



An Analytical Study of Morality in Cambodian Traditional Wedding at Chamnomkuet Village, Chamnom Sub-district, Mongkolborei District, Banteay Meanchey Province, Based on Buddhist Principle
ศึกษาวิเคราะห์ศีลธรรมประเพณีการแต่งงานกัมพูชา บ้านจัมโนมเกิด ตำบลจัมโนม อำเภอมงคลบุรี จังหวัดบันเตียเมียนจชัย ตามหลักพระพุทธศาสนา

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Abstract

This research has three main objectives : 1) to study the concept of marriage in Buddhism, 2) to study morality in traditional wedding in Chamnomkuet village, Chamnom sub-district, Mongkolborei district, Banteay Meanchey province and 3) to analyze morality of Cambodian traditional wedding based on the Buddhist principle. This is a qualitative research, to collected data from documents and interviews of respondents in Chamnomkuet villagers and presented in a descriptive analysis.

The results of this analytical study were found that all ceremonies in Cambodian wedding are being influenced by many religious teachings from both Buddhism and Hinduism. These influences established a philosophy of life based on the religious concepts but Buddhism has a power and plays a role to show a way of life, what is right or wrong, what should one do or not do, etc. Actually, Buddhism teaches a good householder who seeks happiness with mundane pleasure in the Tipitaka and some commentaries such as Garavasa Sutta, Bramavihara Dham, Mongkola Sutta, Anguttara Nikaya etc. Buddhism teaches moral conduct about security, responsibility, gratefulness, monogamy in order to serve as guidelines to encourage a successful married life.

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Cambodian people created their tradition in order to educate the younger generation to understand and encourage their life with right way leading to peace and happiness in their marriage. Chamnomkuet wedding morality manifest philosophy of life that depends upon the guidelines of gratefulness returning to parents, relatives, family, neighbors, even to spirits, ancestors, ghosts, angels and God. In addition, Cambodian traditional role educates people in order to lead a happy married life and sufficiency in daily life based on monogamy.

Chamnomkuet wedding morality is similar to Buddhist principle, but the researcher has found that some ancient beliefs and some Hindu principles such as: worshipping or dedicating to spirits, ghosts, angels or God to beg the happiness without the moral conduct is not of any advantage and it does not encourage Cambodian society. Moreover, the foreign cultural influence has taught people to seek happiness with desire, especially materialism in the present life. It destroyed the moral conduct in the society. It brought the problems in the society. With ordinary people aimed at seeking pleasure and desires, Cambodian society gradually forgot the good morality. Thus, modern civilization with its focus on materialism and consumerism made people greedy about comfort-seeking and mundane happiness.

Keyword; Wedding Traditional

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยฉบับนี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์ในการศึกษา ๓ ประการคือ ๑) เพื่อศึกษาประเพณีการแต่งงานในพระพุทธศาสนา ๒) เพื่อศึกษาศีลธรรมในประเพณีการแต่งงานบ้านจัมโนมเกิด ตำบลจัมโนม อำเภอมงคลบุรี จังหวัดบึงเทียเมียนชัย ๓) เพื่อวิเคราะห์ศีลธรรมในประเพณีการแต่งงานบ้านจัมโนมเกิดกับประเพณีการแต่งงานในพระพุทธศาสนาเป็นการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพโดยเก็บข้อมูลจากเอกสารและแบบสอบถามความคิดเห็น วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วยวิธีพรรณนา และค่าร้อยละ

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ประเพณีการแต่งงานของชาวกัมพูชามีปรัชญาชีวิตมากมาย และมีการผสมผสานกับทัศนคติของศาสนา เช่น ศาสนาพุทธ และศาสนาฮินดู เป็นจำนวนมาก แต่ภายหลังจากต่อมา ศาสนาพุทธได้มีอิทธิพลต่อชาวกัมพูชา และมีการสนับสนุนในการ



เผยแพร่วิถีชีวิต โดยการอบรมสิ่งที่ถูก สิ่งที่ไม่ดี สิ่งที่ดี และสิ่งที่ควรทำ และสิ่งที่ไม่ควรทำ จนกระทั่งในปัจจุบันศาสนาพุทธได้มาเป็นศาสนาประจำชาติของกัมพูชา

พระพุทธศาสนาได้แสดงเกี่ยวกับศีลธรรมของคนครองเรือน คนติดกับกิเลส ตัณหา นั่นก็คือ ชีวิตคู่ที่แสวงหาความสุขตามโลกิยะธรรม โดยมีอยู่ในพระไตรปิฎก อรรถกถา หรือ คัมภีร์ ฎีกาต่างๆ อย่างเช่น ฆราวาสธรรม หน้าที่ของสามีภรรยา พรหมวิหารธรรม ปราภวสูตร มงคล ๓๘ ประการ เป็นต้น ซึ่งเป็นแนวทางในความคิด เพื่อสนับสนุนชีวิตแต่งงานที่ราบรื่น มั่นคงยาวนาน ที่สำคัญพระพุทธศาสนาจะเน้นทางความรักที่มีการยอมรับ และเปิดเผย (Security) ความรับผิดชอบ (Responsibility) ความกตัญญู (Gratefulness) มีใจสำนึกรักเดียวใจเดียว (Monogamy) ชาวกัมพูชาได้สร้างประเพณีการแต่งงานของตนเอง เพื่ออบรมคนรุ่นหลังให้ทำความเข้าใจชีวิตคู่ และส่งเสริมชีวิตคู่ในทางที่ถูกต้องเพื่อดำเนินไปถึงความสงบสุข เจริญรุ่งเรือง

กล่าวโดยสรุป ประเพณีชีวิตของการแต่งงานบ้านจำโนมเกิด ประเทศกัมพูชา มีวัตถุประสงค์ ๒ ประการ ได้แก่ เพื่อความกตัญญู คือ การตอบแทนบุญคุณ ต่อบุพการี พ่อแม่พี่น้อง ญาติมิตร รวมไปถึงคนที่ทำคุณกับพวกเขาเป็นต้น และเพื่อเป็นศิริมงคล คือ การเคารพบูชา ผีเจ้า ปีสาง เทวดาที่อาศัยตามต่างๆ ที่ให้การรักษา ให้ความสุข ความเจริญแก่พวกเขา ความเป็นอยู่ที่ดี เจริญรุ่งเรือง มีชีวิตคู่ยาวนานมั่นคง

ศีลธรรมในประเพณีการแต่งงานบ้านจำโนมเกิด มีความเหมือนกับหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนา ซึ่งมันได้แสดงให้เห็นว่า ในขั้นต้นการแต่งงานมีหลายประเด็นที่ไม่ควรทำ และไม่ได้ส่งผล อะไรต่อการส่งเสริมชีวิตคู่แก่สังคมกัมพูชา อย่างเช่น ประเพณีการบูชาผีเจ้า การถวายอาหาร สิ่งของแด่ดวงวิญญาณ พวกผี ปีสาง โดยไม่ได้พ้นจาก ผู้ทรงศีล หรือพระภิกษุสงฆ์ เป็นต้น มากกว่านั้นก็คือ การเอา วัฒนธรรมยุโรป มาส่งเสริมประเพณีเก่า ซึ่งประเพณีเหล่านั้น ไม่ใช่แค่ไม่ส่งเสริมต่อศีลธรรมการแต่งงานเท่านั้น แต่ยังทำลายสังคมกัมพูชาอีกด้วย

วัฒนธรรมยุโรปสอนคนให้แสวงหาความสุขโดยวัตถุนิยม ความทันสมัย ผสมโดยกามตัณหา แล้วสร้างปัญหามากมาย เช่น การประพาดิระหว่างหญิง ชาย การสมการวะ ความซื่อสัตย์ ความรับผิดชอบ เป็นต้น จึงตกเป็นทาสของกามตัณหาโดยไม่รู้ตัว วัฒนธรรมเหล่านั้นสร้างความสุขที่ไม่ยาวนาน ทำให้ชีวิตคู่มีปัญหา หากความสุขที่แท้จริงไม่ได้

คำสำคัญ: ประเพณีการแต่งงาน

1. Introduction

Traditionally, Cambodian wedding was always arranged without the knowledge or consent of the individuals to be married. Cambodian culture



also exhorts parents to choose and arrange marriages for the child so that their family price and honor are retained. Children also have obligations toward their parents to do their utmost to maintain their parents' honor. Cambodians believe in returning gratitude to their parents. Marrying into a good family is considered to be a way of returning gratitude, especially for a girl or young woman married under the age of twenty and a boy or young men married under the age of twenty-five. That is why young people at times get married with misunderstanding about a morality of conjugal life and the ways to sustain family life. The most important factor is that the new generation does not understand about philosophy of life existing in the wedding ceremonies.¹

Cambodian wedding has got influenced from religions such Buddhism and Hinduism. So far, Buddhist principles have more influence to Cambodian society and Buddhism spread the concept about how to get happiness without seeking defilement and desires to be a good householder and reach the point of a truly successful married life. Buddhism also has a part to play in making the philosophy of life which exists in wedding ceremonies easily comprehensible. In this case, Buddhism has clearly shown moral conduct about what should be done and not done. That is why Buddhist concept caused some irrelevant wedding ceremonies disappear.²

Today, because of the demands of modern living, Cambodian people try to seek happiness by receiving the influence of other cultures, a marriage is much simpler and less time consuming. Wedding ceremonies can be conducted in one day. However, those ceremonies that consist of philosophy of life that is hard to understand; the meaningful concept of those methods to live in harmony and happiness in married life and ways to respond to situation in the future by the new generation are gradually disappearing.³

¹ Prof. Li Suvira, *Khmer Civilization*, (Phnom Penh, Part I, 2008), p. 5.

² Nhean Poern, *Lom An Tomleam Tomlop Khmer Boran*, (Following Cambodian ancient tradition, Phnom Penh, Second edition, 2004), p. 26.

³ Chamnomkuet Villagers' concepts as responded in the questionnaires and interviews, 15 July 2015.



The situation of Cambodian wedding declined by many conditions, most of those problems are believed to be caused by the modern foreign civilization that has influenced the country and some Cambodians misunderstanding about educational morality in their own great tradition.

2. Objectives of research

The objectives of this research are:

1. To study the concept of marriage in Buddhism
2. To study morality in traditional wedding in Chamnomkuet village, Chamnom sub-district, Mongkolborei district, Banteay Meanchey province
3. To analyze morality of Cambodian traditional wedding based on the Buddhist principle

3. Framework of research

This research had a mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative research done by studying about the original history and the importance of Cambodian wedding as related to Buddhist morality.

1. Framework of documentary research

1.1 The primary source is the Khmer Tipitaka 2005 and Tipitaka of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University B.E. 2539.

1.2 The secondary sources are chosen commentarial, non-commentarial texts, theses, and many related books including e-books on the Internet and the important documents that are the palm leaf manuscripts which were written by the wise and some documents in Sontipeab library of Battambang province including the Suramruet Buddhist high school library and Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya library, especially, some books on Hinduism related to the Cambodian beliefs.

2. Framework of area

In this thesis, the researcher would like to show the basic effects of Cambodian traditional wedding on the way of life of Cambodian people, studying the differences and history in Cambodian wedding as related to Buddhism.



1. To gather more information the researcher delivered the questionnaires to Chamnomkuet villagers, about 120 persons who shared their concepts on the morality of Cambodian traditional wedding.⁴

2. The most important information, the researcher collected is through in-depth interviews of local experienced people, monks and the scholars in Chamnomkeut village, Chamnom sub-district Mongkolborei district, Banteay Meanchey province.

4. Definition of the keywords

Tradition is commonly known as ritualistic practices that are passed on generation after generation; they are passed through society, family and individual influences. Some traditions are based on religious beliefs. Other traditions may provide an understanding of a particular culture. Whichever way a tradition is learned, it will always define the principles of customs for the people who practice them, this definition can be referred to the Cambodian civilization as well.

Morality bases of Cambodian people, it is human behavior with the distinction between good and bad or right and wrong behavior, moral sense, the principles or rules of right conduct or the distinction between right and wrong ethical and moral attitudes.

Wedding in this research relating to the Cambodian tradition, it is a love between man and woman created by nature to show the people (family, relative and authority) for supporting and remarking to be a safety for couple as a witness. (2) It is declared that the couple respected their obligation to the parents who look after them from the birth with their gratefulness and their wedding without forces.

5. Benefits of Research

This study contributes to the background information for the development of concepts which is intended to improve Cambodian wedding tradition and also help to spread the main points of Cambodian study and

⁴Collected data at Chamnomkuet village, Chamnom sub-district, Mongkolborei District, Banteay Meanchey province.



understand about the Cambodian wedding morality while encouraging Cambodian tradition. This study is also to help the MCU students of Cambodia and Thailand to reach the development in sustainable way and ideas about Cambodian culture, tradition and civilization which has come from ancient time:

1. Clear comprehension to understand about the marriage in Buddhism.
2. Clear comprehension to show the morality in wedding tradition in Chamnomkuet village, Chamnom sub-district, Mongkolborei district, Banteay Meanchey province.
3. Clear comprehension of analyzes related to morality of Cambodian traditional wedding bases on Buddhist principle.

1. Buddhist Morality on Marriage

Marriage, according to Buddhism, reflects morality of both good and bad conduct, regarded as entirely a personal, individual concern and not as a religious duty. It is also the sexual conduct of human being by the nature in order to make the family ties. Marriage involves conjugal life between husband and wife who must understand the obligation, responsibility, and monogamy. On the other hand, Buddhism is the religion of love with compassion, sympathy, kindness and equanimity without clinging to desire and accumulation of the defilement of greed, anger and craving that cause problems to married life.

Buddhist morality is respectfulness, obligation and responsibility to point out the right way to lead a peaceful and happy conjugal life. Hence, Buddhist morality has an impact on Cambodian wedding morality.

2. Cambodian Wedding Morality

Cambodian wedding morality focuses on happy married life to point on the way of life which is living together with blissful happiness, well being, and prosperity without argument or disagreement of each other in the family. There is also a happiness of superstition to invoke the spirit and making offerings to ghosts, god or angel etc, show some form of respect to those spirits to beg for their blessings to make a stable family for long with full happiness. On the other hand, Cambodian traditional role shows how to return gratefulness to one's parents, groom and bridegroom's families,



relatives, etc. Especially, Cambodian wedding morality has emphasis to women. It is expected that the bride (wife) faithfully pays respect to her husband, undertakes responsibility, well organized the things in the house and understands the welfare of individuals in the family. By doing so she is paying gratitude in return (Kattannu) to her parents. Son and daughter married under agreement of their parents, it is regarded that it is one kind of paying gratitude of son or daughter towards their parents, because son and daughter's marriage is showing the fulfillment of parents' wish (aspiration) in the society. Cambodians believe that the wonderful happiness of parents can be found in the wedding of their children with social dignity. And after the wedding their new children's family knows well how to run their new family by themselves.

Cambodian wedding tradition has explained many moralities to new couples in all steps of Cambodian wedding celebration, they insert the psychological concepts to educate the couple's behaviors, characteristics and gratefulness.

3. Marriage by Buddhist Principle

Marriage in the Buddhist sense is an expression of love without clinging with desires or defilement to reach the real happiness. At one level it seems that Buddhism denies the married life. But Marriage in Buddhism is morality's role which an ordinary person has to practice in his or her daily life. Buddhism gives a meaning of a marriage that it is a pair of life (husband and wife) and how to lead to a peace and happiness called mundane happiness.

Buddhist morality clearly outlines both the unwholesome and a good way on moral conduct For example, Buddhism offers many good advices such as the duties between husband, wife, a good householder, etc. Not only right way, but Buddhism also mentions the wrong way the practice of which leads to downfall causing the unhappy married life.

4 Chamnomkuet villagers' concepts as responded through the questionnaires and interviews

4.1 Conclusion of questionnaires' respondents The researcher has surveyed the villagers' ideas on understanding morality delivering 120 questionnaires for Chamnomkuet villagers who shared their concepts on



Cambodian wedding tradition using the percentage of their preferences (fair, good, medium, and low). The researcher could collect all ideas and found that there were four main problems:

1) Chamnomkuet villagers understand the Buddhist morality but they only used the Buddhist practicing about 40% for their daily lives.

2) Foreign civilization is spreading fast in Cambodian society making people seek happiness with materialism

3) Cambodian wedding morality in Cambodian society is declining nowadays as compared to an ancient wedding morality.

4) About 30% of villagers accepted that Buddhist influence has a part on disappearing Cambodian traditional wedding. However, the researcher found that the new generation does not seem to pretend the affection and impacts of foreign civilization which is motivating present-day Cambodian society.

4.2 Conclusion of interview Most respondents showed that the percentage of their concepts in livelihood depend on the Buddhist morality in traditional living even though 80% of their educational qualification is lower than bachelor degree. About 75% of Chamnomkuet villagers' concepts reflect the understanding about the impact of Buddhism and foreign civilization to Cambodian wedding tradition. There are about 94% of their concepts supported the Buddhism's influence to the Cambodian society, however, about 85% of them do not support the impact of foreign civilization in the Cambodian society.

6. Conclusion

Declining of moral conduct of Cambodian society started from the family spreading to community and the entire country because of misunderstanding about advantages of Buddhist morality and philosophy in Cambodian wedding as the guidelines to lead to real peace and happiness.

Based on these problems the researcher had collected the data of declining Cambodian wedding morality from respondents' concepts and interviewees including the researcher's own concept showed that : Cambodian wedding morality has great philosophy of life, but it is hard to understand what the meaning of main concepts of a wedding is. Buddhism plays a role in



Cambodian society and Cambodians willingly accepted the Buddhist influence in order to judge the moral conduct of a conjugal life. For this case, Buddhism is really a part of changing Cambodian traditional wedding.

Based on the researcher's own idea, and ideas of respondents and interviewees it was found that even though the Chamnomkuet villagers have poor knowledge but they preserved traditionally the Cambodian wedding morality basing on Cambodian ancient beliefs, that is why the rate of divorcee is lower than in other areas. Chamnomkuet villagers understood the importance of Buddhism's influence over their life and family. Based on the interview of a few divorced couples it can be concluded that they had a poor understanding of Buddhist education. It slightly indicated the impact of foreign civilization on Cambodian traditional wedding morality by increasing the desire and unlimited demands to reach the separated family in Cambodian society. It is to express gratefulness to parents, family, relatives, especially spirits, angel and the god to beg them a peace and happy married life. The most important factor to get happiness is – Cambodian people have to train their children to respect the traditional role on the responsibility of male and female, about what should be done and what should not be done. The traditional role is created to educate the new generation about Buddhist morality, as was once created when Cambodia first received the influence from Buddhism and it works directly to Cambodian society to solve the philosophy of life and the way of life through the application of such principles as the Bhrama vihara, Garavasa Dham, Parabhava Sutta, Mongkola Sutta, etc. Buddhist morality help people decrease the rate of divorces, son and daughter pay much gratitude to their parents, relative and elders, respecting the human rights and obligation to each other (wife and husband) are humble better than nowadays and Cambodian people very well understand the morality, virtue and ethic of the couple's life.

The researcher thinks that Buddhist morality existing in some ceremonies in Cambodian wedding are useless, do not have any advantages such as: Sen Doun Ta, Krung Pili dedicating the spirit, ghosts, and ancestors without offering the holy man, monks, wise etc. Especially, a foreign civilization has been spreading in Cambodian society, it caused bad



impression increasing a high rate of divorces. Moreover, gratefulness, humility, respecting the human right, individual obligations, virtue and ethic have been declining nowadays in Cambodian society because most modern-day foreign cultural influences just teach people a happy life seeking the materialism and consumerism.

7. Suggestion for further research

If it has the research work about Cambodian traditional wedding characteristics, the researcher would like to show the suggestion as follows:

1. An analytical study to community or involved people should relate the main ideas in Chamnomkuet village, Chamnom sub-district, Mongkolborei district, Banteay Meanchey province.
2. A research study dealing with Cambodian morality practice to develop Cambodian society should be undertaken.
3. Analytical study using Buddhist morality as the main concepts such as the Noble Eightfold Path, The Four Sublime States (Brahma Viharas), the duties of family ties, etc with Cambodian traditional wedding characteristics as well.
4. Study the impact of Cambodian women's wedding with foreigners.
5. Analytical study of the impact of Cambodian wedding morality of men and women in Cambodia who are hired to marry Cambodian people living overseas.

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2) Interview :

Chamnomkuet Villagers' concepts as responded in the questionnaires and interviews. 15 July 2015.

Collected data at Chamnomkuet village, Chamnom sub-district, Mongkolborei District, Banteay Meanchey province.