

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to study the ritual performance at the Erawan Hotel Brahma Shrine which is the first and the most popular one in the center of the Bangkok metropolitan.

Brahma has, indeed, a long history of development. Its original set of believes has gradually transformed and adapted to social and cultural context of Thai society. As a result, Brahma has become greatly "Thai-like" as reflected in several details of performing such as regulations or guidelines for prayers which are established by the group of people serving as the shrine keepers of the Erawan Hotel Brahma Shrine.

Regulations or guidelines are aimed to direct all participants' actions in the same way, to control them within the new set of ritual structure and to isolate them from the usual social structure marked by Turner as "Liminality". Liminality means marginality or ambiguity, that is, referring to the circumstance in which no status of participants could be identified but participants united as a temporary group during observing the ritual along with the pattern established by the shrine keepers. After finishing the ritual, the group would return to the usual reality. The temporary group could be called "Communitas".

Due to the large number and the variety of participants, the ritual pattern at the shrine has become diversified and sometimes break away from the regulations and guidelines. As a result, the isolation to the liminality including the unification in the ritual are obscure and distorted. Moreover, the objects in the ritual are symbolically reflecting the real social structure.

However, the ritual performance at the Erawan Hotel Brahman Shrine to a certain extent could be recognised as reflections of belief in Brahma and of Brahma's capability to serve human desires.