



Boon Khun Lan Inheriting the Legend in Buddhism

¹⁾Phramaha Ridtichai Sumantabhāṇī (Prompinid), ²⁾Phramaha Mit Thitapanyo*,
³⁾ Phramaha Natthabhan Hanpong

¹⁾²⁾Faculty of Buddhism, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus, Thailand
E-mail: ¹⁾littichairompinij@gmail.com, ²⁾mit.wan@mcu.ac.th, ³⁾pnmnatsila2525@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author e-mail: mit.wan@mcu.ac.th

Abstract

This article examines the history of Boon Khun Lan inheriting the legend in Buddhism. It is an Isan language, which means a rice gifting ceremony. After harvesting and threshing, it is brought to the barn. In this rice gifting ceremony, villagers gather rice at the temple. Some areas may have different area assignments. But the goal is to make merit in the rice gifting ceremony. This merit-making is based on the stories in the Dhammapada of Buddhism as a guideline for practice. It has been made and inherited until it becomes a tradition. Nowadays, this merit-making tradition had evolved in terms of ceremonies that have changed according to the era. Making merit of Boon Khun Lan, besides it will be inherited according to the way of making merit in Buddhism, it also commemorates the kindness of rice, commemorating the gratitude of the farmers who endure the sun and rain to harvest rice each year. It shows the wisdom of Isan people toward Buddhism. It also represents the power of faith and creates unity among the people in the community as well.

Keywords: Boon Khun Lan, Inheriting the legend, Buddhism

1) Introduction

Buddhism is a religion of merit that has been practiced since the time of the Buddha until the present. Making merit in Buddhism is doing good deeds. It is called "Merit" because it is a purification tool of evils. The merit that is part of the result is happiness [A. (Thai)120/62/23 [1] "Merit" is one of the important Dhamma words in Buddhism. Particularly when Buddhism comes to prosper in society. The word "Merit" is especially outstanding. [Phra Dhammapitaka (P.A. Payutto, 2011: 76) [2] which is believed that giving will bring wealth in this life and in the next life. When we die, we will be reborn in heaven, or attaining human beings' property, heaven property, and Nirvana property (Boonmee Thaenkaew, 2003: 22) [3] Making merit in Buddhism also resulted in Thai society of all ages as people with a mind concentrating on the pursuit of happiness through giving. Along with making merit, you can also follow various occasions. Especially the Buddhist society in the Northeast. It is the most trusting culture. Northeastern culture creates people to be people and makes people free from greed, anger, and delusion to do good deeds and be generous to each other. There is a Heet Khong tradition called Heet Sip Song Khong Sip Si, Heet Ban Khong Mueng, and Heet Phor Khong Mae. The word "Heet" is the Lao Language, which Laos takes from the Pali word "Jaritta" (Pronounced Ja-rit-ta). Then the people of Laos and Thai Isan use it in their own language as "Jarit" or "Tradition". Later, there is only one single word, "Heet" left. Therefore, "Jarit" or "Heet" means a custom, a pattern of good behavior, or tradition [Boonkerd Pimworamethakul and Nipaporn Pimworamethakul, 2003: 3] [4] The twelve months of Isan people are said to follow the characteristics of twelve months. Each month has a tradition, rules according to the rules of Isan society that have been passed on for a long time [Isaraphorn Prasertsi, 2017:1] [5].

The Heet Sip Song tradition emphasizes the process of making merit, which is evident in giving alms, particularly in the merit-making tradition of the first, and second, lunar months during January-February. There will be a tradition of Boon Khun Lan, or Boon Kong Khao, or Boon Kum Khao Yai [Wanna Ratanaprasert, 2006: 29] [6]

Boon Khun Lan is considered an important tradition of the Northeastern people's traditions because it is a merit made about the expression of worship among the main sustenance of the people is rice [Isaraphorn Prasertsri, 2017: 11] [7].

Therefore, the researchers are interested in studying Boon Khun Lan inheriting the legend in Buddhism by studying the history of importance, evolution over the ages, and Isan wisdom arising in this merit in order to inherit and preserve the good traditions of Buddhism in the future.

2) History and importance of Boon Khun Lan

Boon Khun Lan is a tradition that has a long history and is related to Buddhism. Because in Boon Khun Lan, there is a process of making merit, including giving alms, undertaking to observe the precepts, and listening to sermons, which have a history and are important according to the era as follows;

2.1) Buddha Era

Boon Khun Lan is a merit-making ceremony for the rice that has been threshed and piled up on the rice threshing floor. The origin of doing this because whoever farms a lot before carrying it into the barn. It is a charitable act to increase wealth and happiness. By taking the story in the Dhammapada as the reason that the religion of Kassapa Sammasam Buddha. There were two brothers and sisters working in the same place. When rice became milk rice time, the younger brother would invite the elder brother to cook rice porridge (Mathupayasa) for the monks. The Buddha was the head, but the elder brother refused. So, they agreed to divide the fields into different parts. When the younger brother owned the land that was allocated, therefore he offered alms as satisfied counted 9 times [Kh. (Thai) 26/303/318] [8] It was when rice is rice porridge (Mathupayasa) such as offering Yakult 1 time, Khao Pho Mao 1 time, putting in Lan 1 time, making Lan 1 time, Barn collection time 1 and made a wish that he would become an Arahant in the future. When it came to the religion of Gotama Buddha, his younger brother was born as a son of a great Brahman named Annakondanna, he was ordained and became an Arahant before the disciple and was the first disciple of the Buddha.

As for the brother, he was unable to offer alms 9 times. He gave only once, that is, at the time the rice farming was finished, he set his wish for becoming a noble monk in the future. When it came to the era of the Gotama Buddha, he was born Subhaddaparibajaka. When the final Bodhisattva was approaching, the Buddha would enter Nirvana, which came to raise doubts. At the end of the sermon, the Buddha preached the Dhamma. Therefore, he was attained in Anagamiphala as the last noble person in Buddhism [Kh. (Thai) 1/87-90] [9] This is because of the virtue of giving less rice than his younger brother. Farmers, when they know the virtue of this, therefore, it was popular to make merit by giving rice in the field. It is a tradition of the Isan people to continue later. From the aforementioned history, it can be demonstrated that the morals derived from this story are: 1) receiving merit made in past life 2) making merit and setting the mind to pray well, will get good results 3) good deeds always heal those who do good deeds, people who do good deeds with good intentions would definitely get good results, good deeds always heal those who do good deeds.

2.2) Post-Buddha Era

According to traditions in the period after Buddhism into the urban society, particularly in the Isan Ban Hao or "Heet Sib Song Kong Sib Si". When it comes to the first, and second, lunar months. There will be a ceremony or merit tradition for the prosperity of the farmers, namely "Boon Khun Lan" [Charubuatra Ruangsuwan, 2002: 18] [10] The meaning of the word "Khun" means to multiply or make it more. As for the word "Lan", it means a large courtyard for threshing rice. Originally, the location of the mound was high near the rice fields, smooth the soil, then bringing buffalo manure to mix with water, smoothing for the rice sheaves and there was an area for threshing in front. Bringing the threshed rice to pile up high is called "Khun Lan" [Pramod Thasanasuwan, 2003: 36] [11] Boon Khun Lan will do it in whose field it is, or in whose house it is or there is persuasion to gather adjacent rice fields or nearby houses and decide on which day to make merit. Making merit Boon Khun Lan must prepare a place to make merit at their threshing floor. After that, the monks were invited to come and chant the Buddha's chanting, arranging perfumed water and sprinkling the holy thread around the rice sheaves. When the monks finished the Buddha's chanting, food would be offered to monks. Then it will bring rice, fish, and food to take care of relatives and grandchildren and those who participated in making merit. Monks finished eating food, they will be pouring holy water on the rice sheaves, the host, and everyone who participated in the event. After that, they will give a blessing

and return to the temple. The host will bring the remaining holy water to sprinkle on the cows, and buffaloes, as well as tools for farming [Samlee Raksuthi, 2010:48][12]

2.3) Modern times

Boon Khun Lan, given the meaning of the ceremony, is the merit that is made to make a good fortune for the villagers. And it's a thankful worship of all the sacred things that are related to rice. Whether it's a Phi Poo Ta ghost, Ta Haek ghost, or a Phosop goddess, etc. Who gave abundant rice [Charubuatra Ruangsuwan, 2002: 19] [13] Making a merit of Boon Khun Lan, many villages may do it at different times. Because harvesting rice may take time depending on the farming area and labor available. But it will be done during the second month or during the month of January. The reason for this kind of merit-making is because whoever farms a lot of rice before carrying or transporting rice to the barn would like to make merit to be auspicious to increase wealth and happiness for themselves and their families. Location procedure, as for the place, it is mostly used in the temple area, which in the past was actually used as a threshing floor. That is, we will now the grass to clear and then mix buffalo dung with water and pour it over and tread smoothly to form a threshing floor. But nowadays, there is more progress, so it is popular to use plastic patios to lay in suitable places in temples or in designated community places before the villagers' merit day. They will bring paddy to gather at the threshing floor as specified. How much one can bring depends on faith or how much productivity is important [Sunee Prasongbandit, 2003:43][14]

Rituals, when the merit-making date has been set, relatives are told to attend the merit-making in the evening by inviting a number of monks to come and pray at the threshing floor where the Triple Gems are worshiped. Take the holy thread around the base of the Buddha image and the water container. The holy thread can be stretched through the monks for them to hold while chanting the Buddha image and continue to stretch around the yard and stack. When the monks complete the chanting, there is a sermon to celebrate 1 chapter, or there can be a sermon in the morning after offering food to the monks. At night, there may be an amusement such as Mor Lam Klom or others, depending on the arrangement. In the morning there is an offering of food for alms. After the Buddha's food, if they had not yet preached at night, the sermon is now finished. Monks sprinkled holy water on the participants. Participants bring their favorite holy water to their fields. Because they believe that in the next year, the seedings in the field will grow well without any enemies destroying them and will pour water to dedicate merit to deceased relatives through all the gods. After earning merit, they will bless the rainy season. The rice in the field will flourish [Pramod Thasanasuwan, 2003: 23][15].

Nowadays, Boon Khun Lan has gradually faded away due to the lack of interest in its practice, In addition, today the peasants do not have a threshing floor like before. When the harvest is finished and bundle the grain into bundles and carried together around the field without a threshing floor. After that, the rice milling machine is used to remove the paddy grains from the straw into the sacks. However, there are still some villages that still gather to make merit by bringing in a pile called "Kum Khao Yai", which will be called "Boon Kum Khao Yai" instead of making merit Boon Khun Lan [Sunee Prasongbandit, 2003: 41][16].

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that making merit and giving alms in the Boon Khun Lan tradition is very important. In the past, it was done in the rice fields. Later, we gathered them together at the temple and set up merit at the temple instead to maintain Heet Khong. The main purpose is, first it's a merit-making dedication to Phra Mae Pho Sop, second, for the unity of the community, third, it is the recruitment of capital. If in the past, it will be done in the rice field but nowadays culture or prosperity has arrived. This merit-making must bring the unhashed rice grains together at the temple or at the designated place of the community according to their beliefs. We can see that when making merit, all Buddhists are determined because they believe that they will receive merit as mentioned above. For this reason, Isan people have adhered to this practice until today.

3) The continuation of the legend of Boon Khun Lan

Boon Khun Lan is a tradition of Isan people that shows the spirit of the community that has existed through agriculture for a long time with the fertility of the land with gratitude for rice that nourishes the lives of all people. In addition, it shows the power of the cooperation of the community to inherit the strong spirit of the peasants [Samlee Raksuthi, 2010:52][17] In the Bai Sri Su Khawn ceremony Isan people believe that Phra Mae Pho Sop has the power to inspire rice to flourish, bring fertility to the peasants who worship. The ceremony to worship the Phra Mae Pho

Sop was popular in the later period when the rice was harvested by bringing the rice to the middle of the threshing floor and performing a Bai Si Su Khawn rice. Or when the threshing is finished, there will be a large pile of paddy in the middle of the threshing floor. Isan people call the big pile of rice husks as Kum Khao Yai [Charuwan Thammawat, 2007: 26] [18] And will perform a Brahmin ceremony according to the tradition of the ancestors called "Rice receiving ceremony". Because it is believed that we harvest rice and thresh rice, we trample rice with our feet. Therefore, it is necessary to attend the ceremony to worship the Phra Mae Pho Sop in order to ask for forgiveness for the prosperity of oneself and the family for the well-being [Sunee Prasongbandit, 2003: 45] [19] Making Boon Khun Lan is a merit-making ceremony held after the harvest. It is bringing rice to gather in the middle of the house in order to raise the spirits and make merit together every year. If any year it rains, it must be good and the product is plentiful. The pile of rice will be extraordinarily high. Which will be done in the first, and second, lunar months which is January-February of every year. After harvesting the rice, villagers will pile up the bundles of harvested rice that have been harvested and pile them up in the rice field as they believe that rice is a living plant that is guarded by gods. That deity was named "Mae Pho Sop". [Pramod Thasanasuwan, 2003: 41] [20].

From the study, it can be seen that making a merit of Boon Khun Lan has been carried on from ancient times to the present, with the main purpose firstly, to commemorate the kindness of the farmers and the merit of rice and water, secondly, to jointly provide funds for temples or communities to fund the maintenance of Buddhism. In this donation, the villagers will not donate money but will donate paddy too. The reason is that the peasants have no money but have rice which is the first product of their labor, and thirdly, to make merit according to Buddhist principles with the rice in the barn itself.

4) Isan wisdom in Boon Khun Lan

Wisdom is the knowledge, ideas, beliefs, abilities, and experiences that a group of people gained from their accumulated experiences in adapting and living in an ecosystem or natural environment and a socio-cultural environment with the development of succession. It is the knowledge, thought, beliefs, abilities, and clarity that result from the use of intellect to adapt to various conditions. In the area where the community resides, the community in the northeast has a unique thought process especially related to Buddhism and the way of life. Therefore, it appears as Isan wisdom in Boon Khun Lan as follows;

1) Intellectual property

Intellectual property means works resulting from the invention, or creation of human beings which emphasizes the productivity of intelligence and skill. Regardless of the type of creation or the way of expressing it [Department of intellectual property, Ministry of Commerce, 2009: 7] [21] Boon Khun Lan is regarded as one of the intellectual property due to the concept of the sages of the northeastern region, there are guidelines for practice that are unique to the region such as named "Khun Lan" which means increase or make more. The word "Lan" means a place for threshing rice which brings the threshed rice to a high pile called "Khun Lan" [Bamphen Na Ubon, 2007: 56] [22] There are also rituals that are distinctive and unique in the Northeast region, have a gift of rice, make a rice gift box, there are accessories to decorate. Besides the huge pile of rice, there is also a Bai Si Su Khawn offering, Pha Nung Phae Sabai that is prepared to worship Phra Mae Pho Sop. Isan or Northeast, therefore, is a region with a variety of arts and cultures, and traditions. Isan knowledge and local wisdom that ancestors have inherited from each other. It reflects the way of life, beliefs, values, and religions until it becomes a unique and beautiful intellectual heritage [Ministry of Culture, 2018: 8] [23] It should be promoted, protected, and preserved the intellectual heritage of the Isan people from deterioration and aim to create awareness among the people in the nation to realize the value of culture as well as encouraging the community to participate in the inheritance, transmission, rehabilitation, and development of local Isan cultural heritage to honor the wisdom of the ancestors.

2) Unity-building activities

Making a merit of Boon Khun Lan nowadays is not a one-man merit like in the past. But it is a gathering of people in families, communities, and villages, some of them are sub-districts or districts or at the provincial level. As a result, working alone is not able to complete the task. If successful, it may not be timely. Therefore, we have to work hard together to help each other, giving rise to great power "Unity" [Ministry of Education, 2017: 142] [24] Unity is a virtue that supports various activities done together to achieve success as desired.

Boon Khun Lan is therefore a merit of great unity. Because we have to cooperate together from the first day of preparation, relying on the faith and unity of the community. It gathered grain from many peasants into one large heap, decorating the place both as a monk ceremony and Brahmin ceremonies to be neat and tidy according to traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. From the preparation from the first day until the last day, it can be considered the power of the way of faith and unity that is charming with a distinctive identity that is different from general merit-making.

3) Policy of Making-merit

Boon Khun Lan tradition is scheduled to be performed in the second month, therefore, it is also called Boon Duean Yi. As the ancestors have tied a poem to teach the villagers to prepare before making merit that

“Therng Rue Doo Duean Yi Ma Hot Laew Hai Nimon Phrasong Ong Chao Ma Tang Suad Mongkol
Ao Boon Khun Khao Khao Pa Ha Mai Hed Lua Ya Dai Long Luem Thim Heet Kao Kong Derm Hao
Der”

It means that when it comes to the season of the second month, the monks are invited to offer auspicious prayers to make merit and making-merit Boon Khun Khao to procure wood to make firewood for use in cooking, let's not forget our ancient traditions [Charuwan Thammawat, 2007: 24] [25] Therefore, before making merit for the northeastern people's courtyard, there is a tradition called Pai Ao Lua, that is, every villager has to Ao Lua, take firewood. Isan people believe that in ancient times, Charcoal and firewood were used to cook food on a regular basis, so as not to be difficult to find firewood from time to time. Therefore, it is regarded that taking one day in the second month, which was the month after the harvesting in the field, was finished, go to the forest to gather firewood for use throughout the year. Lua means dead bamboo used to make firewood. Firewood refers to all types of heartwood that can be burned into charcoal. After the villagers have prepared the firewood, they will set a date for merit-making in Khun Lan also known as merit-making Kwan Khao along with an Isan scholar who also tied Phaya about the merit-making of Khun Lan that [Sawing Booncherm, 2006: 162] [26].

“Hod Duean Song Ya cha Khao Mai Pla Man Hai Hao Ma Hom Kan
Taeng Boon Prathai Khao Cheon Chao Ma Hom Tao
Ya Pha Kan Khi Thi Boon Khun Lan Tang Tae Ki Pha Kan Hai Hak Sa”

It means during the second month, which is the season for new rice and fish, let everyone comes together to make merit Phrathai Khao (Boon Khun Lan) to shake off the stinginess and brought together to preserve Heet Khong.

It can be seen that the ancient Isan Scholar have tied Phaya as a guideline for making merit during the second lunar month to be the same guideline by establishing a policy of making merit in the form of a pattern in order to maintain the inheritance of good traditions according to the Buddhist way to last as long as possible.

5) New Explicit Knowledge

The Boon Khun Lan has an interesting history starting from the era of the Buddha, the legend of the Dhammapada which has individual alms for the benefit of anyone. When it comes to the period after the Buddha's era, there was an evolution to start making food within the family which takes place in their rice fields. When it arrives in the present era, it has changed to do activities within the community or village using the place that the public set up. Boon Khun Lan has the wisdom of Isan people perfectly inserted, namely intellectual property arising from rituals, building unity arising from activities, and the policy of making merit arising from literature which is a perfect continuation of the legend from Buddhism to wisdom.

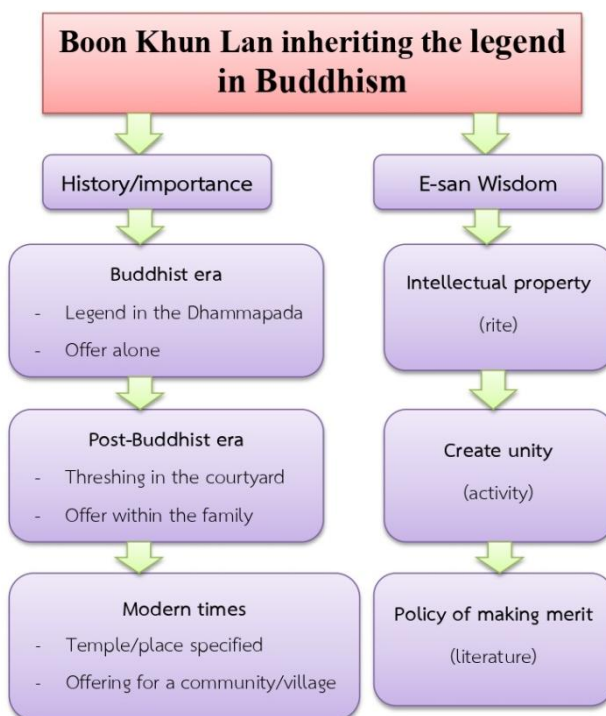


Figure 1 New Explicit Knowledge

6) Conclusion

The Boon Khun Lan ceremony is a tradition of farmers in the Northeast held in the second month of the Isan calendar every year. Therefore, it is also called “Boon Duean Yi”. Making merit in the courtyard in each area will not be done at the same time depending on when the rice harvest will be finished. The Boon Khun Lan tradition has been influenced by Buddhist texts which had been inherited until now and have evolved to change the practice over time to keep it up to date in that society as well as inserting moral values in merit traditions in order to be a way of life for farmers or Buddhists according to the doctrine and to increase in doing good deeds which will result in a happy life in the end.

7) Bibliography

- [1] A. (Thai)120/62/23cited in Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya. (1996). Thai Tipitaka: Thai Version. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press.
- [2] Phra Dhammapitaka (P.A. Payutto). (2011). Things that Thai people should understand correctly. 3rd edition. Bangkok: Sahadhammika Co, Ltd.
- [3] Boonmee Thaenkaew. (2003). Histories and moral philosophy. Bangkok: Odeonstore.
- [4] Boonkerd Pimworamethakul and Nipaporn Pimworamethakul. (2003). Heet Khong Khalam. Khon Kaen: Klung Na Na Vithya Press.
- [5] Isaraphorn Prasertsi. (2017). A study of Heet Sip Song for illustration design: A case study of merit in the fifth month (Songkran Festival). Bachelor of Applied Arts) Ubon Ratchathani: Ubon Ratchathani University.
- [6] Wanna Ratanaprasert. (2006). Making Khawn Khao. 3rd edition. Bangkok: Kurusapa Printing Ladphrao.
- [7] Isaraphorn Prasertsi. (2017). A study of Heet Sip Song for illustration design: A case study of merit in the fifth month (Songkran Festival). Bachelor of Applied Arts) Ubon Ratchathani: Ubon Ratchathani University.
- [8] Kh. (Thai) 26/303/318 cited in Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya. (1996). Thai Tipitaka: Thai Version. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press.

- [9] Kh. (Thai) 1/87-90 cited in Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya. (1996). Thai Tipitaka: Thai Version. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press.
- [10] Charubuatra Ruangsuwan. (2002). Heet Sip Song Khong Sip Si, the regime of the old Isan people. Bangkok: Isan Association Press.
- [11] Pramod Thasanasuwan. (2003). Isan 1. Bangkok: Thai watana Panich Co, Ltd.
- [12] Samlee Raksuthi. (2010). Inheriting the legend of the Isan tradition merit Festival. Bangkok: Patana Sukhsa Press.
- [13] Charubuatra Ruangsuwan. (2002). Heet Sip Song Khong Sip Si, the regime of the old Isan people. Bangkok: Isan Association Press.
- [14] Sunee Prasongbandit. (2003). The Twelve Months Tradition: A Changing Ritual. Bangkok: Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre.
- [15] Pramod Thasanasuwan. (2003). Isan 1. Bangkok: Thai watana Panich Co, Ltd.
- [16] Sunee Prasongbandit. (2003). The Twelve Months Tradition: A Changing Ritual. Bangkok: Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre.
- [17] Samlee Raksuthi. (2010). Inheriting the legend of the Isan tradition merit Festival. Bangkok: Patana Sukhsa Press.
- [18] Charuwan Thammawat. (2007). Principle of Isan. Bangkok: Aksornwatthana.
- [19] Sunee Prasongbandit. (2003). The Twelve Months Tradition: A Changing Ritual. Bangkok: Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre.
- [20] Pramod Thasanasuwan. (2003). Isan 1. Bangkok: Thai watana Panich Co, Ltd.
- [21] Department of intellectual property, Ministry of Commerce. (2009). Introduction to Intellectual Property. Nonthaburi: Roongsiri Greenprint Co, Ltd.
- [22] Bamphen Na Ubon. (2007). Folk beliefs related to the way of society in the northeastern region. Bangkok: Praepittaya.
- [23] Ministry of Culture. (2018). Isan wisdom heritage. Bangkok: The Agricultural Co-Operative Federation of Thailand Co, Ltd.
- [24] Ministry of Education. (2017). National Education Plan 2017-2036. 2nd edition. Bangkok: Office of the Education Council.
- [25] Charuwan Thammawat. (2007). Principle of Isan. Bangkok: Aksornwatthana.
- [26] Sawing Booncherm. (2006). Isan Heritage. Ubon Ratchathani. Moradok Isan Press.