

Belief, Rice Culture, Climate Changed In Thailand

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Abstract

An agriculture is major occupation of Thais. Farmers have local belief involved in the supernatural power of which can give them water or raining for their good crops. They built supernatural symbols for the respectful representing. These symbols are concerned animals differently. This article will explain the animal symbols related into entreat from supernatural power of which Thais believe that can help them gaining the good and enough crops or giving a luck for fishing. The data sources were collected from mass media, academic article, books linking to rainmaking ceremony in 3 regions: the northern, the northeastern, and the central region of Thailand while in the southern data are the animal symbols concerning the fishing. The finding was found the main 3 animals; snakehead fish, cat, frog in 3 regions while 3 main animal symbols in the southern are crab, fish, and shrimp. These believe symbolic animals have been presented in central of city or tourist area for showing and people's respect. Before raining season each year, the people will arrange the rainmaking ceremony for good and enough crops. These believe concern to climate change situation in season change or overwhelmed on flood or drought that affect to food sustainability of Thai's society.

Keywords: Belief, Climate Change, Rainmaking Ceremony, Rice Culture, Supernatural Power

Introduction

A belief plays an important role to human behavior. In each community the belief systems are the stories that people tell themselves to define personal sense of reality [1]. The rice culture is related to the way of life in Southeast Asian people so raining has become an essential factor in their crops. The previous study in the Southeast Asian Countries where the rice culture is significance. The rain praying rituals of the Tai peoples in Myanmar, Laos, China, and Vietnam that people in this area have similarly rainmaking ceremony for their god or supernatural belief as well as Thais [2].

In the past Thai farmer planted rice only for their family but in the present time it has developed for world market and become key agricultural export. Raining season therefore has more important for their crops each year. As it was known that the climate change problem massive affects into rice process of Thailand while farmers have still planned to plant in the same time of a year likely in the past time. The climate change phenomenon has appeared around the earth is not only influence into farmers, but it also results into food sustainable situation. The traditional belief of rainmaking ceremony from supernatural power has been subsequent toward the next generation farmers. It seems that belief has close related to what people performance similarly African people adapted their belief into various art forms of which are linked by human's beliefs and physical world [3]. The belief in supernatural power related to agricultural crops shapes the way of life in local people including behavior, ceremony, and arts so far.

The previous researches in supernatural power or belief of Thailand has been studied in multidisciplinary fields of social sciences mainly in social sciences and humanities subjects. In the northeastern region is mainly research field of rain making ceremony in supernatural power belief of local villager such as using the cat symbol in rainmaking ceremony [4] and Bang-Fai festival in Yasothon province [5]. In addition, the rainmaking ceremony is not only Thais supernatural belief but it also is arranged in other areas where Tai people live such as Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar [2]. So the rain making ceremony is able to show the supernatural belief of the farmers in Thailand. In a region or province, the villagers have their animal symbol in the rain making ceremony such as fish, crab, frog, cat, dog, snake, and so on. These animals are generally in local village and relate to rain. The rain making ceremony was inherited for long time. In the present time the ceremony was adapted into people's way of life or the animal symbol was build up to be province's symbol in terms of tourism and local festival [6].

The rain making ceremony is not only for agriculture productivity but this ceremony is also the local people' belief in luck and good life for their family member. At least one of family member will be join the ceremony arranged in their village. In terms of the government, the ceremony will be arranged before farming in early raining season period in May of each year.

Thailand has mainly 4 regions; the northern, central, northeastern, and southern regions. The 3 first regions have 3 seasons; summer, raining, and winter while only the southern region has 2 seasons is raining and winter. It seems that the 3 regions have rather flood or drought problems than the southern region which has 2 seasons are raining and summer. The rainmaking ceremony therefore will be arranged in 3 regions obviously. The animal symbols have been dragged into this ceremony that each region has same and/or different animal symbols of which related to their culture and believe.

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative research in cultural perspective focusing on a supernatural belief and rice culture in Thailand. The data were grouped from mass media, researches, book and key informants interviewing who are farmers living in rural village. The research field area is in Nong-Saeng District at Udonthani province in the northeastern region where most villagers are farmers. This research is a pilot project to survey the local beliefs related to agricultural crops and climate change phenomenon. The research question is what is the supernatural belief of farmer in Thailand

Research Finding

Animal Symbols

At the northern region, the people believe that the snakehead fish able to give them the rain in the right time of rice filed. The northeastern region, farmers believe that the frog and cat able to give them the rain enough for rice crops. In the central region, they believe in cat for the same reason. The next contents will be shown each region believe in rainmaking ceremony.

Villagers in north region believe that the big snakehead fish can contact to the supernatural power who able to has rain for the farmers. Chiang Mai province as the economic and center city in the north had arranged the rainmaking ceremony around first week of April each year by the big-name person will be the leader in this ceremony.

The figure below was shown the big snakehead fish symbol as the key animal symbol in the ceremony. It had made by wood and colored by pen. There are not only fish in the ceremony but the important things such as banana, dessert, fruit, snack, and rice are also put on the basket to show the supernatural power that they are respect it. So, please give them the raining for the rice filed in this year. The people, moreover, entreat the suitable rain and the flood should not take place between the rice plant procedure

The figure 1 bellowing is the ceremony arranged in local temple.

Fig.1 Rain making ceremony (www.chingmainews.co.th)



In northeastern region, although the key area of rice which growing well and good quality is central and southern-north regions while northeastern one has biggest land of rice but the nature of soil is not

suitable for rice cultivation including water lack. The northeastern region has serious problem of rice process as its geography is high landscape. This region has not many rivers as the northern and central regions so having drought many months a year often occur and result to crops quality and amount of product. It is not only high landscape, but it is also the drought caused by climate changes [7]. Having not enough of irrigation canal for large and wind land of northeast region is massive problem, therefore, rainmaking ceremony is flickering solution for the farmers.

Moreover, the northeastern region has huge population numbers than the other regions and it also has the lowest income in this region that has resulted from drought and get not good and enough crops for living in a year. The rainmaking ceremony quite has been highlighted in this region. The finding was shown that there are few animals believe which have power giving rain such as frog, toad, cat, and turtle so these animals are used in rainmaking ceremonies. For an example supernatural animal statue such as a toad had been shown in many provinces such as Yasothon province in the figure 2.

Fig. 2 Frog symbol (<https://i-san.tourismthailand.org/4410/>)



This figure is the frog as key animal symbol in rainmaking ceremony of the northeastern people believe. This is the frog model built at front of the main lake in Yasothon province. Each year they have ceremony for presenting a perspective to Pha-ya Khun Khak (frog) as it powers to give the rain. In the present time the leader of local government will set the day for this ceremony and it will be arranged in June every year.

The central region, Rice is an important export crop of Thailand that its main area is the central region. The

geography this region is marshland especially southern of this region, however, the global warming and climate change affect to raining season change in some years as well as drought coming. Cat is one animal used in the rainmaking ceremony in Thailand but in Korea cat means the femininity symbol [8]. The northeastern people believe that cat afraid the raining. The cat will be water splashed like having rain and it will yell.

Finally, the people believe that the supernatural power will hear the cat's yell and supernatural belief will work to give them the rain.

The figure below people used the cat sculpture on the car to invite the villagers in community donation to temple by people can put the money on the banana tree. This figure is the published on newspaper online in December that this month is winter season but the central region farmers they do rice field two time a year so this period the rice field should get rain enough to get good crops. The cat symbol in the figure 3 below is the animal belief in rain making ceremony.

Fig. 3 Cat symbol (Neawna online newspaper/27/10/2019)



The cat in this ceremony has both real one and statue. In terms of rain making ceremony belief, the teenagers nowadays do not understand how a cat and rain link together for raining; however, they joined this ceremony because of fun while a cat cartoon is also used replacing the real cat because it was opposed by the animal protection group; however, real cat has been used in some places.

Seemingly, the southern region often rains than the other regions, so it has only 2 seasons: raining and winter. The southern people mostly are fishing man as both sides of this region are the sea and they have not much lowland for rice field. These supporting reasons let them have no obviously the raining ceremony similarly of the other regions. The key animal symbols in supernatural belief have been shown to be the symbol of luck such as fish, crab, and shrimp when the villagers go to fish. The figure 4 shows that the crab is an animal symbol of people believe for good luck in fishing. It was shown at Krabi province near mangrove forest area where the fishing man go out to the sea.

The mangrove forest is an important food source of people particularly fish and crab of which main income by selling very day. The crab is not only being the animal symbol with getting luck, but it also presents the mangrove forest exuberance. Some province they built the shrimp or fish sculptures in the same reason. Changing of global temperature degree let the temperature's sea in Thailand hotter and changing seawater flow and

to impact to fisherman ways of life in mangrove even they have no drought problem as the other regions.

Farmers and Villagers Belief

The regions of Thailand had been divided into main 4 regions: north, northeast, central, and south. The first three regions have 3 seasons: summer, raining, and winter while the south has only 2 seasons: raining and winter. The fruits and rice are the key crops for trading and export while seafood products are an important export goods. The 3 regions often have water management problem for farming and rice field that is several year dryness and some others having flood. In the past time the both water problems people believe that something wrongs came from the supernatural power. Therefore, the entreat raining and water would be arranged to show to the supernatural things that if they did the wrong things and please the supernatural things should apologize them and give them the suitable water for their plant and living. The global temperature and nature change in the present time let the believe traditional being heightened as it ameliorates the local people's mind.

Conclusion

The traditional believe of Thais toward the supernatural power who is able give the raining for their crops. If they do not get the raining in the right time for their rice, the villagers in regions will arrange the rain asking ceremony. Rice is the key crops for family, trade, and export of Thailand. The north and central regions are the main regions producing to export while most of the northeastern region having dryness than the two regions. So, the northeastern region has obvious ceremony for entreat to get rain from the supernatural things while the south has not clear having the ceremony similarly the other regions.

Animal symbols were used on entreat raining ceremony such as the snakehead fish in the north and the cat in the central and northeastern regions and frog in the northeastern region. In the present the people understand the climate change sourced from global warming, however, the believe involved the supernatural power has been maintained in rice culture of farmers in Thailand.

Discussion

Agriculture and fishery make up the majority of the population of Thailand. Rainfall has a significant effect on agricultural productivity. The government will keep them informed of the weather and rainfall at any given time so that farmers can prepare for flooding or drought that will affect their crops. Changes in the global climate today are difficult to predict because they occur every year. Praying for rain is one of the rituals of farmers in all regions of Thailand. Supernatural powers are their spiritual refuge. Although they understand the problems caused by global climate change affecting farmers' livelihoods.

They believed that if the ceremony was performed to ask for blessings from the holy things, it would encourage them to work in the fields, farms, and fisheries. In the next year, it will get better yields. Thus, the belief in supernatural powers is tied to Thailand's agricultural society, which of course has a bearing on maintaining Thailand's agricultural career as one of the world's major rice exporters. In addition, agricultural and fishery exports account for nearly half of the country's income. And it means that the world's population inevitably receives agricultural and fishery products from Thailand. In other words, Thai farmers' belief in supernatural power is affected by climate change issues which it inevitably affects global food security.

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