

Part II

Tradition and Culture

Chapter 1 Local Tradition

Thai culture has been developing since past to present. It reflects ideas and belief including knowledge for mutual works and living in Thai societies. The precious cultures have created a lot of uniqueness both individuals and publics. One of these is social custom.

The meaning of custom

The custom contains two senses, abstract and concrete.

The abstract refers to mode of thinking, belief, value and standard of behavior which is set as social norms.

The concrete sense conveys social doctrines and ceremonial displays that handed down from generations to generations. Such activities has been set under the belief and value for social norms.

The Local customs at Baan-Koke, Uttaradit comprise a lot of outstanding ones such as paddy rice and Pravase merit making.

The followings are some of the customs collected by Baan-Koke villagers.

1. Paddy rice merit waking ceremony

This custom annually takes place after harvesting season is completed

Background:

The custom has been done for ages for temple development purpose using mutual organized by village headman. The villagers who did not do the temple works will help making food for the work force. Such works need money support, so the villagers sell their paddy rice. Some rice will be taken to make food for temple work

forces. Some paddy rice is left over, and they donate to the temple. The temple will let the well being families bet this rice and the temple keep the money for later temple development. Since then after the harvesting season, the villagers will donate rice to the temple depending on their statuses, and it turns to be their traditions.

The paddy rice ceremony will be taken place after the villagers finish their harvesting. The village committee will set the day for the ceremony. The temple will announce to the villagers who then help prepare the building necessary things such as sacred cotton thread, flags and sacks.

On the ceremonial day, the temple committee will collect the donated rice, and the Buddhist monks will make the chant and bless the donaters. Sometimes the ceremonial activities will also be held such as Thai classical dancer, dramas, movies etc. The drinking parties will also be held through the night. After the ceremony, the temple committee will do the auction, and the money earned will be kept for further temple development.

This traditional paddy rice ceremony is annually held in every village of Baan-Koke district. It should be kept for later generation.

2. Prawase Merit Making Custom

This traditional custom is specially performed in Baan-Koke village which is the biggest and oldest among other villages. It takes place for 3 days and nights from 10th – 15th date of the 4th lunar month.

Before the Prawase Merit making day, the temple committee will announce when is the set date to the villagers. Then the accommodation will be prepared for the guests who will come to participate the ceremony. At Baan-Koke they prepare the guest house for the visitors in each village.

On the Prawase Merit making eve, the visitors will come to stay at the guest house. Some may stay with their relatives if they have some.

On the ceremonial day, 13th of 4th Lunar month (March), the parade procession will be set. The big frying pan is also set in the middle of the preaching hall and watching by the man in white robe. The parade procession will directly move to the marsh and stop to pray in respect of gods. Then they search for shells and crabs, representing Naga and Garuda, in the mash. When they get some shells and crabs they will fire a gun, 1 shot to the north, 2 shots to the east, 3 shots to the west and 4 shots to the south, in paying respect and invite Garuda and Naga. They carry them to the preaching hall and put the shells and crabs into the frying pan that fill with water which represents the pond and lotus. Sometimes they really put some lotuses and duck weeds in the frying pan.

In the afternoon, the villagers will draw slot to be the host of a part of preaching offerings for each village. The preaching is about Lord Buddha's Life before He became the Load Buddha. The preaching is divided into 13 sections (parts), and it will start in the evening of 13th – 15th Lunar month. The villagers will set the parade procession of their preaching part and offering it to the Buddhist monk who preaches at the end of the preaching.

“Nakorn-Kan”, one of the Jataka preaching part, is usually well set by the villagers. They set the background as a mage in the jungle where Prawase-Sandorn and his wife Mas-See live. The villagers who this preaching part will set the parade procession usually about 3 pm of the 14th lunar month. They will carry 4 Buddhist monks sitting on bamboo bed to the mage. The senior person will pray in respect of the gods and take the Pravase bible (representing the Lord Buddha) to the bamboo bed and move to the temple. Before moving, they make gun shots: 1 to the north, 2 to the east, 3 to the west and 4 to the south. When the representing of Lord Buddha gets to the temple, the ceremony is

The Pravase merit making ceremony will be held once every 3 years. However, at present the ceremony has been abstain for 4-5 years. It seems as if we were going to forget this wonderful custom.

3. Song Kran Festival

Traditional Song-Kran of Baan-Koke district would have great fun starting from 13th April and would continue until it rains.

On the night of 12th April, the villagers would shoot a gun to salute Paya-Song-Kahn. This night is named Sang-Khan-Log night.

The reason for gun shooting came from the belief that Paya-Sang-Khan comes, so they shoot guns to welcome him. The gun shooting will start from 12.00pm till dawn. They believe that gun shooting is the same as the fire-works firing.

The starting of Song-Kran is an early morning of 13th April. All villagers dress up very beautiful garments and go to the temples to make merit. The water festival will start after finishing merit making, around 9.00-10.00 am. The Buddhist monks and novices will take the bathing from the villages. The temple buildings and grounds will take place after water celebration. The grand Father procession will then follow this events. The villagers will invite the spirit of Grand Father to exorcise the middle woman, Naang-Tiem. She will ask how the villagers' life is about. Then the villagers will take Naang-Tiem to parade around the villages. Every village will have equal chance to bath Grand Father. Then they take Naang-Tiem back to the pavilion and invite the spirit out of Naang-Tiem. The rest of the day will be in full swing of drinks and dance celebration.

The 14th April is called "Wan Nao", and the merit making will be at the temple. Then the big celebration will start again. Young men and women may play variety of games such as Sabaa, Bier, Dameing, drinking and gambling. In the evening the villagers will make the Flags and take them to the temple.

The 15th April is called "Wan-Sang-Kat-Khun". The villagers will bring their Buddha Images to take a bath among one another and

then bring the Buddha images back to the place, that is why it is named “Wan-Sang-Kat-Khun”.

In the morning there will be merit making at the temple as usual, then it is time to take a bath the elder people in the village. Each Cowse is a host to take care of the feast. They bathed the elders and the elders bless them in return. Very often the youngers will help develop the temple, bring rocks and sand to the temple. They believe that when people come to the temple, rocks, pebbles and sand stick with their feet going out the temple; So Song-Kran festival is the time to bring back those things to the temple.

On some occasions of 13th April the youth parade will take the flowers procession to give flowers to the monks, get blessing from the monks and return home. Some years they will bring the Buddha image to the pavillian of the temple and have the flowers procession every night until the Buddha image is taken back to the old place.

Song-Kran festival at Baan-Koke will keep on like this for many days until it rains. Then the villagers will stop celebration and start doing their argricultural jobs. And everything will return to normal life again.

4. Offering robes to Buddhist Monks at the temple ceremony

This offering robes to Buddhist monks at Baan-Koke is usually made for mutual funding of money to help the developing temple in Baan-Koke village or some other villages. The village committee will set the meeting and declare the activity penpose. The date will then set and the villagers will collect all donated materials at the temple.

Two or three days before the ceremony, the villagers will try to collect the donations from all villagers in Baan-Koke district. The villagers will gather all donated malerals into the bin.

At night there will be the ceremony such as the movies or the traditional drama play. Then early in the morning the robe will be brought to the temple and also offer food to the Buddhist monks. After Buddhist monks blessing, the village committee will declare the amount of donated money then divide in half for temple development and village fund.

5. Birth Ceremony

For the tradition of Baan-Koke villagers, when the mother gave birth, the husband will go to collect laal herbs from the woods such as Mai-Pao, Mai-deng, Mai Peka, Mai-Anguang, Mai-Ma-Kham, Mai-Namnoi. He will eat them in a short pieces, peel off the bark bind them and dry in the sun. Then the berbs are hard dry, he will boil them in the big pot. The mother and child will drink and bath the herbal water. The new mother will lie near the fire after childbirth for 15-20 days; however, one month is required by tradition.

At night the experienced elders will stay the night with the new mother and make fun of telling funny stories to help relax the mother. The other youngers will play same other games such as cards and coins to escort the new mother.

The boiled herbal pot will keep boiling even the new mother goes out of the fire. When the villagers or neighbours come to visit her, she will let them have a drink of the herbal water. The villagers love drinking this medicine because they believe it is very useful is out of the fire staying, she will collect somethings such as the Sarong, Loi cloth, money, candes and joss sticks to the midwife who help do the birth giving. On Song-Kran day, the new mother will poor water in respect of the midwife who will bless her in return. This local tradition is still on nowadays.

6. Hae-Ton-Doy Ceremony

This traditional ceremony takes place on Song-Kran day, 13th April. The villagers from all walks of life will bath the Buddha image, Buddhist monks, Buddh novices and do the grand Father exorcise

procession around the village. After out of grand Father invitation, all villagers will have the feast party with all kinds of drinks at their neighbours.

In the evening, the youth will help decorate the flowers in different figures with sonce candes and joss sticks extra addition Then they will take the procession of flowers figures to the temple and offer them to the Buddhist monks who then bless them before they return homes.

This flowers procession is still on nowadays for Buddha image respectation. Sometimes it take 15 days; however, when the Buddha image is brought back to place in the temple, the ceremony will stop.

The merit making will do on the last day by making the candle-wax flowers procession which is the mutual villagers cooperation. The candle-wax flowers will stick to the banana trees in the villagers.

At night the villagers will make the big procession of the candle-wax flowers of the banana trees to the temple and offering them to the Buddhist monks who will preach and bless them. All participated villagers will help prepare food for Buddhist monks in the morning. This will take time and the villagers will stay the night at the temple. Early in the morning, they will make the procession of “Ton-Kao-Pan-Khon”, made of sticky rice sticking to the coconut-bone leaves. At 4.00am the procession will get to the temple and make 3 rounds processing. The villagers will offer the rice to the Buddhist monks who then blessing them and all villagers will return home. This ceremony usually takes place on 15th or 8th waxing moon of the Luna month.

7. The Warming House Ceremony

It is the tradition of Baan-Koke villagers to make a merit making for house warming ceremony after the new house is finished. They believe such merit making will expel all evils and vices and also help protect them when the owners move in.

Usually one day before the ceremony, the house owner will invite all neighbors to participate the ceremony. The next day will be the merit making day; the invited Buddhist monks will pray the blessing chants and spring the holy water on participated villagers and the holy thread will be bound around the new house. The big feast will take place among the merit making participants including drinking, singing and dancing in full swing after the Buddhist monks are taken to the temple.

8. Ordination Ceremony

The traditional Buddhists will ordain their sons when he is 20 years old and stay being Buddhist monks for one Buddhist Lent, but now the ordination will be up to the convenience of the son. Some way ordain only 7 or 15 days according to their free time.

Usually the ordination will take place in 5th - 8th Lunar month before Buddhist Lent and the monks will stay to study Buddhism Tripitaka through the end of Buddhist Lent. Any Buddhist monks who need to stay on as the monk can do so. However any monks who need to resign to lead their life as lay people can also do.

Nowaday most young man at Baan-Koke village do not like to ordain, or they will ordain only a few months and resign after the end of Buddhist Lent. The novices will ordain only a few days as the merit making at their relative funeral, so many temples in Bann-Koke turn to be the abandon temples.

The ordination will start by the ordination applicants bring flowers, candles, joss sticks to tell the elder relatives when and where he will ordain. One day before ordination, applicants will be shaved and dressed in local traditional white dress and sitting and listening to chanting parents by local chanting expert.

Early in the morning of the next day, the parents or the hosts will make ordination process taking the ordination applicant to the temple making 3 rounds around the ordination hall (Bot). The parents will offer the prepared Buddhist monks belongings to the

ordination applicant who then offers them to the preceptor and makes 3 times of prostrates asking for ordination. The preceptor will make some conversations with the ordain applicant to confirm their will chess him and teaching some rules and regulation of Buddhism Law. The mutual attending Buddhist monks will give the chanting offer their approval of the new Buddhist monks, and the ordination ceremony will come to the end.

9. Buddhist Lent Merit Making

The word “Lent” is the new Thai word derived from Pali or Sansakrit meaning “Rain”, the raining season According to the Buddhism Vinaiya, rules and regulations, the Buddhist monks must stay in specific place until the end of the rainy season. Usually the Buddhist Lent will last only three months left out one last month.

The Buddhist Lent starts on 1st day of 8th Lunar month when the Moon Goddess enters Arsarnha Zodiac which is the first day of the rainy season. The Buddhist Lent will last 3 months; ending on the full moon day of 11th Lunar month. If that year containing Leap month, the ending of the Buddhist Lent will postpone to start in the 2nd of 8th Lunar month. However the beginning of Buddhist Lent can start on the 1st day of 9th Lunar month if there are some inconveniences. At this time all Buddhist monks stay and study the Buddhism Vinaiya at one place. Anyway if there is some necessities, the monk can stay the night at some other places not more than 7 nights. If this roles and regulations is broken, the Buddhist Lent will not yield any benefit to the monks and the punishment will be applied as well. On Buddhist Lent day, villagers will bring food to make merit at the temples. Some villagers may keep 8 precepts staying the night at the temples on priest day. Many villagers may make the oath behave themselves being good Buddhists strictly controlled under five precepts.

10. Out of Buddhist Lent Custom

This day is on 1st day of 11th Lunar month which is ending of raining season. Today is named “Devo-Rohana” merit making day in which they have traditional belief that Lord Buddha opened the world. The belief was originated in India and turned out to be the traditional custom in Thailand.

The villagers at Baan-Koke will make merit at the temples in the morning and help develop the compound areas of the temple in the afternoon. At night the “Mahachart” preaching will be performed every temple.

11. The Wedding Custom (Kin-Dong)

The wedding custom at Baan-Koke is also called “Kin-Dong” which means young man and woman make their decision to lead their lives as husband and wife.

Usually the young man goes to visit the young girl and learn to know each other. After they learn and get together very well long enough, the man’s parents will go to see the young woman and ask for marriage. Both families will set the married day on good auspicious moment, usually in 4th and 6th Lunar month. Both families will prepare their houses for the party and invite their relatives and friends both by words or cards. The feast may take place one day before the married day, and they will prepare accspecious rice as well as food for the wedding day. Two pillows will be prepared for two would be bride and bridegroom on the ceremony. The bridegroom will prepare all money and gold or jewelry that will offer to the bride’s parents. The tray containing betel and areca to the bride’s home as a troth will be wrapped and set in 8-12 pairs. Early in the next morning the wedding processions will parade to the bride’s house. The first procession is the troth of wrapped betel and areca the next procession is the bridegroom with sugar cane and banana tree. The sugar cane represent the sweetful marriage life, and the banana tree means the great number of offsprings. When the bridegroom procession gets to the bride’s house ladder, they are

stopped. This barrier called the silver door. The bridegroom has to give them 3-5 bottles of liquor. When they pass this door and get to the ladder, the bridegroom will let the boy attending their wash his feet on certain kind of grass. The boy will lead the bridegroom into the house. The bridegroom will give some money to the boy and go the pay homage to the bride's parents and waets for the bride who has to walk par the golden door where the bridegroom has to pay some money for letting the bride come to join the ceremony. Then both of them will be the center of comfort and relieve(a bereaved family). The bridegroom and bride will exchange a certain kind of cloth. Both couple will open the feast party and waiting for service giving to the ceremony participants

While the feasting party is going on, the parents of both side will check the amount of money brought by the bridegroom. Then all the money will be kept by the bride's parents. So the wedding celebration is over.

Before BE. 2515, the wedding ceremony at Boo-Bier village the bride must pay the money to marry the bridegroom which is the same as India. After BE.2515 the Wedding ceremony has changed to be as it is now.

12. Funeral Ceremony

In the past, if there is the death in Baan-Koke village the villagers will come to help do the coffin decoration. Usually the corpse will be kept one night at home. However if there is the death on Friday, the corpse will be kept at home for 2 nights. They will not cremate the corpse on Saturday on believing that there will be 4 more deaths, they call this 4 posts. The Sound "post is like "Saturn". Moreover, every dead person will not be brought to the temple on believing that the dead person, the Buddhist monks and the temple are individual category.

Accidental death, car crash, tree falling, gunshot, stabbed to death. All these dead bodies will not be allowed getting on the house. However they could be kept under the house.

For the crematory, next day morning the villagers will collect the wood for corpse burning. All night there will be Buddhist monks chanting then some villagers will come to stay the night with the host ceremony. Other may play gambling and drinking. Some may play dancing to cool off the host family's grief. There will be Buddhist monks chanting next day and offering food to the monks. Then the corpse will be taken to the graveyard leading by four Buddhist monks holding sacred thread. In the old days, the villagers will carry the dead body, but nowadays modern transportation, like the pickup truck, is used. However the poor villagers may use a cart, traditional vehicle. Usually the exercise will be employed to control the dead body's spirit. After the dead body is taken to the crematorium, the undertaker will wash the face of the dead person using coconut milk. Also the talcum will be used to ches up the face of the corpse-While the corpse is being burned, the Buddhist monks will chant, and the gun will be shot to see the death's spirit off to heaven. Usually the cremation will take place outside the temple compound. So after the ceremony the villagers will come back to the temple to get the holy water from the Buddhist monks and paying farewell returning to the host family house. The sacred thread will be bound to the wrists of all family members of the host as the welcome of the moral spirit. The feast will be held as the thanks for villagers' helping At night the villagers will accompany the host family.

13. "Hae-Nang-Maew"(Cat's Parade)

Usually this culture will take place when there is no rain in the rainy season. The villagers at Baan-Koke cannot do their agricultural work, so they bring a female cat and put it in a cage which is called "Hub". They will set the pomade carrying the cat through the village. The villagers will give the cooked sticky rice to the cat and also do the water on her.

The villagers make more funny and happy, the cat may not like, to the parade by dancing and singing using local musical instruments. The procedure will be repeated until it rains then they will return to do their farming works.

The song words for the Parade

Serng-Out-Serng,Serng Cat farode

Cry Haew-Haew Black Cat Cries for Eggs

Then ask for the Rain

Ask for sacred water powering on spotted cat

Kao-Ka-Jang Spotted Cat down the house.

They will sing the song until the parade is ending.