

BELIEF ON SUPERSTITIOUS SPIRIT AND HOLY MONK: A REFLECTION ON CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY DURING THE 2018 CAVE TRAPPED CRISIS IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

The cultural psychology is an interesting issue that can explain several social phenomena. In some specific phenomena, the specific behavior of the local people in some settings might be observed and explained by cultural background via cultural psychology principle. In this short article, the authors present and discuss on the observation on belief on superstitious spirit and holy monk reflected from the 2018 cave trapped crisis in Thailand, a tropical country in Indochina.

KEYWORDS: Cave, Trapped, Cultural Psychology, Holy Spirit, Monk.

INTRODUCTION

The cultural psychology is an interesting issue that can explain several social phenomena. In some specific phenomena, the specific behavior of the local people in some settings might be observed and explained by cultural background via cultural psychology principle. In this short article, the authors present and discuss on the observation on belief on superstitious spirit and holy monk reflected from the 2018 cave trapped crisis in Thailand, a tropical country in Indochina.

CASE OF 2018 CAVE TRAPPED CRISIS IN THAILAND

This crisis occurred in June-2018, a group of local boys in a football team along with their coach visited to a big cave in northern Thailand and were trapped in the cave due to the floods. The

attempts to rescue were done by both national and international collaboration until final success. During the event, there many interesting episodes that reflected the belief on superstitious spirit and holy monk expressed by the local people.

BACKGROUND BELIEF

The background belief of the local people is the Buddhism plus the belief on superstitious spirit. At the site of the cave, there is a local tale of a mythical ancient princess who died at this case and become the local great spirits (locally named Jao Mae Nangnorn). Since this area of Thailand is next to Shan state of Myanmar, many traditional beliefs from Myanmar can also be seen in this area.

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Locally, the belief of Buddhism and holy spirit is generally practiced in this area. The rooted cultural psychology can explain that the belief on both things is the local way to maintain the peacefulness in the community. Buddhism for local people represents the principle to do good things and avoid doing bad things whereas the belief on superstitious spirit reflects the respectfulness to the power of nature that results in environmental protection.

DURING THE CRISIS, OBSERVED ACTIVITIES

During the 2018 cave crisis, there are many emerging activities that are classified as superstitious and Buddhist practiced. Some

practiced are considered kinds of spiritual processing and might be misused by some bad persons. The praying to the Buddha image and the statue representing the local great spirits was mainly performed. The famous venerable monks in the region were also invited to pray for the cave victims (see clip at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGwYJke9Hac>). This phenomenon is very interesting and can be well explained by psychology principle. When one get hopeless, the way to promote hope is very important. The attachment to holy thing is the basic way to create the hope and it is no doubt that this is also observed among local people during 2018 cave crisis in Thailand.



Figure 1. Belief on superstitious spirit and holy monk observed during 2018 cave crisis in Thailand

DISCUSSION

As noted by Hegeman, "*Historical connections are suggested between the domination of 1 culture by another and dissociative spiritual and religious responses to that oppression* [1]." In the cave of 2019 cave crisis in Thailand, the natural disaster is considered the stress that triggers the cultural psychological response of the local people. The

way that the local people express by spiritual and religious practiced might seem strange for the outsiders. However, it can be well explained by the rooted culture. The use of the way that they believe to create hope is the basic way to overcome any problem. From external view, it might be missed interpret as an innocent practice or delusion [2] but it is a good local way, during the crisis, for mind and social support of the local

people. The paranormal expression can usually be simple interpreted as spiritual depending on the cultural background and religious traditions of each community [3].

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None

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