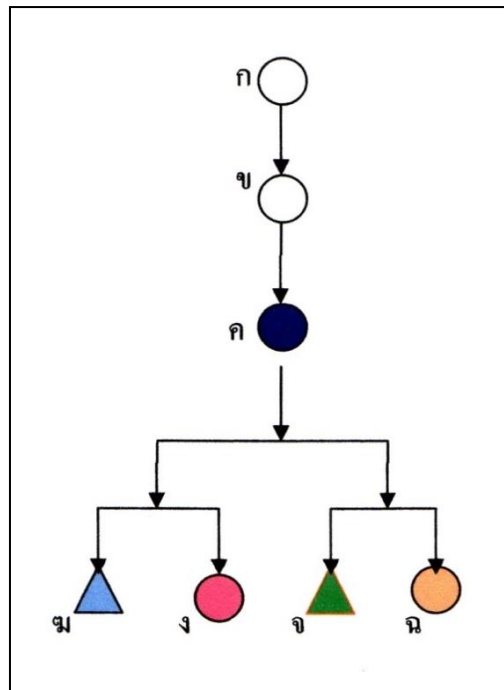
**Picture 5** : shows network and followers of Mrs. Bang-On Chantawong.

- ก is the first medium. (Mrs. Bang-On can't remember the name.)
- ข is Mrs. Yee. – passed away
- ค is Mrs. Pad. –passed away
- ง is Mrs. Bang-On, the present medium of Chaopho Song. She is a big medium with supreme power in Chaopho Song's medium group.
- จ is male offspring and relatives.
- ฉ is female offspring and relatives.
- ฉ is male patients who volunteer to be Chams' followers.
- ช is female patients who volunteer to be Momnangs' followers.

Mrs. Bang-On is the big medium of Chaopho Song. There are a lot of Chams' followers and Momnangs' in her network consisting of sub-groups which include relatives and others who respect her and offer themselves to be her followers. All of these followers also belong to Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng's followers.

### 3.1.5 Network and Social Organization of Mrs. Fon Ratanalongmuang's Family Line

Mrs. Fon Ratanalongmuang is the medium of Chaopho Siang. Mrs. Fon is respected by offspring, relatives, and people in Wangmuennua Village and others. She became a medium after her mother, and she is the third medium as shown in the following.



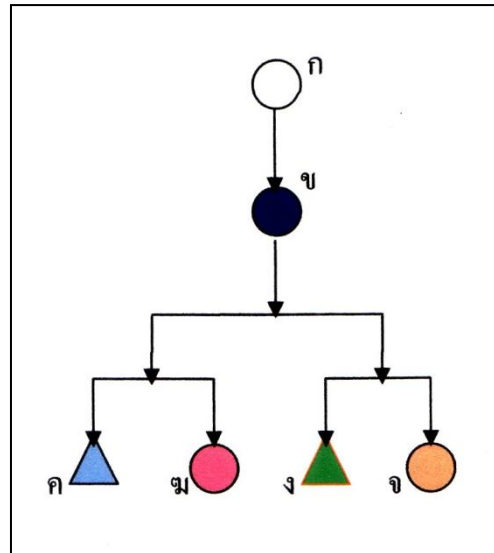
**Picture 6** : shows network and followers of Mrs. Fon Ratanalongmuang

- ก is Mrs. Fon Ratanalongmuang's grandmother. – passed away
- ข is Mrs.Za Kanha (mother). – passed away
- ค is Mrs. Fon Ratanalongmuang, Chaopho Siang's present medium. She is a big medium with supreme power in the medium group of Chaopho Siang.
- ฅ is male offspring and relatives.
- ง is female offspring and relatives.
- จ is male patients who volunteer to be Chams' followers.
- ฉ is female patients who volunteer to be Momnangs' followers.

Mrs. Fon Ratanalongmuang's grandmother was the first medium; the second was her mother, and she is the third. She is a cultural leader like other Chaophos. She is respected by offspring, relatives, Chams' , and Momnangs' followers, all of which are sub-groups belonging to the network of Chaopho Phrawo as well.

### 3.1.6 Network and Social Organization of Mrs. Kampoo Gorhan's Family Line

Mrs. Kampoo Gorhan is the medium of Chaopho Palah. She inherited the duty of the medium from Mrs. Za Gorhan (aunt) who is related to Mrs. On Waikaew.(sister-in-law)



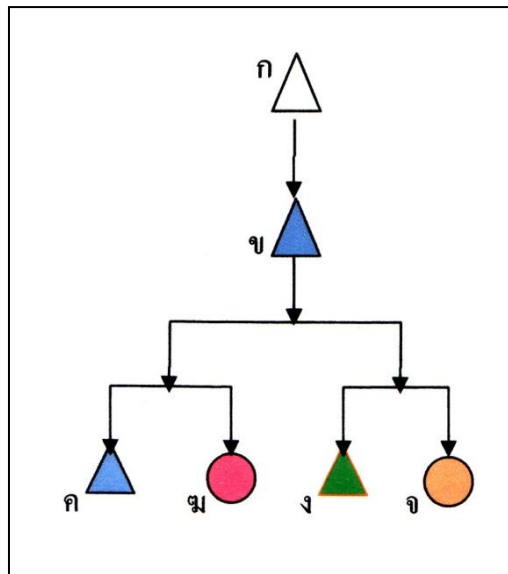
**Picture 7** : shows network and followers of Mrs. Kampoo Gorhan.

- ก is Mrs. Za Gorhan. (aunt)
- ข is Mrs. Kampoo Gorhan, the present medium of Chaopho Palah. She is a big medium with supreme power in the medium group of Chaopho Palah.
- ค is male offspring and relatives.
- ง is female offspring and relatives.
- จ is male patients who volunteer to be Cham's followers.
- ฉ is female patients who volunteer to be Momnang's followers.

Mrs. Kampoo Gorhan must do the duty like other Chaopho as the cultural leader. She is respected by offspring, relatives, Chams', and Momnangs' followers as well. Her group is the sub-group with not very many followers because it is a new group, and it also belongs to Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng's group followers.

### 3.1.7 Network and Social Organization of Mr. Kid U-para' Family Line

Mr. Kid U-para is the biggest Cham in Nongbualumphu District. Chams are not to be possessed. Instead, they are responsible for managing different rituals to run smoothly, correctly and conventionally. Chams are considered to be the followers of Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng, who is the medium of Chaopho Phrawo, who has supreme power. Other five Chaophos also have Cham-followers of different numbers, depending on believers and faith. Chaopho Phrawo is the one who choose big Chams from followers of highest seniority, and good morality. Big Chams should have service-mind and arewilling to help every offspring and follower. In the family line of Chams, there will also be network-followers as shown in the following picture.



**Picture 8** : shows network and followers of Mr. Kid U-para

- ก is Mr. Ha Ganha, the first Cham.
- ข is Mr. Kid U-para, the present Cham of Chaopho Phrawo. He is a big Cham with the highest power.
- ค is male offspring and relatives.
- ฅ is female offspring and relatives.
- ง is male patients who volunteer to be Cham's followers and are respected as big Chams.
- จ is female patients who volunteer to be Cham's followers and are respected as big Chams.

Mr. Kid U-para is respected by offspring, relatives, and Cham-followers of five other Chaophos including Momnangs who respect him according to seniority system, the same way as they respect the medium.

From the above-mentioned, it shows that networking and social organization at the level of family and relatives follow seniority system in relative groups. If the supreme medium or Cham pass away, Chaopho will choose a new medium from offspring and relative group to inherit the duty as the medium. In choosing the female medium, if there is no female offspring or the female offspring is too young for the position; or the offspring does not have good mind and conduct according to the convention considered to be impure, Chaopho will choose Momnang from other family line who is appropriate to be the medium. The selection of male Cham follows the same way.

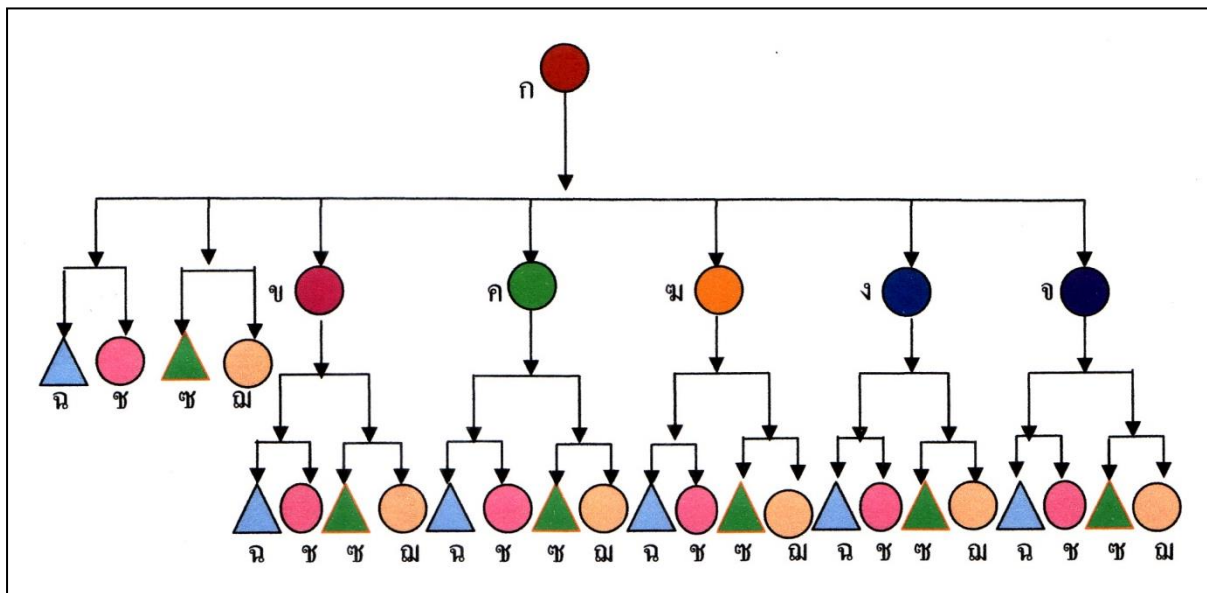
Processes in selecting the mediums and Chams are networking based on seniority system and through rituals and beliefs in the same ancestral spirits. These characteristics are the processes of social organization from relatives group to social group of people in Nongbualumphu Community. The statuses of Chaophos and the medium of each Chaopho imply social statuses. People are grouped in the order of statuses of ancestral spirits and the mediums. Each medium has an important role in performing rituals based on original belief and then generate faith to reality. The medium is the spiritual center of every offspring and follower and can unite and enable all of them to be cooperative at the family and community level because each medium is the representative of Chaopho



of each community. It is also the center of faith that can unite everyone to become oneness. The process of social organization and sacred rituals is an important mechanism to build interaction and organize people of Nongbualumphu Community in good order and harmony.

### 3.2 Network and Social Organization in the Community

The annual Chaopho Phrawo worshipping ritual is the main ritual that hold and combine people of Nongbualumphu who have the same belief in ancestral spirits together. People come together every year to participate and perform the ritual because they believe that the ritual will bring fertility, prosperity and peace to their community. Many groups of people participate in the ritual, and each group belongs to the same network of the medium and the 6 Chaophos, namely Chaopho Phrawo, Chaophu Loop, Chaopho Song, Chaopho Padaeng, Chaopho Siang, and Chaopho Palah. Each group has many offspring and followers as shown in the layout-picture of each Chaopho followers. They come together at the center represented by Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng, who is the medium with supreme power in accordance with the status of Chaopho Phrawo as shown in the following picture.



Picture 9: shows network and structure of people's interaction in the community

ก is Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng, the medium of Chaopho Phrawo, who has supreme power, and is respected by many groups of people. For example, (ก) and (ข) are male and female offspring and relatives; (ค) and (ง) are Chams, Momnangs selected to be Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng's followers. Besides, there are Chaophu Loop's medium (ข), Choapho Padaeng's medium (ค), Chaopho Song's Medium (ง), Chaopho Siang's medium (จ), and Chaopho Palah's medium (ฉ). Each of the five mediums' family lines consists of male and female offspring and relatives along with a lot of Chams' and Momnangs' followers. All of the above-mentioned network are followers under the authority of Mrs. Thongbai Kruadaeng.

In the context of Chaopho Phrawo worshipping ritual, offspring and relatives under each family line including Chams and Momnangs – followers of all Chaophos gather to participate in the important ritual of the community. Everyone has an opportunity to have a social gathering. They pay respect and salute one another in

accordance with seniority and status. The younger offspring have chances to apologize adult relatives and the medium who is their relatives. Each medium gives blessings to offspring and relatives, reconciles those offspring and relatives who have conflicts. In the context of sacred ritual, everyone forgives each other, having each Chaopho represented by Chaopho's medium as witness.

The annual Chaopho Phrawo worshipping ritual has been performed in 2 days. This ritual gives chances to offspring, Chams and Momnangs to entertain themselves, and relieve them from problems, worries and hardship which have burdened them throughout the year. During the ritual, they dance, shout, sing, and scream to their hearts' content so that they feel relieved from suffering and accumulated exhaustion in these two days. At the same time, the annual worshipping ritual is a preparation to get ready for the coming growing season which means the coming of hard work again. The ritual allows people to get together and wait for the prediction of fertility of the new season. If the prediction is good and desirable, people feel confident to lead a happy life and be ready to face hardship in the future because they think that growing rice is an inherited career from their ancestors, so they have to continue and maintain it.

Many groups of people join Chaopho Phrawo worshipping ritual. They are people from Nongbualumphu Community including offspring and followers of every Chaopho, and every Chaopho's mediums who live in many villages such as Muang Community, Ban Nakae, Ban Nua, Kum Watsrikoonmuang, Ban Donhaadsawan, Ban Wangmuennua, Ban Wangmuentai, Ban Kokganchang, Ban Yaiwangthong, Ban Klang, Ban Tantawan, and Ban Huaysai, etc. Groups of people in each village join the worshipping ritual because they believe, have faith in, and be aware of having the same ancestors and ethnic groups. Chaopho Phrawo and followers of Chaophos worshipping ritual offer them opportunity to express their gratitude towards their ancestors.

## Conclusion

Chaopho Phrawo worshipping ritual is an annual important religious ceremony. There are six mediums each of which has status in order of Chaophos' power in Nongbualumphu Communities. Each medium has cultural power, and each is the spiritual center of their offspring and followers in their family line. The respect is based on seniority and faith of the followers. This characteristic is networking based on seniority in the family line which is fundamental to social stratification. The medium with supreme power is Chaopho Phrawo's medium. Other Chaophos' mediums, their offspring, and followers are under the authority of Chaopho Phrawo's medium. The power or authority is stratified according to the status of each Chaopho based on the belief in legends about Chaophos. The sacred worshipping ritual reflects the belief in supernatural power combining with cultural power and the actual practice which hold and mold people from various communities to become one-minded through the medium acting as the intermediary to pass on ancestral spirits' sacred power to their offspring and followers. It can be seen that people's belief in legends and the stories told about power and sacredness of ancestral spirits, their respect to one another on seniority basis, and their faith in Chaopho Phrawo worshipping ritual are important factors to strengthen and confirm the awareness of groups of people to unite, compromise, and stabilize all of them to become oneness. These factors are important mechanism which enable offspring, relatives, people who live in the same cultural area, and people from other areas to have good interaction with one another. However, the same belief and faith, as well as the characteristics of network are rather complicated. The network of the system of family line including offspring, relatives, Chams' and Momnangs' followers from sub-groups enables people to gather into a big group in a

community whereas their ideal concept of shared ancestors and ethnic group finally allows them to live cooperatively, orderly, and peacefully .

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### Interviewing

- Mr. Gaad Mongkonsawad was **interviewed** on May 8, 2014.
- Mr. Kid U-para was **interviewed** on May 7, 2014.
- Mrs. Kampoo Gorhan was **interviewed** on May 6,2014.
- Mrs. Thongbai Krueadaeng was **interviewed** on May 6,2014.
- Mrs. Bang-on Chanthawong was **interviewed** on April 12,2014.
- Mr. Prasert Krueadaeng was **interviewed** on May 6,2014.
- Mrs. Fon Ratanalongmueang was **interviewed** on April 12,2014.
- Mrs. Pisawas Wong-Anu was **interviewed** on May 6,2014.
- Mrs. Supap Srikulawong was **interviewed** on May 8,2014.
- Mrs. Moon Sabutkote was **interviewed** on April 12,2014 .
- Mrs. On Waikaew was **interviewed** on April 12,2014 .