

Thai Culture That ASIAN Students Should Know

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to know Thai culture that ASIAN students should know. Thai culture concerned with custom, religion, language and environments. The ASIAN students who have been studying in Mahachulalongornrajvidyalaya University have effected on daily life toward Thai culture. What is the problem that ASIAN students should know. Generally Thai teachers should know inter-cultures such as languages, belief and tradition and communication of cultural languages and the ASIAN students must know Thai culture and they have improved themselves on environments and Thai culture.

Thai culture is the sum of the learned behavior of Thai persons that are generally considered to be the tradition of Thais and are transmitted from a generation to next generation. The Thai culture used is all the shared products of society: material and nonmaterial. The totality of learned, socially transmitted behavior. It includes ideas, values, and customs.

Thai culture shapes the way Thais interact and understand the world around them. The most complex culture is associated with a society or a nation is commonly used to refer to these characteristics including languages-usage patterns, significant historical events and characters, philosophies of government, social customs, family practices, religion, economic philosophies and practices, belief and value systems and ideals and systems of law.

Keywords: Thai culture, ASIAN Students

Introduction

The culture can be defined as the complex collection of knowledge, folklore, language, rules, rituals, habits, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, and customs that link and give a common identity to a particular group of Thai persons at a specific point in a time, the way of life in the social environment including the methods of living, eating, dressing and searching for happiness and the rules of living which transferred from one generation to one generation in society. The Thai culture refers to the accumulation of experience, values, religion, notions of time, roles, period relations, concepts of the universe and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of Thai person in the course of generations through individual and group striving. Different cultures exist in different parts of the world. The natural environment greatly affects the lifestyle of the persons of that region, shaping their culture that the ASIAN students should know when they have been studying at Mahachulalongornrajvidyalaya University. So we should know the essential of Thai culture.

The Core of Thai Culture

The original behavior and past effect of Thai cultures were individual habits and believable principles including the beliefs divided into 4 characteristics

1. Features displayed the prosperity. Material prosperity refers to well-being, well living, well equipments and good medicines. The improvement and mental development refer to sincerity, compassion, kindness and honesty.

2. Features displayed the rule or orderly characteristic. Orderly characteristic refers to orderliness with appearance, ethical manner for public places or appearance, polite conducts and family. The orderliness in conducts is fame of Thai.

3. Features displayed group, the progress in literatures, arts and Thai unity of nation and Buddhism, the orderliness in the tasks and concept. The unity and progress of the nation refers to the unity of nation and community.

4. Features displayed the good morals of people. The good morals of people refer to doing a religious identity, conducts in religious practices, preservation of religious rule and customs. So Thai culture means benefaction created by Thai human beings and the essence of Thai culture is concerned with class level in many parts of Thai society.

Class Levels of Thai Culture

Thai People even within the same culture carry different layers of culture that exist at the following levels: The national level associated with the nation as a whole, the regional level associated with ethnic, linguistic, or religious differences that exist within a nation, the gender level associated with gender differences (female vs. male), the generation level associated with the differences between grandparents and parents, parents and children, the social class level associated with educational opportunities and differences in occupation and the corporate level associated with the particular culture of an organization.¹ We have studied Thai culture and realized the importance of Thai Culture toward the way of Thai life.

The Importance of Thai Culture

Culture is so important that it is more than its distinct visible features, if we extend this to the inner self of a person to members within a society and to the whole community, maybe we can find some answers by finding out how they are affected by culture just like the customs and traditions that the people of a community follow, the festivals they celebrate, the kind of clothing they wear, the food they eat, and most importantly, the cultural values they adhere to bind them together. Culture is seen as a system of social control in which people shape their standards and behavior. The importance of culture lies in the fact that it is a link between people and their values systems.² The culture contains elements that affect one's inner values other than just external characteristics which those values play an important role in his whole life. The importance of culture as national spirit and social the lifestyle can be indentified 4 features:

1. The culture distinguished human beings from other animals.
2. he culture is protection against evil.
3. The culture is improvement of individual status being better than an animal.
4. The culture is national symbol and the existence.

¹ Hofstede, Cultures and Organizations. New York: McGraw Hill. 1997.

² Manali Oak Published:http://www.buzzle.com/articles/characteristics_of_culture.htm.

The culture distinguished human beings from other animals during human beings and animals there are 4 features having similarly: food, living, fearing and reproduction. But the human beings are different from animals because they have known to improve or build new products to be better than previous objects, they can change and evolve the natural objects into usefulness as required by superior mental development. Thai nation has national culture, identity of Thai culture such as language, alphabet, tradition, personality, habit, art, architecture and literature. These are identity of Thai symbols³. The importance of Thai culture has become element of culture as following

The Elements of Culture

The elements of a culture are beautiful and interesting to those who like to learn more about which aspects are highlighted of a culture. We can learn more by looking:

1) **Language:** The various languages are important part of the culture. On a practical level, language has to do with sounds, symbols and gestures that a community puts in order and associates so that they can communicate. I divided human languages into two types. Spoken and sign languages which have evolved naturally as a means of communication among people are collectively natural languages. For languages such as the word, musical notation or the conventions of architectural drawings etc. My thesis is that cultural information is represented in object in a variety of media, in both natural and arte-factual languages. For Thais, Thai language is inheritance of cultural information⁴

We can include "verbal, visual, and written symbols and their associated rules for putting them together.

2) **Norms:** Every society or civilization has a set of norms which are art and an important element of the culture. This can include the folkways, traditions, prohibitions and rituals in a culture. we can separate norms as followings:

³ Sawad Phinitchan. **Thai Culture**. Mahaculalongornrajavidyalaya, Bangkok: 2553. p. 8.

⁴ Kate Distin, **Cultural Evolution**, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 49.

1. Informal guideline about what is considered normal (what is correct or incorrect) social behavior in a particular group or social unit.

2. Formal rule or standard laid down by legal, religious, social authority against which appropriateness is right or wrong of an individual's behavior is judged.

3) **Values:** The social values of a particular civilization are considered an element of culture. The values refer to be achieved great worth in a particular culture. A culture's values are its ideas about what is good, right, fair, and just. However, Conflict theory focuses on how a culture while functionalism focuses on the shared values within a culture.

4) **Religion and Beliefs:** The religion and the beliefs of the people in a civilization play an important role in shaping up of the culture as well. The belief that meditation and good living can break the cycle of reincarnation and result in enlightenment. So the 'religion' is best described in terms of the beliefs and practices as the scholarly beliefs of the experts at the top.

5) **Social Collectives:** Social collectives refer to the social groups, organizations, communities, institutions, classes and societies which are considered as symbolic social constructions. Its particular focuses on understanding how learning and development are embedded in social and cultural activities and how individuals and collective practices are transformed through learning. Such understanding requires a careful analysis of learning in social context and of the communicative processes involved. In-depth studies of interaction in universities, work-places, voluntary organizations and other institutional settings will be welcome as well as studies of informal settings such as everyday conversations. A product of our collective intellect and memories which shapes the way we try to make sense of the world. It is made up of beliefs, language, literature, music, food, arts, institutions, technology, architecture, sports as they address learning are relevant.

6) **Status and Role in Society:** A status or a social role is a position within a group or society which gives an overall idea of the social structure and hence is an important element of the culture. This can also include traditional gender-based or age-based roles.

7) **Cultural Integration:** Cultural integration is the increasing integration of the different cultures found throughout the world and the diffusion of a dominant “global culture”. This includes the degree of harmony within the various elements of culture: sub-cultures, local cultures and the difference between historical and cultural traditions. The use of information technology has increased the efficiency of communication through the use of phones, faxes, instant messages and video conference calls which aid in cultural integration and globalization. It is driven by an increased interconnection among countries in areas of economics, politics and culture, as well as international trade and investments. The particular character of individual countries, regions and even localities interacts with the larger scale general processes of change to produce quite specific outcomes.

Evolution of Thai culture

Thai cultural evolution is for theories of cultural and social evolution that describe how cultures and societies change over time. Whereas socio-cultural evolution discovers processes that tend to increase the complexity of a society or culture, socio-cultural evolution considers process that can lead to decreases in complexity can produce variation without any seemingly significant changes in complexity. Socio-cultural evolution can be defined as the process by which structural reorganization is affected through time, eventually producing a form or structure which is qualitatively different from the ancestral form.⁵ If Thai cultural evolution is a separate process from biological evolution then it must be the product of a separate inheritance mechanism. I have shown that inheritance in any realm is dependent on generation of receivers that members can detect and react to cultural variations. Thai culture is propagated through generations which adopt their old customs and traditions as a part of Thai culture. Groups evolved culture, composed of the collection of rules, rituals, customs and other characteristics that give an identity to the social units. Thais have many things from other cultures. This is a selective adoption on the basics which those things are borrowed that are in harmony with the Thai lifestyle which these borrowed notions, practices and improved that can make life better.

⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/inheritance>, Theory of Cultural capacities in adaptations. 2016.

Type of Thai Cultural Evolution

1. Religion and Beliefs: The roots of the traditions and cultures of Thailand lie firmly within the family structure and Buddhism. The young are taught to pay respect to their parents, elders, teachers and Buddhist monks. Buddhism spreads throughout Thailand, the temple became the centre of society. It was the place where people received education, attended ceremonies and held festivals. The Buddhism still plays very important roles in the daily life of the extensive majority of Thais today and it is for this reason that the Thai people are some of the most respectful and polite people⁶. Although the original pattern of life and social systems in the countryside are largely retained, they have changed a lot in cities and towns. Monasteries cannot be called centers of social life any more. According to the teaching in the Kalamasutta, a Buddhist does not accept anything merely because it is logical, said in the scripture or even taught by his teacher. To think for yourself and then try it in practice. If it is good accept it. By its principle of non-self, it teaches us not to have a strong attachment to things. Everything is changing. Do not believe in permanence. Buddhism, the ultimate aim of life is to live well. To live well means to have a balance between material well-being and peace of mind. But culture is not an end in itself. It else change all the time. However, that culture is rooted in the heart of man and it plays a role in lifestyles. The cultural identity is a good thing, and material well-being is also a good thing. The progress is the only good thing for life⁷.

The religion is represented in many fields of culture such as Thai art literature, architecture, and forms of a church, Buddha viharal, Buddha images pagodas etc. Religious sculptures show amazing realism with the temples at Sukhothai and Ayutthaya representing many of the Buddha images. Decorating temples with sculpture, painting was increasingly used to depict episodes from the Buddha's life on temple's walls and many murals remain to this day which provide a valuable insight into ancient customs. Thai culture is based upon the style of living of Thai people in the old days blended with

⁶ <http://www.phuketocceanvillas.com/thai-culture-and-customs>. 2016.

⁷ The Bhikkhu P.A.Payutto. **Vision of the Dhamma**, Phi-dhamma, an imprint of Pet&Home Publishing House Co.,Ltd.2556. page 26.

culture of other ethnic groups with whom the Thais have come into contact which is modified and passed on the next generation.

2. Tradition. Tradition of many nations would have national traditions and transferred from one generation to next generation. The most Thai culture concerned with tradition or tradition is related within. Thai tradition as heritages inherited from ancestor and preserved as national cultures can be classified in two kinds:

1) Family traditions. These are related to the different stages in one's life, from birth to death. These are traditions reserved for family and friends for examples traditions related to birth, ordination, marriage, the merit making and cremation for dead, house-warming ceremony, religious merit making for birthday anniversary etc.

2) Social traditions. These are traditions to unite people at the community including into various religious traditions, tradition of the end of lent, Kathin in end of Rains Residence for annual robe presentation, tradition of Loy Krathong falls on the full moon night of the twelfth lunar month and the tide is the highest in rivers and canals. Phuet Mongkhon for blessing for rice-fertility in early May. In other in addition, farming, gardening, new warming house and the various social association are all included into this culture.

3. Nature: Cultural differences among individuals can lead to different survival of individuals. The patterns of this selective process depend on transmission biases and can result in behavior that is more adaptive to a given environment. Our growing concern over protecting the environment is accompanied. Natural language has some interesting structural features which support the theory that it evolved for communicative rather than for interpretative success. Natural language also has structural features which imply that it evolved for communicative rather than for representational success or in other words, that primary purpose of speech is to express our thought to other people rather than to represent it to ourselves. There is evidence that the cultural-specific language that we speak can even "play a significant role in structuring a domain as fundamental as spatial cognition-specific language"⁸. The evolution of natural language provided humans with a shared representational system, enabling them to acquire information from anyone

⁸ Ibid, Kate Distin, **Cultural Evolution**, pp.67-81.

who used that system. It was never a perfect representational system because its evolutionary impetus had been provided by cooperative communication. The set of norms, behaviors, beliefs and customs that exist within the population of a sovereign nation.

Type of Thai Tradition

Important traditions of Thai culture can be divided into three types;

1) Mores⁹ : The term of culture, custom, or ethic refers to norms, etiquette, form, manner, proprieties that are more widely observed and have greater moral significance than others. Mores include an aversion for societal taboos such as the values and mores of a society conclude legislation prohibiting their taboos. Folkways in sociology are norms for routine.

2) Institution: Institution is regulated directly or indirectly as orders for example a rule or rule regulation will be written directly as collective practices with the reference to the text rules. Indirect or implicit knowledge is considered reasonable for a person in a place that continually performs well such as customs of personnel at the feast with merit-making.

3) Convention: Convention is commonly of the common to do not conduct that is no punishments, there are no strict rules of tradition. This convention is not guilty of misconduct. Only a contravention of tradition is illiterate. There is no etiquette for inappropriate on different situations of dressing, standing, walking, sitting, sleeping.

Thai Cultural Category

Thai Culture can be divided into 2 categories as followings

1. The main culture is primary cultures of nation which we have to preserve and encourage permanence with Thai nation as focus of Thai national spirits and Thai national identity. The pillars of Thai cultural identity are the institution of monarchy and Buddhism. The culture should not be changed but it should be improved to be better as followings:

⁹ Macionis and Gerber. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mores>.2016.

1) Buddhism: One of the most important influences on Thai culture has been Buddhism. Many of the traditions and beliefs of the people in Thailand stem directly from Buddhist principles. The Thai culture is deeply influenced by religion. Belief system and values of Buddhism play a huge role in daily-life. Buddhist religion plays a very important part in Thai society. The main religion in Thailand is Buddhism and more than 95% of the population are estimated to be practicing Buddhists, but there is religious freedom and no pressure to commit to any belief system. The practice of Buddhism in Thailand dates back to the 3rd century BC and proved so popular that peoples from other countries.

2) The Monarchy: The Thais have a deep respect for the Royal Family and they love their king and queen. We need to show respect for the members of the royal family also. Thailand is a constitutional monarchy. The king on an occasion involves himself directly in political affairs when national stability is threatened. The king and royal family are deeply respected in the Kingdom of Thailand and the most potent national symbols are the king and images associated with. Religious beliefs about ninety-five percent of the people are Theravada Buddhists and the monarchy must be a Buddhist.

3) Thai alphabets: Ram Khamhaeng king created in 1283 the first Thai alphabet, using as a basis the Mon and Khmer script. He employed for the first time the new script in his stone inscription of 1292. His Thai alphabet has since undergone some changes and is still in use today. Ancient Mon and Khmer scripts were used as the basis for the creation of Thai script. There are a large number of loan words in Thai from Pali and Sanskrit languages. This has enriched the Thai vocabulary with changing the characteristics of Thai languages. At present people have their own Thai alphabets, the Thai alphabets are adopted from other languages but we can apply own Thai alphabets.

4) The Thai language: The Thai language, or Phasa Thai, basically consists of monosyllable words whose meanings are complete by themselves such as mii (there to be) pho^ (father) (mE^E) mother,(phi^i)elder brother, NONG: a younger, phet spicy. Its alphabet was created by King Ramkhamhaeng the great in 1283 by modeling it on the alphabets of Sanskrit and Pali through the medium of the old Khmer features

but after a history of over 700 years, the Thai alphabet today comprises 44 letters, representing 20 consonant phonemes and 15 vowel signs, denoting 22 vowels and diphthongs. As Thai is a tonal language with five different tones, it often confuses foreigners who are unused to this feature of language. Like most languages of the world, the Thai language is a complicated mixture of several sources but the numerous number of loan words especially from Pali and Sanskrit made the Thai language today quite different from that during the King Ramkhamhaeng.

5) Thai traditions: The Thai traditions are symptomatic of lifestyle and spirits of Thai nation on both past and present that how to be background. The most Thai traditions were derived from Buddhism and potential morality such as

1. Traditions concerning birth, the naming, wedding, and death.
2. Traditions concerning merit-making of birthday, birthday anniversary, new warming house and merit-making concerning celebrations etc.

3. Traditions concerning ordination for banphacha for a novice and Upasambatha for monk, Makhabujaday in February commemorates Buddha's preaching to enlightened monks, Visakhabujaday in May celebrates Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and entrance into nirvana, Asarnhabujaday celebrates a sermon given by Buddha, merit-making of the Buddhist lent in July of the three-months period, the end of the Buddhist lent and the robe for monk marks the end of lent.

4. Traditions concerning Loykratong November on 12th lunar month after the rain period is over. The people made Kratong some sort of container of bananas leaf and decorate it so beautifully with flowers, incenses and candles. After They light candles, incenses in kratong and let them float out with the water stream. The purpose of this ceremony is to show respect to water's goddess and beg for forgiveness once a year that they used water. Songkran 13th of April is the beginning day, 14th is middle day and the 15th is the New Year Day, when images of Buddha are washed and monks are offered special alms. People pour water on each other which symbolize blessing them and wishing them good luck in the coming new year. Saht: People celebrate Saht ceremony because the rice on the field is grown, which the rice grain starts to grow from the rice grasses and rice grain contains milk. The food called Kaowmatupayaht reminds us about our religion where Buddha ate kaowmatupayaht before he found Nibana. Thodkathin

ceremony started since Sukothai period and it goes on until today. The period starts from the 11th month and continues to 12th month. Robe for monk will be carried in a procession around the ordination hall three times and offered the monks waiting in the hall.

6) Ethics of Thai manners Politeness, kind behavior and self-control are expected in Thai society. It is important to them to always look for a compromise in a difficult situation. If people are sitting on the floor in a meeting, it is best to walk around the outside of the group. Do not step over people or books on the floor. Visiting Thais in their home it is the host's responsibility to give the guest something to drink. The Thai people are very group-oriented, compared to western individualism. Young Thais are going to share little snacks with you and they expect you to do the same with them. To call a taxi or a person, signal them with a palm down, hand waving action. It is basically impolite to shout, yell, laugh loudly, or speak loudly in public. The Thais consider poor manners to sit on a chair with your legs crossed, extended out in front of you, especially if you are bouncing your foot up and down. ways try to on the same level as others. This is especially true if the person of higher status or older than you.¹⁰ The Thai and other Buddhists follow the widespread Buddhist custom of not touching a person on the head which the highest part of the body. A person should not point the feet at anyone or at an image of Buddha. Footwear is removed when entering temple complexes and it is polite to remove footwear when entering a house. There are many ways to express respect and politeness for respecting and polite person by chance such as obeisance ceremony for parents, teachers, respecting person and the death, obeisance ceremony for the king, the queen and loyal family, obeisance ceremony for individuals with the same status.¹¹

7) Spirits of Thai ways: Respect for elders and for those in higher social positions is also important. Thais place great emphasis on politeness and respect for elders and those in authority. From an early age, they are taught to respect superiors, parents, teachers and the elderly. When meeting people of higher status, it is wise to remember to address them politely and with respect. Remember to smile and "wai".

¹⁰ [http://www.ywamthai.org/office/culture of Manners](http://www.ywamthai.org/office/culture%20of%20Manners), .2016.

¹¹ [http://www.every culture.com/Thailand](http://www.every%20culture.com/Thailand). **Culture Name**.2016.

8) Thai Arts. The Thai arts include art forms associated with Buddhist temples such as sculpture in wood, and stone; mural painting; and bronze castings of images of Buddha. Other forms of Thai arts include lacquer ware, mother-of-pearl inlay, gold work, silverware, wood carving, ceramics, Thai dancing art: the Thais are good at both the classical and folk dances. This includes both drama and dances. Thai music, Thai songs and Various forms of dance including masked dance dramas are shown on Sukhôtâi stone inscriptions etc.

9) Thai Sculpture: The Thai style of sculpture is most environment in images of Buddha. Thai artists and craftsmen adopted the art of making Buddha images of Mons, the Khmers and Indians.

10) Thai architecture: The round bell shaped style of Singhalese stupas, the square columnar style of Srivijaya stupas, the lotus bud summit style of the Sukhothai period and the square base with corners style of Ayutthaya and Bangkok period which are the Thai's own style. The prang type of stupa which was originally the khmer style has been elongated by Thai architects who added. Mural paintings decorating the interior walls of chapel, Vihara and galleries of temples are very typically Thai. The Thais are marvelous handicrafts in wood carving, inlaying of mother of pearl, painting of golden design on black, red lacquer background and inlaying of design on silver and gold.

11) Thai literature: The Thais have adopted many pieces of literature of other ethnic groups. The oldest known poem, the Suphasit Phra Ruong was written in the late 1200s. Poetry from the fifteenth century includes epics, poems based on the life of Buddha and the Lilit Phra Lo, Thailand's first love story. The reign of King Narai in the seventeenth century is considered the golden age of Thai literature. The eighteenth century saw the new kind of poetry and drama. The Thai version of the Ramayana of Thai literature.

2. An Inheritance Culture

Cultural inheritance refers to the storage and transmission of information by communication, imitation, teaching and learning. The Thais have adopted many things from other cultures. This is usually a selective adoption on the basis that only those things are borrowed which are in harmony with the Thai ways of life or which can make life better. These borrowed notions, practices, are always adapted, modified and improved

so much that they are hardly recognized as those in the original cultures. We have been living together with other nations both in western and eastern nations. During these communications of many nations, they have to meet and talk creatively to others and they all have adopted many of their cultures including material and nonmaterial subjects both directly and indirectly. Sometime they adopted some parts or all parts of the cultures to adapt for own their cultures becoming new identical cultures better than previous one. After signing many trade agreement with Western nations during the reign of King Rama IV, The Thais increasingly adopted Western culture because of the practical benefit of new technology such as printing and medical science. King Rama IV applied many new Western ideas to the various affairs of the country. These cultures have been harmonizing of every nations as followings:

1. **An original inheritance:** the original inheritance of foreign nations are the most material cultures. The influence of Western culture is evident in the advancement of technology and changes in Thai tradition such as cars, trains, planes, machines, radios, televisions, mobiles, new technology, Knowledge management of sciences, medical sciences, public heaths, engineering, national administration, finance, armed forces, justice system, law, agricultures, trades, irrigation, education, industries, food cultures, food manners, culinary style, table manner, greeting manner, clothing and wares or appliance.etc.

2. **Adaptive inheritance:** someone said that the Thais are genius to compromise for an advantage and try to take worth subjects from other nations and adapted them as own and in the same ways, if valuable subjects be should preserved continually and learned how to change adaptive subjects for harmonizing with other cultural nations. The Thai cultural identity is flexible and quite homogeneous. This may be the reason why the Thais modify them a little and make them own. They adapt the cultures to adopt them own. When there is conflict between culture and development, the Thais should take the middle way. The Thais do not have a strong attachment to things. Everything is changing over. Do not believe in permanence or identity. The Thais are quite flexible and pragmatic. The Thai people adopted many of their cultures have been adapted in harmony with the Thai ways such as

1) The Thai languages: The Thai languages which Thai people have used currently because of the practical benefit have many kinds of languages for example the words in Thai from Pali, sanskrit, khmer, Chinese, and even European languages such as

Pali Languages: Budit from Pundita (scholar)Phuddhasasna from Buddha-sasana (Buddhism)Mondop from Mandapa (A square building with a pointed roof) Phuttha from Buddha,Viharn from Vihara and Tripidok from Tipitaka (three divisions of the Buddhist Canon).

The Sanskrit Languages: Phiphaksa from Vivagsa (decision-making of law) Phej from Vajara(diamond),Vibula from Vipulaya(ferfection)Manusa from Manusya (Human being)Rama from Ramayana(the hero in Ramayana)and Yaka from Yaksha (a demon).

The English Languages: Futball from Football, Footsal from Futsal, Londorn from London,Batteri from Battery,Technologi from Technology and TV from Television.

2) Traditions: The Songkran Festival lasts three days, from the 13th of April till the 15th of April. This had been the old New year's Day for the Thais until 1941. In the past, people went to ask for blessing from their senior persons. Nowadays, New Year cards are sent instead and gifts are given too and they wish the consecrated Buddha bless the persons who one loves and respects with wishes succeed. Like in most ceremonies, people make merit by offering food to monks and going to listen to a sermon at the temple, and the blessing of ashes of the deceased members of the family with perfume as well as the sharing of the merit being made to those deceased.

Buddhism is the core of Thai culture. It shapes the way the Thais think, their tradition and art. The Thais are tolerant enough to allow and adopt beliefs and practices of other religions such as Brahmanism. Many of their original animistic beliefs are still maintained which they worship the Buddha and at the same time they also worship the spirits of the land and other holy beings. The Thais learned Indian art, religion and tradition through Mon and Khmer culture.

Beliefs based on the law of karma, every action, either good or bad has a result which follows the actors, waiting the appropriate time to manifest itself. That time may

be after the action or even in subsequent lives. Merit making activity is important for the Thai because it increases one's store of merit and is important, it believed to bring a better life in future, one of prosperity, poor, prestige, perfect health, beauty and with very little physical labors. Origins of beliefs among Thais can be traced back to major sources (a) The old belief in spirit, mystery, black magic, superstitions, auspicious (b) Buddhism which underscores the belief in the result of past deeds in merit and demerit and in the next life.¹²

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¹² Arne Kislenko, **Culture and Customs of Thailand**, greenwood publishing group, Amazon.com. 2558.