

The Dai Minority Group in Xishuangbanna and Its Buddhist Religion

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Abstract

Xishuangbanna is an autonomous prefecture lead by its local minority people. As the majority population and largest aboriginal minority group in Xishuangbanna, this autonomous prefecture is lead by the local Dai people. Due to traditional culture and way of life, religions such as Muslim, Buddhist, and original local religion are found among the aboriginal minority groups. For a better understanding of the Dai people and their believes, this paper will be divided into three themes. The first part outlines the three religions in the Xishuangbanna area, namely original religion, Muslim religion and Buddhist religion. The second part mainly concerns the Dai people and Theravada Buddhism. Moreover, the Theravada Buddhism and its construction systems are considered. The third part analyzes the impact of Theravada Buddhism upon the local Dai people and its society, the description covers social political, social life, traditional culture and the future impact. Moreover, the current situation of Theravada Buddhism also present in this part.

Keywords: Xishuangbanna, Dai people, Theravada Buddhist, Impact

1. Introduction

Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture (XSBN) is located in the southwest part of China, facing Southeast Asia, bordering with Burma (Myanmar) and Laos. The Mekong River runs here and is known locally as the Lancang River. There are over 13 minority groups located in the XSBN area, and each of these minority groups has their own unique culture and traditional way of life. As the daily life and traditional culture developed, religions were created or inherited. The Original religion was created with the aim to fulfill their daily life and involved some specific festivals. With the increase in trading activities and with some exchange activities, other religions began to spread into the XSBN area. In accordance with this, the Muslim and Buddhist religions are the two influential religions in the XSBN area. As the aboriginal group with the greatest population in the XSBN area, the Dai group and its religious beliefs are mostly focused on in this paper. In order to get a better understating of the set objectives, secondary data, observation, and in-depth interview methods are applied in this paper.

2. Religions in the Xishuangbanna Area

Xishuangbanna is located in the southwest part of Yunnan province, PR. China and was founded in 1953. 'XSBN' is the Mandarin transliteration of 'Sipsong Panna' in the Dai language. 'Xishuang' means 'twelve' and 'banna' means 'one thousand pieces of land', thus 'Xishuangbanna' can be directly translated into 'twelve thousand pieces of land', which refers to its old twelve administrative

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districts. Covering an area of 19,125 square kilometers, XSBN is composed of one municipal city of Chiang Hong (Jing Hong), two districts of Muang Hai (Menghai) and Muang La (Mengla), and 31 townships (Xishuangbanna Statistics Bureau, 2006). More than 13 aboriginal minority groups, with a population of 1.13 million, live in the XSBN area and each of the minority groups have their own unique culture and traditional way of life. As the daily life and traditional culture required, some religions were created or inherited.

2.1 Original Religion

In the ancient times, due to less production capacity, the ancestor minority groups in XSBN tried to find spiritual support to protect their group. Due to this, their original religion came in to their lives.

In the original religion, aboriginal groups created one general ancestor to protect them, which was named 'Diula'. Diu la could control all the issues affecting the local aboriginal groups. Based on different areas, there are two different Diula, one is in charge of the whole XSBN area and is called 'Pi meng'; the other is for the village and is called 'Pi man'.

'Pi meng' is the incarnation of the leader of the XSBN area and, according to legend in the XSBN area, Pi meng is an ugly monster, while Pi man is the incarnation of the village leader, with different villages having their own Pi man. There is only one Pi meng for the whole XSBN area.

With time passing and social development, now only a few minority groups in XSBN still believe in this original religion, such as the Jinuo minority group.

2.2 Muslim Religion

Regarding the Muslim religion in XSBN, there are two different legends to describe how it spread to the XSBN area :

1) Flee after the war

At the end of the Qing Dynasty, General Du Wenxiu led the Hui minority group, whose religion is Muslim, to fight against the government. Unfortunately, they could not win the battle, so General Du took the remnants of his soldiers and fled to XSBN. In order to guarantee their posterity, they married with local minority people in XSBN, and thus brought their religion to the area;

2) South silk road

Hui ethnic⁴ businessmen Ma Guotou, Ma Haiqing, and Ma Qinglong took salt from northern Yunnan to trade with other people, they chose the South silk-road through XSBN to India. When they entered into the XSBN area, they did not want to go further. Therefore, they gave some salt as a gift to the local leader and asked for permission to stay and marry with local people in the XSBN area. Then they married the local leaders' daughters, teaching them to obey Muslim religious disciplines.

It has been over 240 years since the Muslim religion spread into the XSBN area. However, due to the longer history of the Theravada Buddhists and the beliefs of the majority of the local people, only two villages in XSBN believe in the Muslim religion.

2.3 Buddhist Religion

⁴ Hui Ethnic group in China refers to Muslim group

In the Buddhist calendar year of 2005⁵, the Theravada Buddhist religion (also known as ‘南传佛教’ in Chinese) was spread through Myanmar to the southern part of Yunnan province. Since the principles of Theravada Buddhism matched the aboriginal minority groups' social management system, the Theravada Buddhists could stay with some of the aboriginal minority groups, such as the Dai group and Bulang group. With development and by being spread in the XSBN area for over six hundred years, Theravada Buddhism became the majority religion believed in by the Dai group and the Bulang group.

Theravada Buddhism requires people to follow five religious disciplines,

- a) ‘Ba na’, which means ahimsa
- b) ‘Gami’, which means adultery is strictly prohibited
- c) ‘Musha’, which means tricking is not allowed
- d) ‘A ding’, which means stealing is strictly prohibited
- e) ‘Sula’, which means excessive drinking is not allowed.

According to the bureau of religion in XSBN, every Dai and Bulang minority group based community has at least one Theravada Buddhist temple. Over 99% of these two minority groups in XSBN believe in Theravada Buddhism. Based on this, Theravada Buddhists should, and need, to guide the social and cultural development of these two minority groups in the XSBN area.

3. Dai Ethnic Group in Xishuangbanna

The Dai ethnic group is a minority group in XSBN with a population of around 316,151 (2010). As a large and unique group in the XSBN area, their traditional culture and special ways of life have become an important characteristic in identifying this aboriginal group.

3.1 The Bei Ye Culture

Bei Ye Culture is a general term for the social and cultural history of the Dai people. Bai Ye cultural artifacts and traditions include original scripture etched onto the leaves of the pattra tree (a tropical plant native to the Dai homelands), as well as a plethora of lesser cultural traditions that are handed down from generation to generation, and thus every Dai individual is a walking preserve of Dai culture. The Bei Ye Culture became known especially for the scriptures that were etched onto the leaves of the pattra tree.

Bei Ye scriptures, as indicated, are preserved on two different media: the leaf of the pattra tree and paper made of cotton. The former is called "Tanlan" in the language of the Dai, while the latter is called "Bogalesha". The Bei Ye culture has developed over time from its origins as a collection of primitive ethnic and religious practices that have been combined with the influences of neighboring cultures, primarily the Han Chinese culture, but also the Indian Buddhist culture.

3.2 The Dai Building Structure

The most typical building material in Dai culture is bamboo, and the building style of the typical Dai house is called "Gan Lan". The columns, beams, purlins, rafters, and walls of the house are made of bamboo, as is the gate leading to the house. In fact, the grass, or thatch, that covers the roof of a Dai traditional house is held together in tufts, or bundles, with the help of bamboo twigs, which are quite elastic. A traditional Dai house is two-storey and roughly square in shape. The upper storey serves as

⁵ Buddhist calendar 2005 is the Gregorian calendar 1462.

the living quarters for the family, while the lower storey, which may be only partially walled in, but is generally partitioned into more than one room, serves as a storeroom for grain, etc., and as a shelter for livestock.

3.3 Dai People's Eco Values

The Dai people's ethos defines the family as the basic unit of society, while individuals are only one part of the family. Along with this concept, Dai people believe that all beings have their own soul and due to this original belief, Dai people treat all beings equally.

The Dai have always been an agricultural people of the lowland valleys and headstream of the Mekong River, where they cultivated wet rice with the use of water buffalo and harvested a wide range of fish and shellfish from the Mekong River. The Dai people's traditional way of life was formed during their ancestral period, as they believe in the equality of each being in the universe. As forestry could maintain the water resources, water could irrigate the farmland, the farmland could produce the rice to feed the people, then in order to survive in the universe, the eco-way of life must be formed. This complete ecological chain still guides the Dai people's way of life.

4. Dai People's Buddhist Religion

In the year 1462, Theravada Buddhism was spread through Myanmar to the southern part of Yunnan province. Since the principles of Theravada Buddhism matched the Dai social 'Tusi' system, Theravada Buddhists could be maintained within the Dai ethnic group. With development and spreading in the Dai ethnic area for over six hundred years, now Theravada Buddhism has become the majority religion believed in by the Dai ethnic group.

As the Buddhist religion has been maintained in the XSBN Dai people's daily life for over six hundred years, some traditions have already become matured. As the Buddhist religion requested, the young Dai boy has to convert to become a Buddhist monk once in his life, they study the Dai written language in the temple and study traditional Dai culture. Most of them have the possibility to continue to study in the Buddhist University in XSBN. After graduation, they have to go back to their community to train the young monks and teach the Dai spoken and written language as well. This virtuous circle not only guarantees the Buddhist religion is inherited, it also maintains the Dai traditional spoken and written language.

With the development of Dai society, and the development of the spread of the Theravada Buddhism, nowadays Theravada Buddhism has become the majority religion believed by 99% of the Dai group.

Before the Buddhist religion spread into the Dai people's daily life, the people had their own original religion to satisfy the needs of their daily life. Compared with the original religion and the other religions that have appeared in the XSBN area, some positive perspectives of the Buddhist religion could be summarized by in-depth interview,

4.1 Theravada Buddhism Is More Advanced Than the Original Religion

As the principles of the Buddhist religion are well matched with the local Dai group's 'Tusi' system⁶, the ethnic leaders believed that this was a religious fate offered by their ancestors. Based on this, the local leaders requested that all the Dai people change their beliefs to Theravada Buddhism. Since Theravada Buddhist disciplines require the people to do good things, it is easy for the local people to find a fusion between Theravada Buddhism, their eco values and way of life.

⁶ Tusi system is a management system controlled by the Dai leader.

The Dai minority group is a group with a long history, before Theravada Buddhism spread into their daily life, the Dai only had spoken language. The group leader worried about this situation, as they wanted to maintain their unique culture and make the Dai group stronger. When they saw the Buddhist sutra had a written language and completed religious principles, they believed that Theravada Buddhism was much more advanced, and the written language could be used to record their own unique culture.

4.2 The Powerlessness of the Original Religion, and the Power of the New Religion

The original religion requested the people to show respect to their ancestors. However, respect to the ancestors could not stimulate low rice production. Dai people gradually lost confidence in the original religion, they needed a new belief to provide them with inner sustenance. Based on this, after the Theravada Buddhism spread into the Dai people's daily life, the group leader strongly supported the new religion as it tried to mix all the Buddhist principles and culture into Dai ethnicity. At the same time, Theravada Buddhism considered the exclusiveness of the original religion and made some changes in order to adapt to its new environment.

4.3 Original Religion Compromised Itself to the Theravada Buddhism

During the early period of the Buddhist religion spreading to the Dai ethnic group, the original religion may have had the chance to overtake it, but it did not do so. During a crop failure period, Dai people usually went to the original religion place to make a blessing and pray for a bumper harvest. However, when Theravada Buddhism spread into the Dai ethnic group, with strong support from the group leader, the Dai people became willing to join in with the Buddhist blessing. When the original religion realized this dangerous situation, they allowed their believers join in with the other people at the Buddhist temple. They lost their chance to keep the balance between the two beliefs, and compromised their religion to the Theravada Buddhism.

5. The Structure of Buddhist Religion

After being accepted by the Dai group, the Theravada Buddhists tried to establish their own system for better serving the local leader and Dai people, also for maintaining their position as the most powerful religion. The temple and monks are the two basic elements of the Buddhist religion in the XSBN area, as the temple offers a place for daily prayer and festival ceremonies, while monks, as the ones in charge of the daily praying and the hosts for the festival ceremonies, play a very important role for the Buddhist religion in the XSBN area.

The temple, as a basic and necessary component of the Dai village, is respected by all the believers in the village. Moreover, the temple is normally built near the houses in the village, to ensure that the Dai followers join the blessing ceremonies.

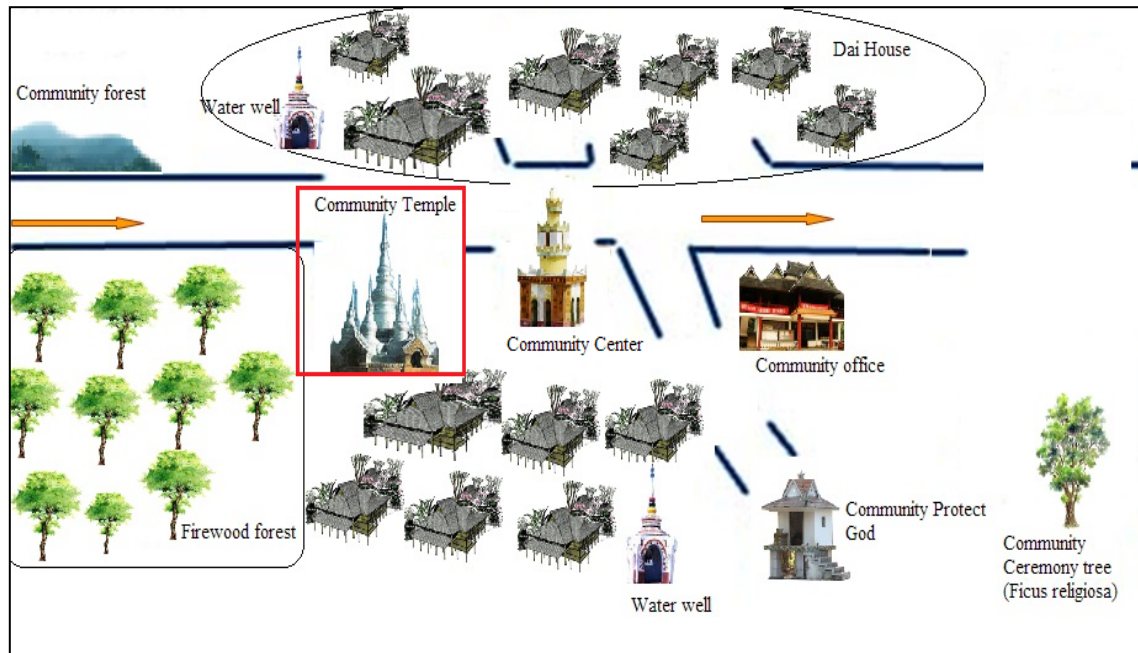


Fig. 1 Map of the Dai ethnic village, temple located in the center of community

5.1 Temple System

At the beginning of the establishment of the Buddhist temple system, the structure was the same as for the Dai power system, which was one head temple to supervise all the lower level temples and the rest were village temples. However, due to the huge numbers (1,600 temples) of village level temples, one head temple was not enough to supervise them, a suitable management had to be adopted within the government administration system.

When the local leaders and the Buddhist leader realized the seriousness of the situation, they organized a new temple system for the Dai group, that is one top level temple (Wat Long) located in the center of XSBN, three lower level temples (Wat Lapingjia) located in three districts of the XSBN area, and village temples (Wat) located within the Dai communities.

1) Central Temple in General (Wat Long)

Wat Long is the title for the head temple in general, which is the top level Buddhist temple in the XSBN area, authorized to supervise lower level temples (Wat Lapingjia and Wat).

2) District Temple (Wat Lapingjia)

Wat Lapingjia is the second level Buddhist temple located in the three sub-districts of XSBN, which take responsibility to supervise all lower level temples.

3) Community Temple (Wat)

The Wat is the basic unit for the Buddhist temple system among the Dai group in the XSBN area, every village should have at least one Wat. The village level's blessing ceremony is normally hosted in their own Wat.



Central Wat in General



District Wat



Community Wat

5.2 Monk System

As indicated above, the temple is built for followers to make their blessing ceremonies. Who organizes the ceremony? For the original religion, the religious leader would organize the ceremony. With the shift from the original religion to Buddhist religion, during the initial period, ceremonies were organized by the Dai group leader. With the increasing number of Dai followers and the rapid development of Buddhism in the Dai minority group, monks replaced the local leader in organizing Buddhist ceremonies.

For supporting the development of the Buddhist religion, the group leader requested all the young Dai boys to convert to Buddhism. As with the Theravada Buddhist temple system, there are five levels for the monks in the XSBN area,

- 1) Pra Nuo (小和尚 in Chinese), is a boy just converted to Buddhism, they need to learn both Dai spoken and written language. They study the Buddhist regulations to be a monk.
- 2) Pra (和尚 in Chinese), is one who has been trained for a few years in reading and writing Dai languages and characters. He has been accepted by the 'Du Long' and could convert to become a real monk.
- 3) Du (佛爷 in Chinese), is the abbot of a village temple. It normally takes 10 years to reach this level.
- 4) Du Long (大佛爷 in Chinese), is the abbot of the district temple. There is only one abbot in the temple, he is selected by the villagers and is aware of everything from the Buddhist Sutra. He has the basic ability to supervise the monks in the temple.

With improvement to his Buddhist knowledge and gaining management experience as the abbot of a temple, Du Long could upgrade into 'Hu ba'.

- 5) Hu ba, needs more than 15 years experience of learning Buddhist Sutra. He could be upgraded to Hu ba level through the local leaders' recommendation and by passing Buddhist exams. Hu ba cannot resume their secular lives. This is the top level for the monks of the Dai society in the XSBN area.

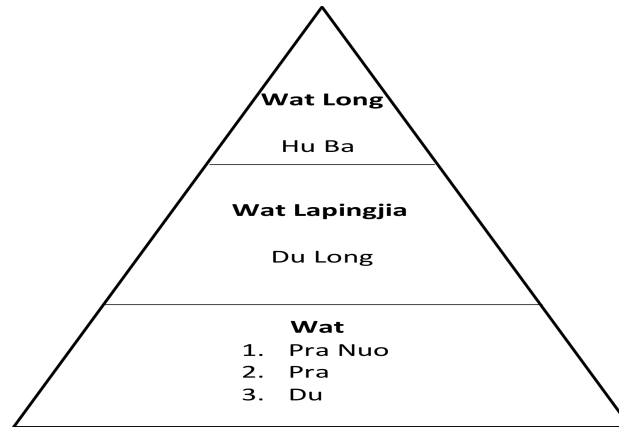


Fig. 2 Temple system and Monk system in XSBN

To date, there are over 1,600 temples with around 10,000 monks in the XSBN area⁷ (2016). The temple, as a place for holding Buddhist festivals and blessing ceremonies, has already been accepted and inherited by the local residents. The monks, as the Buddhist ceremony hosts, play an important role in the daily blessing ceremony with Dharma talks being given to the local residents.

The relationships between the monks and local residents are stable and harmonious; providing food for the monks in the early morning has been in operation for hundreds of years, donating money for construction of temples, following the Buddhist regulations, etc. have long been a part of the local residents' way of life.

Moreover, before Theravada Buddhists were involved in Dai society, there were no written characters in daily use. For better recording of the Dai history, the monks applied some Pāli characters, adapted to the local oral pronunciation, to create the unique Dai written characters. Therefore, in the XSBN area Buddhist monks are also in charge of disseminating the Dai written language; every Dai family encourages their son to convert to Buddhism so that the Dai traditional culture can be inherited.

In summary, the Buddhist religion, as an advanced spiritual support, has been accepted by the Dai group for over six hundred years; the believers always obey the rules and religious disciplines, which make them good and kindhearted. Moreover, the Buddhists also set good examples for conserving the Dai traditional culture and have a positive impact upon the social life within Dai society.



Local villager feed the monks



Monks make blessing ceremony



Tonsure Ceremony

6. Impact of Buddhist Religion

⁷ <http://dy.163.com/wemedia/article/detail/BHFVAFSP052182IJ.html>

The Buddhist religion has been accepted in the Dai group for over six hundred years, the system and structure has already matured. As the only religion believed by over 99% of Dai people, the impacts of Buddhism are obvious and outstanding.

6.1 Education

In the XSBN area, every Dai village has at least one temple. The temple for them is not only a Buddhist activities place, it is also the place for teaching young kids how to conserve the Dai traditional culture, and how to write the Dai languages. Therefore, the education provided in the temple makes a great contribution to Dai traditional culture. Young Dai boys, aged around 8-9 years old, need to become monks in the temple, to learn the Buddhist Sutra, to study the history of the Dai group, and learn the Dai characters. As a part of a complete education system, the Buddhist religion in XSBN also has its own University, supporting the Dai students to earn an education degree. Some who have got an education in temple have become famous singers or poets after they return to the laity. Those who have learned about Dai traditional medicine could use their knowledge to check the local people's health. The Buddhist temple has trained for a lot of monks to become intellectuals.

6.2 Daily Life

Nowadays, when people give birth or pass away, local Dai people will ask the monks to make a blessing ceremony and to recite scriptures. They will invite the 'Da foye' to name the baby, for good luck in the future. Therefore, Buddhism has entered into every element of daily life among Dai people.

6.3 Spoken and Written Language

Dai spoken and written language was built based on Pāli characters. In the beginning, the Buddhist Sutra was written using Pāli characters, the group leader asked the Dai talents to create their own spoken and written language based on Pāli characters. After that, the Dai people could use their own language to rewrite the Buddhist Sutra. Nowadays, only the temple can teach the Dai written language. Moreover, the temple has become the research and education center for the Dai people and outside researchers to study Dai spoken and written language and to learn the Dai traditional culture. Therefore, the Dai language can be preserved⁸.

6.4 Folk Performance

The peacock dance and elephant foot percussion are the most popular folk shows of Dai culture, both could be observed during a Dai traditional festival. According to the ethnography of the Dai group, before the Buddhist religion spread into the Dai people's daily life, there was no peacock dance or elephant foot percussion. As Buddhist sutra mentions, the peacock and the elephant are symbols for luck, the Buddhist believers follow the movements of the peacock and elephant, trying to use these folk performances to represent them and spread the luck to all the believers. Nowadays, the peacock dance and the elephant foot percussion have become familiar to the outside tourists. Moreover, for better conservation of this Dai unique folk performance, the Central government has certified these two folk performances as 'National Level Intangible Cultural Heritage'.

6.5 Dai Calendar

⁸ Interview with a Dai spiritual leader in XSBN.

The calendar was established along with the spread of the Buddhist religion. Previously, the Dai people used an original way to count the days and time. With the development of the Buddhist religion, the Dai people realized that the Theravada Buddhist calendar was very easy to remember and convenient for recording the time and date. Therefore, they made their own calendar based on the Buddhist calendar, setting April 13th as their New Year. As water is the most important and valuable resource for Dai people, during the New Year celebration, the Dai people ask the monks to give a blessing by using the water, then they will splash the water on others to spread the good wishes to them.

The impacts of the Buddhist religion upon the Dai group are obviously positive. After Buddhism spread into the Dai people's daily life, the Dai group achieved great success, the Buddhist religion not only impacted on the Dai social lives, but also impacted on their traditional culture.

7. Current Situations of Buddhist Religion

As indicated above, believed by 99% of the local Dai people, the Buddhist religion has become the special way of life for the local Dai people. To date, the Buddhist religion not only set the example for conserving the Dai culture, also involved into the different perspectives of Dai people's life. With the development of Buddhist religion in XSBN area, some projects are established to promote this religion, the temples become the friendship-bridge between China and Thailand, and one campus of Buddhist university was established in XSBN for promoting this religion in XSBN area.

7.1 New Project Set for Promoting the Buddhist Religion

The Buddhist religion become popular among the Chinese people, so the Buddhist temple in XSBN announced a new project related to 'Meditation study'.

Dhammavihārī Forest Monastery is a new project which is organized by the XSBN Theravada Buddhist temple. Connecting with the national highway 214, it is easy to access. The aim of this center is to offer a forest place for the people to train themselves, and be released in the interest of benefiting their life.

With the increase in the numbers of Buddhist believers in China, this meditation center offers great opportunities for those who are willing to learn Theravada Buddhism.

This Dhammavihārī Forest Monastery was established in April 2013, the Abbot is H.E. Anālayo, a member of the local Dai community who converted himself to Buddhism in 1983 and studied Buddhism Sutra at Lamphun Buddhist University, Thailand. To improve the development, local government released a 10,000 hectare area from Muang Bang dam to the Dhammavihārī Forest Monastery.

7.2 The Buddhist Religion has become the Friendship-bridge between the Neighboring Countries

The main Theravada Buddhist temple is an example of the friendship between China and Thailand. In 1995, Princess Sirindhorn of the Kingdom of Thailand visited the Theravada Buddhist temple where she planted a Bodhi Tree to indicate that the friendship between China and Thailand will be maintained for a long time. In 2011, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the King of Thailand offered a golden Buddha image to the Theravada Buddhist temple, which contributed to the friendship between the two countries.

Moreover, the Buddhist temple in Muang Jinglai Dai Community, as a sub-center for Muang Hai district, is also a sub-center for the neighboring districts in Myanmar, and is a place where Buddhism

believers from both sides (China and Myanmar) are free to come and pray, which offers a great opportunity to observe the two nationalities at prayer in the Dai village temple. For the valuable contribution of this temple, on Nov. 26, 2015, The King of Thailand offered a Buddha image and Kasaya (robes) to the temple and its monks.

7.3 Buddhist University of XSBN Campus Established

For better promotion of the Buddhist religion, the main Theravada Buddhist temple applied to the National Religion Bureau to set up a Buddhist University XSBN campus. In 1995, the campus began to receive students in the XSBN area. A directive of this campus means that, all students do not have to pay tuition and accommodation fees, all the fees will be covered by the National Religion Bureau. Moreover, some of the most talented students were sent, by this campus, to Thailand, Sri Lanka, and India to study further.

7.4 Other Situations Related to Buddhist Religion

With social development and the impact of globalization, fewer Dai people are converting to Buddhism; this situation is most serious among the Dai boys of the Jing Hong city area. Regarding the other districts such as Muang Hai and Muang La, this situation is somewhat better. Even though the local government set a simulative policy to encourage the young Dai boys to convert to Buddhism, this phenomenon remains a bad condition.

Chasing joyful social activities, unrestrained childhood, and some other impacts from globalization are the major factors affecting the young Dai boys. This situation should be paid close attention to, as Theravada Buddhism been the belief of the majority of the local Dai people for hundreds of years.

Moreover, with a decreasing number of local monks, the Dai communities are facing having temples without monks. Therefore, they have to invite monks from neighboring districts or foreign countries to be their abbot. Most of these invited monks are from Myanmar, as monks from Myanmar also belong to the Theravada Buddhist religion, and most of them speak Chinese or the local dialect. In 2016, around 95 monks from Myanmar were invited to become abbots in the XSBN area⁹. However, inviting monks from outside could only cure the symptoms, not the disease. Most of the invited monks used to study in Thailand, the country with the most complete Theravada Buddhist education system; they are not local Dai people. This situation could cause the local Dai people to lose their religious identity, as a Monk is not only an indispensable part of the Theravada Buddhist religion, but also the spiritual leader and a writer of the traditional inherited characters. The monks from outside, especially from a foreign country, cannot represent the local Dai culture. Moreover, the Dai Monk is not only responsible for spreading the Buddhist sutra, but also for the inheritance of Dai traditional writing characters. If this situation is maintained, the Dai traditional culture and traditional writing characters may receive a negative impact.

8. Conclusion and Future Research

The Buddhist religion has spread into the Dai group for over six hundred years, the impact of which has already been accepted by most Dai people and has also lead to the Dai group moving its own civilization forward. Setting some simulative policies to encourage the local young Dai boy willing to convert into Buddhist should pay more attention.

⁹ <http://dy.163.com/wemedia/article/detail/BHFVAFSP052182IJ.html>

Civilization not only relies on culture or religion, the development of the local economy is also important. Nowadays, the economy level in the Dai group is not very outstanding, some areas are still below the national poverty line. Making some stimulating policies, based on the religious concept, to create better development in the current area would contribute to the economic level and carry forward the Buddhist religion. In 2015, the Central government announced a series of policies aimed to stimulate the development of rural economies. They especially targeted those rural areas with minority groups as the focus for development. Tourism has been recognized as a green industry and stimulating this industry has already achieved great success in developing countries, such as Thailand, Turkey, etc. The pro-poor impacts are obvious and outstanding. Among a series of policies announced by Central government, pro-poor tourism in the rural areas is the most suitable for improving the economy of the Dai group in the XSBN area.

Moreover, in recent years, the tourism flows in China have mainly focused on the unpolluted natural environment, countryside, farmland, rural life, and the ethnic cultural scene. The Dai group's traditional way of life, combined with its Buddhist religion will attract the flow of tourism in mainland China. Furthermore, some of the Dai communities have already been set by the local tourism association as a pilot project to attract the tourists, with aims for improving the local living standard, expanding the Dai traditional culture, and carrying forward the Buddhist religion.

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