

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This research has objectives to explore the traditional perception of the Phon Pisai people regarding the Naga Fireballs or *NGF* phenomenon and to analyze factors enhancing to the change in the local people's perception regarding the *NGF* phenomenon. This research also aims to present the status of the perception regarding the *NGF* and present the perception among groups of Phon Pisai people who involve with this belief during 2005-2006.

To achieve these objectives, the author applies the information from document and field work which included questionnaire and in-dept interview.

This research reveals that the group of young generation has more high possibility to accept the new perception which is based on the scientific studies in explaining the *NGF* phenomenon than the group of elderly people. Nonetheless, the research also shows that the perception regarding the *NGF* phenomenon is changing from the sacredness to become the profane which can generate income.

Prior to the term of the *NGF* that has been used nowadays, the mysterious fireballs of the Mekong River were known in other terms, such as '*Bungfai Phii*' and '*Lukfai Nam*'. However, the strong belief of Naga in local people and the marketing plan of TAT together contributing in modifying the new term of the mysterious fireballs to become the Naga fireballs.

However, the development of the traditional perception in the area of study is not only from the indigenous belief concerning with the snake but also from the Buddhism and Hinduism. These elements are the key concepts in developing the perception of the Naga to become the sacred savior. The Naga is the symbol of water,

fertility, and the protector of Buddhism. At the same time, Naga can provide both benefit and punishment to people as found in the local literatures.

The Naga serves as the social norm identify the interrelation of human and nature. It is also the symbol of water, fertility and is perceived as the powerful creature which can grant benefit and at the same time can be harmful. Furthermore, the Naga belief functions as the symbol to create social identity to Phon Pisai people.

The belief of the Naga and the traditional perception regarding the *NGF* phenomenon is passed on from generation to generation through the socialization. Nonetheless, the external factor such as science and tourism play important role in changing the traditional perception into the new direction of perception among local people. It is the clash of the traditional world view and the modern world view. The tourism and the science are the main external factors contributing to the change in the perception. These factors are the new condition to set the new series of social value and social standard.

When change happens, we may say that it is the attempt to change the sacred thing to become the profane.

1. The transfer from Supernaturalism to Scientific. (profane because of science)
2. The transfer from Sacred (a value given by the local community) to commodity as understood in the Capitalist system. (profane because capitalism drives people to give value only when the situation can generate income)
3. The transfer from Sacred to Human made. (profane because it is made by humans; therefore, there is no need to pay respect or give faith to it)

The change in the perception presented above varies according to the different age group.

The situation that the belief and the culture become the marketing materials can be found in Thai society. To give meaning or value to something according to the world view of modern people is based on two factors: The 'something' should be scientific or it should generate income. This system of world view is changed from the past. It is because of the Capitalism and the education progress. When the traditional perception of the local people gets affected by these factors, it causes the changes in relationship between human-human, human-nature. This changes the equilibrium of interrelation.

Phon Pisai society is an example of many local Thai societies where they have to deal with the change in the perception due to the modern time that value the money and always attach to the science as the best solution to give their best answer.

This thesis is restricted to Phon Pisai area, however; the nearby location that has been affected by tourism should be the area for further study regarding the perception in the phenomenon of the Naga fireballs.