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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THAI AND LAOS TEMPLE FESTIVAL DRESS

Abstract:

Aims of this research were to study Thai Buddhist temple festivals and Laos temple festivals, to compare Thai Buddhist temple festival dress with Laos temple festival dress, and to create the knowledge which can be useful for Thai attitudes and cultural perceptions, especially for Thai children and youth. The findings of the research disclosed that there are four temple festivals of Thai Buddhists in Thailand, namely Songkran Festival, Buddhist Lent Festival, Sart Thai Festival and End of Buddhist Lent Festival. There are five temple festivals of Laos Buddhists, namely Boun Ok Phansa Festival, Boun Pha Vet Festival, Boun Pi Mai Festival, Boun Khao Pradabdin Festival and Boun Khao Salak Festival. Thai Songkran Festival is similar to Boun Pi Mai Festival in Laos. Both are the celebration of new year. Sart Thai Festival has the same purpose as those of Laos, Boun Khao Pradabdin Festival and Boun Khao Salak Festival in marking merit traditions and honoring Ghosts and Ancestors. Boun Ok Phansa Festival in Laos is the same as End of Buddhist Lent Festival in Thailand, the Buddhists celebrate them by offering foods and other necessities to monks. However, there are two temple festivals that are not alike. In Thailand, Buddhist Lent Festival is a popular time for young Thai men to be ordained as a Buddhist monk. In Laos, Boun Pha Vet Festival is the celebration of the birth of Prince Vessantara or Pha Vet, The Buddha's penultimate existence. For temple festival dress, the two countries are alike: Buddhist men in Thailand and Laos wear stand-up collar, spread collar or round neck, hip-length shirts with long pants, loincloths or sarongs. Buddhist women in Thailand and Laos wear round neck, long or short sleeves blouses, and maxi tube skirts.

Keywords:

Temple festival dresses, Thai Buddhists, Laos Buddhists.

JEL Classification: I29

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays Thai people are facing several crises of value, ethics and behaviours which link to Thai way of life, thinking, attitude and virtue. These problems are the effects of foreign cultural expansion on multimedia. The creative media are much less dangerous and illegal media which spread over the whole country of Thailand. While Thai people, especially children and young people, are not aware of Thai custom and culture, social institutions such as family institutions, religious institutions and educational institutions take less active role in the implantation of ethical virtues and the potential development of Thai people, especially children and young people. That is because the youth and their parents rarely have the opportunity to participate in traditional Buddhist temple festival activities even though Buddhism is Thailand's national religion [1]. These Thai people rarely have the opportunity to see the beauty of Thai traditional dress in the Buddhist temple festivals, and the importance of these festivals with Thai temple festival dress. The dissemination of precise knowledge about the temple festivals and the temple festival dress of Thai Buddhist and Laos Buddhist, one country of ASEAN community and religious adhesive country like Thailand, will enrich attitudes and cultural perceptions of Thai people, especially children and young people. For these reasons, this research is conducted.

METHODOLOGY

In this documentary research study, all data from National Library of Thailand and Electronic media were collected. The qualitative data were analysed and interpreted in qualitative research without variable control just as naturalistic research, and the analysis results and research results were presented by descriptive writing with pictures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thai Buddhist Temple Festivals and Laos Buddhist Temple Festivals

Fig. 1 Map of Thai and Laos Two Asian Countries



Source: Own adjustment based on pattayavillaholidays.com picture

1. In Thailand, there are four major Thai Buddhist temple festivals as follows :

1.1 Songkran is a Thai traditional New Year. Songkran Festival starts on April 13 every year and lasts for 3 days. Thai New Year begins early in the morning when faithful Thai Buddhists give alms to Buddhist monks. After that, they build sand pagodas and release caged animals, especially birds and fish. Elders and parents will be visited and respected by their children and grandchildren. The young pour scented water over their elder's hands, they in return, wish them good health, happiness and prosperity, and also go to the temple to make merit to their deceased ancestors. In the afternoon, Thai Buddhists sprinkle scented water on Buddha images. After that, they sprinkle perfumed water on, or throw clean, cold water over each other. In addition, they take part in folk plays. [2]

Fig. 2 Thai Buddhist activities in Songkran Festival



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

1.2 Buddhist Lent Festival. The commencement of the three- month Buddhist Lent traditionally falls on the first day of the waxing moon of the eighth lunar month. During this period, coinciding with the rainy season, Buddhist monks and novices remain closeted in their particular Buddhist temples, and discouraged from spending nights elsewhere. It is a popular time for young Thai men to be ordained as a Buddhist monk. Two main important things presented to monks during the Buddhist Lent are the large candles and garments worn by monks, especially the bathing robes. [3]

Fig. 3 The large candle procession in Ubon Ratchathani Province



Source: <http://www.hugubon.com/history/culture/1562>

1.3 Sart Thai Festival is held on the 15th waning (no moon) day at the end of the tenth lunar month. Sart Thai Day is the day of making merit traditions and the honoring Ghosts & Ancestors Day of Thai Buddhists. This traditional festival is now celebrated mostly in Thailand's southern provinces, especially in Nakhon Si Thammarat, and other parts of Thailand. It has many features of animism, attributing souls or spirits to animals, plants, and other entities. [3]

Fig. 4 Sart Thai Festival in Nakhon Si Thammarat



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

1.4 Dhevo Rohana Ceremony is the end of Buddhist Lent Festival begins on the full moon day of the eleventh lunar month. Thai Buddhists celebrate this occasion by offering foods and other necessities to monks. This ceremony is called "Dhevo Rohana Ceremony" [3]

Fig. 5 Dhevo Rohana Ceremony



Source: <http://student.nu.ac.th/jitrada/Northeast2.html>

2. Five Buddhist festival in Laos [4]

2.1 Boun Ok Phansa Festival is celebrated on the day of the end of Buddhist Lent: At the dawn of day, donation and offerings are made at temples around the city. In the evening, candlelight processions are held around the temples and the hundred colorful floats decorated with flowers, incenses and candles are set adrift down the Mekong River in thanksgiving to the river spirit. The next day, a popular and exciting boat racing competition is held on the Mekong River.

Fig. 6 Main activities of Boun Ok Phansa Festival in Laos



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

2.2 Boun Pha Vet Festival is the celebration of the birth of Prince Vessanthara, or Pha Vet, the Buddha's penultimate existence. Lao Buddhist people believe that when people listen to their stories, it means they get a lot of merits. In addition, there are playrole ceremonies to invite Pha Vet in the forest back to the palace.

Fig. 7 Main activities of Boun Pha Vet Festival in Laos



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

2.3 Boun Pi Mai Festival is the celebration of Lao New Year. For this festival of joyous spirit, Lao Buddhist people wear new clothes, Buddha images are washed, temples are repainted, homes were cleaned; thousands of sand stupas are built with their colorful banners and offerings; people gently sprinkle water on one another as a sign of respect; conduct the procession of the sacred Prabang Buddha image, procession of Nang Sangkhan (Miss New Year), and conduct the parade wearing traditional Lao costumes with music and dance.

Fig. 8 Main activities of Boun Pi Mai Festival in Laos



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

2.4 Boun Khao Pradabdin Festival is the celebration devoted to remembering and paying respect to the dead. Lao Buddhist devotees visit local temples to make offerings to the deceased as well as to share merit-making. Music is traditionally performed in the grounds of the temple while people make their donations. This nationwide festival includes

boat racing on the Nam Khan River and a trade fair in the center of Luang Prabang, the World Heritage Town.

Fig. 9 Main activities of Boun Khao Pradabdin Festival in Laos



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

2.5 Boun Khao Salak Festival is the celebration devoted to remembering and paying respect to the deceased ancestors. Lao Buddhist families visit local temples to make offerings to the deceased ancestors by presenting them to the Buddhist monks. They believe that if the spirit does not receive the offerings, then it will bring bad luck to the living. During the festival, popular and exciting longboat-racing competitions are held to celebrate the river.

Fig. 10 Main activities of Boun Khao Salak Festival in Laos



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

It may be concluded that

1. Thai Songkran Festival is similar to Boun Pi Mai Festival in Laos. Both are the celebration of New Year.

2. Sart Thai Festival has the same purpose as those of Laos, Boun Khao Pradabdin Festival and Boun Khao Salak Festival in making merit traditions for honoring ghosts and ancestors.

3. Dhevo Rohana Ceremony in Thai is similar to Boun Ok Phansa Festival in Laos. They, both celebrate festivals by offering foods and other necessities to monks.

4. They are two temple festivals that are not alike. In Thailand, Buddhist Lent Festival is a popular time for young Thai men to be ordained as a Buddhist monk. In Laos, Boun Pha Vet Festival is the celebration of the birth of Prince Vessantara or Pha Vet, The Buddha's penultimate existence.

B. Thai Buddhist temple festival dress and Laos Buddhist temple festival dress.

1. Most of Thai Buddhist men wear round collar outerwear called "Mauhom", and Thai wide leg trousers or Thai loin cloths.

Fig. 11 The temple festival dress of Thai Buddhist men

Two men wear "Mauhom" and Thai wide leg trousers and build sand pagodas in Songkran Festival



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

Two men wear "Mauhom" and Thai loin cloths in Songkran Festival



Source: <http://travel.mthai.com/news/80406.html>

However, Thai Buddhist men in Northeast region and some areas of Central region of Thailand wear the same sarongs as Laos men wear in their temple festivals.

Fig. 12 The temple festival dress of Thai Buddhist men in Northeast region (left) and some areas of Central region of Thailand



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

Thai Buddhist men also wear stand-up collar, spread collar or round neck, hip-length shirts with long sleeves or short sleeves; and long pants.

Figure 13: Thai Buddhist men



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

Laos Buddhist men wear stand-up collar, spread collar or round neck, hip-length shirts with long sleeves or short sleeves; and long pants, loincloths or sarongs

Figure 14: Laos Buddhist men



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

2. Women temple festival dress.

Most of Thai Buddhist women wear collarless blouses with elbow length sleeves and front opening as the outer wears and mari tube skirts.

Fig. 15 The temple festival dress of Thai Buddhist women



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

Laos Buddhist women wear round neck long sleeves or short sleeves blouses, and maxi tube skirts.

Fig. 16 The temple festival dress of Laos Buddhist women



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

It may be concluded that

1. Buddhist men in Thailand and Laos wear stand-up collar; spread collar or round neck, hip-length shirts with long sleeves or short sleeves; and long pants, loin cloths or sarongs.

Men's costumes for temple festival dress in Thailand and Laos

Fig. 17 Men's costumes for temple festival dress in Thailand



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

Fig. 18 Men's costumes for temple festival dress in Laos



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

2. Buddhist women in Thailand and Laos wear round neck, long sleeves or short sleeves blouses, and maxi tube skirts.

Women's costumes for temple festival dress in Thailand and Laos

Fig. 19 Women's costumes for temple festival dress in Thailand



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

Fig. 20 Women's costumes for temple festival dress in Laos



Source: Own adjustment based on google.com pictures

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