

# COVID-19 Outbreak, Change of Traditional Practice and New Normal at Famous Holy Site during Chinese New Year Period: View from Indochina

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## Abstract

COVID-19 becomes the worldwide problem. It affects several aspects of activities. In view of culture, the impact on traditional practice is interesting but little mentioned. Here, the authors present and discuss on the change of traditional practice and new normal at famous holy site during Chinese New Year period with specific situation reference in Indochina.

**Keywords:** Practice, COVID-19, Traditional, Chinese New Year, New Normal.

## Introduction

COVID-19 becomes the worldwide problem. It affects several aspects of activities. In view of culture, the impact on traditional practice is interesting but little mentioned. Here, the authors present and discuss on the change of traditional practice and new normal at famous holy site during Chinese New Year period with specific situation reference in Indochina.

## Case study

The case study is from Thailand, a tropical country in Indochina. During Chinese New Year, it is a holiday and local people usually visit to holy site for pay respect to god and Buddha images. In year 2021, COVID-19 is still a local problem. The “new normal” practice to promote social distancing aiming at disease spreading prevention is widely practice. The impact on traditional practice of at famous holy site during Chinese New Year period can be seen. The important occurrences are hereby listed.

### a) Chasing away of the disease

In Chinese New Year period, some holy site might allow old people with strict religious practice who are leader in religious practice at the holy site (locally called *เถ่ามั่ง* or *首席* in Chinese) to perform a spiritual practice to chase way the disease.

### **b) Screening before entering holy shrine**

Screening at the door of the shrine is common. The thermo screening and applying hand sanitizing agent before enter the holy shrine becomes the new rule. Additional a signboard warning for the risk of COVID-19 spreading might be issued.

### **c) Barrier setting**

The plastic barrier setting is common and it is usually set inside the shrine at the areas crowded with visitors (such as the point for holy paper distribution).

### **d) No prostrate**

Some holy sites do not allow visitor to prostrate at the floor. Only standing and paying respectfulness is allowed. Also, many setting do not permit use of joss stick to prevent the problem of PM 2.5.

### **e) Holy site closure**

Some holy sites that are located at the area with high chance of disease spreading might be closed. The example is a vegetarian house namely Rong J ThayPikul at Saraburi province. The closure of the holy site might be a good way for cutting circuit of disease spreading.

## **Discussion**

During Chinese New Year period, it is the local tradition that Chinese ethnic people will go to holy site for worshipping of gods and Buddha images. During COVID-19 outbreak period, it is no doubt that there might be the risk due to lack of good social distancing. The new normal concept is applied for disease control at the holy site. In fact, the disease control during pilgrimage is a well-known issue when there is a new emerging disease outbreak [1-2].

Many sites use the screening at the door and one way rowing circulation of visitor inside the building of holy shrine. The screening at the floor is usually prohibited. Some places are closed. These new normal things reflect impact of COVID-19 on rooted traditional practice. It can show the abruptly change of culture. An old person might not feel good when there is a rapid change.

One might believe the magic power of the holy site to cure for disease and bring lucky. When a signboard indicating that there might be disease contact from visiting to the holy site, one might not feel frustrate and the topic might become an argument in view of culturalism.



**Figure 1.**Some new normal at a famous holy shrine.

In the picture, people is waiting to receive holy paper from the shrine and there is a specific plastic barrier to prevent direct contact between visitor and shrine officer.

**Conflict of interest:** None

## References

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