

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of genital symbols worship in the Northeastern region of Thailand in terms of its history, meanings, socio-cultural context, and its effects on the society. These were conducted through collecting data from documents concerned and extensive fieldworks in three villages.

According to the archeological sources and historical documents, genital symbols worship originated from two major sources; 1) It was the believe of prehistoric man on genital symbols as those appear in archeological objects found in Ban Chiang, Udon Thani province. 2) It was the believe influenced by Siva school in Hindu. In ritual practice and genital symbols worship of the Northeasterners in the present time, this study found that genital symbols symbolized three aspects ; for fertility cults, to sacrifice the Goddesses, and as a potent material.

In ritual practices that genital symbols were used as sacrificial object, this study found that the practices reflect local believe related to female status in NE socio-cultural context. This can also be found in the marriage system whereas man has to reside in woman's family and in the mode of inheritance conveyed through woman.

Genital symbols used in various rites, moreover, can be seen as communal effective reaction against local crises which cannot be overcome by the existing local institutions. These are droughts, health crisis, economic problems and so on.