



Traditional Festivals in Southeast Asia: Unity in Diversity

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Abstract: Traditional Southeast Asian festivals serve as vibrant expressions of cultural identity, reflecting historical continuity and regional diversity. Rooted in indigenous traditions and influenced by external cultural exchanges, these festivals embody the concept of "unity in diversity." This study explores the shared characteristics and distinct variations of traditional festivals across Southeast Asian nations, emphasising their roles in fostering social cohesion, reinforcing national identities, and preserving cultural heritage. Utilising a secondary research methodology, the study systematically examines documentary sources to identify thematic patterns across agricultural, religious, and New Year's festivals. The findings reveal that while the festivals exhibit diverse forms and rituals, they share standard foundations in wet-rice agriculture, spiritual beliefs, and seasonal cycles. These festivals function as cultural markers and dynamic platforms for adaptation and modernisation in an increasingly globalised world. The study highlights the significance of these celebrations in sustaining regional cultural heritage while fostering cross-cultural appreciation among Southeast Asian nations.

Keywords: Traditional Festival, Southeast Asia, Ritual Practices, Cultural Heritage.

Introduction

Southeast Asia, known for its spices and flavours (Mccloud, 2019), was not recognised as a distinct region until the late nineteenth century, with its identity solidifying after World War II due to British colonialism (Roberts, 2011). Scholars highlight that it has a rich, unified cultural history, including an Indigenous culture (Foley, 2021) focused on wet rice farming and the Bronze Age, symbolised by the bronze drums. Thus, Southeast Asia was a historical-cultural region before its geopolitical recognition (Lien, 2008).

Today, Southeast Asian culture is both the inheritance and promotion of traditional Indigenous cultural capital and the selective absorption of new elements from the outside, both East and West. In the huge cultural treasure of Southeast Asia, many common elements make up the so-called "frame" of Southeast Asia (Lien, 2008). However, many unique elements are typical of each country. In other words, Southeast Asian culture is a culture of "unity in diversity", in the words of Indonesians. The phrase originated from the Indonesian Mpu Tantular poet "Bhineka Tungga Ika", meaning "unity in diversity" (Alfandy, 2024; Kosasih et al., 2024), and today, it has become a popular term when talking about Southeast Asian culture.

There is rarely a diverse and unified region, as in Southeast Asia. That diversity and unity are manifested in many aspects, from the foundation of formation to the material and

spiritual life of Southeast Asian residents. Southeast Asia is a multicultural kaleidoscope, with historical constants of change and the coexistence of multiple cultures. The region's cultural diversity results from its complex historical roots and the parallel existence of various cultural practices (Azad, 2023). The concept of “mandala” kingdoms historically exemplifies the region's political and cultural unity, where patron-client relations were prevalent, fostering a sense of interconnectedness among diverse groups (Mahadevan, 2024). Moreover, festivals can act as cultural mediators, fostering social integration and understanding among diverse communities (Haidukevych, 2022). With such a culturally diverse region in many aspects, this article selects the traditional festivals of Southeast Asian residents to partly prove the “unity in diversity” of Southeast Asian festivals in particular and of Southeast Asian culture in general.

No study fully counts and accurately records all festivals in Southeast Asia because the number of festivals here is too large, with large and small festivals in each country. However, “all Southeast Asian festivals are largely rooted in a common regional root, which is the agricultural production of wet rice” (Chu, 1999, p. 158) or in other words, wet rice civilisation. This characteristic creates similarities between traditional Southeast Asian festivals and the region's general culture.

Theoretical Framework

Studying traditional Southeast Asian festivals necessitates a multidisciplinary theoretical framework integrating festival and folklore theories. These theoretical perspectives facilitate the analysis of festivals' cultural, political, and social functions while considering their symbolic and performative aspects. Grounded in cultural anthropology, performance studies, and identity theories, this framework thoroughly examines how traditional festivals reflect and shape regional identities.

Festival theory offers critical insights into festivals' ritualistic, performative, and socio-political dimensions. Turner conceptualised festivals as liminal spaces where societal norms are temporarily suspended, fostering heightened communal bonding and symbolic transformations (Turner & Abrahams, 2017). This perspective, further elaborated by Turner, highlights the creation of *communitas*, a shared experience that transcends hierarchical structures, reinforcing cultural continuity and social cohesion (Turner, 1998). In addition, Schechner viewed festivals as cultural performances that merge ritual and entertainment, reinforcing societal values (Schechner, 2003). His notion of restored behaviour provides a useful framework for analysing the performative elements of Southeast Asian festivals, such as processions, dances, and dramatisations, which preserve historical and mythical narratives (Schechner, 2020). Furthermore, Bourdieu posited that festivals act as sites of cultural capital, enabling social groups to assert their cultural identity and reinforce historical legitimacy (Bourdieu, 2002). This theory is particularly relevant to studying national identity construction and heritage tourism in Southeast Asia (Kong & Yeoh, 2017).

Folklore theory complements festival theory by examining the oral traditions, myths, and legends embedded in traditional festivals. Bascom identified four primary functions of folklore: entertainment, education, social control, and cultural preservation, which are

integral to traditional festivals through storytelling, performances, and symbolic representations (Bascom, 1954). These functions facilitate the intergenerational transmission of cultural values. Lévi-Strauss also argued that myths and folklore operate through binary oppositions, such as life versus death and nature versus culture (Johnston, 1964; Levi-Strauss, 1977). Applying this structuralist approach aids in decoding the narrative structures and symbolic meanings within Southeast Asian festival traditions, as seen in the duality of good and evil in masked performances and mythological reenactments. Bauman (1977) further emphasised folklore as a dynamic performance that evolves with social and political changes (Bauman, 1975). Traditional festivals are platforms for reinterpreting and recontextualising folklore and balancing preservation and adaptation in contemporary contexts.

Traditional festivals also play a significant role in nation-building and regional identity formation. Smith underscored the importance of cultural representation in fostering national identity (Smith, 1991), while Anderson's concept of imagined communities provides a lens through which to analyse the construction of national narratives via festival participation and media representation (Anderson, 1983, 2020). Postcolonial perspectives, such as those advanced by Chatterjee, further illuminate how festivals resist cultural homogenisation and assert local identities, countering the legacies of colonial influence (Chatterjee, 2020).

This theoretical framework integrates festival, folklore, and national identity theories and provides a comprehensive lens for analysing traditional festivals in Southeast Asia. Through this approach, festivals can be understood as cultural texts that encapsulate heritage, collective memory, and evolving identities within the region. This multidisciplinary perspective highlights the significance of festivals in preserving cultural traditions and underscores their dynamic role in shaping contemporary social and political landscapes.

Methodology

This study employs a secondary research method, which focuses on systematically identifying, reading, and analysing documentary materials (McCulloch, 2004) related to traditional Southeast Asian festivals. By relying on existing sources, this methodology ensures a structured and objective approach (Morgan, 2022) to understand the region's cultural diversity and shared traditions. The approach comprehensively explores how these festivals express national and regional identities, historical continuity, and social cohesion. Through an in-depth examination of various sources, including historical records, ethnographic accounts, and visual documentation, this study presents a holistic view of traditional festivals as a unifying cultural phenomenon (Platt, 1981).

The collected documentary materials undergo a rigorous analysis (Klingebiel et al., 2024) to identify patterns, themes, and historical trends related to traditional festivals in Southeast Asia. The study follows a structured data analysis approach (Morgan, 2022), identifying key themes from the documentation. These themes may include rituals, performances, religious significance, communal participation, and the symbolic use of space

and time in festival settings (Duffy & Mair, 2017; John Lucas, 2014). A comparative analysis is then conducted to examine similarities and differences among the various festivals, highlighting how they reflect local distinctiveness and broader regional commonalities. Contextual interpretation (Lim, 2024) is crucial in exploring how traditional festivals have evolved, adapted to modern influences, and maintained their significance in contemporary society. By systematically categorising and interpreting the collected data (Arias Valencia, 2022), the study aims to provide a well-rounded analysis of traditional festivals as an essential component of Southeast Asian cultural heritage.

Ethical concerns are minimal since this research is based entirely on publicly available documentary sources (Tight, 2019). However, academic integrity is upheld through meticulous citation and acknowledgement of all referenced materials. Proper attribution ensures that the original authors and researchers receive due credit for their work while providing transparency in the research process. Furthermore, care is taken to avoid misrepresentation or decontextualisation of the documentary materials, ensuring that the analysis remains faithful to the festivals' intended meanings and cultural contexts. The study maintains high scholarly rigour by adhering to these ethical principles and contributes to a responsible discourse on Southeast Asian cultural traditions.

Consequently, this methodology offers a structured and comprehensive framework for analysing traditional festivals in Southeast Asia through documentary research. The study provides valuable insights into the cultural significance of these festivals and their unifying role across the region by systematically gathering, categorising, and interpreting relevant materials. This approach not only enhances the understanding of Southeast Asian cultural heritage but also emphasises the importance of preserving and celebrating these traditions in an increasingly globalised world.

Result and Discussion

Southeast Asian festivals mainly focus on three main forms: agricultural festivals, religious festivals, and New Year's celebrations.

Agricultural Festival

In the words of Mai Ngoc Chu: "Among Southeast Asian festivals, the most popular are agricultural festivals, the most important of which are those related to rice plants" (Chu, 1999, p. 158). Indeed, this is a unique aspect of Southeast Asian traditional festivals compared to many other regions in the world. It is also a common point and a source of unity among countries in the region. However, in countries and ethnic groups with different beliefs and religions, the manifestation of agricultural festivals in each place and each ethnic group is also completely different.

Rice agriculture, mainly water, has become an economic feature of Southeast Asia (Liu et al., 2020; Peter, 2023). Rice is considered the soul of production labour and cultural and spiritual activities of the residents of this area (Bray, 2023). Wet rice farming has given rise to traditional festivals in Southeast Asia. Because rice is considered the most important crop, Southeast Asians are interested in natural and weather factors. Because of the importance of natural factors, the fear of affecting crops has led Southeast Asian farmers to

worship the gods of nature (Bray, 2024). At that time, the “god of rice” was considered the most sacred god. Southeast Asian people strongly believe in the soul of rice; the soul brings vitality and helps the rice plant grow lush, bloom, and ripen its seeds. The rice plant will die if the soul leaves it. In the eyes of Southeast Asian people, the soul of rice is wonderful.

When people believe that the rice plant has a soul like all other things, they develop cult thoughts (V. H. Van, 2020a). Therefore, the festival is associated with the draper and its life cycle, the complex rituals that take place in the rice care cycle as a circular law; any month and season in Southeast Asia has a festival as an indispensable cultural feature and custom in the spiritual life and production of residents. Along with the rice, farming festivals are also a diverse expression of prosperity beliefs, which are Indigenous, a dream of the multiplication and proliferation of all things and crops (Gandeza et al, 2023).

In agriculture, besides seeds, there are other factors such as soil, water, light, etc. Therefore, the sowing season is also the season of rain festivals, festivals of sacrifice of earth, water, sun and other supernatural forces everywhere. Water is an essential element for the life of humans and living things. For agriculture, water is even more necessary. With enough water, trees can grow and develop well. Therefore, in Southeast Asia, there are also many festivals related to the construction of water and rain bridges. In addition to water, land is an indispensable agricultural production element. Therefore, farmers value land and have performed many rituals and beliefs to pray for the land to bless them while doing business.

As mentioned, in agricultural festivals, the most popular and important festival is associated with the life cycle of rice plants, reflected in festivals related to the process of planting rice plants (V. H. Van, 2020a): the ceremony of going to the field or confiscating the land of the Vietnamese people; opening the first plough road of the Thais; the ceremony of building the Cham people's plough; the happy plough road of the Burmese people; the sacred seed-giving ceremony of the Khmer people and the water pouring ceremony of the Khmer people in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar; or water worship festivals of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam (Chu, 1999; Doanh & Thien, 1997; Kien, 2007; Minh, 2000). The above festivals show that Southeast Asian people desire to have a prosperous, happy life and good harvests. With people's hopes and aspirations for a prosperous and happy life, Southeast Asian residents have organised ceremonies to pray for lush crops, for all species to multiply, and for the first steps to be taken in the field (B. T. A. Van, 2012).

Farmer work is hard in the field and depends greatly on natural conditions (Bray, 2023). Therefore, in addition to diligently caring for the fields, Southeast Asian residents also have to organise festivals to pray for rice plants to grow green, bloom and ripen satisfyingly (Ramkumar, 2015). Those are the most sacred wishes of farmers (Bonura, 2023). Thus, Southeast Asian people want the growth process of rice plants to take place smoothly, so they have organised a series of agricultural festivals related to rice plants, hoping to have a good harvest. These are Cambodia's *Dolta* festivals, the Thai goddess of rice, festivals of the Tay, Nung and Cham people in Vietnam, and so on (Chu, 1999; Doanh & Thien, 1997; Kien, 2007; Minh, 2000). At the stage of harvesting rice and in the later stage, people also organise festivals such as the festival of cultivating rice in the yard of the Lao people, welcoming rice to the homes of Lao and Thai people, thanking the rice soul of the Lao and

Cambodian people; the festival of thanksgiving for the gods and Buddhas of the Burmese people and the people of the Central Highlands in Vietnam; even the Rija festival of the Cham people in Vietnam (Kien, 2007; Minh, 2000). Although the form of the festival is different, it all shares the same goal: to satisfy the harvest results and bring happiness and warmth to people in this season and the coming seasons (Bonura, 2023; V. H. Van, 2020a).

Thus, these festivals include both parts: the ceremony with sacred rituals (praying for prosperous business, a good harvest or thanking the gods and ancestors for blessing and protecting, etc.) and the festival part is entertainment games (wrestling, tug-of-war, throwing, swinging, flying kites, etc.). The participation of many residential communities has contributed to connecting the community, educating people about their love for labour, and respecting agricultural production workers (Perry, 2022). Festivals are associated with agricultural activities that promote the common aspiration of having a good harvest. Still, the way of expression in these festivals is completely different, creating richness and diversity in the traditional festival culture of Southeast Asia. These festivals have existed for centuries; however, their form and scale have changed somewhat. They still retain the essence of agricultural festivals, with the legitimate aspirations of Southeast Asian residents.

Religious Festivals

Southeast Asia is on the exchange path, with converging cultural currents and migration flows (Morand & Lajaunie, 2017). Therefore, there is a mixture and interference between local culture and foreign culture, especially Chinese and Indian culture. Religions and beliefs in Southeast Asia are also diverse and colourful (Ullah & Ming Yit Ho, 2021). The rich religious picture fully converges the ideological systems of the East and the West, with the main religions being Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, etc (Lopez, 2020). However, the important thing is that with their faith and national consciousness, when those religions enter Southeast Asia, there is a mixed generosity, so many religions are suitable for the people's spiritual life. Religious festivals are also held annually in each religion, with their festivals, such as Christian Christmas, Buddhist temple festivals, the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Mohamad of Islam, etc. In each religion, people have annual festival days to celebrate the events of their religion.

During the development process, Buddhism has greatly influenced not only social activities and life but also the morality, culture and lifestyle of Southeast Asian people (Kasulis, 2022; Pham & Nikolaeva, 2021). Therefore, for a long time, Buddhist holidays have become indispensable festivals in the spiritual life of Buddhist residents in Southeast Asia. In Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, there are festivals or ceremonies to express respect for the Buddha and ceremonies with the deeds of Buddhism. These festivals usually take place in places where there are traces of Buddha or in sacred lands where there is superficial Buddha worship, such as the *Keo Pagoda Festival* (in Thai Binh Province), *Huong Pagoda Festival* (in Hanoi), *Phu Giay Festival* in Vietnam; *Bun Pha Vat* (Celebrating the day of *Shakyamuni* becoming a Buddha), *Bun Mahabuxa* (Buddha entering the realm of nirvana) in Laos; the light boat festivals, the boat race on the river in Cambodia; *Loy Krathong* (Dropping the lamp in a leaf cup), *Tot Kathina* (Annual offering of robes and items to the monks) in

Thailand (Atcharee et al., 2015); Flower lantern festivals, fireballs in Myanmar. In addition, in Indonesia, some Buddhists celebrate *Galungan* (Festival of temples), Buddha's birthday in Malaysia (Chu, 1999; Dat, 1992; Doanh & Thien, 1997; Kien, 2007). Islamic countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, and Singapore all have festivals such as *Hari Raya Puasa* (*Eid al-Fitr*), *Hari Raya Haji* (*Eid al-Adha*), Ramadan, *Hari Raya Aidilfitri*, *Maulid Nabi Muhammad* (the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad) and so on. On this day, Muslim families hold a sacred feast and even flock to the mosque to pray. The young people listen to the older people talk about the faith and virtues of the day of Muhammad. The Philippines is the only country in the region with strong Christian influence, so the Philippines is interested in Christmas. Other countries, such as Indonesia, Singapore, etc., have also organised this event for Christians in their countries.

The religious festivals observed across various countries are significant and are celebrated annually by adherents of each religion prevalent within those nations. It is common for nearly every country to host festivals representing multiple religions, reflecting the diverse religious landscape sanctioned by governmental policies. These festivals are not exclusive to major world religions; many regional and local faiths commemorate their traditions through solemn celebrations that resonate positively among their followers. Such festivals do not typically coincide within a single country, and they often draw interest from adherents of other faiths, exemplifying the interreligious appreciation characteristic of Southeast Asia (Lien, 2008).

In addition to agricultural and religious festivals, in Southeast Asia, there are festivals to celebrate the nation's heroes, the deceased, the founders of tribes, tribes or even ordinary people who carry the deeds of deification. When they live and are revered by many people until they die, they are even more revered, and they pray that these souls will be forgiven of their sins and that worship will be established naturally. Vietnam has several festivals: *the Hung Temple Festival*, *the Giong Festival*, and *the Hai Ba Trung Temple Festival*. *The Semarang* and *Sampo Kong Festivals* are major holidays celebrated to celebrate the heroes and gods of the Indonesian people. In Malaysia, residents of *Kelanta* annually celebrate the memory of mother and daughter *Cik Siti Wankembang* and *Puteri Saadoong*. In the Philippines, Laos, and Cambodia, there are also quite a few festivals associated with the belief in worshipping the deceased, national heroes, and great people. These festivals also aim for the desire for business to move forward, good health and thanksgiving to the gods. This ceremony is usually elaborately prepared and performed thoughtfully and carefully by Southeast Asian inhabitants.

New Year's celebrations

In Southeast Asia, there is a type of festival that is particularly important and has a national and ethnic scale, attracting everyone to participate. It is collectively called *Tet* (In Vietnamese) or New Year's Ceremony.

New Year's Ceremony is usually a type of festival held during the transition of seasons in Southeast Asia, associated with changes in climate, weather and natural landscapes, usually held from 1 to 3-4 days (depending on the type of New Year's Ceremony

of each ethnic group). This is an occasion where people can rest, have fun, congratulate, and visit each other to enjoy delicious food and dress beautifully to enter the new year and new season. In every country, there is at least one large-scale festival at the national level, which is the most important one in that country. Indeed, the Lunar New Year is the largest festival of many ethnic groups in Southeast Asia and the most obvious and characteristic festival of the cultural identity of each ethnic group.

Tong cuu nghinh tan in Vietnamese means old farewell, new welcome (or Lunar New Year), is called by Mai Ngoc Chu and Dinh Trung Kien about the festival of Southeast Asian ethnic groups, calculated according to the lunar calendar, always meaning to summarise the old year and celebrate the new year (Chu, 1999, p. 163; Kien, 2007). The expulsion of the old is a summary of the old year, which usually means sending off bad luck, while celebrating the new year always means welcoming the new, lucky and good. As Mai Ngoc Chu repeated Vo Dinh Huong's words in 1997: "The Lunar New Year always contains the meaning of summarising and opening, expelling the old and welcoming the new" (Chu, 1999, p. 163).

Generally, the Lunar New Year of Southeast Asian peoples is held fixedly, when the heavens and the earth change seasons, from the dry to the rainy season, when the harvest is finished, and people rest to prepare for the new planting season. "Although the form and ritual of celebrating New Year of each ethnic group are different, New Year's Ceremony is always an opportunity for people to rest, have fun, and give thanks to heaven and earth, ancestors, and gods for giving a year of favourable rain and wind, washing away the bad things in the old year, praying for and receive all the goodness of the new year" (Doanh & Thien, 1997, p. 307).

Vietnamese people celebrate the Lunar New Year in spring, the season of proliferation (V. H. Van, 2020b). This is also an opportunity for farmers to rest after a year of hard work, one sun and two dews. *Tet* is an opportunity to meet, reunite, visit, and congratulate each other (Jamieson, 1993, p. 28). It is also associated with activities to pray for good luck in the new year, such as storming, opening a pen, and going out. The *Tet* Vietnamese people are associated with legends that symbolise the civilisation of wet rice agriculture. Therefore, the indispensable offerings in *Tet* are *banh chung*, *banh giay*, *banh tet*... apricot flowers, peach blossoms, or display a tray of five fruits.

The Lunar New Year (changing seasons, changing years) of the ethnic groups of Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos all takes place in the middle of April of the solar calendar, that is, the transition time between the dry season and the rainy season, related to the rice farming of the residents here. Currently, the weather in some countries is hot; therefore, for agricultural residents, it is actually to catch the rain and water to prepare for the planting and transplanting season. In addition, this work also means cleansing people through a year of hard work, helping people to be healthier and fresher in labour and life of a new year. This can be easily demonstrated by Cambodia's *Chol Chnam Thmay*, the Rainy New Year, the *Songkran Festival* in Thailand and the *Vosa Festival* in Myanmar, which also means splash water. Lao people have *Bun Xamha* Holiday (festival of Falling Water, Praying for Rain). These festivals are considered the Lunar New Year of these ethnic groups (Chu,

1999; Dat, 1992; Doanh & Thien, 1997; Kien, 2007). For Mai Ngoc Chu, the *Songkran Festival* not only means bringing coolness, prosperity to all things, prosperity and happiness for people, but religiously, it means purity and purifying human life (Chu, 1999). Water will wash away the old, outdated, dirty, evil, trivial things in people. Moreover, the days adjacent to Tet are the end of the dry season, so it is very hot; splashing water on the body will cool the body, smooth the skin, and refresh the soul.

The New Year of Cambodians, Thais, Laos, and Myanmar is also associated with one religion: Buddhism. Therefore, when preparing to welcome the new year, people also repair and sweep the pagoda and clean the Buddha statue. In general, the New Year is usually opened by bathing in fragrant water for the statues, after which the monk sprinkles fragrant water on all those who attend the ceremony, hoping to bless them and bring good luck to them (Chu, 1999).

Countries in Southeast Asia deeply influenced by Islam, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei, and Singapore, all have their holidays, such as *Hari Raya Idul Fitri* in Indonesia and *Hari Raya Aidilfitri* in Singapore. This holiday is celebrated a week after Vietnam's Lunar New Year, after a month of fasting and drinking during the day, which is Ramadan. Although it is a vacation for Muslims, in terms of time, it is entirely suitable for the New Year of agricultural residents throughout Southeast Asia. As people approach this vacation, they compete to make the best cakes and sell them at night markets because this is the biggest festival for every family. During the vacation, people dress well, pull each other to pray at Islamic mosques, and then return home to wish the best to grandparents, parents, relatives and neighbours.

Southeast Asian Chinese also celebrate the Chinese New Year like the Vietnamese. In Malaysia, festivals such as Pongal and Chinese New Year highlight the importance of interfaith dialogue to maintain religious tolerance in a multicultural society (Zumla et al., 2022). In addition, Indians living in Southeast Asia also have the *Thaipusam* (Hindu New Year), which is held annually in January or early February, which also coincides with the holiday of wet rice farmers in Southeast Asia. In the country of coconut islands, Balinese people in Indonesia also perform the *Melasti* or *Melis* (Balinese Purification Ceremony), which takes place on the shores of lakes, rivers, and the sea associated with the worship of the sun, sea, and earth gods with the desire to be helped by those gods for lush crops, a prosperous and happy life. The Lunar New Year (the 5th day of the 5th month of the lunar calendar) and the Mid-Autumn Festival (the full moon of the 8th lunar month) are also major festivals in Southeast Asia (Lien, 2008).

In short, the traditional New Year's Ceremony and festivals are unique expressions of Southeast Asian traditional culture. The forms of festivals and festivals of Southeast Asian peoples are vibrant and diverse and have different nuances. However, with such diversity, there is still a common and regional unified cultural root, which reflects the cultural identity of the residents of wet rice farming with their own brilliant traditional cultural achievements.

Conclusion

Two similar characteristics can be drawn from traditional festivals in Southeast Asia: the origin and structure of the festival.

The first point, the origin of festivals, comes from primitive beliefs. This can be easily seen; the festival was formed and born to carry a belief. There are no beliefs and no festivals; those are primitive beliefs that arose spontaneously from the relationships of primitive people with the natural environment.

The second point of similarity is the festival's structure (the mode of expression), which has a ceremonial and a festival part. Primary external cultures influence festivals of Southeast Asian countries due to geographical location; China influences Vietnam, while Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Indonesia are imbued with the philosophy of life and moral issues of Buddhist, Islamic, and Brahman ideologies from Indian civilisation. Thus, the absorption of external influences does not change the concepts of human life and the worldview of ethnic groups in Southeast Asia at all. However, in the mode of expression, these rituals are more or less influenced by ideologies of worldview and human outlook associated with Indian and Chinese lifestyles such as Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, Brahmanism, etc., so their expressions are diverse and rich. Today's traditional festival not only has the main important function, is a means to integrate and strengthen the connections between community members as it is, but also a place of convergence to develop entertainment and develop the tourism economy of the countries where the festival is held.

All the advantages of a culture that is “unity in diversity” can only be positively promoted in the current development process if the cultural masters here know how to preserve and promote it positively. It must be understood that the future is in the hands of Southeast Asian cultural masters; therefore, it is necessary to be deeply aware of the nature of their culture, the traditional cultural structure in common with neighbouring countries, and the absorption of modern cultural quintessence from many other directions. From there, Southeast Asian countries can maximise their cultural advantages in industrialisation, making it a real driving force for current development. Today, with a diverse but unified cultural heritage, solid cultural bravery, and rich cultural experience of each country, the whole Southeast Asia region, in general, will bring cultural owners advantages for national development in this region—regional and global integration in the trend of globalisation.

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