

## **KHUN TOK DINNER: THE TRANSFORMATION OF A LANNA EATING STYLE INTO A TOURIST ATTRACTION IN CHIANG MAI, THAILAND**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper examines the transformation of the Khun Tok and Lanna cuisine in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand. Khun Tok is a traditional round, low table used for meals of the Lanna people (those who lived in the Northern part of Thailand or Lanna Kingdom in the past). In 1953, the Khun Tok Dinner was then established in the form of a modern party that used the name of the traditional Lanna utensil, Khun Tok, as the title of the party. It was the first time that the Lanna traditional cuisine and Khun Tok appeared in a modern style dinner for upper class people in the city of Chiang Mai. Later, the pattern of the Khun Tok Dinner was used and replicated to host visitors in Chiang Mai by local Buddhist groups. After the establishment of the private tourist business and the Old Chiang Mai Cultural Center, the Khun Tok Dinner was used regularly as a tourist attraction. Later, dancing in traditional costumes was introduced to accompany the meal. With this tourist construction of a traditional cuisine only easily cooked Lanna dishes were made available and a limited menu was served, despite there being a variety of traditional Lanna dishes. Subsequently, and in response to tourism demand, more Khun Tok Dinner restaurants were established in Chiang Mai. The concepts of authenticity and commoditisation of Lanna culture, as well as the promotion of the cultural industry are debated as significant factors relating to the transformation of the traditional Khun Tok and Lanna cuisine in response to the developing tourism industry.*

**Keywords:** Lanna cuisine, Khun Tok Dinner, authenticity, commoditisation, cultural industry

### **INTRODUCTION**

Chiang Mai, the former capital of the Lanna Kingdom, had a unique culture that is different from the culture of other regions in Thailand. Chiang Mai was first known as a cultural destination when Thai people were encouraged

to travel by train from Bangkok to Chiang Mai during the 1950s. At the same time, in the 1950s and 1960s, the images of Chiang Mai were invented and used to promote the city as a paradise for Thai tourists (Srisawat 1961). As a result, the Lanna culture in Chiang Mai was portrayed as a domestic tourist attraction. In 1953, Lanna cuisine and Khun Tok, a low, round wooden table used to serve food, was first imitated to host guests of the local elite, widely known as the Khun Tok Dinner. After that the Khun Tok Dinner became popular among local people to serve their visitors and provide them with the taste of Lanna cuisine. The Khun Tok Dinner started to get directly involved in the tourist business when the Old Chiang Mai Cultural Center, a private business property, was established in 1975 (Buakli 2004).

Then, the Khun Tok Dinner began to serve mostly foreign tourists in Chiang Mai every night. Later, the presentation of the Khun Tok Dinner has been more elaborately developed to attract tourists. Traditional performances have been included during the dinner, as well as the display of decorative costumes and performing styles. The traditional taste of Lanna cuisine has been increasingly adapted to satisfy foreign tourists. The traditional style of eating by sitting on the floor around the Khun Tok has been adapted into floor couches and dinner tables. The Khun Tok Dinner has become a must activity for tourists in Chiang Mai to taste and appreciate Lanna culture. Consequently, more restaurants and eating places serving the Khun Tok Dinner have been established. Accordingly, the construction of a particular and local cuisine as part of the creation of a cultural industry in Chiang Mai are discussed in this paper as factors relating to the transformation process of traditional Lanna cuisine into a specific element—the Khun Tok Dinner—which has become a popular tourist attraction in Chiang Mai. Yet, this is an inauthentic cultural construction which has been developed for the tourist industry and we will explore the process of invention and reinvention in this paper.

A historical approach is adopted in this study, in terms of data collection on traditional Lanna cuisine and Khun Tok, the establishment of the Khun Tok Dinner, and the process of using the Khun Tok Dinner for tourist-related commercial benefits. The ethnographic research method is also used in observing Khun Tok Dinner events and interviewing some key informants involved in the provision of this Lanna cuisine. Photographs are also used to interpret the phenomenon of the transformation of the Khun Tok Dinner from the past into the present.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Food and Tourism**

Although food is accepted as part of the tourist experience, it can also be a primary motivation for tourists (Everett and Aitchison 2008). Long argues that food can be a central element in the motivation to travel (2010). In this way, the tourism industry provides food experiences, as well as introducing new exotic foods, or food as a cultural experience for tourists. In this manner, travel for food can be part of "a perception of otherness, of something being different from the usual" (Long 2010).

Hall et al. (2003: 10) define food tourism as the "visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations... it is the desire to experience a particular type of food or produce of a specific region..." They also consider food tourism as mainly attributable to people who have higher incomes and who specifically travel to particular restaurants to experience unusual or special cuisines.

Food tourism is an economic generator and marketing tool, as well as providing an attractive feature of tourist destinations, contributing to the maintenance and development of regional identity, the improvement of environmental awareness and sustainability, the provision of a range of social and cultural benefits, the preservation of traditional heritage, and the support of expertise and skills in the traditional culinary arts (Everett and Aitchison 2008).

Douglas et al. (2001) view food tourism from a multidisciplinary perspective whilst Boniface (2003) and Hjalager and Richards (2002) observe that empirical studies in food tourism, particularly in terms of socio-cultural perspectives, are limited. In addition, there is a growing need for food studies which adopt multidisciplinary approaches drawing on psychological, anthropological, ethnological and sociological perspectives (Beardsworth and Keil 1997). Similarly, Everett and Aitchison (2008) consider that food tourism is a new development in the field of tourism studies. Hence, it is obviously seen that there are more recent publications and conferences on food or gastronomy tourism than there were in the past.

### **FOOD AS CULTURAL AND PLACE IDENTITY**

Indeed, food tourism has important roles in strengthening a regional identity and to prolong cultural heritage (Everett and Aitchison 2008). Food and cuisine express their socio-cultural significance within society and food

contributes to identity formation as well as serving as a marker of local identities (Mintz 1996). Hence, food can be "place cultural artefacts" serving as powerful symbols of identity (Cook and Crang 1996: 131).

Consequent to "the basis of tourism is a perception of otherness, of something being different from the usual" (Long 2010: 5), Howes (1996) proposes that the nature of identity is connected with experiencing the identity of others in the context of the process of cross-cultural consumption. In this way, the tourist experience can be observed as a tool to strengthen and positively reinforce cultural and social identities (Cohen 1979).

On the other hand, common identity of local places can be developed and marketed as essential places to tourists (Mueller and Schade 2012). In this way, symbols of group identity are important for the development of local places and "symbols can be established" through marketing procedures. Along these lines, established place symbols, as part of branding strategies, can strengthen place identity (Mueller and Schade 2012).

## **FOOD, TOURISM AND AUTHENTICITY**

However, questions about "authenticity" or "traditional" experience in food tourism have been raised. Indeed, the issue of authenticity has long been a focus in tourism research, especially a search for the discovery of authenticity in the travel experiences of tourists. But there are few recent studies on food involvement from different viewpoints of food and authenticity (Chhabra et al. 2013).

Authenticity is usually understood as originating from tradition and the past. However, there are debates which focus on where authenticity, or tradition is located, and whose judgment determines whether something is authentic or not. Cohen has formulated the concept of "emergent authenticity" that refers to the process through which cultures are constantly "making themselves up" (2004). This notion of emergent authenticity expresses the broader phenomenon of the invention and reinvention of culture. Research within tourism and cultural studies has focused on the creativity of tradition and the ways in which tradition is continually being reinvented and reconstructed. Accordingly, the reinvention of traditional food can also be identified in the context of culinary tourism. Molz (2004) examines how traditional Thai cuisine is used to represent Thai culture in American Thai restaurants. In this fashion, several strategies are used to expose the authenticity of these Thai foods.

Tourists themselves have their own perceptions of the construction of authenticity in food tourism. Molz argues that indeed authenticity is a mutually negotiated concept in which the tourists' perceptions are as much involved in the construction of authenticity within the context of the tourism industry (2004). She further explains that tourists bring with them their own set of judgments about what establishes an authentic experience. Frequently, these judgements are informed by media images of the region. Thus, issues of authenticity can be significant in influencing consumer perceptions of food.

When food tourism marketing focuses on the region's cuisine and history, then many tourists expect to find food associated with traditional local culture. This demonstrates that tourists establish connections between food and place. In this sense, tourists bring their own ideas and ways of making judgements on traditional experiences (Molz 2004).

## **TOURISM AND COMMODITISATION**

Cohen defines commoditisation as "a process by which things (and activities) come to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value, in a context of trade, then becoming goods (and services)" (1979: 380). In Gotham's study, commoditisation is viewed more critically and refers to "the dominance of commodity exchange-value over use-value and implies the development of a consumer society where market relations subsume and dominate social life" (Gotham 2002: 1737). The commoditisation process can transfer the exchange value generated in trade into goods or commodities, which can be priced or marketed. Once commodities are conceptualised as items produced for their monetary value, the introduction of the "sign value" can stimulate more consumption. The commoditisation process seems to fit a modern, developed and consumer society, where capitalism and monetary value can grow.

Meethan views tourism as part of the process of capitalist-generated commoditisation and consumption (2001). Tourism itself is also recognised as a commodity (Watson and Kopachevsky 2002). Signs and images are constructed to attract tourists to spend and consume. For example, symbols and images which they produce in some cases also become commodities for consumption. The sign-value, which replaces the use-value and exchange value of commodities, becomes important. In Gotham's view, "sign value"—the value of images and symbols—is not related to reality in that the marketing and advertising process can make things into something

"hyper-real," resulting in consumers losing the ability to distinguish between the real and illusion (2002: 1738).

There are limited studies on the transformation of food in relation to tourism, as well as authenticity and commoditisation. The study of Lotti (2010) focuses on the transformation of Slow Food through the commoditisation process. This paper examines how the tourism and commoditisation process has transformed the image of Khun Tok and Lanna cuisine. Although the Khun Tok Dinner and Lanna cuisine have been involved in tourism in Chiang Mai for a long time, there is a limited number of studies on culinary tourism in Chiang Mai and Thailand, and this study hopefully builds a foundation for the study of the influence of tourism on the transformation of local gastronomy in Chiang Mai.

## **KHUN TOK AND TRADITIONAL LANNA CUISINE**

Khun Tok is a round wooden table about one foot high which is used for serving food of the Lanna people, who sit on the floor around the Khun Tok for their meals. Khun Toks have also been used as utensils for ritual activities in houses or temples. Khun Tok which is used to serve ordinary people had a simple decoration compared to the one used to serve food for high-ranking people. Furthermore, there are several sizes of Khun Tok depending on their functions. For instance, "Khun Tok Luang" or big Khun Tok has been used in ritual activities in temples or for ruling class families. "Khun Tok Ham" or middle size Khun Tok has been used to serve middle class families because more dishes of food can be placed on them. "Khun Tok Noi" or small Khun Tok, the popular Khun Tok, has been used by ordinary people. Khun Tok can be considered as an element in the tangible cultural heritage of Lanna culture.

As mentioned, Khun Tok is served as a utensil for food, thus dishes of Lanna cuisine are placed on the Khun Tok beside boxes of glutinous rice, made from palm leaves. Traditionally, Lanna people eat with their fingers and their cuisine is also unique, in terms of recipe, compared to cuisine in other parts of Thailand.

Glutinous rice is a major element of Lanna cuisine. There are various types of traditional Lanna cuisine. As a consequence of being an agrarian society, Lanna traditional food comprises mostly local vegetables, mixed with meat or proteins from local animals, insects or worms. There are many kinds of dishes in Lanna cuisine; for instance curry, chilli paste, spicy vegetable pestle or salad, grilled food and so on. As mentioned, traditional

Lanna food was part of the context of a traditional agricultural society in which food was prepared and cooked in a relatively simple way.

The main ingredients of the cuisine are quite comparable, though they are different in some components, such as in the use of dried or fresh chilli and different kinds of vegetables or meats as the main ingredients. Indeed, there are many kinds of traditional Lanna chilli paste. Chilli pastes have not only been cooked from dried or fresh chilli, but also with vegetables, meats, bugs and even worms as major elements of the dishes. Different kinds of local vegetable are made as priority ingredients of Lanna chilli pastes, for instance, jackfruit, bamboo shoot, wild mushrooms, local bean, tomatoes, eggplants, *moutarde chinoise*, galangal, ginger and so on. Local natures, freshwater creatures or insects are also important ingredients of chilli pastes, for instance, fish, rice field crabs, pork, pork crackling, earth bugs and bamboo bugs. It is no wonder that there are around 30 types of chilli paste in Lanna cuisine.

Traditional Lanna recipes seem very simple, when most curry ingredients are similarly made, from dried or green chilli, onions or shallots, garlic, galangal, citrus fruits, salt or fish sauce. Various types of Lanna curry contain vegetables or meat as major ingredients. Different kinds of local vegetables are also used to make different types of Lanna curry and there are around 20 different curry dishes.

Spicy minced meat salad or "*Laap*," which can be made from pork, beef and fish, has been recognised as the best dish of Lanna cuisine. It is the most complicated to prepare compared to other dishes. Accordingly, more than ten kinds of traditional spices are mixed for the ingredients of this dish. In the past, it was cooked only for special events or festivities, since pork or beef was the traditional meat for this dish and it was rarely found in the past daily life.

There are also many kinds of Lanna grilled food made from vegetables, fish, pork, egg and even beehives. Most Lanna grilled food is wrapped in banana leaves, or placed in banana leaf baskets. When local Lanna society changed then these changes also significantly affected traditional Lanna cuisine. Consequently, many dishes are rarely made or found today, like some traditional vegetables. Furthermore, traditional Lanna cuisine may be too complicated for the younger generation to cook or it may take time to cook for people who now live in a faster paced modern society. As a result, nowadays there are fewer traditional dishes in markets or restaurants in the city of Chiang Mai.



Figure 1: Lanna cuisine placed on Khun Tok (source: author with the permission by Huen Phen 2 traditional restaurant in Chiang Mai).

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE KHUN TOK DINNER IN CHIANG MAI

The Khun Tok Dinner was first known in 1953 when Kraisri Nimmanahaeminda<sup>1</sup> organised a farewell party for his friend, Sanya Thammasak, who was appointed as a judge in Chiang Mai, and who had to move back to Bangkok. This first modern festivity of the Khun Tok Dinner was held at the luxury house of Kraisri on the bank of the Ping River in Chiang Mai. There was a discussion about the form of the party which would give an appropriate expression to Lanna culture. As a result, the costumes of guests were designed, and the women were asked to wear *Pa sin* and long tight sleeved blouses with their hair in a bun and decorated with orchids. For men, the *Mor Hom*, traditional blue cotton pants and shirts were required.

It was the first time that Lanna culture was blended into a modern festivity. The nostalgic feeling of the traditional atmosphere of Lanna culture therefore came to be focused on the dinner and its associated activities. Later, other Khun Tok Dinners were organised by Kraisri. The second Khun Tok Dinner was organised to welcome the World Bank officials through the request of the Minister of Finance. In 1956, the third Khun Tok Dinner was established for high-ranking officials of foreign funding organisations. This time troupes of traditional dancers performed the *Forn Leb*<sup>2</sup> (nailed-covered dance), *Forn Tein*<sup>3</sup> (candle dance), *Forn*



*Dap*<sup>4</sup> (sword dance) and *Ram Wong*<sup>5</sup> (Thai folk dance). Again in 1956, the biggest Khun Tok Dinner was arranged for high-ranking officials, members of northern noble families, and foreign diplomats. There were around 200 participants in this party. This time the property of Kraisri was lavishly decorated like a grand festival in northern temples. The path ways and temporary buildings were decorated with colourful flags and small fire lanterns. Poles of temporary structures were wrapped in coloured paper and decorated with flowers. It was the first time that Khun Tok was accompanied by a parade along with troupes of traditional dancers (Chaisawat 1984).

Later, the Khun Tok Dinner fashion was followed by local people in Chiang Mai to welcome their guests. During the 1960s, Khun Tok Dinners were popularly organised by the Young Buddhist Groups of Chiang Mai at Buddha Sathan (a place to practice Buddhism) and other temples in the city to welcome their visitors from Bangkok and other parts of Thailand. During the 1960s and 1970s, Chiang Mai was promoted as an important tourist destination for the Thai people, hence many visitors came from Bangkok and other parts of Thailand, as well as practising Buddhism activities at Buddha Sathan and temples in the city. Consequently, the Khun Tok Dinner became part of the popular activities of local Buddhist groups to welcome their visitors to Chiang Mai (Srisawat 1961).

In 1975, the "Old Chiang Mai," the private cultural centre for tourists, was established. Then, the Khun Tok Dinner emerged at this time to welcome Thai tourists every night in this cultural centre (Buakli 2004). At present, the eating style of the Lanna people, in the form of the Khun Tok Dinner, can be found every night as a tourist attraction at cultural centres, hotels and restaurants in Chiang Mai. Accordingly, Chiang Mai has become a centre for the Khun Tok Dinner and traditional Lanna performances.

## **THE EVOLUTION OF THE KHUN TOK DINNER**

The Khun Tok Dinner, which first emerged as a luxury festivity of upper class people in Chiang Mai in 1953, was transformed into the appropriate means to host the guests of young local Buddhist groups in the 1960s. Then in 1975, it appeared in the form of a cultural experience for tourists in Chiang Mai by the Old Chiang Mai Cultural Center. It can be argued that the first founder of the Khun Tok Dinner, Mr. Kraisri Nimmanahaeminda, used it to express the rich cultural identity of the Lanna to his guests. However, initially the Khun Tok Dinner was presented in a very luxurious and decorative style. Subsequently, the Khun Tok Dinner of the local

Buddhist youth groups was presented in a very simple way and similar to the life style and the way of eating of local people. The emergence of the Old Chiang Mai Cultural Center in 1975 can be viewed as marking the change in the use of local culture by local tourist businessmen to secure economic benefits. It can be seen that the more recent transformation of the Khun Tok Dinner and Lanna cuisine came about through the organisation of the tourist business.

In the 1960s, the Khun Tok Dinner was used to host guests from Bangkok by the local Buddhist youth groups, when Chiang Mai was promoted as a destination for domestic tourists. This resulted in the Khun Tok Dinner and Lanna cuisine becoming more recognised as marking a certain "otherness." The establishment of the Old Chiang Mai Cultural Center was a major factor in this transformation.

The serving method used in the Khun Tok Dinner in the Old Chiang Mai Cultural Center gradually transformed the dining experience. The presentation of the Khun Tok Dinner developed from the simple form into a more lavish and decorative style to facilitate, as well as satisfy modern tourist demands. The traditional way of sitting on the floor around the Khun Tok while eating, developed into sitting on floor couches and at the dinner table instead. Some places provide the Japanese style of dinner table so that the customers can hide their legs under the tables.

Traditional performances have been added to the organisation of the Khun Tok Dinner in the Cultural Center. At the beginning, only a simple style of traditional performance was presented. But nowadays, performances for tourists while they are having dinner are arranged in a very splendid style. Hence, performers' costumes are lavish. However, these luxuriously presented costumes are not related to the costume of ordinary Lanna people in the past. They may look like the costume of the upper class women but they are designed in a very decorative and lavish style. Furthermore, the performers selected are mostly beautiful young women with similar figures and height. This has made the serving of the occasion of the Khun Tok Dinner much more elaborate than the original one.

Surprisingly, the Lanna dishes served for tourists in the Khun Tok Dinner restaurants are quite similar and simple. As mentioned, there is a variety of Lanna food in terms of curry, chilli pastes, grilled food and so on. But only four to five simple dishes of Lanna food are now served: sticky rice with Kang Hunglay (Burmese style of pork curry), Nam Prik Num (fresh-chilli paste) with boiled vegetables, Kab Moo (crispy pork skin), and fried chicken or fried pork. "*Laap*," the spicy minced meat salad, has not been served in any Khun Tok Dinner restaurant. Furthermore, the taste of the food in the Khun Tok Dinner is not like the original dishes. For instance,

the chilli pastes are not as spicy as the chilli in the ordinary food of the local people. The adaptation of food to satisfy customers' tastes can be considered as a reason for this inauthenticity.



Figure 2: Lanna style of food served at the Khun Tok Dinner restaurant in Chiang Mai (source: author with the permission by Sibsongpanna Khuntoke).

## **KHUN TOK DINNER, TOURISM AND CULTURAL IDENTITY**

The invention of the Khun Tok Dinner in 1953 can be seen as a celebration to demonstrate Lanna cultural identity (and see Cook and Crang 1996: 131; Howes 1996; Cohen 1979). In other words, the Khun Tok Dinner and Lanna cuisine came to serve as symbols of Lanna culture in Chiang Mai.

In the 1960s, the Khun Tok Dinner was organised by the local Buddhist youth groups to host their guests who were visitors from Bangkok, which began the process of the recognition by domestic tourists of Lanna cuisine as something different from mainstream central Thai cuisine. After the establishment of the Old Chiang Mai Cultural Center, Lanna cultural identity in the form of the Khun Tok Dinner and Lanna cuisine has become more developed and has been marketed for tourists in Chiang Mai who like to experience traditional Lanna culture and identity for a brief period of time (and see Mueller and Schade 2012).

Following the ideas of Long (2010: 1), food is a cultural experience for tourists, and travel for food is part of the perception of otherness and difference (2010). The Khun Tok Dinner has therefore served to provide a symbol of Lanna culture located in Chiang Mai, as its historic and cultural

centre (and see Mintz 1996; Cook and Crang 1996; Everett and Aitchison 2008).

## **AUTHENTICITY, COMMODITISATION AND THE KHUN TOK DINNER**

In terms of authenticity, it can be argued that the Khun Tok Dinner, organised by the local Buddhist youth groups, represented the more authentic Lanna eating style compared to the initial Khun Tok Dinner organised by Kraisri Nimmanahaeminda and that of the Old Chiang Mai Cultural Center, as well as the cuisine of the recently established Khun Tok Dinner restaurants. The Khun Tok Dinner served by the local Buddhist groups was more simple and similar to the "real" eating style of Lanna people, because it was organised and serviced in Buddhist temples.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the Khun Tok Dinners that were provided by the first two organisers, Kraisri Nimmanahaeminda and the local Buddhist youth groups were not related to the commoditisation process. Their purpose was to serve a unique Lanna style of cuisine to their guests and present Lanna culture. But in the case of the Old Chiang Mai Cultural Center and the recent established Khun Tok Dinner restaurants, the Khun Tok Dinner and Lanna cuisine have been commoditised for their customers. Furthermore, the Khun Tok Dinner has become "hyper real" since the Lanna eating style has become more elaborate and decorative to attract customers. In other words Lanna cuisine in these restaurants can be seen as a case of "staged authenticity," cultural invention and the commoditisation of culture (MacCannell 1976). Remarkably, only a few dishes of Lanna cuisine are served for tourists and similar or standardised Lanna food is served at every Khun Tok restaurant in Chiang Mai.

The reason for this representation of food at the Khun Tok Dinner is to facilitate the event for customers, who are mostly foreigners and are not familiar with the spicy taste of Lanna curry and other dishes. In other words, tourists do not experience authentic Lanna food and may have the wrong perception that Lanna cuisine is limited in its variety. Furthermore, the creation of performances and the lavish costumes, as well as the decorations in the Khun Tok restaurant are not authentic at all. Accordingly, the staged Khun Tok Dinner in 1953 was the origin of the process which was to totally transform the eating style of ordinary Lanna people into the modern and adorned meal for tourists in Chiang Mai. It took only around 60 years for this transformation.

After the founding of the Old Chiang Mai Cultural Center which started to serve Khun Tok Dinners for tourists in Chiang Mai in 1975, many eating houses have sprung up in the city. Tourism, as well as the commoditisation process can be viewed as major factors in this. Furthermore, the increasing number of Khun Tok Dinner establishments, providing Lanna cuisine, and cultural performances decorated in an appropriate Lanna style can be seen as the specific creations of a tourism-oriented Lanna cultural industry. Due to the fact that Lanna culture focused on the Khun Tok cuisine, as well as highly decorative cultural performances what we also witness here is a process of "touristification" (Picard 1996): an original cuisine has been reconstructed in what we might term a "double transformation." The Khun Tok Dinner was the product of a constructed event in the early 1950s, which drew on certain elements of Lanna culture. It was then further appropriated by the Cultural Center in Chiang Mai to become a "signifier" of Lanna culture but also a cultural experience designed for tourists.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Khun Tok, a traditional Lanna table for serving meals, has been converted into the name of a luxury dinner provided in a modern decorative style. Furthermore, the Khun Tok, which was used to serve all the meals provided in the daily lives of Lanna people in the past, has been transformed into a serving table exclusively for a restaurant dinner. Moreover, even the traditional Khun Tok may not be used as the table for serving food at the Khun Tok Dinner in that standard dining tables may be supplied instead.

However, the term Khun Tok is still used as the name of the location where the food is provided and the meal itself with its associated cultural performances and displays. In this way, the Khun Tok has become a "sign" or the provision of a simplified Lanna food for tourists in Chiang Mai, accompanied by elaborated and decorative cultural performances. Tourism is viewed as the major factor in generating this transformation into the mass production and commoditisation of the Khun Tok Dinner. Tourists can then experience and can taste the "otherness" of an invented Lanna cultural tradition. Furthermore, the Khun Tok Dinner and Lanna cuisine have contributed to the identification of Chiang Mai as the centre for Lanna cultural tourism. The origin of the Khun Tok Dinner was as a constructed cultural event to honour guests and to express Lanna cultural identity. It has subsequently been "touristified" and provides an appropriate case of what has been termed in tourism studies "staged authenticity."

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Kraisri was from a Chinese merchant family and was well-known in Chiang Mai from the 1950s to the 1990s for his contributions to the city.

<sup>2</sup> Traditional dance of Northern Thailand. Dancers often wear long-sleeved cotton blouse with *Pa sin* and eight nail covers made of brass.

<sup>3</sup> A Northern Thai dance in which dancers hold lighted candles.

<sup>4</sup> A traditional Northern Thai dance representing ancient martial arts often performed to raise courage and strength.

<sup>5</sup> A group of traditional dances with cheerful music and lyrics, often performed as the closing performance.

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