



Roles of the Calendrical Rites and Traditions of Mon's life at Wangka Village, Sangkhlaburi District, Kanchanaburi Province

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Abstract

This article aimed to study the roles of the calendrical rites and traditions of Mon's life at Wangka Village, Sangkhlaburi District, Kanchanaburi Province. The data were collected by field studies and observation interview recording during 2019 – 2021. The results of the study revealed that Mon people at Wangka Village have migrated to Thailand for more than 70 years. There are traditions throughout the year that reflect Mon ethnic identities as Buddhists and strong worshipers of spirits. Such rituals have shaped the patterns of life and are mechanisms for inheriting Mon culture from the past to the present. Moreover, Mon rituals perform several roles in the establishment of identity, collective memory, and ethnic consciousness; in social order training, socialization, and maintenance of social behavioral patterns; and in the creation of enjoyment and individual mental stability of Mon diaspora. These roles reflect the importance of traditions in relation to ethnic consciousness and adaptation when settling in Thailand.

Keywords: Wangka Village, functionalism, Mon ritual, identity and collective memory

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1. Introduction

Wangka Mon Community is a newly established community in Sangkhlaburi District, Kanchanaburi Province, approximately 70 years old. Mon people in this community migrated from villages and towns in Mon State to Thailand due to the unrest in Myanmar around the year 1947. There have been several waves of immigration until now. Mon people in Wangka Village, therefore, have the status of Burmese diasporas or illegal immigrants who the Thai government has limited residential areas and formulated measures to prevent any movement that may affect the relationship between Thailand and Myanmar [1].

Mon people migrated to live in Sangkhlaburi District because its border is adjacent to Mon State and Thailand has a relaxed policy on the displaced person and better economic conditions. Moreover, the reason includes the generosity of Thai people. Luangphor Uttama—a Mon monk from Mawlamyine in Myanmar, born in 1910 and died in 2006, and the abbot of Wat Wang Wiwekaram from 1961 – 2006—was the one who led the migration and established a Mon village. He was a worldly and religious leader who influenced the way of life and maintained the mental stability of Mon people at Wangka Village. Luangphor Uttama was the one who planned the coexistence of Mon people at Wangka Village and initiated the restoration of Mon traditions, rituals, and cultures. Therefore, Luangphor Uttama played a role in the birth, existence, and transformation of Mon people at Wangka Village.

Mon people in Sangkhlaburi District have a different status from Mon people who settled in Bangkok and various

provinces. This Mon group entered Thailand in the Ayutthaya period and the early Rattanakosin period. They hold complete Thai citizenship and have a way of life, culture, beliefs, and traditions like other Thai people. As for the Mon people who migrated to Sangkhlaburi District, they have the status of Burmese diaspora, having culture, traditions, and spoken language like the Mon people in Myanmar. Furthermore, Mon people in Wangka Village try to maintain and pass on their ethnic and cultural identity, and they associate with their motherland through their customs, rituals, language, and lifestyles.

There are research studies by Deepadung and Damsa-ard [1], Thabsakul [2], Wongpolgan [3], Tabwiset [4] and Kroenkrathok [5] collecting information about calendrical rites and living traditions in the community background. It can be noted that different names and descriptions of traditions were recorded, may be because of different period's data collection. However, from the researchers' data collection in 2018-2020, the conclusion is different from the previous researches. It was found traditions that are related to the way of life and religion of the community. Some are just a telling, some are adapted to the economic and social conditions. This raises the question of what roles these two types of ritual traditions play in the present Mon community at Wangka Village, more than 15-year after the death of Luangphor Uttama.

2. Research Method

This study collected data about calendrical rites and traditions of Mon's life at Wangka Village, Sangkhlaburi District, Kanchanaburi Province. Data collection used informant interviews and participant observations. Interviews with informants

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used informal interview methods. During the interview, audio was recorded and field notes were taken. Data analysis by using related folklore concepts and theories such as Functionalism.

3. Mon Traditions

3.1 Calendrical rites

These traditions are performed at a community level in each month. The months of Mon people at Wangka Village correspond to the Thai lunar month. The details of traditions throughout the year are as follows:

In the third lunar month, there is ‘Yahu rice’ making tradition to offer to monks on Magha Puja Day, one of the Buddhist important days. Mon people believe that offering Yahu rice give the same merit as offering Yahu rice in the Buddha’s era. Before approaching Magha Puja Day, villagers bring glutinous rice, toasted coconut, nut, and sesame to make Yahu rice at the village hall. On Magha Puja Day, they give Yahu rice to monks who come to pray in the village and at Wat Wang Wiwekaram.

In the fourth lunar month, there is Chedi worshiping tradition to pay respect and remember the grace of the Lord Buddha. The ritual happens at Phutthakhaya Chedi for 9 nights before Luangphor Uttama’s birthday anniversary. After that, there is another 5-day merit-making activity for Luangphor. The fourth month is considered the month of merit-making by merging two important rituals into a great annual event of the Mon community at Wangka Village.

In the fifth lunar month, there is the Songkran tradition. Before Songkran, ‘Khao Chae’ is made for offering to monks and giving to senior relatives. During the Songkran festival, elderly people go to the temple for 3-day precept observance. Children have to deliver food and bring water to bathe their parents at the temple. Songkran activities also include building sand pagodas, worshiping ancestor spirits, bringing wood to support the Bodhi tree, and bathing the Buddha image through a bamboo trough. Moreover, male villagers create a human bridge by laying down side by side for monks to walk on. On the last day of the Songkran festival, people gather to put tiered umbrellas on sand pagodas, offer robes to monks, and then pour water of dedication. Songkran is an outstanding tradition of tourists’ interest, so it is included in a tourism campaign of Kanchanaburi Province. After the Songkran festival, Mon people hold a ceremony to show respect and thankfulness to ‘Phor Pu’ for protecting the village and people in the community, including asking for forgiveness for wrongdoing and praying for peace and happiness. ‘Phor Pu’, in Mon language called ‘Panok’, is the ghost of the Mon village at Wangka Village. Phor Pu Shrine is located behind Phutthakhaya Chedi. Food offerings to Phor Pu are vegetarian dishes, such as steamed sticky rice, sweets, and drinking water. The village shaman is a person who communicates between Phor Pu spirit and the villagers. In the afternoon of veneration of Phor Pu shrine tradition, there is the ‘Klang Ban’ merit-making tradition. This tradition is a combination of Buddhism and spirit worship. The purposes are to ward off evil and bad luck, drive away evil spirits from the village, and build morale for people in the community. Community leaders bring small stones to the Buddhist praying ceremony. After that, the monks chant while walking around

the village and throwing stones on the roofs of the houses.

In the sixth lunar month, there is Bodhi Tree watering ritual and Nirvana Market. On Vesak Puja Day, Mon people pour water to pay homage to the Sri Maha Bodhi tree that Luangphor Uttama brought from Sri Lanka. This ritual comes from the belief that worshiping the Sri Maha Bodhi tree is like worshiping the Lord Buddha. On the same night, meals are distributed. The buyers bring merit to buy instead of money, while the sellers or givers receive merit in return. This is trading with merit in the area of merit, therefore, is called Nirvana Market.

In the seventh lunar month, there is a ritual to ask for forgiveness from the preceptors. On the day, monks pay homage to Luangphor Uttama and make apologies to preceptor teachers. For the laymen, there are ceremonies to worship teachers of each profession.

In the eighth lunar month, there is the merit-making tradition before the Buddhist Lent. Before the start of Buddhist Lent, young people go to ask for forgiveness from their senior relatives. On the morning of the 15th day of the waxing moon of the eighth lunar month (Asalha Puja Day), people go to make merit, offer food to monks, and offer candles at the temple. In the afternoon, flower offerings are made to the monks who come for praying. On the evening of the first waning day of the eighth lunar month (Lent Day), villagers will provide flower vases as offerings to monks.

In the ninth lunar month, there is ‘Nithi Pot’ merit-making tradition. Nithi pot is a pot containing things and utensils that want to offer to monks, such as rice, dried food, plates, bowls, spoons, and coconuts. Mon people offer Nithi Pots in the belief that they bury treasures to be eaten and collected in the next life.

In the tenth lunar month, there is the boat floating tradition to dispel bad luck. This tradition is related to the legend of boat floating tradition during the reign of Phrachao Thammachedi. Nine kinds of food are put in the boat as offerings. There are also activities of burning incense and candles to remove bad luck, lighting a lamp as an offering to the Buddha, praying for good luck, making merit and giving alms to monks, and floral offering ceremony. The boat floating tradition is a big ritual event that allows villagers or tourists to join and it is included in a publicity campaign for tourism in Kanchanaburi Province.

In the eleventh lunar month, there is ‘The-wo’ food offering tradition at the end of Buddhist Lent. Luangphor Uttama has assigned Wat Wang Wiwekaram, Wat Sri Suwan, and Wat Somdetto to take turns hosting this tradition. In this event, people will offer alms to monks and make merit in remembering the day when the Lord Buddha returned to earth from heaven. On the day, there is a traditional football competition to win Luangphor Uttama Trophy. Another important event in October is the merit-making ceremony on the anniversary of Luangphor Uttama’s death, which began in 2007. This event reflects the profound reverence of Luangphor Uttama as a worldly, religious, and spiritual leader.

In the twelfth lunar month, there is Kathin ceremony and blanketing Phutthakhaya Chedi tradition. On the night before the Kathin ceremony, Mon people come together to sew blankets for the Chedi and clothing for monks. It has a belief that the Kathin ceremony is a great merit-making to preserve

the religion with a charitable mind which brings happiness and prosperity. In this month, there is also Loy Krathong tradition to worship Phra Upakut in Mon style. People jointly make a large Krathong to put offerings to Phra Upakut, and then float the Krathong into the river in the early morning of the 15th waxing moon of the twelfth lunar month.

According to the field data collection, in the first and second lunar months, around December to January, Mon people do not organize any events.

3.2 Traditions of Mon's life

Traditions of Mon's life at Wangka Village are family traditions related to the four factors for living. These traditions reflect Mon ethnic identity of worshiping ancestor spirits. From the field data collection during 2019 – 2021, it was found that Mon people at Wangka Village strongly worship ghosts along with Buddhism. Ghost worship there includes ancestor spirits, village spirits (Pho Pu), and other beliefs about ghosts. Traditions of Mon's life, both at family and community levels, have still inherited ancestral beliefs and practices. The details are as follows:

Children's 'Kwan' Blessing Tradition

It is a tradition that reflects the belief in 'Kwan' to bless newborns to be healthy, safe, and easy to raise. The ceremony was performed by a master of ceremony, called 'Mo Tham Kwan'. The ceremonial objects are arranged on trays according to the child's gender, with 9 trays for boys and 7 trays for girls. They are bananas, sticky rice mixed with coconut, children's clothing, notebooks, pencils, loose powder, and a stick tied with the necklace and golden ring at the end of the rope.

Ordination Tradition

This tradition reflects the belief and faith in Buddhism of Mon. Parents preferably get their sons aged 7 – 14 to enter the tonsure and to ordain when they are 20. The ordination is normally organized on the birthday anniversary of Luangphor Uttama as homage paying. In this tradition, there is a 'Kwan' blessing ceremony for the ordained person, just like for a newborn child. Parents prepare eight necessities of a monk and an auspicious pot filled with turmeric and soap pod juice for hair clipping. The ordination ritual is performed in a Buddhist monastery, where women are not allowed to enter.

Wedding Tradition

The wedding tradition of the Mon people in Wangka Village today is similar to that of Thai people. They, however, still adhere to the belief that marriage in the same spirit family is prohibited. Marriage women must perform a ghost return ritual to pay respect to the ghost of their male counterparts. Widows are forbidden from holding wedding ceremonies in the morning but can be arranged in the afternoon.

House Celebrating Tradition

Mon people organize house blessing ceremonies for the prosperity of their homes, as well as for peace, happiness, and prosperity of family members. They invite monks to perform the ceremony at the house. They cook and offer food for monks, relatives, and guests attending the event. There are symbolic objects in the ritual that reflect Mon culture, i.e., auspicious pots, Mon food, and Mon language.

Ancestor Spirit Worship Tradition

Mon people inherit the spirits of their ancestors through their sons. It is a must to hold a ceremony to venerate their ancestor ghosts annually. Offerings shall be corresponding to the spiritual family or favorite food of the dead ancestors or give a parting. Some families offer meat dishes, some offer vegetarian food. Mostly, food offerings are bananas, coconuts, sticky rice, steamed rice, sweets, and drinking water. The master of ceremony is the village shaman.

Funeral Tradition

Death rituals of Mon people at Wangka Village vary according to the cause of death. Practices strictly follow the beliefs and customs of Mon. In case of accidental deaths, murders, suicides, or death of children under 12 years of age, bodies must be buried only and no monks are invited for chanting. The ceremony is performed at Sala Daeng. After that, the body is carried on a carriage to the crematorium behind the Phut-thakhaya Chedi for funeral services. When there are several deaths happen at the same time, the body of the latest deceased is cremated, followed by the first deceased. This is in the belief that there will be no more fire, which means another death in the village. Mon people perform a funeral ceremony for monks differently from laypeople. It is because monks are considered pure precept observers without passion and they are successors and propagators of Buddhism. Therefore when a monk passes away, Mon people hold a grand funeral to show their utmost gratitude and respect. This tradition obviously reflects Mon ethnic identity as strong Buddhism respecters and spiritual worshipers through symbolic objects, i.e., a moveable crematorium, a deceased carriage, a brick carriage, and rituals, i.e., body swaying and snatching traditions.

According to the field data collection, it was found that the ritual traditions of Mon people at Wangka Village reflect Mon ethnic identity with respect to Buddhism and strongly worship ancestor spirits. Such rituals have been mechanisms for inheriting Mon culture from the past to the present. It also connects Mon people to their homeland and assimilates Mon diaspora into the local community in Sangkhlaburi District.

Lifestyles changed after the construction of the Vajiralongkorn Dam, living life under the policy of Thailand, ethnic diversity, contexts and phenomena occurring in today's society—particularly the tourism context in Sangkhlaburi District that has affected the way of life, consciousness, and thinking of Mon people at Wangka Village—are factors that have influenced traditions, rituals, patterns of life to adapt to changes. These factors play an important role in expressing and inheriting Mon ethnic identity and culture, as the researchers will discuss in the next section.

4. Roles of Mon's Ritual Traditions

It can be claimed that Mon traditions at Wangka Village are linked to Mon culture in Myanmar. Luangphor Uttama revived the traditions, set guidelines, and inherited the identity of Mon through various traditions and rituals.

Bascom [6, 7], author of the article "Four Functions of Folklore," explained that different types of folklore may play different roles and some types of folklore may play a number of roles. Bascom has categorized the roles and duties of folk-

lore in four ways: 1) explaining the origins and rationale for ceremonies, 2) serving as an education in a society that uses narrative traditions, 3) maintaining social normative behavioral standards, and 4) providing enjoyment and a solution to personal frustration [6].

Regarding the study of ritual traditions of Mon community at Wangka Village, Sangkhlaburi District, Kanchanaburi Province, the researchers have classified the roles of the traditions as follows:

4.1 Role in identity establishment, collective memory, and ethnic consciousness of Mon Diaspora

4.1.1 Identity establishment

Traditions and rituals of Mon diasporas at Wangka Village play an important role at both the individual and community levels. The rituals bring together the power of people in the community and create a sense of belonging or group. Performing traditions and rituals outside the homeland together with explaining ritual origins and reasons for performing, telling myths, stories, and beliefs, talking about the history and background of Mon ancestors create an identity and collective memory and maintain the ethnic consciousness of Mon diasporas in Thailand.

Since myths, stories, and beliefs are important components in explaining the origin of the rituals; they play an important role in establishing the identity of Mon ethnic group. The exemplifications below show how these traditions help maintain Mon identity.

The legend of Hongsawadee City and two golden swans swimming at the beach told the story of the great Mon Kingdom establishment. Mon Kingdom was civilized and prosperous. Despite losing in the war, the prosperous culture had influenced and was the cultural origin of many countries. The legend of Hongsawadee City and the golden swan; therefore, plays a role in explaining the importance of the swan as a symbolic animal. Swans appear as a symbolic object in various rituals, which clearly represent the identity of Mon ethnic group.

The legend of boat floating to remove bad luck during the reign of Phrachao Thammachedi originated the boat floating tradition of Mon people at Wangka Village. It is held to worship deities of water, forest, and land. This tradition reflects the faith in Buddhism and beliefs in misfortunes and bad vices that affect living life. There are ceremonies to ward off bad luck, extend life, and pray for expelling bad things and blessing peaceful life. Therefore, the boat floating tradition shows the Mon identity and considers the evidence of Mon identity building as Buddhists and spirit worshippers.

4.1.2 Collective memory and ethnic consciousness of Mon Diaspora

The story of Luangphor Uttama and the construction of Phutthakhaya Chedi, as well as bringing the Buddha's relics and Sri Maha Bodhi Tree from Sri Lanka to enshrine at the Chedi, explains the origins and the relationship between the Phutthakhaya Chedi worshipping tradition in the third lunar month and the tradition of watering the Bodhi Tree and Nirvana Market in the sixth lunar month. These two traditions had never been done at Wangka Village before the construction of the Chedi, and Luangphor Uttama revived them after building

Phutthakhaya Chedi. This tradition helped create collective memories of this Mon diasporas group who performed the same rituals when they lived in the Mon State, Myanmar.

Mon traditions at Wangka Village play a role in creating collective memories of when they grew up and lived in the Mon State, collective memories of Luangphor Uttama as a center of mind, and collective memories of the former Wangka Village as a center of Mon diasporas in Sangkhlaburi District. Stories and past memories are important to the way of life and society construction of Mon people at present Wangka Village. This Mon group has thus formed collective memories of the individual and the community through various traditions and rituals to understand the existence in the present life and create a sense of belonging to maintain ethnic consciousness among the displaced Mon.

It can be concluded that the Mon traditions at Wangka Village play a role in building the identity and collective memories of Mon diasporas. This is consistent with what Na Thalung [8] said that cultural traditions in society have a function in responding to human needs in terms of fundamental factors, social security, and mental stability. Traditions, therefore, meet the needs of human beings both socially and mentally. Furthermore, they are a matter of gathering people's powers in society. Performing rituals together makes the members of society warm and secure, and create the sense of belonging. Rituals are, therefore, an important mechanism for creating ethnic identity.

4.2 Role in social order training, socialization, and maintenance of social behavioral patterns

Na Thalung [8] explained that in the past society relied on telling traditions related to social order training in order for members who grew up in that society to learn about the rules of society, values that society sees as good, an attitude that society sees as a bad thing, as well as behavioral and ethical norms of society. Therefore, folklore plays a role in cultivating social order, cultivating values, and maintaining behavioral norms for society.

The life of the Mon people at Wangka Village under the ruling of Thai government as displaced persons is adhere to Luangphor Uttama's three rules of living which are refraining from alcohol drinking, refraining from gambling, and refraining from stealing and sexual misconduct. Additionally, the ritual traditions that Luangphor Uttama revived and Mon people have followed until today are an important mechanism for training social orders, socializing, and maintaining standard behavioral patterns of society. As a result, the coexistence of Wangka Village community is peaceful and does not cause problems for the Thai government.

Mon people are trained in social orders through thorough traditions and rituals. They create rules and behavioral norms that everyone should mutually accept and follow. There are also criteria and agreements determined to be aware of. Consequently, Mon people learn the rules of coexistence, aware of their roles that should and should not be done, and duties as community members by participating in community activities. They also learn to work as a team, have community unity, and help each other. Mon children and youths are educated about community history and background, way of life, and

local wisdom. Moreover, they are instilled in values, attitudes, beliefs, and customs with parents and senior relatives as role models in daily life. Allowing children to participate in or attend various traditions and rituals, they can absorb Mon culture unconsciously. Knowledge and experience that the young generation acquires through various traditions and rituals significantly encourage self-learning through cultural identity and learning rules and norms of society.

Mon traditions at Wangka Village reflect their belief in Buddhism along with strong beliefs in ghosts. Belief in Buddhism is a spiritual anchor that helps controlling behavior and maintaining behavioral standards and disciplines of coexistence. However, beliefs in ghosts help keep people in line with social customs and patterns. Practices to ghosts are a mental anchor for people in the community to fear wrongdoing and adhere to traditions and rituals.

The role in socialization is manifested through ritual traditions, for example, in the merit-making tradition on the birthday anniversary of Luangphor Uttama. It is an annual event of Wat Wang Wiwekaram with multi-day activities. Mon inhabitants in each village will share their duties to preparing venue, activities, performances, and food for offerings to monks and welcoming visitors. The Yahu rice tradition in the third lunar month, another exemplification, reflects the values of giving and sharing. It emphasizes the behavioral norms of coexistence with generosity and mutual assistance. When it comes to Songkran tradition, Mon people must return home to show their gratitude to their parents and visit their ancestors, no matter how far they work or live. This ritual reflects the values of gratitude. It is also a good strategy to encourage Mon people to return home by establishing a norm that at least once a year on Songkran Day, they must gather and make merit together and share each other's suffering. This can instill love and harmony in the family and community.

To sum up, the Mon traditions at Wangka Village play an important role in controlling and creating social orders, rules, and norms for displaced Mon. The traditional practice is a process of socialization that causes Mon people at Wangka Village to strongly adhere to social rules and customs of their ancestors.

4.3 Role in creating enjoyment and building mental stability of individuals

The ritual traditions of Mon people at Wangka Village play a psychological role in creating enjoyment. Organizing traditions in the community is an opportunity to have fun from various entertainment activities, helping villagers to relax from tiredness and stress at work. As in the third lunar month, there is a grand annual event of Wat Wang Wiwekaram, Chedi worshipping tradition and merit-making merit on Luangphor Uttama's birthday anniversary. At this event, there are various entertainment activities, including theatrical performances, ancient boxing, folk music, and Li-Ke Mon. Li-Ke Mon is a rarely seen performance because it has to be hired from Myanmar. Both male and female actors dress in colorful clothes in Mon style. There are various forms of performances with musical instruments, including singing, dancing, comedy, and musical play. All of them create a lot of happiness and fun for Mon

people at Wangka Village.

Living in Myanmar, the status of the Mon people was a minority group with no own land. When migrating to Thailand, they have to live under the rules of Thai society as displaced persons. This status made Mon people at Wangka Village feel unstable, both physically and mentally. Moreover, with no Thai citizenship, they are unable to access their desirable rights and employment opportunities. Mon people feel insecure about the risk of being pushed out of the country and unconfident about their illegal living status. Additionally, being displaced persons who migrated from the homeland to face adversity has badly affected morale in life. Mon traditions are able to be a part of building morale and motivation for family members and the community. Moreover, they help build mental stability and inspiration in life. When there is a ritual, those who go to work outside the area return home to join the ceremony and share their life. In other words, family members reunite and have a chance to encourage and express goodwill to each other. Mon traditions, therefore, play a role in creating mental stability and encouragement.

Worship of Phor Pu Shrine tradition derived from the belief in ghosts protecting the village. The Mon people of Wangka Village greatly respect Phor Pu, a spirit who takes care of and protects the village. The story of Phor Pu's sanctity has been passed on from generation to generation. When Mon people hold a wedding ceremony, ordination, house celebrating, as well as go to work or study and travel far away from the village, or do businesses, they usually pay respects to Phor Pu for safety, encouragement, happiness, success, and prosperity. After Songkran tradition, Mon people join to organize an event to pay respect to Phor Pu's shrine every year in order to express their gratitude to Phor Pu for protecting the village and community members. The village shaman is a person who communicates between Phor Pu spirit and the villagers, and forecast the future events or suggest a solution for a bad incident happening in the village to bring about peace to the community.

In conclusion, Mon traditions at Wangka Village play a role in both entertaining and building mental stability. This is consistent with what Na Thalung [8] said that folklores have an important direct function in the mental aspect. It is because folklore can offer a compensatory alternative to what human desires but cannot achieve in real life.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Regarding the study of the roles and functions of the calendrical rites and traditions of Mon's life at Wangka Village, it illustrates the ethnic identity and roles of traditions for various ethnic and displaced person groups. Mon traditions have their roles and significance to Mon people at both individual and community levels. It serves as a communication tool to understand the displaced Mon as an insider who is aware of and maintains Mon ethnic identity. These traditions also communicate to the outsiders by showing Mon ethnic identity in ethnic diversity areas. At the same time, Mon traditions at Wangka Village are a tool for negotiating power relations with Thailand, as well as other ethnic groups in the area. This is in line with Wasiwivat and Jaruworn [9], who stated that folklores play an important

function in responding to the psychological needs of people and social security. However, in the age of cultural diversity, each individual group living together in society requires similar or equal levels of rights and priorities. Thus, it appears that folklores are used as a tool to negotiate power relations between groups of people coexisting in society.

In addition, the rituals of Mon people at Wangka Village also play an important role in economy and tourism. Mon ethnic identity and culture presented through various ritual traditions of Wangka Village community represent the original Mon in Myanmar. This study applied an embedded field study, which was different from going as a tourist visiting Mon Bridge and staying in a homestay, and doing tourist activities like almsgiving activities, taking photos with Mon people, and dressing like Mon and applying Tanaka powder. Regarding the embedded field study, Mon culture is cultural capital that this diaspora group uses as an economic opportunity by presenting Mon ethnic identity through Songkran tradition, boat floating tradition to dispel bad luck, the Bodhi tree watering tradition, etc. In the tourism context, these are traditions that strongly present Buddhism identity. The selection of traditions to become tourism activities of Kanchanaburi Province shows that this group of Mon uses their rituals to communicate with the Thai state and to be recognized as a displaced group who creates economic and tourism benefits, not a burden. On the one hand, these traditions are used to maintain Mon ethnic identity in the new settlement. The rituals of Mon diasporas are, therefore, of economic importance along with cultural values and ethnic identities.

The contexts outside the motherland and being under the ruling of the Thai state, including the social context and changes in various aspects, influence the way of life and cultural identity of the Mon ethnic group. Ethnic boundary is proclaimed through

cultural mechanisms by expressing Mon ethnic identity through ritual traditions to prove the existence of the Mon ethnicity. The ritual traditions of the Mon at Wangka Village at present have been adapted to suit various contexts, especially tourism. At the same time, efforts have been made to maintain and carry on the traditions, rituals and culture of Mon in accordance with the limitations of area and status of being Mon diasporas.

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