

The Reflections of Society and Culture on Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version

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Abstract: Research study on the reflections of society and culture on Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version aims to analyze the reflections of society and culture on Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version. This is a study using qualitative research process. Copies of the translated version are chosen to study as well as related documents and interviews with a group of key informants. Research tools include data record and structured interview. Data collection and analysis are based on structural functionalism theory and functionalism theory. Presentation is based on a descriptive analysis approach. The study found that there are 4 aspects for the reflections of society, generalized reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the Royal family with a status as wife, negative reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the nobles, negative reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the poor and mental reciprocity in the relationship between the people and the King, i.e., the King in the status of contributor is considered the highest social status. At the same time, the duties of the recipients are classified into 2 categories, the recipients are directly related to the Royal Court and the recipients are indirectly related to the Royal Court. In addition, there are 38 reflections of culture that can be classified into 7 categories including the King, the Royal Court, religion, economy, cambodian characteristics, women and nature each of which has different functions but promotes each other. The most visible reflections of culture is the reflections on the characteristics of the Cambodian people, followed by reflections on religion while the reflections on the King and the Royal Court share the same number of reflections.

Key words: Reflections, society, culture, Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version, Royal Court, number of reflections

INTRODUCTION

The Mahavessantara Jataka influences the thinking and lifestyle of the Cambodian people through various forms of communication. According to Anonymous (2015), Mahavessantara Jataka was a major Khmer literature of Buddhism that has influenced the Cambodian beliefs and way of life, since, the ancient time. The major reason is that the Mahavessantara Jataka is more powerful than other allegory, this may be due to the constant faith of the Buddhists, regardless of nationality, especially in a country with large population of Buddhists.

As for history of Mahavessantara Jataka in Cambodia, carvings in a castle are found as evidence. According to Katchima (2008), the carvings referring to Mahavessantara Jataka are portrayed on the gable of Thommanon castle, a group of ancient temples of Siem Reap city built in the same ages of Angkor Wat or about 900 years ago. The images are presumed to be from the Maharat Chapter (The Great King). In addition, the carvings on the lintel of Ta Prohm castle which was built after the Thommanon castle for about 50 years are presumed to be from the Himmapan chapter. According to Santi Pakdeekham, regarding the influence of Buddhist literature on Khmer literature in the city foundation period,

there have been Buddhist scriptures translated from Pali such as Buddha's biography, jatakas and sutras to Khmer language inserted with Pali called Somray. The literature was then chanted or read aloud with rhymes, Mahavessantara Jataka for instance. In addition in the introduction of the Khmer Version of Mahavessantara Jataka it also shows that, the Mahavessantara Jataka and Thet Mahachat have been very popularly celebrated among the Cambodian people for a long time. This can be concluded that according to the tradition of the Cambodians, Thet Mahachat in which Mahavessantara Jataka is sermoned by monks at all the temples is originally held after the Buddhist Lent. This has been practiced every year for more than 20 years. The mentioned traditional sermons have been spaced out or undone lately even today only some temples that still celebrate the Thet Mahachat but not as an important festive event now (Watanachai, 2012).

One of the reasons for the loss of popularity in the Mahavessantara Jataka is likely that Cambodia was frequently involved in domestic wars and the effects of the Khmer Rouge war between 1975 and 1979 could have almost devastating consequences for Cambodian society and culture, especially, the exclusion of Cambodian people from religion and genocide (Buakamsri, 2012). For this reason such factors may have an impact on the influence of the Buddhist literature like the Mahavessantara Jataka that results in the Cambodian society and culture.

The study of the reflections in the Mahavessantara Jataka is the same as the study of society and culture in the past as the social and cultural root still appears its traces until now. According to Malayaporn (1985) in relation with the culture of Cambodian society and culture, literature reflects the image of society and culture as society and culture are the imagination and feelings of a poet. Literature and society can influence each other. The opinions of poets are representative of the ideas of individual groups or of the whole society. It can be an idea corresponding to or preserving the social thoughts or even opposing the society. In other words, literature is like a mirror reflecting the image of society and culture under the institution of society. Therefore, literature, society and culture are indistinguishable and they both influence each other. In accordance with the concept of Medina (1979) describes the concept of reflections in three perspectives. Reflections that take a stand on life that is full of thought and usually exists away from all passions. Reflections that focus on the stability of the living and the action of individual life and widespread. Reflection in this view comes from the pure spirit and later on when the spiritual belief fades away, a human will come closer to the thought of revising their own thoughts and

feelings. Thus, these reflections will be back to repeated thinking according to background of the ego status these reflections may be just illusions and reflections caused by consideration resulted from profound insights. It is the action of the thought process of anyone. Reflections express the extraordinary depth of understanding that lies beyond the concept and beyond the relationship between the general concept.

Objectives: To analyze the reflections on society and culture that appear in the Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research titled "The reflections of society and culture on Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version" is a qualitative research. Research methodology is designed as the following points.

Target group: The target group for this research is divided into 2 parts documentary target group and key informants as follows.

Documentary target group: The researcher chose to study the documents from the Thai translated version by studying all the 13 chapters translated from Khmer Mahavessantara Jataka (The Buddhist Institute Version), 1996, Thai translation is credited to Associate Professor Dr. Watanachai Monying as part of PhD. thesis, Department of Thai Language, Faculty of Humanities, Kasetsart University (2012), titled "An analytical and Comparative Study of Raiyao Mahavessantara Jataka and the Khmer Mahavessantara Jataka (The Buddhist Institute Version)"

Key informants: Key informants are of 5 people knowledgeable in Mahavessantara Jataka including monk, university teacher, social and cultural experts or academics in Cambodia as follows:

- Bhikkhu The Bunthoeurn, Abbot of Wat Satung Meanchay
- Pheach Nang, Deputy Director of National Language Institute, Cambodian Royal Academy
- Prof. Dr. Chhom Sunnang, Researcher at National Language Institute, Cambodian Royal Academy
- Prof. Phally Chea, university teacher, Royal University of Phnom Penh
- Prof. Limsoeurn Chhan, university teacher, Royal University of Phnom Penh

Research period: For this research, the researcher spent a period of time, only at data analysis to achieve the research set-forth findings for 1 year and 6 months.

Research tools for data collection including

Data record: To record the contents of Khmer Mahavessantara Jataka to analyze the social and cultural reflections.

Structured interviews: To interview with 5 key informants in Cambodia, the interview's results are to support the achieved results at data analysis.

Research plan: The researcher took a 5-step research plan as follows:

- Review of literature related to Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version, social and cultural knowledge
- Create research tool, send to experts for a review have the tools adjusted by the suggested instructions and consult with all the thesis advisors
- Collect information about Khmer Mahavessantara Jataka and other relevant research study and interviews with the key informants then consult with all the advisors
- Analyze the data, according to the set-forth objective then collect some of the interview results from the key informants, consult with all the advisors
- Compiling, writing and disseminating the research research, taking 3 months to write the research report and propose for the graduation completion, revise the final copy and publish

Data collection: The researcher collected the data corresponding with the research objective to be able to answer the research questions as prescribed by the following methods of data collection.

Data collection on Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version is as follows. The researcher studied the Thai Tipitaka, Royal Edition (45 Volumes) published in 1971 by Department of Religion (translated from the Pali Tipitaka, Siamese Edition) to be the intermediary in the screening of duplicate events in the Tipitaka then bring in only the different events for an analysis. This was conducted by taking the chosen contents of Mahavessantara Jataka to record in the recorder created by the researcher, repeating doing this until it reached the 13th chapter.

Collecting data from documents and individuals: Collect data from documents, refers to study of documents, books, texts and research related to Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version and Mahavessantara Jataka in other versions of Foreign countries.

Collect data from individuals, referring to the data achieved from the interviews with the key informants to support the analysis of social and cultural reflections within the story.

Data analysis and presentation: Take the achieved data on social reflections to an analysis based on the Talcott Parson's structural functionalism theory using the data from documents and supporting elements in the data analysis then bring the cultural reflections under the analysis layer to group in accordance with the appeared reflections. After that use the Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown's functionalism theory for the analysis then take the results from the interviews with the key informants to support the clarity of the findings analysis, compile it into a descriptive analysis.

Present the research findings to the public in the form of research study, study and academic posters including presentations on the national stage as well as international stages.

Study findings: This research aims to present the background and analysis of social and cultural reflections in the Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer version. Study findings are as follows:

Analysis of social reflections in the Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version. The researcher classified the social framework according to the concept of Marshall Salins (Kuwinpant, 2010) and used the Talcott Parson's structural functionalism theory (Srisontisuk, 2009) to analyze the social reflections appeared in the jataka as follows.

Generalized reciprocity: Generalized reciprocity means a relationship between small intimate groups of individuals, having a personal bond no time limited for returning back, giving without any conditions.

According to the study, only one aspect of generalized reciprocity is found in the Khmer Version of the Mahavessantara Jataka-generalized reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the Royal family with a status as wife.

According to the study, it's found that there are two characters in Thossapon chapter (Ten Blessings), God Indra and Queen Phusati. God Indra is a Mighty God of the heaven of Trayastrimsa (Daowadueng) which can be compared to a King. Queen Phusati in the past life was Sutthamma who presented aromatic sandalwood to Kassapa Buddha then reincarnated by the merit in the heaven of Trayastrimsa (Daowadueng). Both are characters in the ruling class and have a husband and wife relationship when the wife is considered a member of the Royal family, thus, God Indra has two roles, one role as an executive and another, a husband.

The granting of 10 blessings of God Indra to Queen Phusati is an interesting point that indicates the response that occurs between the relationship of conflicting roles that cannot be determined in this very situation what status God Indra takes to perform his role. According to Srisontisuk (2009), human beings behave according to

their status and roles in various social systems, concepts and beliefs that bond between people in the society are considered mandatory. The study of the differences or behavioral tendencies of individuals in the social systems is called pattern variables and sensory variables, concentrating on affectivity and affective neutrality. In the relationship between these two characters, there is an emotional bond, i.e., God Indra expresses a sense of reverence for the blessings given to her as the quote here with.

“Bhikkhus” look, my fellow Bhikkhus. God Indra, the mighty God of all devas in heaven who has granted the blessings to Queen Phusati Devi was overwhelmed with joyfulness and delights” (Watanachai, 2012)

The above statement clearly shows the generalized reciprocity in the relationship between husband and wife in the ruling class as the underlined quote expresses the bond and the emotions that the characters have given to each other.

Especially, the Himmapan Chapter (Himmapan Forest), it is a chapter of fun and captive story. It can be said this chapter is the principal conflicts of the Jataka as Vessantara gives away the magical white elephants to the Brahmins of Kalinga, resulting in the great distress of the residents of Sivi who complain to the King to order punishments for Vessantara. The Himmapan Chapter depicts a decision-making whether it is the decision of Vessantara to give away the kingdom's elephant or the decision of King Sanjaya who orders Vessantara into exile and the decision of Princess Maddi who chooses to follow Vessantara into the wild. Not only is the main conflict, this chapter is also the origin of Vessantara. No matter what Queen Phusati wants, King Sanjaya usually offers that to her. This indicates more clearly of generalized reciprocity in the relationship between husband and wife of the ruling class as shown in the following quote.

“The Queen wants to sightsee the city, so, she asked for the Royal permission. When the Great King Sajaya knows, the King was fulfilled with happiness very profoundly he decorated the city to look like Heaven of God in that heavenly place as well as he ordered the nobles to get the Royal Palanquin for the Queen to seat on to sightsee the city. After the 3-clockwise possession while the Queen was on a halfway return with the increasing bearing-down pressure inside the belly, the Queen gave birth to the Bodhisattva at that time” (Watanachai, 2012)

The above statement shows the relationship of a husband and wife, unlike the Mahavessantara in the Tipitaka in which there are no words showing relationship, roles or feelings in any Royal giving, mentioning only Queen Phusati was pregnant then circled around the city. There are no words that show emotional expressions between the husband and wife characters or any gestures or any rewarding.

Balanced reciprocity: A balanced reciprocity is a relationship between an individual who is personally involved but not so close. Relationship is expressed by conditional exchange. Giving and receiving often take into account the economic balance of reciprocity. According to the study of the Khmer Mahavessantara Jataka, no such balanced reciprocity is found.

Negative reciprocity: Negative reciprocity is an impersonal relationship. It is a relationship with an outsider, expressed by exchanges that both parties aim for the highest possible return. Personal relationships in psychology are less important. The Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version found there are two types of negative reciprocity.

Negative reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the nobles. Negative reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the poor as in the following discussion. Negative reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the nobles. According to the study, the negative reciprocity is found in the Himmapan Chapter (Himmapan Forest) in the Khmer Mahavessantara Jataka when Vessantara was 4-5 years old. Vessantara asked for Queen Phusati to give him things, so, he could give them to the nobles as shown in the following quotes.

“Do you have gold? I would like to make a charity. When Queen Phusati heard that she replied to her son “Look, my dearest son there's no burden at all.” After she said that she put up one thousand tamleung of gold on the hands of the Bodhisattva right away” (Watanachai, 2012)

Even when he was young, Vessantara was still not a King but anyway he has go to the reign after King Sanjaya. This clearly shows the negative reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the nobles. The relationship is consistent with the Parson's variables mentioned in structural functionalism theory in the subject of variables about the social unit that an individual considers as particularism. When analyzing this situation in the Royal Court there are many nobles who serve and fulfill the King's commandment which functions

according to the mechanism of absolute monarchy of which the King is the head of state. An individual who acts in this aspect refers to Vessantara who reflects the image of the King of Cambodia who usually considers in each case who should be rewarded. This is a favorable situation in which the King appreciates the virtue of his nobles a specific situation of rewarding. Anyway, the Royal rewarding is not bound for any thing in return as many nobles perform their normal duties. This is not considered a balanced reciprocity and the King himself does not want to receive any giving back because he is the person who decides according to structural functionalism theory.

In addition, the action between such an individual or relationship between members can analyze each individual in the society. When the social system emerges, two important conditions are needed, the acting individual needs to have the motivation to act according to the status and roles and the social system must try to avoid conflicts and behavior that deviate from the society. The society here means the Royal Court that has a clear system when the King is the person who acts, there must be an instruction to control the people in the court according to the principle of 10 Royal virtues and Royal duties in order to avoid social difficulties. Therefore, Royal giving to the nobles is another way to create prestige and the other way to balance the power of the Royal Court.

Negative reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the poor. The study found such a negative reciprocity in the Himmapan Chapter (Himmapan Forest) of the Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version. The negative reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the poor is as quoted herewith.

“My dear Lord, the divine King of all, Lord Vessantara should give rice, drinking water, clothes, sabais, sleeping mattresses, seats and other needs as all of these are deserved to be useful for the Brahmins” (Watanachai, 2012)

The first and second aspects are similar, the difference is that the acting individual considers this in a dimension of universalism (Srisontisuk, 2009) because there are many poor people who are not involved in the research for the King, the acting individual who should see or judge from the reesrach. The negative reciprocity is a matter of the outside or larger group of people of the society as an actor in the ruling role who takes care of the large group of people, therefore, a balanced reciprocity cannot be substantively compared here.

When considering the social reflections based on the concept of Marshall D. Sahlins which is classified into

three categories above, the researcher found an overlap in the aspects of social relationship between the generalized reciprocity and the negative reciprocity between the people and the King. In principle no giving back is needed if it is a close relationship or within a particular group of people while negative reciprocity is based on a concept that it is not bound to each other, everyone looks for the maximum profit for their own, less considering others. Based on the analysis for the negative reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the nobles and the negative reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the poor, the researcher classified those as negative reciprocity because Vessantara is pleased to give away to others as it will result in dana parami (Perfection of Generosity). The nobles and the impoverished receive their rewards and what they need. No words have shown conflict with Marshall's concept. With this reason, the researcher added the 4th aspect of the reciprocity that has the possibility to reflect the Cambodian society appearing in the Mahavessantara Jataka more clearly. It's mental reciprocity which refers to a relationship of individuals outside or inside the group who interact to each other with any factor or reason and show the aspects of giving or exchanging in any form of objects or assistances as well as interaction which affects positively and negatively to the minds of each individual. This affect can change or stay in the right time and place as well as the suitability of the relationship.

Mental reciprocity: The study found such reciprocity in the Nakhon Kan Chapter (Return to the Kingdom) of the Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version. The mental reciprocity in the relationship between the people and the King appears when the citizens were presenting at the return of Vessantara with joy and happiness as shown in the following quote.

“When Prince Vessantara arrived in the city, all the citizens have the great pleasure so much they presented the great man with a number of tributes. The Bodhisattva gave a large drum in the city to give Royal orders to the citizens to release every animal from neck chains and handcuffs, no more tided animals in the city” (Watanachai, 2012)

It can be seen that for the mental reciprocity in the relationship between the people and the King of the Cambodian an interesting point is that the people are happy with the return of Vessantara. The citizens have prepared tributes for the returned prince but with the Cambodian society holding the aristocratic tradition as a Cambodian motto, “hold the end, support the front” do

whatever needs to be done according to the procedure (Tedtong, 2015). Therefore, the people are not entitled to shorten the steps to present tributes to the King but need to give it to the nobles to do that for them. What is reflected is the happiness that the citizens preside over the reception even if they are not allowed to get near to the King.

The mental reciprocity in the relationship between the people and the King of the Cambodian is consistent with a description of loyalty that Sathiankoset stated that loyalty is a matter for Buddhists paying respect for the Triratna with faith, believing in Karma, believing in the effects of karmas and believing that everyone has Karmas. The important thing is believing in Lord Buddha's enlightenment. In one aspect, Buddhists are taught to think with causes and affects in other implication, blaming the unreasonable beliefs, especially, the superstition. Buddhism focuses on freedom from transmigration or karmic cycle. Buddhism is the source of loyalty and loyalty is a matter of the mind. This is most possible that the Cambodian people have a strong belief in the mind.

Reflections of the society appearing in the Khmer Mahavessantara Jataka, based on an overall analysis with structural functionalism theory, it was found that Vessantara gave a large number of objects because the giver has a higher social or economic status than the recipient. Considering all four aspects of the situation the generalized reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the Royal family with a status as wife, the negative reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the nobles, the negative reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the poor and the mental reciprocity in the relationship between the people and the King, the study results found are in line with the interview results from the Cambodian group of key informants. Every informant has a common opinion towards the relationship between the King and the people that the Cambodian King has a good relationship with all the connected people the nobles, wife and citizen.

The shown social reflections is the giver or Vessantara who has both the power to govern and finance which corresponds with the variables that affect the structure of functions. According to Srisontisuk (2009) variables related to inborn quality or ascription, e.g., gender, age, race, family status and variables derived from achievement with variables of collectivity orientation. For example in some societies, it focuses more on individuals rather than groups but in some societies, it may focus more on groups rather than individuals. The reason for this is people who have a good foundation and are superior to others in the same society may have the duty to ease the burden and hardship of their members in

order to get a balance, like Vessantara who always helps those who are suffering, no matter who that might be the poor or Brahmins and even concubines who do not have a lot of fortune but serve the King and the Royal family, Vessantara also grants his Royal giving.

These aspects of reciprocity that appear in the Cambodian society are based on Theravada Buddhism. Therefore, the monarchs must exercise charity to reach the Perfection of Generosity (dana parami) that has many levels. This relationship may be part of the principle of "Generosity" as mentioned by His Royal Holiness the Supreme Patriarch Krom Phraya Vajiranavarorasa as follows.

Dana as a verb, means to give as a noun, means what is given. When something is given away, there is no such thoughts of anything in return. In simple other words, Dana, in definition of Buddhism means a form of giving, someone gives away something with wholesome intentions (kusala) to help out the others. The word "Dana" if comes with "Self-sacrifice", meanings of the two words should be separately defined. A giving gesture with an intention of getting in return of something in this life which is still full of lust and greed to help out the others as an individual contribution this is called dana (giving). A giving gesture to sacrifice oneself for others with intention to alleviate greed not a specific giving but for public donation this is called self-sacrifice. With this implication, the King patronizes the Royal family and the servants with Royal treasury, consumer goods, according to rank and status of the servants that have served the King honestly or the King himself wants to patronize with rice, water, clothings, etc. to anyone who did not do anything for him as the King is only to provide benefits to the recipients or the King may contribute his treasury on setting up an almshouse to provide for the poor to feed themselves periodically or to provide the monks with necessities a devotion to Buddhism's dharma.

Analysis of cultural reflections in the Khmer Mahavessantara Jataka: The 38 cultural reflections appeared in the Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version are grouped according to the type of reflections that appear. There are 7 categories reflections on the King, reflections on the Royal Court, reflections on religion, reflections on the economy, reflections on Cambodian characteristics. Reflections on women and reflections on nature. Each category has a different number of reflections. The reflections were analyzed using the Functionalism theory of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown (Srisontisuk, 2009), the analysis results are as follows.

Reflections on the King include:

- The truth of the monarchy
- The prestige and wealth of the monarchy
- The hope of the people depends on the monarchy
- The mercy and grace of the king towards the people
- Being the God of life
- Unity between the monarchy and religious institutions

The above reflections on the King in the Khmer Mahavessantara Jataka points out that the monarchy and the religious institute support each other. Even the Cambodian King remains as God of the people, under the governing regime the King rules the country with Royal prerogative and grace. Anyway, in the days when the poet recorded reflections into the Mahavessantara Jataka, it's likely that the period falls into the time when the Cambodian monarchy deteriorated that's why the image of 'divine King' isn't clearly portrayed only the image of an ordinary human being with higher social status and more capabilities as they still face the same difficulties as humans. However, the hope of the people is always on the King's shoulder. With this reason, the King has a role, burden and duty to take care of the people and manage the country for prosperity and peace under the conditions of social context in those days.

Reflections on the Royal Court include:

- The greatness of the Cambodian Court
- The Royal Court system and regulations
- Management within the Royal Court
- Consent to the Royal Court jurisdiction
- The social hierarchy
- The influence of the nobles on the people

Reflections on the Royal Court in the Khmer Mahavessantara Jataka above indicate that the noble system is the driving force and support the monarchy in the customs of the Cambodian Royal Court as well as a link between the King and the people, causing a social hierarchy. The Royal Court is thus the source of the collection and use of the systematic power of the authorities. Therefore, the duty of the Royal Court is to support or maintain the power which is not permanent to become permanent. This can be applied that the system within the court has occurred significantly. According to an interview with Limsoeurn Chhan (26 June 2017, interview) in the past it was like that but at present, the King is closer to his people.

Reflections on religion include:

- Respect for the Brahmin status
- The Brahmin class affect the role and functions of Brahmins in the Cambodian society

- The Cambodian perception linked to the belief in the concept of Trailokya (the three worlds)
- The true abandonment
- The close relationship of Brahmanism with Buddhism
- Brahmanism plays an important role in rituals and ceremonies in the Cambodian society
- Traditional beliefs about ghost worship remain the cornerstone of the ceremony in Cambodia

Reflections on religion in the Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version above show that Brahmanism plays a role in the Cambodian society both in the Royal Court and in the general public. Buddhism is in the direction that shows the process of division clearly. Buddhism is in the process of thinking and the mind of the people, while Brahmanism is practiced in rituals both in Brahmanism and in Buddhism. It is a systematic distribution of the hierarchy of clergy in the Cambodian society systematically. The results of this system are the respect of the Brahmins and the access to the conditions of the true abandonment from kleshas. According to an interview with Bhikkhu The Bunthoeurn (26 June 2017, interview), the abandonment is a matter of an individual, the monks can only teach the people to know how to reach the abandonment in this life for the goodness in the future life. Therefore, the Cambodian people do not desire anything when making merits. Most of them often wish for Nirvana. Additionally, given the social status of Cambodia if anyone is born to which clan or class, going to another status is quite difficult, so, merit-making is a matter of the better for the future. If the Cambodian people wish to ask for blessings, they often use the vows, instead of making merits than asking for blessings. If the persons who vow get what they have wished for they must fulfill them. This can be said that religion has the responsibility to anchor and develop the minds of the people in society.

Reflections on the economy include: With no career and know how to save, ones do not have the opportunity to own a valuable asset. The Royal Court has a plan to disburse assets.

Reflections on the economy in the Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version above indicate the Royal Court has a system in financial collection and disbursement in which the financial administrator of the Royal property is responsible for the disbursement. The economic culture found in the Khmer Mahavessantara Jataka is a reflection of the prosperity of the Royal Court, consistent with functionalism theory that traditions and institutions should support each other continually. With the social duties, everyone must be under the laws at the same time, it reflects the diversity of opportunities that the ordinary

people can have. From the interview of the key informants, it can conclude that difficulties of the Cambodian people in the past was that if ones do not work hard or take the opportunity, they may not secure their lives. Because of this reason, the economy of the Cambodian society at that time was solely up to the monarchy. The well-being of the citizens varied according to the stability of the Royal Court that gave the people the opportunity. Therefore, the economy is controlling the security of society and culture.

Reflections on the Cambodian characteristics include:

- The Cambodian people have euphemisms in language
- The reality of the Cambodian way of life
- Cambodian hospitality etiquette
- Practices of good hygiene and sanitation
- Difficult people's way of living in Cambodia
- The delicacy of the Cambodian spirit
- Opportunity to express the happiness of the Cambodian people
- The torture by legal punishment

Reflections on the Cambodian characteristics in the Khmer Mahavessantara Jataka above indicate that Cambodian people in the past should know their role and duties in what social status they're entitled to. In terms of kindness and beauty in the mind, they are the basis of the Cambodian people, especially the performances through the reserach of art as well as the Khmer language that is beautiful and melodious in both the scripts and sound. In the past, Cambodians often faced tragedies in society. According to interviews with Chhom Sunnang and Limsoeurn Chhan (26th June 2017, interview), during wars between Thailand and Cambodia and Cambodia with Vietnam, the residents were in trouble, the easy-going way of life came along with the hardship but the Cambodian people still enjoyed the occasional happiness they could find, showing the good management of the mind and thoughts derived from the ancestors who have accumulated for a long time including the characteristics of the Cambodian people who adapted to the climate changes, the wisdom of the Cambodian people to maintain a good hygiene is to have a foot bath before entering their houses. In the past, the penalties were the controlling factor for the people to live humbly. Therefore, the Cambodian characteristics are responsible for adjusting the character and integrating the self to fit in with the society and culture to live as happily as they should be.

Reflections on women include:

- The beauty of a woman does not depend on the woman herself but men's thoughts affect such beauty

- A role-modelled Cambodian woman must maintain the beauty of the body, speech and mind in every situation
- Beauty is a sign of the noble existence and dignity of every woman
- The power of a woman in the Royal laws
- Women jealousy is normal, no matter in what status they are

Reflections on women in the Khmer version of Mahavessantara Jataka point out that the beauty of a woman whether inside or outside the Royal Court can all have merits and demerits. A role-modelled Cambodian woman must possess the "31 Signs of a Virtuous Woman", according to 'the beast' (Khmer Didactic Literature 1999 cited in Songsil, 2010). At the same time, jealousy among women is unpredictable. The existence and the culmination of each society of women are all under the patriarchal system. In some of the Cambodian mottos, the negatives of women are mentioned such as "Do not fight with a woman. Do not have a case with the same people group. Don't do things that do nothing good for you yet cause bad after-effects", or motto like "Do not fight with a woman. Do not have a case with the Chinese. Do not tear your belly to a vulture which means do not do anything that will affect yourself" as well as, "Do not fight with a woman. Do not trade with the government officials. Do not fight the lawsuit which means do not do anything that not only doesn't research but also causes damages" and "Do not trust a woman, Do not be kind with an animal which means that women and animals should not be trusted" (Tedtong, 2015). With this reason, duties for a Cambodian woman in that time is like a cultural system that supports and promotes men to advance in the career to have a good social image, also provides the basic needs for mutual enjoyment. This results in other following cultures, especially, the family institution. It is a commitment of women to all the systems where men have the authority over.

Reflections on nature include:

- The bond between people and nature
- Abundance in nature and resources but good quality resources may be small in number, so, they need to be economical
- Ecological abundance in Cambodia
- Cultivate children to recognize the importance of nature

Reflections on nature in the Khmer Mahavessantara Jaraka show that Cambodia has abundant natural resources and Cambodian people give importance to nature no exploitation or unnecessary destruction of

nature. The Cambodian people also cultivate and convey these ideas to younger generations through the teaching of the children and the first-hand experience. The nature produces basic human needs and at the same time it acts like a tool for building the minds of the people too.

According to the analysis of the reflections of culture in the Khmer Version of Mahavessantara Jataka, the reflections of the Cambodian characteristics are found the most followed by religion, the King and the Royal Court share the same number of reflections, followed by other reflections respectively women, nature and economy. Each category has a duty to contribute to the creation of society and culture. The study witnessed the past traces from the literature of the Mahavessantara Jataka through the perspective of the researcher.

Summary: In summary, there are four aspects of the reflections of society appeared in the Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version Generalized reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the Royal family with a status as wife, Negative reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the nobles, negative reciprocity in the relationship between the King and the poor and Mental reciprocity in the relationship between the people and the King, i.e., the King in the status of contributor is considered the highest social status and is ranked in a better status than the recipients as the King possesses the power of governance as well as the financial power, therefore, the King must act to alleviate the burden and eliminate the suffering of members in the society to balance the social system to move forward. At the same time, the duties of the recipients are classified into two categories recipients directly related to the court. Their duties are to follow the role and responsibilities of such particular status entitled by law and are the stakeholders of the Royal Court and the recipients are indirectly related to the court. Their duties are to comply with the rules and laws set forth under the governing regime of which the King is the head of state and pay Royalty to the monarch.

In addition, there are 38 cultural reflections appeared in the Khmer Mahavessantara Jataka and can be classified into 7 categories including, reflections on the king, reflections on the Royal Court, reflections on religion, reflections on the economy, reflections on Cambodian characteristics. Reflections on women and reflections on nature. Each type has a duty to support one another, i.e., the King has a role, duties and burdens to take care of the people, dealing with the country management and governance for the prosperity and peace. Under the conditions of the social contexts in those days, the Royal Court was obliged to support or to foster the ruling power which was not permanent to become permanent. Religion is responsible for anchoring and developing the minds of the people. The economy is responsible for controlling

the security of the society and culture. Cambodian characteristics play an important duty in the adaption of their individuality and integrate themselves into society and culture in order to live as happily as possible. Women in that Cambodian period were responsible for supporting and promoting the men in their career, social image as well as the basic needs for mutual enjoyment, resulted in other following cultures, especially the family institution. Nature is responsible for producing basic human needs in the society and at the same time is a tool for building the minds of the people. The reflections of culture found the most are reflections on the characteristics of the Cambodian people, followed by reflections on religion, while the reflections on the King and the Royal Court share the same number.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the analysis of social and cultural reflections in the Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version, the researcher puts the following two issues to discussion.

The first issue is the influence that links between the Khmer Mahavessantara Jataka and the society and culture of the Cambodian people. Mahavessantara Jataka is a Buddhist literature that appears in the Tipitaka (the Pali Canon) in the division of Sutta Pitaka Khuddaka Nikaya (the collection of little texts) with 2 referenced contents found, e.g., Vessantara Jataka No. 547, the Mahanibhat division, classified as the Jataka Pitaka (Department of Fine Arts, 1997) and the Vessantara Jariya, classified as the Jariya Pitaka (Bangchang, 1983). Mahavessantara Jataka is recognized as one of the most valuable ancient literature of Southeast Asia, influenced by Buddhism that has passed through many eras in this region. As a result, the Khmer Version of Mahavessantara Jataka plays an important role in the interrelation of Khmer society and culture through religious mechanisms, resulting in the emerging of the monarchy and the social hierarchy. According to Danel and Polkinghorne (2015), the sustainability and distribution of the narratives of the Mahavessantara Jataka is a clear evidence of the Cambodian culture that passes over time and the social hierarchy. The Mahavessantara Jataka has been since the foundation of the countries as evidenced of the engraved images depicting Mahavessantara Jataka on the gable of the Bayon Temple. In addition, the Mahavessantara Jataka may be an evidence of the emerging of Theravada Buddhism in Cambodia or probably the Mahayana Buddhism in the reign of King Jayavarman VII.

This concept is consistent with Ven. Sayadej Vongsopha research study that indicates the role and impact of the Mahavessantara Jataka in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. According to the said research, Mahayana emphasizes the Bodhisattva whereas

Theravada, Arhat. In reality, they are equally accounted for the aspects of support and the dissemination of Buddhism, especially, the traditions and self-practice. Therefore, no matter when the first Mahavessantara Jataka emerged in Cambodia in any of the Buddhism groups, they all play an important role in the society and culture of Cambodia. Many research studies have concluded that the Mahavessantara Jataka affects the society and culture of that country or region, whether it is in the Northeast of Thailand, the town of Chiang Tung in Shan state, Union of Myanmar and in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Assavapiyanon, 1985; Sengpan, 2007).

Considering the origins of the Mahavessantara Jataka in Cambodia even if it cannot be judged where the beginning point is the beginning does not mean more than the passing and retention of this narrative story which have infiltrated into the Cambodian society and culture as clearly shown in the neighboring countries. According to Boonkhachorn (1980), literature is related to society as it reflects the life experiences of the particular period of time, whether it deliberately reflects the society or not. Therefore, reflections of Cambodian society and culture that appears in the Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version are caused by the recognition, the practices or intent of the researcher, composers including the publishing institution involved in the dissemination of this literature the Buddhist Institute of Phnom Penh who will collect all the information regarding some of the Cambodian society and culture in order to unite the nation and tactfully create some unique identities in Buddhist literature.

The second issue is the relationship between social reflections and cultural reflections found in the Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version. The study results indicate social reflections in 4 aspects as mentioned above. The King has a clear role in helping and has the power to decide what to give to anyone. Even in the 4th scenario, the mental reciprocity in the relationship between the people and the King which focuses on the loyalty of the people, it is the result of the Royal activities and the Royal virtues of the King. Although, the status of the monarchy in Cambodia in the post-Khmer era is weakening with a great foundation and ancient ruins are like a morale boost for the Cambodian people. According to the history of Cambodia in the views of D.G.E. Hall, the glory of the Kingdom of Funan, until the most prosperous period of the Khmer empire during the reign of King Suryavarman II or the years 1112-1152 who is the highest authority in Khmer history as he was the builder of Angkor Wat as well as he proposed diplomatic relations with Cham and China. The decline of power was during 1157-1867 (Chamvit, 2014). The Royal prestige and virtue of each of the Kings of Cambodia in different

reigns may be more or less however they all have the same reflections of culture in the Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version.

From the 38 reflections of culture, there are 6 reflections on the monarchy. These 6 reflections as discussed in the study are based on the theoretical analysis by functionalism theory. The study results indicate that the monarchy has a role, burdens and duties for the people and the management of the country for prosperity and peace, under the conditions of social contexts in each period. The most reflections found are the Cambodian characteristics which are of 8 reflections that indicate the duty to adapt and integrate oneself into society and culture in order to live as happily as one deserves. The 2 sets of reflections are clearly related when the King prospered, the people found themselves in good living conditions. However, earlier discussions on the first issue found that the Mahavessantara Jataka is assumed to be emerged in the reign of King Jayavarman 7 that was also considered a very prosperous era of Cambodia, though the power declined, respectively later. Therefore, the remembrance of the King and the Cambodian people's living are based on the flow of thoughts and the minds of the researcher. In accordance with Pinitpuvadol and Kanchanawan (1977), literature is research of a human, thus, it is the gathering of ideas, the living and the conditions of human beings that are part of the society. Literature is a book that can reflect the state of the society. Whatever, the nature of the society the researcher is so, the nature of the literature. What scenes of social changes and evolves according to events, so, the events the literature mentions about. Sometimes they're corresponding; Sometimes they're contradictory, sometimes they're in harmony.

In addition to the various appearances and reflections on the monarchy and reflections on the characteristics of Cambodian people are related as mentioned above, point of such relationships are evident when looking at the religious reflections as religion plays an important role in anchoring and the development of the minds of the people, resulting in the monarchy's greater impact on the Cambodian people. In accordance with the research results by Ratubon (2013), indicating the ideology of the characters in the Mahavessantara Jataka in Isan version, the ideology of hierarchy through the character of King Sanjaya, a King of dhammaraja according to Buddhism and through the character of Vessantara, acting as a King alongside with the Bodhisattva which affects the people of this message in another way. In Jory's view (2016), the inclusion of the political center of administration in the Ayutthaya period also used the Mahavessantara Jataka as the core principal of the administration. Moreover, the foundation of the Buddhist Institute of Phnom Penh also aims at the revival of Cambodia literature. This revival

reflects an advanced vision because the use of religion as a center of anything can drive a change in the direction and bring society and culture to the desired goal. The origins of ideas in the founding of the Buddhist Institute of Phnom Penh began in 1930, based on the ideas of the French leaders during the rule in Cambodia with a desire to establish Phnom Penh as the center of Theravada Buddhism instead of Thailand because at that time, Cambodian buddhist monks needed to travel along from Phnom Penh to Bangkok to study Buddhism. With this reason, the Buddhist Institute of Phnom Penh will be responsible for the publication of Buddhist literature for dissemination in the society. Kourilsky (2006). The cultural reflections of the Royal Court, economy, women and nature can all support and promote the traces of Cambodian society and culture in the old days which can be studied further in the present time.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, the researcher is interested in bringing the Mahavessantara Jataka in Khmer Version of the Buddhist Institute, 1996 which is one literature by Watanachai (2012) associate Professor Commander, Department of Thai language, Faculty of Humanities, Naresuan University, who gave it a Thai translation to study with a focus on social and cultural reflections within the study subject.

SUGGESTIONS

Suggested relationship between social and cultural reflections in other version of Khmer Mahavessantara Jataka be studied, probably a comparative study with the modern society and culture to clarify the relationship in aspects of power, politics, governance or cultural exchanges.

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