



Knowledge Organization of Thai Isan Amulets

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Abstract

An amulet is a symbol which represents the beliefs in Buddhism. The amulet, in general, is small and portable. This hallowing object is not only valuable in arts and commercial aspect but also has a role as a source of information and knowledge. The objective of this study was to analyze and organize the knowledge of 20 amulet magazines, 10 amulet websites, and 20 amulet entries on Thai-Journal Citation Index Centre (TCI) from 2007 to 2017. The research employs content analysis, knowledge organization, and entries form. The researchers found 505 concept entries, evaluated on redundancy and it was categorized into 202 entries. Then the researchers organized knowledge structure by using knowledge organization to group the same content together and similar content alongside. There are four groups of amulet content as 1) history 2) philosophy and teachings 3) religions and beliefs 4) arts, moreover, the history content was mostly found.

Keywords: knowledge structure, Amulets, Thai Isan Amulets, Knowledge Organization



1. Introduction

Thailand is a country where culture, values, and beliefs have been constantly changed because of the being of society and the advent of modern technology. However, one aspect which has not been changed is the belief of Thai people in rituals and religious practices. The belief is a combination of Buddhism, Brahmanism, and beliefs in mysteries which are still presented in Thailand. (Ministry of Culture, 2019). Kewtch & Crutchfield (1948) defines belief as a cognitive system and recognition which derives from personal experiences and becomes personal mindset. This is relevant to a definition of Schwitzgebel (2006) as belief is a personal perception which might not be proved and belief is a positive personal perception as something exists. Suchacha Chanaem (1988) said that belief is to accept facts also persons often do things by their belief and opinions. In psychology, belief and attitudes is concerned as one of unconsciousness which once it is aroused, persons will react the same patterns on what they believe. It could be said that belief is human nature and culture; acceptance of reality according to direct experience or assumption. Thai amulets are one of the Thai beliefs as it is hallowing objects which combined holy elements and white magic and moulded as objects the Buddhism beliefs (Wichian Sanmee, 2016) or Buddha images, portraits of monks, both living or passing away, who are revered as great Buddhism instructors. Amulets are generally small and portable, and it made from clay, lead, metal, or bronze (Chalong Suntharavanich, (2008).

The amulets in Thailand are most commonly found in the Northeastern due to this region has a lot of great Buddhism instructors who are important and respected by the Thai people. Also, the Northeastern region is an area where many amulets were stored in the basement of Buddhist pagodas or the dungeon especially in upper northeast region provinces: Udon Thani, Nong Khai, Nong Bua Lamphu, and Bueng Kan province (Ministry of Culture, 2019).

The Thai amulets are not only valuable in terms of arts and commercial aspect but also have a role as a source of information and knowledge by grouping into history, philosophy and teachings, and arts. Currently, the knowledge about amulets are likely to be lost or distorted because the knowledge about amulets, which is mostly a tacit knowledge, is accumulated in the person. If that person is sick or dies, then the knowledge will be lost. Therefore, if the knowledge of the amulets is systematically managed, it would be easier to keep and utilize that latent knowledge.



To ease the information search, reconfirm the knowledge, support research on Thai Isan amulets, and keep knowledge embedded in Thai amulets it needs knowledge organization and classification, therefore, the knowledge could be systematically managed, reconfirmed, and utilized conveniently (Chan, L.M, 1985: 190, Hjørland, 1994: Online, Nancy J, 2003: 43) since the knowledge has been organized into knowledge structure which simulated and stored in stratifications and relationships of each concept. This leads to obvious cause and effect relationship, helps on distributing relationships of related and unrelated scope of knowledge, and affects to effectiveness on decision making and information presentation or becomes grounded knowledge for further developments (Nawapon Kewsuwun, Kanyarat Kwiecien and Chumchit Sae-Chan, 2019).

To summarize, Thai amulets are important in terms of uplifting and spiritual anchor, besides, they are crucial information resource which are full of knowledge and information regarding Buddhism. Even the data on Thai amulets has been recorded in forms of books, articles, or research reports, most of the amulet knowledge is considered as latent knowledge which kept as personal memories and experiences. The memories and experiences could be disappeared so that it should be reserved and managed properly.

Therefore, knowledge organization is needed to be studied and analysed the in-depth content thoroughly as to gather essential aspects or wisdoms for developing a data storage system or assistance on organizing classes and structures meaningfully and precisely (Nawapon Kewsuwun, Kanyarat Kwiecien and Chumchit Sae-Chan, 2019). Moreover, it helps passing on the knowledge to next generations, strengthening antique knowledge, and applying the knowledge into commercial aspects.

2. Objectives of this study

1. To study and organize the knowledge structure of Thai Isan amulets

3. Scope of the study

The researchers aim to analyze knowledge structure regarding Thai amulets which published in the following resources:



1. 20 Thai amulet magazines which published between 2016 – 2018.
2. 10 registered Thai amulet websites which published and updated since year 2016.
3. 20 entries of research articles on Thai-Journal Citation Index Centre (TCI) from 2007 – 2017

4. Research Methodology

This research is conducted by using content analysis to collect and analyse for concepts in each topic and uses classification approach to study data relationship for acquiring new knowledge (Boonprasert,1999: 26-30). The methodology is as follows:

1. To select the resources the researchers gathered from 3 sources as:

- 1.1 20 Thai amulet magazines which published between 2016 – 2018.

- 1.2 10 registered Thai amulet websites which published and updated since
year 2016.

- 1.3 20 entries of research articles on Thai-Journal Citation Index Centre (TCI)
from 2007 - 2017

2. Data collection tools

The tool is a form which created to record concepts, class, sub class, and divisions. The researchers recorded and analyzed for scoping knowledge structure as class, sub-class, and division.

3. Data analysis

Contents from the 3 resources have been analyzed in terms of concept by considering on topics and texts and evaluated redundancy by deleting similar contents, words, and concepts. In contrast, the different content but shares the same meaning will be recorded. After that the researchers employed classification of knowledge to manage knowledge into structure by grouping the same content together and the similar content alongside. If some contents could not be grouped, a new structure was formed. Consequently, there were 202 entries regarding concepts as 1) history 2) philosophy and teachings 3) religions and beliefs and 4) arts.



5. Results

According to the study, the Thai Isan amulet knowledge structure was divided into two parts:

1. Contents which are on selected amulet resources as 20 Thai amulet magazines which published between 2016 – 2018, 10 registered Thai amulet websites which published and updated since year 2016, and 20 entries of research articles on Thai-Journal Citation Index Centre (TCI) from 2007 – 2017 could be analysed in 505 concepts. These were evaluated on redundancy and the data went down to 202 entries as showed in Table 1

Table 1: *Thai Isan amulet content in various resources*

Content	Concepts
Thai amulet knowledge	10
Thai amulet evolution	1
Elements in making Thai amulets	1
Thai amulet and date of birth knowledge	7
Thai amulet and astrology knowledge	12
Thai amulet dungeon knowledge	8
Great Buddhism instructors knowledge	41
Holy Buddhism image history	21
Attitudes of Buddhism images	21
History	1
Arts	1
Holy objects	3
Tips on detecting replica and genuine Thai amulets	1
Buddhism	1
Buddhism idioms	1
Incantations	45



Black magic	13
Prayer	3
Buying Thai amulets guides	1
Dhamma books	1
Thai amulet superstitions	7
New famous Thai amulets	2
Total	202

2. Knowledge organization has been adopted to manage the knowledge into class, sub-class and division by grouping content according to scopes of knowledge into 4 classes, 8 sub-classes, and 20 divisions as showed in Table 2.

Table 2: *Overview of knowledge structure from Thai Isan amulet content analysis*

Knowledge on Thai Isan Amulets		
Class 1 History		
Scope: this relates to Thai amulet history or great Buddhism instructors' autobiography and covers periods of making the amulets.		
	Sub-class	Division
	1.1 Period	1.1.1 After the Buddha's decease period 1.1.2 Dvaravati period 1.1.3 Ayutthaya period
	1.2 Dungeon	1.2.1 Nadoon Dungeon
	1.3 Great Buddhism instructors	1.3.1 History
Class 2 Philosophy and teachings		
Scope: it relates to acceptance on mysteries and positive personal attitudes on existence by direct experience or assumption.		



	sub-class	แนวคิดย่อ division
	2.1 Practices	2.1.1 Daily life 2.1.2 Observance 2.1.2 Food
Class 3 Religions and beliefs		
Scope: it relates to principles of great Buddhism instructors		
	Sub-class	Division
	3.1 Buddhism principles and teachings	3.1.1 texts 3.1.2 principles 3.1.3 ภาพหลักธรรมคำสอน pictures 3.1.4 prayers
	3.2 Beliefs	3.2.1 Luckiness 3.2.2 Safety 3.2.3 Wealth 3.2.3 Holy objects
Class 4 Arts		
Scope: it relates to arts in Thai amulets in various periods, culture influences, and artists or amulet makers in different communities who have different designs and styles.		
	sub-class	division
	4.1 Architectures	4.1.1 Dvaravati architectures 4.1.2 Ayutthaya architectures
	4.2 Schools	4.2.1 the royal craftsman school 4.2.2 the villager craftsmen school



6. Discussion and Conclusion

It could be concluded and discussed as follows:

1. According to the content analysis, it was analyzed for 505 entries and evaluated on redundancy so it was organized into 22 groups as 1) 95 entries of great Buddhism instructors knowledge 2) 94 entries of incantations 3) 47 entries of holy Buddhism image history 4) 41 entries of Thai amulet knowledge 5) 36 entries of attitudes of Buddhism images 6) 32 entries of holy objects 7) 31 entries of black magic 8) 21 entries of Thai amulet dungeon knowledge 9) 19 entries of Thai amulet superstitions 10) 16 entries of prayers 11) 12 entries of Thai amulet and astrology knowledge 12) 10 entries of buying Thai amulets guides 13) 7 entries of Thai amulet and date of birth knowledge 14) 7 entries of Buddhism 15) 6 entries of Thai amulet evolution 16) 6 entries of Thai amulet elements making 17) 6 entries of tips on detecting replica and genuine Thai amulets 18) 4 entries of history 19) 4 entries of arts 20) 4 entries of Dhamma books 21) 4 entries of new famous Thai amulets and 22) 3 entries of Buddhism idioms.

2. In accordance with the analysis and organization of the 3 resources, it was found that some groups share the same and similar contents, for instance, a group of great Buddhism instructor knowledge and Thai amulet knowledge. The researchers applied knowledge organization to manage the information considering on 1) same content 2) similar content but if some contents could not be grouped, a new group is formed. There were 505 entries, yet after evaluating on redundancy there were 202 entries. The researchers managed the knowledge into 4 groups as 1) history 2) philosophy and teachings 3) religions and beliefs 4) arts, moreover, the history content was mostly found.

3. After managing the knowledge into class, sub-class, and division, it was found that scopes of Thai amulet knowledge consist of 4 classes, 8 sub classes, and 20 divisions. The knowledge from this study could be utilized for further studies in terms of developing Thai Isan amulet ontology or semantic search.

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