

Abstract

This research project aims to study: 1) status of “Sam Pee See Ruang Khao” ritual in the community 2) factors that influence the alteration of the ritual 3) functions of the ritual to the individuals and the community from past to present 4) reproduction process to pass on the ritual 5) relationship between variables related to the communications in reproduction process to pass on the ritual. Adopting the concepts of Ritual Media, Cultural Production & Reproduction Concept and Functionalism Theory, and Identity Concept. The project ethnographically examines Ban La village community, operating a focus group interview of rural inhabitants, and performing a field experiment in the village.

The research project begins to investigate a socio-cultural context of Ban La village community which is separated into 3 eras i.e. past, B.E. 2539 – 2544 and B.E. 2545 - present. It was found that in the past, status of “Sam Pee See Ruang Khao Ritual” was strong and complete in format, content, value and meaning as it was not affected by other factors neither inside nor outside the community. From B.E. 2539 – 2544, a study at Nong Bua, Nan found that “Sam Pee See Ruang Khao Ritual” was incomplete due to social environment and people’s lifestyle of that era which affected the format and content of the ritual and consequently reduced its value and meaning. From B.E. 2545 - present, a study at Ban La, Chiangkham, Phayao found that the status of “Sam Pee See Ruang Khao Ritual” seemed strong from outside but actually inside was extremely weak as its format and content was tremendously altered due to change in social environment which resulted in massive reduction of its value.

Exploring further, the research found that factors that influence the alteration of “Sam Pee See Ruang Khao Ritual” are comprised of 3 aspects which are: 1) Personal Factor i.e. belief/faith and knowledge 2) Outside Community Factor i.e. education, technology, government sectors and communications outside community.

In regards to the functions of “Sam Pee See Ruang Khao Ritual” to the individuals and the community, separated into 3 eras i.e. past, B.E. 2539 – 2544 and

B.E. 2545 - present. It was found that in every era, the ritual has performed the same functions to the individuals i.e. functions to create identity, harmony and gratefulness. However, due to changes of social environment the concentration of value in the ritual has respectively decreased in each era. The functions of "Sam Pee See Ruang Khao Ritual" to the community remain the same in all eras i.e. to create identity, to inherit the belief in ghost and sacred items, to conserve cultural norm, to create mutual memorable moments, to test the power of community, to bridge relationship between generations, to be store of knowledge for the community and to conserve other fields of rituals within the community. However, between B.E. 2539 – 2544 there were additional functions i.e. to groom new generation, to build networks outside the community and influence villagers to return to the community. From B.E. 2545 - present, the ritual has extra functions i.e. as a tourist attraction and a center for the study of Thai Lue culture.

The study of relationship between variables related to the communications in production and reproduction process to pass on the ritual, found that in the past, when there was no written record, the form of communication was only word of mouth, which was mainly conducted by the leader of the community. Between B.E. 2539 – 2544, the only communication method was still word of mouth without written record which caused incomplete inherits of the ritual. From B.E. 2545 - present, the main person to conduct the ritual is still the community leader and communication method is still word of mouth however, there are some introductions of new technologies to assist with the documentations. The research reveals that having only verbal communication in the past has resulted in reduction of knowledge and awareness and consequently decreased value of the ritual to the community, wherein anticipated to inherit incomplete format of the ritual in the future.