

Karen people revived their ancient ritual, "Kroh Yee" (village closure) to fight against Covid-19

โดย AIMN - 19/03/2020



Karen people in a number of highland communities begin to shut-down their villages one by one, not to allow entering nor getting out at all times. These village shut-downs were announced in conjunction with the revival of the ancient ritual called, "Kroh Yee" (or village closure). It was found that this ritual was used seventy years ago when there was an outbreak of cholera. Local knowledge holders believe that there would be enough food for annual consumption if a pandemic occurs and the village needs to be blockaded, but the town's people may run away to the forest for their survival.

What is "Kroh Yee"?

On an interview with Prasert Trakansupakorn and Wuth Boonlerd, the two Karen scholars, Indigenous Media Network (IMN) was informed about the origin as well as the meaning of this Kroh Yee important ritual. "Kroh" means "to close, to block, or to prevent" and "Yee" or "Hee" means "village". Occasionally, "Kroh Klae" was referred to as "road block". In most cases, the ritual is expected to be performed near the entrance to the village. There are two types of this ritual. One is performed annually called, "Bua Yee Bua Kho", or ritual to remove community bad luck, by shutting-down the village from 3, to 7, or to 9 days depending on the decision of each community leader. At present, Karen communities in Thung Hua Chang district, Lamphun province are practicing this ritual mostly in the sixth month of the lunar calendar. If by any chance, during the community closure, an outsider happens to enter the community, he/she has to stay there to the end of the ritual.

Another type of more complicate ritual which is happening at this time, but not so often, is usually performed in serious cases, for instance, when several people die of unknown cause, or incurable pandemic occurs, each community is required to shut-down and to prohibit internal household visit. This ritual was used around seventy years ago when there was an outbreak of cholera. This type of

ritual can be observed easily, even by an outsider, from the sign of six pointed star-shape made from bamboo called, "Talaew"; with more serious case the sign, "Talaew" is accompanied by the replica of spear, sword, or other weapons hanging at the entrance of the community and it implies the most serious incidence.

In addition, another ritual called, "Wee Doh", or dispelling of communal malevolent spirits is performed by community ceremonial leader who has to prepare a bamboo basket containing chili, salt, tobacco, Acacia concinna, turmeric, and grains of rice to execute this ritual. The ceremonial leader, together with community members cast all malevolent spirits out of the community and take the whole bamboo basket with its paraphernalia to throw away outside the community to end the ritual and that spot is referred to as "Doo-eu" (or no-man's zone). "Wee Doh" is performed when there are several illnesses at the same time, but no dying incidence yet, or when bad, but not serious, omen occurs in the community.



A road access to the village is blocked with "Kroh Yee" ritual / Khunmaeruam, Chiangmai, Thailand / Photo by Chuikait Hongarhan

How to make a living when community is shut-down?

It is well-known that Karen communities are mostly located in the highland with difficult terrain and isolated from modernity. Many Karen communities may lack of buying power to launch their food hoarding. Then, how do these Karen communities make their living when they have to shut-down for several weeks or even months?

According to Dr. Prasert Trakansuphakon, Ban Hin Lad Nai in Wiang Pa Pao district, Chiang Rai province is a good example of self-subsistence economy. The community is capable of feeding all members throughout the year. There are rotational fields with multiple food crops, terraced paddy fields, and agro-forestry in the community. Without main line electricity, Hin Lad Nai makes use of firewood and solar panels for their energy consumption. Apart from farm products, villagers have an abundance of non-timber forest products to gather from. Thus, community forest is equivalent to the supermarket for the whole community. If the village is compelled to launch its community closure, its members can survive conveniently throughout the year. Only a few things the community has to depend on the market, salt for instance.

When there are illnesses, Hin Lad Nai is fully equipped with indigenous knowledge in traditional health care and remedy. However, Dr. Prasert admits that access to information and ICT is considered necessary for the community to catch up with the situation outside.

IMN English by Chupinit Kedmanee

Share this:



Related

The death of 17 Indigenous students reflects the poor government policies on education.
01/06/2016
In "ไม่มีหมวดหมู"

Save the date! Indigenous Peoples Day, 2017
31/07/2017
In "ชาวประชาสัมพันธ์"

New York - Indigenous Peoples pledged their commitment to take action on Climate Change.
26/09/2019
In "ข่าว"

A IMN

ขอบเขี่ยน ขอบเล่าเรื่องที่ไม่มีใครอยากเล่า เรื่องที่สังคมยังไม่ค่อยรู้ หรือยังไม่ให้ความสนใจมากนัก เปิดเผยข้อมูลที่เป็นอีกฝั่งของเหรียญ



FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM
@IMNVOICES



วัฒนธรรมพื้นบ้าน
แห่งประเทศไทย ประจำปี 2562
"แม่ รามรา รามโลก"
8-10 สิงหาคม 2562
มหาวิทยาลัยแม่โจ้ อ.สันทราย จ.เชียงใหม่

รายละเอียด
สแกน

