

# A Comparative Study of Costumes for Religious Festivals in ASEAN Countries

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**Abstract**—Aims of this research were to study the major religious festivals of merit making and joyful celebrations (nationwide) in each country of ASEAN countries and to compare the costumes for these major religious festivals among these countries. This documentary research employed qualitative research methodology. The findings of the research disclosed that there are 28 main religious festivals in ASEAN countries: 3 Islamic festivals in Brunei Darussalam such as Hari Raya Aidiladha Festival, Mauludin Nabi Festival and Hari Raya Aidilfitri Festival; 2 Buddhist festivals in Cambodia such as Pchum Ben Festival and Khmer New Year Festival; 3 Islamic festivals in Indonesia such as Eid al-Adha Festival, Maulid Nabi Festival and Eid ul-Fitr Festival; 5 Buddhist festivals in Laos such as Boun Awk Pansa Festival, Boun Pha Vet Festival, Boun Pi Mai Festival, Boun Khao Pradabdin Festival and Boun Khao Salak Festival; 3 Islamic festivals in Malaysia such as Hari Raya Aidil Adha Festival, Maulidur Rasul Festival and Hari Raya Aidilfitri Festival; 4 Buddhist festivals in Myanmar such as Thadingyut Festival, Tazaungmon Full Moon Festival, Htamane Festival, and Thingyan Festival; 2 Christian festivals in Philippines such as Christmas Festival and Feast of the Santo Niño; Only 1 Buddhist festival in Singapore: Festival of Vesak Day; 4 Buddhist festivals in Thailand such as Songkran Festival (Thai New Year), Sart Thai Festival, Khao Pansa Festival and Awk Pansa Festival; and only 1 Buddhist festival in Vietnam: Tet Nguyen Dan Festival. For the comparison of the costumes for these major religious festivals, it can be concluded that the most popular style of male costume for religious festivals in ASEAN countries consists of stand-up collar (100%), long sleeves (100%), shirt (90%), and long pants (100%), and the most popular style of male costume for religious festivals in ASEAN countries consists of round neck (90%), long sleeves (80%), blouse (60%), and maxi tube skirt (80%).

**Keywords**—Costume, Religious festival, ASEAN countries.

## I. INTRODUCTION

NOWADAYS Thai people are facing several crises of value, ethics and behaviors which link to Thai way of life, thinking, attitude and virtue. These problems are the effects of foreign cultural expansion on multimedia. The creative media is much less dangerous than illegal media which spread over the whole country of Thailand. While Thai people, especially children and young people, are not aware of Thai custom and culture, social institutions such as family institution, religious institutions and educational institutions take less active role in the implantation of ethical virtues and the potential development of Thai people, especially children and young people. That is because the youth and their parents rarely have the opportunity

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to participate in traditional Buddhist religious festival activities even though Buddhism is Thailand's national religion [1]. These Thai people rarely have the opportunity to see the beauty of Thai traditional costumes in the Buddhist religious festivals, and the importance of these festivals. The dissemination of precise knowledge about the major religious festivals and the religious festival costumes of Thai Buddhist and the majority of people in every country of 10 ASEAN countries will enrich attitudes and cultural perceptions of Thai people, especially children and young people; and will support the goal of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015.

## II. METHODOLOGY

In this documentary research study, all data from National Library of Thailand and Electronic media is collected. The qualitative data is analysed and interpreted in qualitative research without variable control just as naturalistic research, and the analysis results and research results are presented by descriptive writing with pictures.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*A. The Major Religious Festivals of Merit Making and Joyful Celebrations (Nationwide) in Each Country of ASEAN Countries*



Fig. 1 Map of ASEAN countries

The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) consists of 10 member countries, namely: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines,

Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam [2]. There are 28 major religious festivals in ASEAN countries which are celebrated nationwide as follows:

1) Three Islamic Festivals in Brunei Darussalam [3]

a) Hari Raya Aidiladha Festival

Sacrifices of goats and cows are practiced to commemorate the Islamic historical event of Prophet Ibrahim; then its meat is distributed among relatives, friends and the less fortunates.



Fig. 2 Main activities of Hari Raya Aidiladha Festival in Brunei

b) Mauludin Nabi Festival

Prophet Muhammad's Birthday celebration is celebrated by conducting processions on foot through the main streets of the city, religious functions, religious lectures and other activities.



Fig. 3 Main activities of Mauludin Nabi Festival in Brunei

c) Hari Raya Aidilfitri Festival:

It is the time for celebration after the end of the fasting month of Ramadhan when prayers are held at every mosque in the country, and families get together to seek forgiveness from the elders and loved ones, and wear their traditional garb while visiting relatives and friends.



Fig. 4 Main activities of Hari Raya Aidilfitri Festival in Brunei

2) Two Buddhist Festivals in Cambodia [4]

a) Pchum Ben Festival

Khmer people bring food to the temple for the monks and to feed hungry ghosts who could be their late ancestors, relatives or friends. Pagodas are usually crowded with people taking their turn to make offerings and to beg the monks to pray for their late ancestors and loved ones; many remain behind at the temple to listen to Buddhist sermons.



Fig. 5 Main activities of Pchum Ben Festival in Cambodia

b) Khmer New Year Festival:

Khmer people visit local temples to make offerings to monks, engage in traditional Khmer games and merrily dance Khmer forms in the open.



Fig. 6 Main activities of Khmer New Year Festival in Cambodia

3) Three Islamic Festivals in Indonesia [5]

a) Eid al-Adha Festival or Festival of the Sacrifice

Indonesian Muslims parade and perform the ritual of slaughter of cattle and goats, with the beef and meat distributed to the needy people; and they sit on a street as they attend prayer.



Fig. 7 Main activities of Eid al-Adha Festival in Indonesia

b) Maulid Nabi Festival

It is the birthday celebration of Prophet Muhammad. Indonesian Muslims gather to recite special prayer of thanksgiving to Allah for sending the Prophet Muhammad as his messenger; pay attention to speeches and lectures in mosques and elsewhere about the life and instructions of the Holy Prophet; dress up in their best clothing and give money or gifts to children. In some

cities, such as Yogyakarta and Surakarta, believers celebrate the Maulid by conducting parades or carnivals, reciting special prayers and singing holy songs.



Fig. 8 Main activities of Maulid Nabi Festival in Indonesia

c) Eid ul-Fitr Festival:

It is the celebration after the end of the Ramadhan fasting month. Indonesian Muslims gather to pray in mosques and large open areas around the country, celebrate with the traditional rice cakes, visit family and friends, donate charity, and traditional buy new cloths for celebrating this festival.



Fig. 9 Main activities of Eid ul-Fitr Festival in Indonesia

4) Five Buddhist Festivals in Laos [6]

a) Boun Awk Pansa Festival

It is celebrated on the day of the end of Buddhist Lent: At the dawn of day, donation and offerings are made at temples around the city. In the evening, candlelight processions are held around the temples and the hundred colorful floats decorated with flower, incense and candle are set adrift down the Mekong River in thanksgiving to the river spirit. The next day, a popular and exciting boat racing competition is held on the Mekong River.



Fig. 10 Main activities of Boun Awk Pansa Festival in Laos

b) Boun Pha Vet Festival:

It is the celebration of the birth of Prince Vessantara, or Pha Vet, the Buddha's penultimate existence. Lao Buddhist people believe that when people listen to his story, it means they get a lot of merits. In addition, there are play roles ceremony to invite Pha Vet in the forest back to the palace.



Fig. 11 Main activities of Boun Pha Vet Festival in Laos

c) Boun Pi Mai Festival

This is the celebration of Lao New Year. For this festival of joyous spirit, Lao Buddhist people wear new clothes, Buddha images are washed, temples are repainted, homes were cleaned; thousands of sand stupas are built with their colorful banners and offerings; people gently sprinkle water on one another as a sign of respect; conduct the procession of the sacred Prabang Buddha image, procession of Nang Sangkhan (Miss New Year), and conduct the parade wearing traditional Lao costumes with music and dance.



Fig. 12 Main activities of Boun Pi Mai Festival in Laos

d) Boun Khao Pradabdin Festival

It is the celebration devoted to remembering and paying respect to the dead. Lao Buddhist devotees visit local temples to make offerings to the deceased as well as to share merit-making. Music is traditionally performed in the grounds of the temple while people make their donations. This nationwide festival includes boat racing on the Nam Khan River and a trade fair in the center of Luang Prabang, the World Heritage Town.



Fig. 13 Main activities of Boun Khao Pradabdin Festival in Laos

e) Boun Khao Salak Festival

This is the celebration devoted to remembering and paying respect to the deceased ancestors. Lao Buddhist families visit local temples to make offerings to the deceased ancestors by presenting them to the Buddhist monks. They believe that if the spirit does not receive the offerings, then it will bring bad luck to the living. During the festival, popular and exciting longboat-racing competitions are held to celebrate the river.



Fig. 14 Main activities of Boun Khao Salak Festival in Lao

5) Three Islamic Festivals in Malaysia [7]

a) Hari Raya Aidil Adha Festival

Malaysian Muslims celebrate the festival with prayers and the sacrifice of cattle in local mosque, and their meat are distributed to all. It is also the festival of family reunion.



Fig. 15 Main activities of Hari Raya Aidil Adha Festival in Malaysia

b) Maulidur Rasul Festival

It is the festival of Prophet Muhammad's Birthday; celebrated by special prayers and sermons in mosques, followed by processions and banquets.



Fig. 16 Main activities of Maulidur Rasul Festival in Malaysia

c) Hari Raya Aidilfitri Festival

It is the celebration after the end of the Ramadhan fasting month. Malaysian Muslims attend special morning prayers in mosques, visit the cemeteries of their loved ones, and take a week off to return to their home towns or village to meet family and friends. Many people host "open house" feasts during Hari Raya, where friends and family gather together to celebrate. Buying (and wearing) new cloth is also a feature of the festival.



Fig. 17 Main activities of Hari Raya Aidilfitri Festival in Malaysia

6) Four Buddhist Festivals in Myanmar [8]

a) Thadingyut Festival, or Myanmar Festival of Lights

This is celebrated at the end of Buddhist Lent. This festival commemorates the time when the Buddha returned to the earth after preaching in the abode of celestials during the three months of Lent. He descended at night and devotees greeted him with lamps and lanterns. So people decorate their houses with candles and colored lanterns. Pagodas are crowded with people in doing of meritorious deeds so it is not only a time of joy but also of thanksgiving and paying homage to parents, elders. There are concerts and theaters in every city.



Fig. 18 Main activities of Festival of Lights in Myanmar

b) Tazaungmon Full Moon Festival

This festival is a celebration for the season of the offering robes and other requisites needed by monks after the end of Buddhist Lent. Cash offerings for monasteries are also collected and displayed on wooden frames built in the shape of a tree. There is the special offering of Mathothigan, or timely woven robes, a robe that is woven in one single day, held on the night of the eve throughout to the full moon day. There are weaving competition to complete the robes, which are offered to images of Buddha.



Fig. 19 Main activities of Tazaungmon Full Moon Festival in Myanmar

c) Htamane Festival or Glutinous Rice Festival

It is a celebration for the donation of sticky rice and sesame seeds. There is a competition between teams of men for donation of glutinous rice to the Great Lord Buddha. Lots of people enjoy watching the competition of cooking glutinous rice. After finishing the competition, glutinous rice is distributed as donation to people and followed by the prize giving ceremony for the winners.



Fig. 20 Main activities of Htamane Festival in Myanmar

d) Thingyan Festival

This is the Myanmar New Year Festival and the Water Festival. During the festival, Myanmar people pour water over one another to the melodious tunes of singing and dancing at the decorated pavilions. Pouring water signifies cleansing the body and mind of evils of the past year, performing a lot of meritorious deeds to usher in the New Year such as going to pagodas and monasteries, offering food and alms to monks, paying respect to parents, teachers and the elders, setting free fish and cattle and so on.



Fig. 21 Main activities of Thingyan Festival in Myanmar

7) Two Christian Festivals in Philippines [9]

a) Christmas Festival

This festival is a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, is the longest and happiest of the Filipino festivals, starts on 16 December and ends in the first Sunday of January. There are the nine-day dawn masses from 16 December to Christmas Eve, known as Simbang Gabi, or Night Mass. On the eve of New Year's Day (31 December), the families make as much noise as they can by lighting firecrackers, beating pans and cans, and blowing horns and whistles up to midnight. The Lantern or Parol is the most popular symbol of Christmas in Philippines.

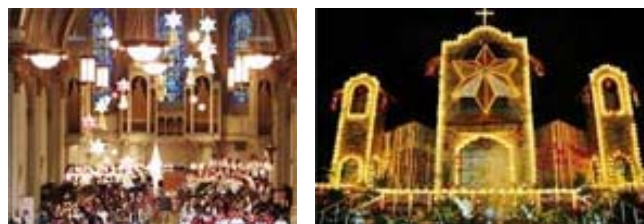


Fig. 22 Main activities of Christmas Festival in Philippines

b) Feast of the Santo Niño

It is a celebration for the Holy Child Jesus, a miracle worker, known as El Santo Niño de Atocha, celebrated by colorful parades, fluvial processions and street dancing.



Fig. 23 Main activities of Feast of the Santo Niño in Philippines

8) Only One Buddhist Festival in Singapore:

Festival of Vesak Day is an annual commemoration of the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha; celebrated by chanting of mantras, releasing of caged birds and animals, having vegetarian meals, bathing and illuminating statues of the Lord Buddha, and concluding with a candlelight procession through the streets [10].

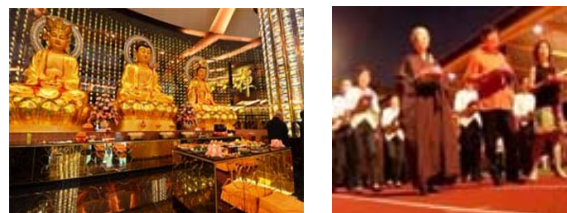


Fig. 24 Main activities of Festival of Vesak in Singapore

9) Four Buddhist Festivals in Thailand:

a) Songkran Festival

This is Thai New Year Festival. During this festival, Thai Buddhists give alms to Buddhist monks, build sand pagodas, release caged animals, especially birds and fish, visit and respect the elders and parents, and pour scented water over their elder's hands for receiving the best wishes in return, also go to the temple to make merit to their deceased ancestors, sprinkle scented water on Buddha images; sprinkle water on each other; also take part in folk plays [11].



Fig. 25 Main activities of Songkran Festival in Thailand

b) Sart Thai Festival

It is the festival of making merit traditions and the honoring ghosts & ancestors of Thai Buddhists. This traditional festival is now celebrated mostly in Thailand's southern provinces, especially in Nakhon Si Thammarat, and other parts of Thailand. It has many features of animism, attributing souls or spirits to animals, plants, and other entities [12].



Fig. 26 Main activities of Sart Thai Festival in Thailand

c) Khao Pansa

It is the period of 3 months of Buddhist Lent. During this period, coinciding with the rainy season, Buddhist monks and novices remain closeted in their particular Buddhist temples, and discouraged from spending nights elsewhere. In Khao Pansa Festival, there are 2 main important things which Thai Buddhists presented to monks: the large candles are carried by beautiful processions, and garments worn by monks, especially the bathing robes [12].



Fig. 27 Main activities of Khao Pansa Festival in Thailand

d) Awk Pansa Festival

It is the end of Buddhist Lent Festival. Thai Buddhists celebrate this occasion by offering foods and other necessities to monks. This ceremony is called "Dhevo Rohana Ceremony" in many parts of Thailand. In the addition, this

festival is celebrated by illuminated boat processions in the evening and by boat races during the daytime [12].



Fig. 28 Main activities of Awk Pansa Festival in Thailand

10) Only One Buddhist Festival in Viet Nam:

Tet Nguyen Dan Festival is the celebration of Vietnamese New Year. In this festival, Vietnamese Buddhists cook special foods, clean the house, worship the spirit of dead ancestors, wish New Year's greetings, and give lucky money to children [13].



Fig. 29 Main activities of Tet Nguyen Dan Festival in Vietnam

*B. The Comparison of the Costumes for Major Religious Festivals in Each Country of ASEAN Countries*

1) Men's Costumes in Their Major Religious Festivals

- a. Muslim men in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia wear stand-up collar, hip-length shirts with long sleeves; long pants; and shorts, round caps. Brunei and Indonesian Muslim men also wear short sarongs over pants.



Brunei Darussalam                      Indonesia                      Malaysia

Fig. 30 Muslim men's costumes for Islamic festivals in ASEAN

- b. Buddhist men in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand wear stand-up collar, spread collar or round neck, hip-length shirts with long sleeves or short sleeves; and long pants, loincloths or sarongs. Buddhist men in Myanmar maybe wear fabric headdresses.



Cambodia



Singapore



Laos

Myanmar



Philippines



Thailand

Fig. 31 Buddhist men's costumes in most Buddhist countries of ASEAN

- c. Vietnamese Buddhist men wear stand-up collar long sleeve tunics over long pants, and also wear fabric headgears.



Fig. 32 Vietnamese Buddhist men's costumes for their religious festivals

- d. Buddhist men in Singapore and Christian men in Philippines wear stand-up collar or spread collar shirts with long sleeves or short sleeves and long pants.

Fig. 33 Costumes for Buddhist festivals in Singapore and Philippines

2) Women's Costumes in Their Major Religious Festivals

- a. Buddhist women in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand; and Christian women in Philippines, wear round neck long sleeve or short sleeve blouses, and maxi tube skirts.



Cambodia

Laos

Myanmar



Thailand

Philippines

Fig. 34 Women's costumes for religious festivals in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Philippines

- b. Muslim women in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia wear the round neck long sleeve tunics over maxi tube skirts, and headscarves.



Brunei Darussalam                      Indonesia                      Malaysia

Fig. 35 Women's costumes for religious festivals in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia

- c. Buddhist women in Singapore wear round neck or spread collar, long sleeve or short sleeve or sleeveless blouses; and skirts or long pants.



Fig. 36 Singapore Buddhist women's costumes for their religious festivals

- d. Buddhist women in Vietnam wear stand-up collar long sleeve tunics over long pants; and also wear fabric headgears or conical hats.



Fig. 37 Vietnamese Buddhist women's costumes for Buddhist festivals

It can be concluded that

1. Most popular style of male costume for religious festivals in ASEAN countries consists of stand-up collar (100%), long sleeves (100%), shirt (90%), and long pants (100%).
2. Most popular style of female costume for religious festivals in ASEAN countries consists of round neck (90%), long sleeves (80%), blouse (60%), and maxi tube skirt (80%).



Fig. 38 Most popular costumes for religious festivals in ASEAN countries

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