



## CHAPTER III

# RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES IN MANGKORN TEMPLE, PHOMAN TEMPLE

This chapter will first look at the historical background of the Mangkorn temple and Phoman temple. The second part will analyze the deities worshipped in both temples. The two temples worship different style of deities, which indicates the differences between the groups of lay practitioners that each temple attracts. The third part will look into the style of chanting, the chanting instruments and also the religious activities practiced in those two temples.

### 3.1. Chinese Mahayana Temples

#### 3.1.1 Mangkorn Temple

Mangkorn temple was the first Chinese Mahayana temple in Thailand, built in the reign of the king Rama V. It is also the most popular and well-known Chinese temple in Thailand. The temple has 22 Monks and 180 novices, the highest number among all the Chinese Mahayana temples in Thailand. Mangkorn temple also has its own high school and university (Personal interview, 2009).

The founder of Mangkorn temple, the monk Sok Heng (續行), arrived in Bangkok in 1862, fleeing disaster and a weakened government in China. The Opium wars of 1839-1842 and 1856-1860 had brought the Qing government to its knees and gravely affected the Chinese Buddhist establishment. Sok Heng stayed at a Sala next to Wat Kusolsamakhorm when he first arrived. He started his teaching of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism and attracted many people. The Chinese around this area donated money and set up a temple for him. According to Luo (1999), King Rama the V donated the land to Sok Heng to build the temple, and ordered Chen Tian (陳天) to help Sok Heng build the temple. There were many people willing to help and make donations. It took eight years to build the temple and finally the construction was finished in 1871 and was named Loan Lian Si, (龍蓮寺) which means Dragon Lotus Temple in Chinese.

A famous anecdote, related by a Thai monk, Pra Kru Songsat, tells of the assistance Sok Heng was able to provide King Rama V. A wife of the King had drowned and her body could not be found. A Chinese officer to the King suggested that Sok Heng might be able to help to find the body by using his famous meditation skills. Sok Heng's chanting lifted the body to the surface of the river. In gratitude the Thai Monarch bestowed a Thai name upon the monk. However since Sok Heng was the first Chinese monk that King Rama V named, the King had some trouble finding an appropriate name. Eventually the King named him "Praajarnjeen wangsasamotiwat", or the Chinese monk who is named by the palace and good at mediation ( Personal interview, 2009).

There were numerous Chinese monks that came to Siam and the number of Chinese monks increased significantly. On the 13 August 1899, Praya Paskornwong submitted a letter to King Rama V to ask for official recognition of the Annamese and Chinese Buddhist sects in Thailand. The King approved the request and allowed both Annamese and Chinese Buddhist sects to register with the Ministry of Culture (Kosittanakit, 2005:30). The official name of the sect was Jin-Nikai, as the Chinese Buddhist were first known in the reign of King Rama V.

The Mangkorn temple was very prosperous under the first Abbot and second abbot Guo Wu (果悟). The Chinese Mahayana monks were well respected and received Sanghati (monk's robe) from the royal family. In the reign of King Rama VI (1910-1925) Chinese temples started to lose their popularity and the fortunes of the Chinese Mahayana monks declined. King Rama VI did not support Chinese in the same way as his father. Ethnic Thai nationalism and anti-Chinese sentiment were on the rise. The Chinese also started to found new kinds of Chinese associations during this period. Chinese associations slowly took the place of the Chinese temple to become the new place for Chinese people to gather.

### **3.1.2 Phoman Temple**

If Mangkorn temple oversaw the founding period of Chinese Mahayana in Thailand then Phoman temple can be seen as part of the second wave of popularity

for Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. Phoman temple (普門寺) was built in 1961 and fully completed in 1970 its founder, Phochaeng Mahathera(普淨), was to become the sixth Chinese Supreme Patriarch. Phochaeng moved to Thailand in 1927 and became a monk in Thailand. He went back to China in order to study and gain greater knowledge of Mahayana Buddhism. He became the 19<sup>th</sup> leader of Lu(rule) Sec. He built Pu-Ren Temple (普仁寺) in 1947 and it became the first Chinese Mahayana temple that was able to perform the Refuge ceremony for the Chinese Mahayana monks in Thailand. Before him the Chinese Mahayana monks had to go to China to undertake the ceremony of receiving the Refuges. Phochaeng built Phoman temple in 1961.

### 3.1.3 Other Chinese Mahayana Temples

According to the information from Phoman temple, there are only 17 Chinese Mahayana temples in Thailand. This number is very low considering the high number of Sino-Thais in the Kingdom. According Venerable Zhen Dun (真頓): one of the reasons that the number of shrines are higher than the number of Chinese Mahayana temples is because the Chinese Mahayana temples in Thailand are under the Thai Sangha Law. When a new Chinese Mahayana temple is going to be built in the Thai Kingdom it needs the approval of the Chinese Mahayana temple's Supreme Patriarch in order to register the place as a Temple. The process is complicated due to the power struggles among the temples and internal politics. All of the official Chinese Mahayana temples in Thailand today were founded by Chinese-Thai monks. None of the monks from Taiwan, Hong Kong, China have been able to register their temple under the Thai Sangha Law in Thailand. Even though there are many unregistered Chinese Mahayana temples (communal places of worship) in Thailand that are supported by Chinese from mainland China, and Taiwan, those places of worship are unable to be registered as official Temples. They have to use different kinds of name. Venerable Zhen Dun built the first Taiwanese temple in Sukhumvit soi 101 in 1980. The temple was supported by Teochius and lay people from Taiwan. The place was

not granted Temple status Si (寺) in Chinese but only school, 'Dong Shan Xue Yuan' (東山學苑) meaning Eastern-Mountain School. Another temple 'Fo Guang Shan' (佛光山) in Rama IX Rd is registered as an "International Buddhist Progress Society Foundation". Fo Guang Shan was founded by Venerable Master Xin Yun and has more than 250 worldwide branches around the world. In 2008, after 12 years of struggle, Fo Guang Shan was finally able to register the temple as "International Buddhist Progress Society Association of Thailand under Patronage of the Supreme Patriarch". The current abbess Miao Shen (妙慎) said:

'Because the way we try to approach lay people is different and we are from a different sect of Buddhism, we were not able to be under the sect of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism in Thailand. According to the Thai Sangha Law we could not become a temple because we were not under any existing Thai sect. The council did want to modify the Law to add another sect. We decided to be under the Sangha law and after a long process we were finally able to make it happen last year. There are other reasons that we were not able to register as a Chinese Mahayana temple, partly because of fears of competition over lay people. There were fears that attendance in the Phoman temple and Mangkorn temple would diminish if there were more Chinese Mahayana temples around '(Personal interview, 2009).



Picture 3.1 The inner gate of Dong Shan Xue Yuan

(Source: From Dong Shan Xue Yuan)



Picture 3.2 The alter of Dong Shan Xue Yuan

(Source: From Dong Shan Xue Yuan)



Picture 3.3 The Chinese New Year ceremony in Fo Guang Shan.

(Source: From Fo Guang Shan)



Picture 3.4 The Chinese New Year ceremony in Fo Guang Shan.

(Source: From Fo Guang Shan )

### 3.2. Deities in Chinese Mahayana Temple

#### 3.2.1. Deities in Mangkorn Temple

Table 3.1

#### The deities in Mangkorn Temple\*

Name of the deity	Function of the deity	Religion
Shaykyamuni Buddha (釋迦牟尼佛)	The founder of Buddhism.	Buddhism
Amitaba Buddha (阿彌陀佛)	Amitaba is the principal Buddha in the Pure land sect, a branch of Buddhism practiced mainly in East Asia.	Buddhism
Medicine Buddha (藥師佛)	The Buddha of healing and medicine. Chinese Buddhist recite the mantra of the Medicine Buddha to overcome sickness. The Medicine Buddha is also often associated with the temple ceremonies for the people to transferring the merit or making merit.	Buddhism
Maitreya Buddha (彌勒)	The future Buddha. Also called the laughing Buddha.	Buddhism,
Guanyin (觀音)	The Goddess of mercy. Very popular in Thailand and able to find the image in Thai temples.	Buddhism
Weituo Bodhisattva (韋陀菩薩)	The Guardian of the Faith-depicted as a Chinese warrior clad in golden armour. Whereas the Vajars and Heavenly Kings protect the devotees, WeiTuo is charged with keeping the Dharma( Sacred Doctrine) itself from contamination of defilement (Blofeld, 1971:23).	Buddhism

---

\* The deities without reference are well known among Chinese.

Four Deva- Kings (四大天王)	The protectors of Buddhism.	Buddhism
18Arhats (十八羅漢)	They were disciples of the Buddha who had realized the meaning of the Four Truths and completely freed themselves from the cycles of cause and effect.	Buddhism
Patriarch Bodhidharma (達摩祖師)	Bodhidharma was the Buddhist monk from southern India and credited with bringing Zen to China.	Buddhism
Sixth Patriarch Huineng (六祖惠能)	Huineng (638-713 CE) is the sixth Patriarch of the meditation tradition.	Buddhism
Wenchang DiJun (文昌帝君)	The great Emperor of Literary Thriving. Often worshipped by scholars, also very popular among the students before exams, parents often pray for their child to have better scores in school (Hong Kong Taoism Association).	Taoism
Fu De Ci (Da Bo Gong) (福德祠) (大伯公)	In China worshipped as the earth god, to protect the family's health. In southeast China, worshipped as the god of sea.	Taoism, Folk religion
ChengHuangYe (城隍爺)	The God who records people's good and bad deeds, and decides whether one will go to heaven or hell (About YuFengGong, 2005)	Taoism
TaiSuiye (太歲爺)	The God of Luck, who controls people's fortune and misfortune. It is very important for people worship during their bad luck year.	Taoism
CaiShenYe (財神爺)	The God of wealth. There are many different gods of wealth, according to region and occupation.	Taoism
Huatuo (華佗)	The God of medicine. People worship it for healing and in sickness.	Taoism, Folk religion

BentouGongma (本頭公媽)	Goddess of land. People pray for good luck, safety. Very popular among Teochius (Personal interview, 2009).	Taoism, Folk religion, Popular in south China
GongPoMu (公婆母)	The God to protect the children. More popular in the south of China especially among the Teochius. In Teochius's culture, after the birth of a child the parents will place the image of Gongpomu and pray for the child's health and safety until the child reaches the age of 15, then they will stop praying (Cai, 2006).	Taoism, Folk religion, Popular in south China
YueLao (月老)	The God of marriage. People will go and pray if they want to get married and the parents also pray for their children for a good partner. If one already has boyfriend or girlfriend can offer flowers. If one is without a partner they can offer red dates.	Taoism
DaSheng fozhu (大聖佛祖)	The main character of a famous novel <i>Journey to the west</i> a monkey. People believe that by praying to it the children will be well behaved. One often brings bananas as offering (Personal interview, 2009).	Taoism, folk religion
ZhuSheng Niangniang (註生娘娘)	The God of Babies. Women wanting to have a baby will come to pray. By offering the white flower will help one to gain a baby boy and red or pink flower will help one to gain a baby girl. After one gains a baby they must go back to the temple and make the offering again when the baby is one month old. One can bring four kinds of fruit, chicken soup cooked with sesame oil, oil rice and flowers.	Taoism



Guandi (關帝)	The God of war, during the period when the secret society still existed people use Guandi as a symbol to attract people to join the society. It is also the God of wealth, a lot of merchants worship it.	Taoism, folk religion.
Huo Sheng (火神)	The God of fire. In the west and south of China people believe that by worshipping the God of fire they will be able to gain wealth and blessing for the family.	Folk religion.
Tai Yin (太陰)	The moon Goddess. The original name is Changer(嫦娥)who stole her husband's elixir of immortality and went to the moon after she took the medicine.	Folk religion
Tai Yang (太陽)	The God of Sun	Folk religion
Jiu Huang (九皇)	Prayed to for good luck and to reduce misfortune and gain merit.	Taoism, Folk religion. Popular in south China

\* The deities without reference are well known among the Chinese.

Mangkorn temple, is not exclusively a Buddhist place of worship, with Taoism, Shin, Confucian, and folk shrines in the temple. This mixture of shrines is typical of Chinese religious practice, which often requires the honouring of different deities on specific religious holidays. The religious synthesis can be seen as part of the Chinese immigrant culture: "On going overseas to the Nanyang the Chinese took with them their religious beliefs. Be the principle of Buddhism, Taoism, or Confucianism effective or ossified, there can be no doubt at all that the world of spirits, demons, gods and heroes is still a very real thing to the majority of Chinese and goes with them wherever they go (Purcell, 1965:47)." In the case of Mangkorn temple, the religious mixture also serves the purpose of facilitating spiritual practice, since a worshipper can find all the needed deities in one location. A 42 years old company manager interviewed stated that:

'I am from the south of Thailand. Often I have to pray to one particular god on one particular date. In Mangkorn temple it gathers all the gods that I want to pray to, so it makes it very easy for me. My entire family all came to this temple to worship so we do not need to go back to the temple in the South.'

According to a Chinese teacher of the novices in Mangkorn temple, many people come to the temple because of the fortune tellers. Fortune tellers advise the people which god that the people have to pray in order to get what they need. Often they suggest that each person needs to pray to different god. The people come to the Mangkorn temple and make a wish, to get rid of bad luck or many other things. After their wishes come true they will have to return to the temple and make offerings to the god in gratitude for answering their prayers.

80% of the people who attend the temple are Teochius according to the monks in the Mangkorn temple. This explains why Mangkorn temple does not have deities worshipped by other dialect groups, for example the goddess of the Machu, popular with Hokkiens and ShuiweiNaing(水尾娘) an important goddesses for the Hainanese (Lee, 2003).

### 3.2.2. Deities in Phoman temple

Table 3.2

Deities in Phoman Temple

Deity	Function of the Deity	Religion
Shaykyamuni Buddha	(as in Mangkorn temple)	
Amitaba Buddha		
Medicine Buddha		
Maitreya Buddha		
Guanyin		
Weituo Bodhisattva		
Puxian Bodhisattva (普賢菩薩)	In Sanskrit is also known as Samanthabhadra Bodhisattva, which means universal kindness, associated with action. The right-hand retainer of Sakyamuni Buddha.	

Wenshu Bodhisattva (文殊菩薩)	Known as Manjusri the Lord of wisdom. The left-hand retainer of Sakyamuni Buddha. The image often holding a sword, means using the sword of wisdom to cut away worry and troubles. Often depicted riding a lion.	Buddhism
Dizhang Bodhisattva (地藏菩薩)	Ksitigarbha famous for his vow not to achieve Buddhahood until all hells are emptied. This sutra is often chanted during the Ancestor worship ceremonies	
Four Deva- Kings	As in Mangkorn temple	
Zhu Shi (祖師)	Founder of Phoman temple	

Compared to Mangkorn temple, Phoman temple has fewer deities and they are all Buddhist. The temple practitioners are also different, they mainly attend the temple for religious ceremonies, rather than fortune telling and wish making.

### 3.3. Temple religious ceremonies

#### 3.3.1 Chanting

There are significant differences between Chinese chanting and Thai chanting. Chinese chanting uses various instruments and the chanting is in Sanskrit and Chinese. The basic chants are Mantras, the Incense Anthem and Sutras. This applies to the both temples which use the same prayer books. All the prayer books are in Chinese, with Thai transliterations alongside.

##### a. Contents of the chanting

There are three main parts in the ceremonies. There are the Anthem, the Mantra and the Sutra. The Anthem is very short but the chanting speed is very slow. Often, the same word is repeated, and extra sounds are added after each word- for example A YA YA. There are many kinds of anthem, which are often chanted at the beginning and ending of the ceremony.

The Mantra is the teaching of the Buddha in Sanskrit but transliterated into Chinese. The language of the Mantra does not have a meaning in the Chinese language, emphasis is placed on the actual sounds which are believed to contain power and spiritual energy. Each mantra has a different type of power and as such monks and lay people often chant different type of Mantra for different purposes.

In contrast to the Mantras, the Chinese Mahayana Sutras have meanings. They are the teachings of the Buddha and they are often speeches that Buddha gave to his disciples. The Sutras are often in the form of stories, starting with “ As I have heard ..” . In both Mangkorn temple and Phoman temple most of the practitioners are not able to read Chinese and the Sutra just becomes sound. In these temples the sound of the Sutra is a mixture of 5 different kind of Chinese dialogue languages: Cantonese, Hakka , Hainanese , Hokkien , Teochiu. Although the monks and laypersons memorized the Sutras almost perfectly they do not know the meanings of the Sutras.

Even so, when the people who attend temple do not understand the meanings of the sutras, they still believe that chanting brought some positive effect for them. This does not only apply to the Chinese, Thais also are familiar with chanting which

is also practiced in Thai Buddhism. ‘Chanting in all religions is a part of sacred ritual, interwoven with human culture. Vibrations from chanting can potentially heal. Sound vibrations affect humans on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual level (Umavijani, 2009:5)’. Chanting at the temples is attended by a broad cross section of practitioners, not just ethnic Chinese and not just female, as is the case in other temple functions. There was one young male university student who attended the ceremony in Phoman temple. He rushed to temple from his university still in his uniform. He said:

‘I like the sound of the chanting very much. I really enjoy chanting and it makes me feel very good. I only know the meanings of few of the words in the sutra but I am learning it word by word.’

Monks often lead the lay people during the chanting. Monks need to memorise the chanting. The lay people who attend the chanting do not necessarily need to memorise the chanting. Most of the lay people who attend the temple often believe that by attending the ceremony it will help them or others to gain merit. The Monk’s Rule prohibits the enjoyment of music, chanting sounds like music, but is considered separate. ‘Chanting is able to clean our body and mind. By chanting our body is doing right action and our mind will need to be concentrated. One needs to have a good intention and we also need to calm our heart during chanting. Because of that, chanting indeed helps us gain merit by cleaning our mind, body, and mouth (Chen, 2002)’. The Grand Buddhist Tripitaka states by chanting “ Body will not get tired, will not forget what you remembered, will not get tired in mind, able to keep your voice, will be easy to understand the language and sutra.” (Da Zeng Zang, Vol,23 P,269)

According to an interview with Venable Hui Xi:

‘Chanting is not just to read out from your mouth but also needs concentration. It will help you to be able to have Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration, and by having the Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration then will help one gain wisdom and then understanding of the meanings of the sutras’.

### **b. Learning how to Chant**

In both temples the senior monks often instruct the novice monks in the proper methods of chanting. These techniques are ancient, handed down from one generation to the next over hundreds of years. Young monks need to learn how to chant and memorize the use of instruments by heart. According to the monks at Phoman temple they use a form of notation on the edges of their prayer books. A type of crib note that they are not allowed to show to laymen.

The general popularity of the chanting very much has produced CDs and tapes that are sold on the streets of China town. According to the monks those CD and tapes are not made by monk but by lay people who attended the ceremonies often enough to make the music and chanting and who produce the products for sale.

### **c. Chanting Instruments**

There are many different kinds of instruments in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism especially when they spread into Thailand. The function of the instrument is to make the chanting sound in order. Instruments are used to keep the rhythm, the speed of the chanting regular and to help everyone to chant at the in unison. Most of the instruments have a clear sound. The instruments improve the atmosphere of the ceremony and lay people pay in more attention to the ceremony when there were more instruments.



Picture 3.5 Large Bell

(Source: Taken by the author at Phoman temple Aug 2008)

大磬 Ch'ing, Large bell/gong always placed on the right hand side of the table. The Ch'ing leads the speed of the chanting and also marks the changing of chanting. It can be many different sizes. The bigger sizes have a lower (deeper) sound. It often marks the end of each sutra and also signifies the moments for the laymen to bow.



Picture 3.6 Wood-fish

(Source: Taken by the author at Phoman temple Aug 2008)

木魚 Wood-fish also can be many different sizes. The bigger wood-fish has a lower tone. It marks each word, to make sure everyone chants at the same speed. It is to sets the rhythm for chanting.

引磬 Hand bell/gong is struck according the drum, in the beginning of the sutra.

Used during the different chapters of sutra and also at the end of the sutra.

Used for the laymen to bow.

吊鐘 Tiao Chung, Suspension bell is paired with a large drum. Used with the drum, and also in the beginning, middle break, and end of the sutra.

大鼓 Drum will be hit in the beginning and ending of the sutra. It will let the people know that the chanting is going to start and also in the middle break of the sutra. It is also a main instrument to link the entire ceremony, keeping continuity and avoiding breaks and silences. It also able to lead the ceremony into its high emotional pick by the seed of the drum. It can said that it's a most difficult instrument to be play well.

鈴 Small Cymbal

Use both hands to play. When not used it is placed in front of the chest

鈸 Cymbal

鑼 Gong



#### d. Special Instrument

搖鈴 Hand bell normally will be held by the monk who serves as the master of ceremony, it is believed that the sound can be heard by the Bodhisattvas.

揚琴 Dulcimer , 二胡 Chinese Fiddle and also (唢呐) Trumpet are very special instruments for Chinese Mahayana temple. It seems only popular in the Teochiu area. The monks do not play the instruments but hire the musicians during the special ceremonies. It is also possibly a mixture of Taoism and Buddhism. The Dulcimer was introduced to China from Qing from Ming period 1368-1644 from Persia. The Chinese Fiddle is a traditional Chinese instrument.

Mangkorn and Phoman temple hire musicians to play at special ceremonies. There is only one troupe of musicians in Bangkok capable of playing the instruments, and this troupe works at both temples. The musicians play the same style of music in all the temples and shrines. Four of the group members play fiddle, trumpet, dulcimer, and drum. The leader said that he has been working in the temple business for 4 years. They go to many different Chinese temples and shrines around Thailand. The leader plays dulcimer, he learned how to play the instrument in China. He is not willing to teach anyone because he worries that he will create another competitor who might take over his business. The musician who play the Chinese Fiddle learned how to play from a teacher and he used to help the family business before he started to play the instrument for the temples. He has been working as a musician for 4 years.



The drummer who played in Phoman temple was a volunteer. He used to stay in the temple when he was young and learned how to play the drum while he was in the temple. He is a driver, when he has free time he often comes to the temple to practice drum and often helps during the special ceremonies.



Picture 3.7 The musician who plays dulcimer out sources by the Mangkorn temple. He is also the leader of the team.

(Source: Taken by the author at Mangkorn temple Aug 2008)



Picture 3.8 The musician who plays trumpet.

(Source: Taken by the author at Mangkorn temple Aug 2008)



Picture 3.9 The musician who plays Chinese fiddle.

(Source: Taken by the author at Mangkorn temple Aug 200)



Picture 3.8 The musician who plays Drum.

(Source: Taken by the author at Mangkorn temple Aug 2008)

### 3.3.2. Daily Service

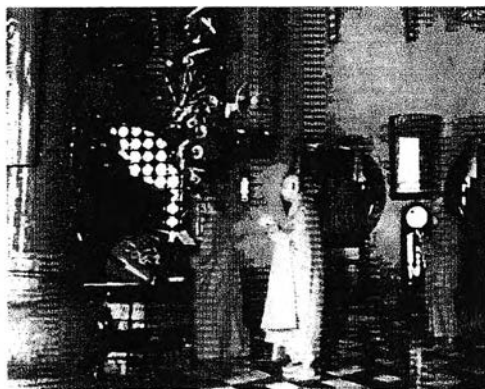
#### a. Morning Service

Generally these rites begin long before dawn. Morning service needs to be held before the sunrise. It starts with Incense Anthem *Pao Ting* to offer the incense and then is followed by the Suramgama Mantra which is the longest and the most powerful Mantra. It is believed that the Suramgama Mantra is able to defeat the devil. Then they follow the Ten Shorter Mantras and then the Heart sutra.

#### b. Evening Service

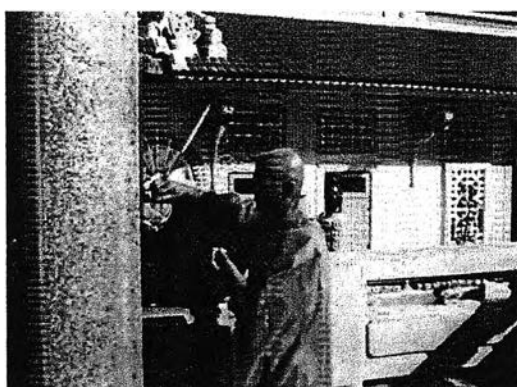
In Mangkorn temple there about 100 monks and novices and, 20 to 30 laymen participate in the evening service. Monks, novices arrive at 3:45pm and line up along of both sides of the aisle, facing each other in front of the main Buddha image. They turn to face the Buddha image, bow, then turn to face the aisle again. The people, mainly females, sit on the ground and having removed their shoes. The place of chanting is in side the main hall. The Monks, novices are positioned in the front, close to the Buddha image, separated from the laymen by a string, which prevents people from entering the main space.

The evening chanting commences with the incense anthem *Lu Xiang* then the *Amitabha Sutra*, which describes about the beauty of the Western Pure land that Amitabha Buddha inhabits. These are followed by the *Food bestowal after Mengshan* which is a small ceremony for giving food to the spirits. According to Venerable Hui Xi once the temple starts the ceremony they must perform it everyday without fail because all the spirits will be waiting in the temple.



Picture 3.11 The evening service in Phoman Temple

(Source: Taken by the author at Phoman Temple Aug 2008)



Picture 3.12 The Food Bestowal after Mengshan ceremony, the monk put few drop of rice to make offer to the spirits.

(Source: Taken by the author at Phoman Temple Aug 2008)

### 3.3.3. Special ceremonies

Both of the temples hold some special religious ceremonies during the year. The most important one is the Ullambana festival and the vegetarian festival and in both temples they also hold their own ceremony of taking the Triple Refuge ceremony.

#### a. Ullambana festival

The origins of the Ullambana Festival is from the Ullambana Sutra. The Buddha taught Mahamaudgalyayana to help his mother who was suffering in the lower realm of the Hungry Ghosts. Ullambana is a popular festival in China and Japan. On this day it is believed that the "Gates of the Hell" are opened and the dead ones pay visit to their loved ones. The ceremony is about worshiping ancestors and feeding the hungry ghosts. During this festival offerings are made to the spirits of the dead and to the hungry ghosts in order to bring good fortune and luck. It is celebrated on the 15th day of the 7th lunar month. It's the biggest event for the overseas Chinese. The people who join the event are from many different levels in the society, not only the poor but also the rich and people with high social rank, also many merchants and workers. This is true not only in Thailand but also in other countries where there are Chinese residents (So, 1995:219). It is very important ceremony for both temples.

Attendance at both temples' Ullambana festival was held as field work for this thesis:

A lot of lay people gathered in both temples and it looked like a very big party. In Phoman temple there were a lot of people sitting outside of the altar and folding paper to make offerings for their ancestors. They folded the gold and silver paper into a shape of old style money for their ancestors to use and the yellow paper, which is printed with some red writing was used as a passport. There were also some colorful lotus boats for the ancestors to take. All those offerings will be burned at the end of the ceremony. Yui, a 19 years old, female university student who attended Phoman temple with her family, said that her family has been visiting the temple every year for the special ancestor worship since she could remember. Her mother is third generation Chinese. The mother still can speak Cantonese but she can not speak any Chinese herself. She does not know the meaning of chanting but believes that chanting will make merit for her ancestors. She enjoys visiting the temple every year

especially folding the papers.

During the period of the ceremony there were a lot of long tables placed inside of both temples. On top of the long tables there were many sets of offerings. The sets of offerings were fruits, flowers and incense. In the middle of each set of offerings there was a little table on which the name of the each ancestor was written. The family will come and put the incense by themselves in front of their own name. Some of them invited the monks for a short chanting in front of their table. According to one of the ladies who invited the monks for chanting, she paid about 4000 Baht every year so that temple could arrange the whole set of offerings for her. She said she put down her parents' names in Phoman temple and she does not need to worry about it any more. When it is time for worship, the temple will inform her.

In Mangkorn temple there were more older generation lay people and it was much more busy during this period of time. There were a lot of people trying to put their ancestor's name on a paper for the ceremony. There was a box next to the people who registered for the ceremony. A volunteer said : ' you can put some money into the box, the amount is up to you, there is no fixed amount for the ceremony.' There were some big houses made by paper placed in the Mangkorn temple which were also made as offerings. The first purpose of the ceremony is to pray for the merit of our current life and for good luck. By helping the poor the people who pray will gain merit. They believe that after the ceremony, the food that is prepared for the ceremony will not only feed the ghost but also the gods. Also people will be able to enjoy the food as well (Watanabe, 1987:182)



Picture 3.13 The Ullambana festival *Yulan Sheng Hui* in Chinese.

(Source: Taken by the author at Mangkorn temple Aug 2008)



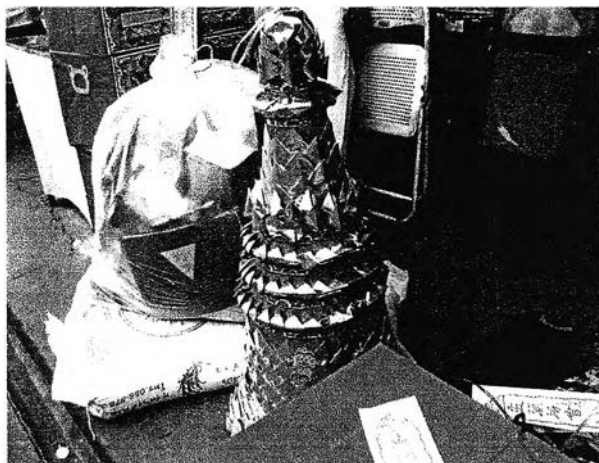
Picture 3.14 The Ullambana festival. Lay people were waiting for the ceremony to start.

(Source: Taken by the author at Mangkorn temple Aug 2008)



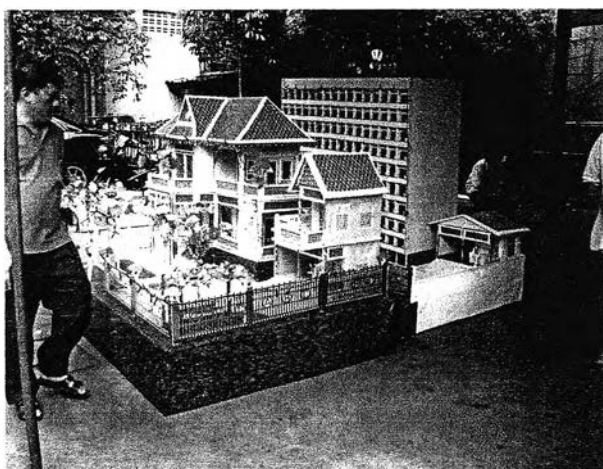
Picture 3.13 The Ullambana festival. During the ceremony

(Source: Taken by the author at Mangkorn temple Aug 2008)



Picture 3.14 The offering of gold and silver paper folded into a shape of mountain which represents the mountain of money, offering for ancestors used in the Ullambana festival

(Source: Taken by the author at Mangkorn temple Aug 2008)



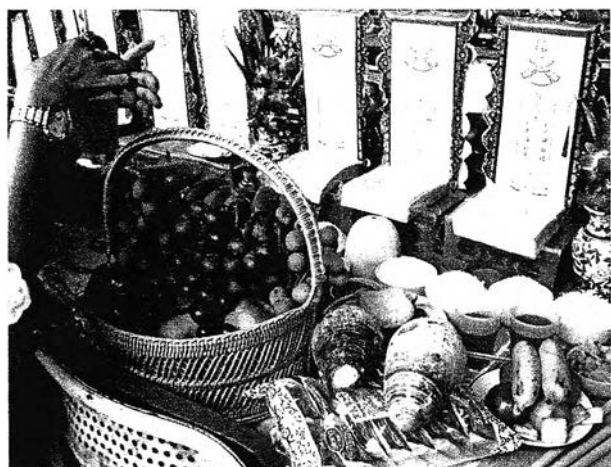
Picture 3.17 Paper house, the offering for ancestors used in the Ullambana festival

(Source: Taken by the author at Mangkorn temple Aug 2008)



Picture 3.18 People gathered and getting ready for the ceremony during the Ullambana festival

(Source: Taken by the author at Mangkorn temple Aug 2008)



Picture 3.19 The yellow table has the name of the ancestor. Temple also put numbers on each people's name so that the lay people will be able to find it easily. The family members offer extra food that their ancestor like.

(Source: Taken by the author at Mangkorn temple Aug 2008)



### **b. Triple Refuge ceremony**

Devout Buddhists layperson often undertake the Triple Refuge ceremony which is sponsored by a monk or nun, as a sign of their religious commitment. The temple will issue a record on a certificate with the individual's name and the new name that monks offer (Birnbaum, 2003). The Triple Refuge ceremony is held once a year in both temples. There are about 100 people who join the Triple Refuge ceremony every year, according to the monks in Mangkorn temple. On the day of the ceremony one has to wear a white outfit and be a vegetarian for one day. A 72 year old female said:

‘You must come and take the Triple Refuge ceremony. It is very important. It is better for you. After you finish the ceremony and then you can come to the temple every month to listen to the abbot's speech.’

The female's friend said: ‘But she still can come now right?’ and she replied ‘But it is different. It's better this way. For her it is very important that I take the Triple Refuge because only after that will I be able to be one of them.’ According to field research, this ceremony also signifies membership in the temple community. Participants only undertake their vows in the temple they have a relationship with and which they support. A 45 year old female, company employee stated that she chose to attend Phoman temple for this ceremony because:

‘I am a ‘Luk Sit’ here. I took the Triple Refuge ceremony in the temple.’

In her reasoning, because she took the Triple Refuge ceremony in Phoman temple, it is therefore better for her to attend the ceremonies in the temple that she belongs to now. Asked why she did not take the ceremony in other temples, she said she felt more comfortable in Phoman temple.

### **c. Ancestor worship ceremonies**

‘The ancestors represent protectiveness and solicitude. And yet they have rights-Chiefly, to be served on their death-dates and provided with agnatic descendants-which, if they are denied, may lead them to cause sickness or some other discomfort to the living’ (Freedman, 1970:174). The Chinese pray for the ancestor to bless them and if things are not going well they believe that by honouring the

ancestors they can change the situation. It is necessary for them to worship regularly and also on the death anniversary of the ancestor. Beside the ceremonies that are held by the temple, the lay people can also register for private ceremonies for their ancestors. The temple will arrange the setting of the ceremony and hold the private ceremony for the lay people. The size of the ceremony and number of the monks who attend the ceremony depend on the budget that the lay people are willing to spend. On the day of the ceremony, all the members of the family will attend, including the men and the young grandchildren who are usually absent on the regular temple ceremony. The entire ceremony takes place for two to three hours. There are about two to three private ancestor worship ceremonies a week held in Phoman temple. The cost of the ceremony is about 30,000 to 50,000 baht for the arrangement of the ceremony and preparation of the offerings. The lay people also have to prepare money to offer to the monks who attend the ceremony ( private interview, 2009).

The temples provide many different kinds of services that lay people request. At house warming rituals and designating a new Buddha room often the lay people ask for nine monks to attend the ceremony. The lay people also ask the monks to attend funerals. There are no facility to cremate the body in Mangkorn temple and Phoman temple, often the lay people ask for three monks to go to the Thai (Theravada) temple for chanting. Punyodyana's (1971) research also provides data that most of the Chinese have their relatives cremated in Thai temples, but also perform rites which are distinctly Chinese in origin and content. Most of the Chinese hold the funeral practice in mixed Chinese and Thai rituals (Punyodyana, 1971:45). There are also some lay people that ask the monks to give blessings during weddings similar to that traditional Thai manner.

Table 3.3

## Calendar of Ritual Worship at the Phoman Temple in Year 2009

<b>Date</b> <i>Lunar month/</i>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Event</b>
<i>January 14<sup>th</sup> / February 8<sup>th</sup></i> Sun	9:00am 1:00pm	Eight Precepts Retreat Dharma talk
<i>February 12<sup>th</sup> / March 8<sup>th</sup></i> Sun	9:00am 1:00pm	Eight Precepts Retreat Dharma talk
<i>March 10<sup>th</sup> / April 5<sup>th</sup></i> Sun	9:00am 1:00pm	Eight Precepts Retreat Dharma talk
<i>March 18<sup>th</sup> / April 13<sup>th</sup></i> Mon	9:00am	Medicine Master Repentance Ritual
<i>March 19<sup>th</sup> / April 14<sup>th</sup></i> Tue	9:00am 1:00pm	Medicine Master Repentance Ritual The Feeding Fire-Spitting Ghosts Ritual
<i>April 9<sup>th</sup> / May 3<sup>rd</sup></i> Sun	9:00am 1:00pm	Eight Precepts Retreat Dharma talk
<i>May 8<sup>th</sup> / May 31</i> Sun	9:00am 1:00pm	Eight Precepts Retreat Dharma talk
<i>May 13<sup>th</sup> / July 5<sup>th</sup></i> Sun	9:00am 1:00pm	Eight Precepts Retreat Dharma talk
<i>June 12<sup>th</sup> / Aug 2</i> Sun	9:00am 1:00pm	Eight Precepts Retreat Dharma talk
<i>July 11<sup>th</sup> / Aug 30<sup>th</sup></i> Sun	9:00am 1:00pm	Eight Precepts Retreat Dharma talk
<i>July 20<sup>th</sup> – July 22</i>	8:00am	Ullambana festival
<i>July 22</i>	1:00pm	The Feeding Fire-Spitting Ghosts Ritual
<i>Aug 9<sup>th</sup> / Sep 27<sup>th</sup></i> Sun	9:00am 1:00pm	Eight Precepts Retreat Dharma talk
<i>Aug 29<sup>th</sup> – Sep 10<sup>th</sup></i>		Nine Emperor ceremony
<i>Sep 9<sup>th</sup></i>	1:00p	The Feeding Fire-Spitting Ghosts Ritual
<i>Sep 15<sup>th</sup> / Nov 1<sup>st</sup></i> Sun	9:00am 1:00pm	Eight Precepts Retreat Dharma talk
<i>Oct 13<sup>th</sup> / Nov 29<sup>th</sup></i> Sun	9:00am 1:00pm	Eight Precepts Retreat Dharma talk

<i>Nov 8<sup>th</sup></i>	8:30am	Refuge Taking Ceremony
<i>Nov 12<sup>th</sup></i> /Dec 27 <sup>th</sup> Sun	9:00am 1:00pm	Eight Precepts Retreat Dharma talk
<i>Dec 10<sup>th</sup></i> / Jan 14 <sup>th</sup> Sun	9:00am 1:00pm	Eight Precepts Retreat Dharma talk

Table 3.3 contains all the ceremonies that were held in Phoman temples in the year 2009. Most of the Chinese religious holidays are based on the lunar calendar. The time schedule provided by Phoman temple shows the dates of the ceremonies according to both the lunar and solar calendars. Dates of ceremonies according to the lunar calendar are shown in italics. Dates of ceremonies according to the solar calendar are shown in plain font. The Eight Precepts Retreat is held in the temple monthly. The ceremony starts at 9 am and finishes around noon. In the afternoon at 1:00pm the abbot delivers a Dharma talk. The lay practitioners can pay a fee of 1200Baht to become the annual member for the retreat every month. The older generation are often more devout and register as an annual member. They often wear white outfits to attend the ceremony and observe the Eight Precepts for one day. The Eight Precepts are 1) No killing 2) No stealing 3) No sexual practices 4) No lie 5) No alcohol 6) No eating after noon time 7) Abstain from listening to music, wearing jeweller 8) No sitting or lying on high and luxurious places (Dhammadana.org). There are also many other religious ceremonies such as Medicine Master Repentance Ritual, Nine Emperor ceremony and Ullambana festival. In the last day of each religious ceremony the Feeding Fire-Spitting Ghosts Ritual is performed as the ending of the ceremonies. The Feeding Fire-Spitting Ghosts Ritual ceremony, Yankou (焰口) in Chinese, often attracts many people. The ceremony often uses many different chanting instruments, which creates a party atmosphere. During the ceremony the master monk throws candies and steamed buns to the lay people, as part of the ritual. The lay people often fight to get the steamed bun thrown by the master monk. They believe that the steamed bun will bring them good luck if they eat it.

### 3.4. Discussion

The Mahayana tradition incorporates many diverse religious practices, depending on the practitioners' needs. Lee (2006) examines the way that the Chinese worship specific deities for specific needs, this practice is very strongly followed in Mangkorn temple. Lay practitioners at Mangkorn temple pray for a very wide range of different reasons. The many different deities at Mangkorn temple are worship for such reason including worshipping each for such reasons as recovering from illness, wanting to have a baby, praying for success in examinations, and wanting to find a spouse. Mahayana can accommodate many different rituals and traditions this has helped Chinese religious integration over-seas.

The nature of religious integration is interesting because religious traditions both integrate and preserve at the same time. This idea is clear in the style of religious chanting and chanting instruments. Not only do these large numbers of instruments show the depth and richness of Chinese Mahayana ritual culture but they also reveal a difference from other Mahayana traditions. Taiwanese Mahayana culture, although observing the same festivals and rituals, does not have all the same chanting instruments and use less instruments in chanting. An explanation for this is likely to be found in the origins of the Mahayana monks in Thailand and the traditions of the dialect groups that support the Bangkok temples. It is also important to note that although in many ways Mangkorn and Phoman temples are very different, they do share both their musical troupes and they use the same chanting books. The culture of music and chanting in Bangkok Mahayana reveals the strong communal ties that bind the Chinese population. To this extent it can be seen as an important legacy but not as a living culture in itself. The Sutras that are chanted are beautiful examples of classical Chinese poetry, a fact that is lost on the non-native speaking Chinese-Thai laypersons and monks of the two temples.