

Buddhist and Animistic Beliefs in the Isan Folktale *Nang Phom Hom*

Itsarate Dolphen

Thai Language Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

Krittanon Dhechachortchuang

Srikrnuanwittayakom School, Krnuan District, Khon Kaen, Thailand

Abstract:

Most Thai people consider Buddhism a core spiritual foundation, yet their belief system extends beyond Buddhism to include the animistic notions of spirits and supernatural forces in nature and the cosmos. These intertwined beliefs are not only evident in contemporary Thai society but are also reflected in literary works. This research article aims to examine Buddhist and animistic beliefs in the Isan folktale *Nang Phom Hom* through a descriptive-analytical approach. The data for this study were drawn from the folktale *Nang Phom Hom*. The findings reveal that Buddhist and spirit beliefs are clearly expressed throughout both the narrative convention and plot development. Several belief systems are embedded in the story, including beliefs about merit and sin, heaven and hell, deities, spirits as embodiments of evil, frightening supernatural beings, and spirits possessing extraordinary power. This study contributes to an understanding of how blended belief systems—Buddhism and animistic spirit beliefs—play significant roles in shaping notions of sacredness, supernatural authority, and their influence on everyday life within the society.

Keywords:

Buddhist beliefs, animistic beliefs, spirit beliefs, Isan folk literature, *Nang Phom Hom*.