



APPLYING SONGKRAN ACTIVITIES TO WEAVE THE BI-INTERRELATION BETWEEN THE THAI BUDDHISTS AND THE MYANMAR BUDDHIST DIASPORAS IN THAILAND

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Abstract

The academic article on “Applying Songkran Activities to Weave the Bi-interrelation between the Thai Buddhists and the Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas in Thailand” was focused on investigate self-conducts during Songkran days, to develop Songkran activities to weave the relation between the Thai Buddhist with the Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas. The findings were research findings reveal the Songkran Activities engage organizing bi-nationality alms offering, organizing bi-sprinkling on monks for munificence or gratitude, organizing requiem ashes rites for both ancestors and formulating sand chedis (pagodas) to weave bi-interrelations. These are to inherit and to nurture the Songkran values which evolve the communal values for Songkran enhances community solidarity, the societal values for Songkran escalates environmental hospitality and the religious values for Songkran organizes cogent alms offering of the Buddhists. The goal is to reinforce the Bi-interrelation between the Thai Buddhists and the Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas in Thailand including the model of applying Songkran activities: New Theory. Serious suggestions, through the 4 Songkran activities; devotees should plan other common Buddhist rites year-round but staging protest of diasporas might contribute pessimism amongst most Thai Buddhists; Myanmar Buddhist diasporas themselves should break their hard-core Myanmar diasporas.

Keywords: Songkran Activities, Bi-interrelation, Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas



Introduction

In the Ayudhya period of His Majesty Baramakosa the royal function of traditional Songkran was held only in the palace. It was influenced by Hinduism integrated with the Buddhist rites. It was later spread into the local communities until in the early Ratanakosin age, His Majesty Phra Nangklao or Rama III observed that Songkran festival was initiated by elites who attempted to seek their original roots to at that time control the Thai societies not to incline to the western cultures, which were flooded into the early Ratanakosin era and to secure the monarchy through systematically initiate their own tradition asserted Pipad Krajaejun (2016). The Traditional Songkran written by His Majesty King Chulalongkorn or Rama V was a sacred bath practiced only in the royal court and counted as the sacred tradition by the religious belief and to promote the monarchic institution. Rather than only water splashes alike the commoners as found in today.

Religions were then the principal creeds for intense and the most profound spiritual attachment. In addition, religions helped create reciprocity to eliminate social gaps, building mutual trust, the foundation of unity, synergy and peacefulness and its implication was the community security peacefulness (Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P.A. Payutto), 2012).

Directly and indirectly inter-societal activities between the known and the unknown, de facto, human beings had to be responsive to basic biological and cultural needs and they were vested with initiatives and able to invent tools and plans to better their societies (Somparn Phromtha, 2011). Peaceful coexistence demanded abiding in rules and regulations of laws, practiced virtues of reciprocity, involvement in social activities of politics, government, protection of human rights and adherence to the virtues of coexistence, religious doctrines which led to peaceful and doctrinal co-existence (Duan Khamdi, 2010). Differences in genders, ages, educations, social classes, work experiences, religions, nationalities, would welcome different attitude, norms and values and could indisputably lead to internally and externally physical and psychological clashes. Still, “Birds of the same feathers not only flock together but fight each other, and fight with other feathers, too.” Nevertheless, diversities could have common goal and harmony or unity to live peacefully and saved

from lethal jeopardies as in the *Vaḍḍtakīsūkara Jātaka* (Tripitaka Thai Vol.27 Code 22 page 142 MCU, 16 June 2005). The sense of nationalism, the sense of national owner and the sense of confederacy to further their national development (Thailand Development Research Institute. 2015).

The Songkran events to weave the relations between the Thai Buddhist with the Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas in Thailand attracted the author to conduct a research. The traditional Songkran helped instill Buddhism and social to responsive behave to the course of peaceful livelihood. Most Myanmar were Buddhists very faithful to the Rattana Triya (the Three Jewels) and when they had to travel to work in Thailand where it was Buddhist country; the Myanmar needed some spiritual sacred adherents. As such “Wats” (Buddhist Temples) were where they associated for the Buddhist rites. The Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas devoted to their faith and the Buddhist ritual practices similar to the Thai Buddhists. To be as the approaches for community co-existence, behavioral socializations, and conflict alleviations, the author has employed the Songkran activities and events to weave the relation in order to found the social multicultural security for further the Buddhist Vital Crescendo. Therefore, this article would investigate self-conducts during Songkran Days, to develop Songkran activities to weave the relation between the Thai Buddhist with the Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas.

Self-conducts during Songkran Days

The Kingdom of Thailand, the Laos People's Democratic Republic, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Tai Minority in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Yunnan in the People's Republic of China, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and eastern Republic of India enjoyed traditional Songkran Festival adopted from the sacred ancient Indian Holi (7th Century) organized in every waning day of the 4th month or around March.

The Songkran activities involved Alms Offers to create virtues and merits and to contribute them also to the dead. Such virtue and merit creation had to be afore prepared. When merit time arrived, the Buddhist devotees brought foods to offer monks at the temple pavilions. After merit-making; they



heaped sand chedis (pagodas and stupa) which was the prime tradition on Songkran Day. The Water-play was consecrated as reciprocal New Year Greetings and the water used mixed by traditional perfume to water the Buddha images at home, in the temples, the elders, the revered persons like teachers and the ancestral relics which implied seeking blessings and forgiveness. The elders, the masters and the teachers returned the blessings. Monks brought monkhood robe for changes as well as the devotees brought clothe for changes, which implied the “start new life”. Offerings included dresses, coconuts, bananas, acacia, candles, and flowers. Freeing birds and fishes counted as purification for the sin one has committed. It implied exorcism and calamities leaving only happiness on the New Year Day. Carrying sands into the “Wats” implied to bring fortunes meeting happiness, prosperity, inflowing wealth of gold and money like sand carried into the “Wats”. Some believed that bringing sands stick at shoes from the “Wats” was sinful; therefore, bringing in sands to the “Wats” countered sinfulness.

Activity Developments during Songkran Days

To conclude the findings of the Songkran activity development to interlace relation between the Thai Buddhists and the Myanmar Buddhists, they were:

The activities of the Songkran tradition showed the unity, gratefulness and traditional merriment. In general, activities were organized before the Songkran Day to be well-prepared for good luck in order to welcome new life. Most activities were the cleaning of dwelling, utensils, and public places such as “wats”, pavilions, community vicinities, preparing dress for the alms offering, and apparels. In addition, clothes to respect elders and to water them to seek blessings, preparing foods for alms offering, special desserts for the New Year Day particularly the red sticky rice, local dessert (khanom kuan) and kalamae and the Songkran Day. The traditional Songkran value was important and organized since ancient time. It was the day of munificence, affection, and commitment for the family, community, social and religion. As for the family, it attracted family member homecoming to express gratefulness, help cleaning, arrange their home, and help prepare desserts to merit-offering, and their children, and various Thai desserts, dinners and happy associations particularly

Buddhist rites on alms offering, monk feedings, attending Dhamma sermons and watering the Buddha images.

Knowledge gained from this research directed to sustain this tradition has to be inherited for its virtues, traditional values, to inherit and nurture Buddhism, to cultivate the sense of sacrifice without demanding returns. However, Songkran activities were varied by areas to expose their local intellectual of ancestors. Any changes or modification directly relied on the cultural deliberation of the locals to welcome alien trends flooding into the localities. Another 4 knowledges collected from this research were:

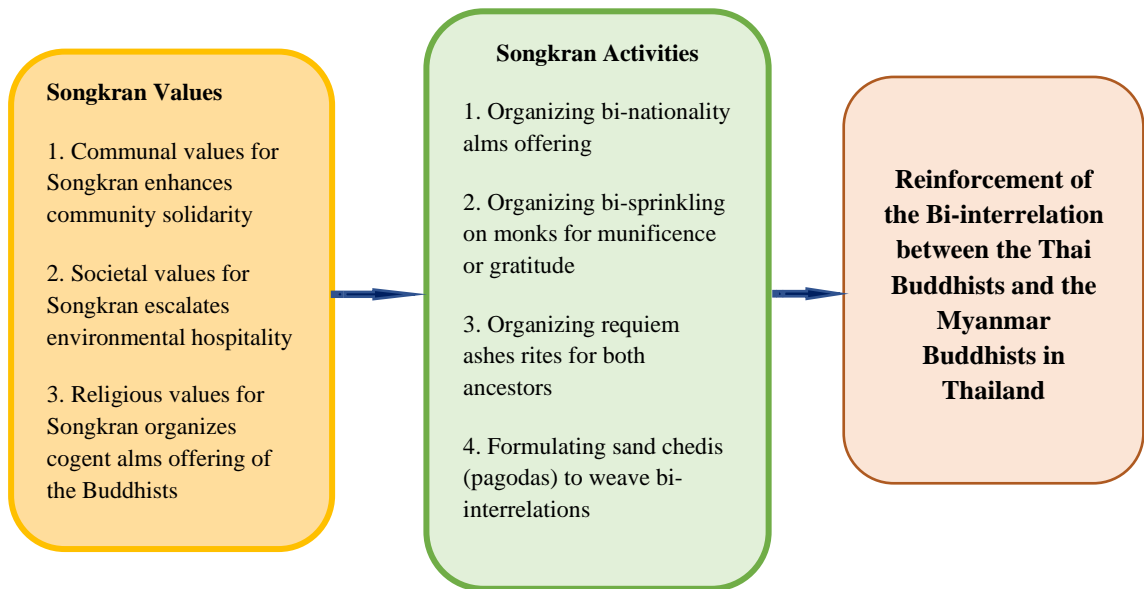
1. The Activity of Alms Offering for Virtues and Merits for both Thais and Myanmar – this was counted to raise virtues and merits for oneself and donate these virtues and merits to the deceased. Such alms offering had to be well-prepared in advance, to bring foods for alms offering to monks at the temple pavilions where devotees assembled. After alms offering rites; Sand Buddha Images would be pursued and forming which as the invaluable tradition.

2. The Activity of Sprinkling Water on His Lord Buddha Images and munificence gratitude by both Thais and Myanmar – this was the New Year mutual greetings. The water for sprinkling had to be mixed with local perfume to water the Lord Buddha images placed in the “Wats” and at homes. Some areas organized to sprinkle monks, the requiem ashes rites, the elders’ relics. Sands were mostly used for the chedis (pagodas or stupas) formulations and requesting monks to preside the requiem ashes rites.

3. The Activity to Organize Alms Offering to the Ancestors by both Thais and Myanmar - Remembering them or making merit was considered a good thing and ritual offering merit to our ancestors was another form of remembrance and expression of gratitude.

4. The Activity to Form the Sand Chedis to Intertwine Thai and Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas Relationship – it was to bring sands to form chedi-like and decorate them with florals which was unfound in the urban areas

The Model of Applying Songkran Activities: New Theory



Theorizing the Interethnic Harmony Model by Buddhist Songkran Tradition

Theorizing the Interethnic Harmony Model by Buddhist Songkran Tradition requires five steps, i.e. philosophy, principles, theory, practice and beyond practice. Philosophy, The Interethnic Harmony Model by Buddhist Songkran Tradition means the observable conduct acquires reasons which direct it even if the devotees do not articulate these reasons - reinforcements of the bi-interrelation between the Thai Buddhists and the Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas in Thailand. The model examines the Buddhist devotees and recommend that the traditional activities either in Thailand or in Myanmar communities in Thailand are invariably directed by the basic Buddhist philosophy or the Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca: suffering [dukkha], the cause of suffering [dukkha-samudaya], the cessation of suffering [dukkha-nirodha], and the path leading to the cessation of suffering (dukkha-nirodha-gāṃimī-paṭipadā) Phra Brahmagunabhorn (PA. Payutto), (2013). The Buddhist Myanmar diasporas by any reasons have to cease their impacts of virtual culture and cultural capital

through the assistance of the Thai Buddhist by applying Songkran Activities to Weave the Bi-interrelation between the Thai Buddhists and the Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas in Thailand.

Principles

Believing that the 4 Songkran activities, i.e. organizing bi-nationality alms offering, organizing bi-sprinkling on monks for munificence or gratitude, organizing requiem ashes rites for both ancestors and formulating sand chedis (pagodas) to weave bi-interrelations could reinforce the Bi-interrelation between the Thai Buddhists and the Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas in Thailand. The Thai Buddhists and the Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas believe that this application will bring the communal values for Songkran enhances community solidarity; societal values for Songkran escalates environmental hospitality and religious values for Songkran organizes cogent alms offering of the Buddhists which might certainly alleviation of their diasporic impacts of virtual culture and cultural capital. Virtual culture refers to the ever-changing set of beliefs, values, behaviors, and performances that help define ethnicity for the community of interconnected world-wide individuals who feel attachment to an ethnic group such as the Buddhist Myanmar Diasporas and other world diasporic citizens. By the concept of cultural capital is referred to the endowment that each person inherits as a member of a particular ethnic group or sub-group (cf. Bourdieu, 1986).

Theory

Influenced by the reflections of the philosophy and principles, the theory of fruitful practices helps plan annual, monthly, weekly and daily ritual performances during Songkran period and the daily normal life. Theory examines and explores the different choices on activities to best fit and reinforce the bi-interrelation of both devotees throughout years, months, weeks and daily basis. This is the attempt plans into practices. As both devotees reflect their methods and approaches, they will also reflect specific techniques to choose or may wish to choose if they are consistent with the methods and the approaches they have chosen and will choose. To best reflect on these theories of practice, the Thai-Myanmar devotees have to describe specific techniques, activities, and



routine religious rites they are applying and having strong determination to use when implanting them.

Practice

At this stage the Thai-Myanmar Buddhist devotees should reflect the “hidden” viewpoints from the 4 Songkran activities since analogous to an iceberg, each Songkran activity presenting is just its tip or just 10% and below it might have Himalayan aspects either beneficial or harmful points. In implementing, they contribute practice, as such devotees are now ready to reflect more visible conducts on what have been implemented but devotees need to investigate the “hidden” conducts during their applications of the Songkran activities. Reactions would indicate their “hidden” conducts. However, devotees could assume also that visible conducts might be influenced by philosophy, principle and theory they have proposed. Key devotees may record their ante – current–post observations during in and on actions of participant devotees. Expert psychologists may best help for consultation, if longing for success of applying Songkran activities to reinforce the Bi-interrelation between the Thai Buddhists and the Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas in Thailand.

Beyond Practice

The stage of Beyond Practice takes sociocultural dimension which Johnson, K.A. (2009:2) hints “It is not simply a matter of enculturation or even the appropriation of existing sociocultural resource and practices but the reconstruction and transformation of those resources and practices in ways responsive to both individuals and local needs (diasporic devotees).” However, it demands to explore moral, political and social issues. To achieve “Beyond Practice,” devotees need to reflect broader socio-political issues and affective/moral issues which impact practices, organizing dialogic transformative process to reconsider and recognize live experiences through the construct theoretical constructs and discourses which are publicly valued and recognized within their professional discourse (Johnson, K. A., 2009:98). This process would enable both Thai and Myanmar devotees evident understanding these philosophy, principles, theory and practice. Upon realizing the “hidden” fundamental theory and policies the devotees have embraced into activities but

felt free on choices. Consequently, devotees could begin to contribute reinforcing bi-interrelation between the Thai locals and the Myanmar Diasporas.

Conclusions

Research findings reveal the Songkran Activities engage organizing bi-nationality alms offering, organizing bi-sprinkling on monks for munificence or gratitude, organizing requiem ashes rites for both ancestors and formulating sand chedis (pagodas) to weave bi-interrelations. These are to inherit and to nurture the Songkran values which evolve the communal values for Songkran enhances community solidarity, the societal values for Songkran escalates environmental hospitality and the religious values for Songkran organizes cogent alms offering of the Buddhists. The goal is to reinforce the Bi-interrelation between the Thai Buddhists and the Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas in Thailand.

The model of applying Songkran activities: New Theory involve 5 stages, i.e. the philosophical stage, the principle stage, the theoretical stage, the practical stage and the beyond practical stage. In the philosophical stage, both Thai devotees and the Myanmar devotees should be depended upon the basic Buddhist philosophy or the Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca). In the principles stage, both Thai devotees and the Myanmar devotees should adhere to the communal, and societal values and to alleviate the impact of virtual culture and cultural capital among the Myanmar Diasporas. In the theoretical stage, it needs to examine and explore the different choices on activities to best fit and reinforce the bi-interrelation of both devotees throughout years, months, weeks and daily basis attempting planning practices. In the practical stage, the Thai-Myanmar Buddhist devotees should reflect the “hidden” viewpoints from the 4 Songkran activities since analogous to an iceberg, each Songkran activity presenting is just its tip or just 10% and below it might have Himalayan aspects either beneficial or harmful points. Finally, in the beyond practical stage, devotees need to reflect broader socio-political issues and affective/moral issues which impact practices, organizing dialogic transformative process to reconsider and recognize live experiences through the construct theoretical constructs and discourses which are publicly valued and recognized within their professional discourse.



Suggestions

The academic article on “Applying Songkran Activities to Weave the Bi-interrelation between the Thai Buddhists and the Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas in Thailand” could not only achieve communal and societal values including alleviating diasporic impacts of the virtual culture and cultural capital to reinforce the Bi-interrelation between the Thai Buddhists and the Myanmar Buddhist Diasporas in Thailand through the 4 Songkran activities; devotees should plan other common Buddhist rites year-round but staging protest of diasporas might contribute pessimism the most Thai Buddhists; diasporas themselves should break hard-core diasporas.

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