

A RITUAL TO COMMUNICATE WITH GOD OF THAI-KHMERGROUP : A CASE STUDY OF JOALMAMAUDRITUAL, MUANG DISTRICT, SURIN PROVINCE, THAILAND

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Abstract

The ritual to communicate with god of Thai – Khmer group, JoalMamuad, was believed as the way to connect to supernatural power, god or spirits. The Thai-Khmer had belief and practiced this ritual since long time ago from generation. This study was aimed to study belief of Thai-Khmer people on their god and spirits based on their traditional belief and to study their rituals in order to connect to their god. The result of study was found that the ritual was practiced and believed by Thai Khmer people long years but no evident showed the exact time of beginning. This area was influenced from Brahmanism and Hinduism since 1500 years ago and they have believed in spirituality before that. The evidences of Brahmanism and Hinduism were sanctuaries, religious building and idols which were over thousand years old. Those objects were indicated that they were built to worship their gods. The ritual to communicate with god of Thai Khmer was JoalMamuad ritual. The propose of ritual was to invite respected spirits or god to imbed in human body. Then, people can ask for their problem solution, fortune, illness treatment and protection. Thai Khmer people have believed indeity from the past. So, the ritual has been arranged in order to communicate with spiritual dimension. The components of ritual were offerings, good smell objects, flowers, light and music. People who took part in the ritual would clean their body and dress up with nice dresses, then, all components will be offered together with music and chanting. After the deity came to imbed or take

mediumship in human, the selected human will dances accorded with music. All presented in this ritual, JoalMamuad, was one of Thai Khmer people belief in order to communicate with their sacred.

Keywords : Rituals, Connected, God, Thai-Khmer group, Surin Province

1. Introduction

Belief system, ritual or symbol of a ritual were communication tools which human created and accepted together with experiences. The process of coding and decoding led people to interpret systematically. A Pattern or symbol of in each society need participated experiences of people, community and social in order to have same understanding^๑ Moreover, the interpretation also need super organic and context of nature, culture, tradition, belief, ritual or inherited behavior not only obvious expression. It was an abstract term consideration with connotation in inner feeling such as supernaturalism, holiness or religious ceremony presented^๒

The pattern of communicated ritual expressed in Thai Khmer culture was created from traditional belief of Animism, Brahmanism and Hinduism which found in Southern Isaan especially Thai Khmer group. They believed in sacred, supernatural power, power of god, spirits which dwelled in places which can give them auspicious or punishment. By this belief, people managed the ritual according to their traditional belief, culture and practicing called “JoalMamuad”. The ritual was created to connect with spirit or refined dimension or refined human body in order to ask for illness treatment, prediction and protection.

This communicated ritual was an identity of Thai Khmer group. They expressed their way which human can connect to power of refined dimension or spiritual dimension through the ritual and ritual component included offerings, step of ritual and materials.

^๑Lisa, **Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding**, (Bloomfiel: Kumarrian, 2005), p.81.

^๒Niyaphan (Polwatthana) Wannasiri, **ocial and Cultural Anthropology**, (Bangkok: Kasetsart University, 2540).p.57-58.

1.2 Objectives of study

1. To study belief of Thai-Khmer people on their god and spirits based on their traditional belief
2. To study the rituals of Thai-Khmer people in order to connect to their god.

1.3 Scope of study

1. Scope of document, the documents used in this study were academic documents presented in vary resources such as documents of ritual, belief, tradition and cultures which emphasized on ritual and belief of Thai Kmher people to god.
2. Scope of area, the study area was Muang District, Surin Province.

1.4 Criteria of study area selection

1. There still existed of strong belief and practicing in the area.
2. There were numbers of Thai Khmer experts and participants on the ritual in the area.
3. Identity and tradition of the ritual had been well maintained in the area.

1.5 Methodology

1. Literature reviewed from related conceptual, theory, and researches together with consulted experts in order to scope framework of study.
2. Surveyed the study area in order to study general context of the area and information background of the ritual.
3. Prepared of data collection by coordinated to related organization in the area for permission and make an appointment with informants to collect data.
4. Collected data in the area by in-depth interview and observation together with voice recorded and photographed.
5. Analyzed data by listened and reviewed the information from voice recorder. Summarized the data from in-depth interview and observation and concluded in each aspects by the study framework.
6. Report the result of study using descriptive analysis technique together with conclusion in each aspect.

1.6 Result

1. Belief in JoalMamaud Ritual of Thai Khmer people

“Mamuad” was a traditional language of Thai Khmer. It was a belief and ritual related to mediumships to connect with spirits. Considered by process of the ritual, this was an illness treatment ritual mixed with superstition from Thai Khmer people belief. The process of ritual may included holy water sprinkle, incantation and traditional herbs by local medicines who inherited from their ancestor. Thai Khmerpeople have believed in their ancestor spirit from the past. In ancient time, human lived simple, closed and reliance on nature; rivers, mountains, seas and forests that made humanallied with nature firmly^๑ By this reason, human have paid respect to nature as spiritual anchor from ancient time. After the period, human have believed that there must be invisible aspects dwelled in both life and alive called ghost spirits^๒ Moreover, people believed that there was another spirit which has stronger power than normal spirits called angel which can destine incidents. Thus,human have to propitiate ghosts, spirits and angel by worshipping in order to make them satisfy and pay back human successful of their wishes. This was an originate of ritual based on human beliefs. The animism was a part of Thai Khmer Surinpeopleway’s of life. This belief has settled down in the society of Thai people especially in Southern Isaan along border line of Cambodia^๓ JoalMamuad Ritual was a ritual of mediumships created by Thai KmherSurin people to connect with god. The propose of connection was to ask supernatural power for illness treatment which people cannot find its caused. People believed that the illness caused from black magic, mystery power, dwelled from bad spirits or from unexplained aspects. The ritual will be arranged from patient’s relatives to connect with spiritual dimension and invite ghosts, spirits or god to dwell in human body, mediumships, and ask them for illness solution. The ritual has highly participation from people in community in order to support each other to get well from the illness.

^๑ PhramahaWeeraSuksawang. **Mamuat : Ritual and belief of Northern Khmer inAmphoeKrasang, Buriram Province**,2007

^๒ Ibid.,p.2

^๓ Loc.cit.

With those reasons “JoalMamuad” played important role for Thai Khmer people especially in Surin Province which people have strong belief and practice in this ritual. Therefore, researcher interested to study this ritual which has inherited from their ancestors long thousand years.

2. The JoalMamaud Ritual proposes of Thai Khmer people

Belief and ritual were behaviors which indicated people’s belief in societies and expressed in various way by their proposes. The ritual can be divided into rituals related to life and auspicious rituals. The rituals related to life were aimed to make ritualist’s life prosperously by worship to sacred power which believed to give them protection from illness and bad power included longevity The another implication of ritual was a component of religion which people have strong belief and practiced. Some rituals have a mixture aspectsof religion and superstition, a mixture of various religions both beliefs and practicing or a mixture of various beliefs.

The ritual was arranged optionally with its rite, process, component and related materials. The important components of ritual were a mediumship body, ritual conductor and ritualists. It was a specific ritual for each group which created by their own belief and traditional practice.

3. Belief of Thai Khmer people to JoalMamaud Ritual

The belief in JoalMamuad ritual was a culture that Thai Khmer people have practiced long years from the past. And, the ritual practice was also believed in Khmer culture. JoalMamuad ritual was aimed to connect with spirits or some supernatural power which maybe god or angel. The ritual practice can be seen nowadays in countryside societies which remained its traditional patterns while the ritual components may adopt to make its nicer. But the components still remain such as BaiSri Ton, Bai Sri Pak Cham, Bai Sri Thad and Cham Kru.

Thai Khmer people arranged the JoalMamuad ritual to pay respect for teacher or to give treatment to illness which cannot fine its caused. The illness was believed that caused from black magic, mystery power, dwelled from bad spirits or

from unexplained caused. The ritual will be arranged from patient's relatives to connect with spiritual dimension and invite ghosts, spirits or god to dwell in human body, mediumships, and ask them for illness solution.

4. Conclusion

The JoalMamuad ritual of Thai Khmer people was one of ceremony to connect to their god by mediumship from a ritualist. When god or spirits dwelled in human body, his character will be changed obviously from his voice and physical expressions. Then, people can ask the mediumship for illness treatment or prediction.

The ritual practice to worship deity or angel was implanted in Thai Khmer society long years from the past. The evidence of belief can be seen generally and transferred till nowadays in Mon-Khmer society of Isaan area, Thailand.

In the past, Thai Khmer people was belong to the culture of ancient Khmer period. Their habitat was located next to Cambodia with Phnom Dongrakmountain as a border line. Thai Khmer group in the past was prosperous and civilized paralleled with Cambodia. Before the propagation of Brahmanism and Hinduism, Thai Khmer people believed in animism and ancestor spirits.

The ritual was considered as a spiritual anchor related to other aspects closely. It was as a norm that governed living, societies, economics and governance and also related to problem solutions. Pattern of the ritual was created complicatedly and relied on many elements in order to present its meaning and belief which existed generally in ethnic group of this area.

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