

The Contribution of Khmer Local Wisdom to Social Cohesion

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Abstract

The objective of this paper, the Contribution of Khmer Local Wisdom to Social Cohesion is to foster Cambodian culture, which has been sustained for many generations from the past to the present day. Khmer local wisdom encompasses the traditional knowledge, practices, and cultural values that have been cultivated and preserved by Cambodian communities over generations. This article focuses on 1) to explores the role of Khmer local wisdom in fostering social cohesion, particularly in the context of Cambodia's historical and contemporary challenges. 2) to apply the local wisdom, starting from community traditions, religious practices, and conflict resolution mechanisms, the study highlights in the real situation in the kingdom. 3) how to these cultural assets contribute to building trust, solidarity, and harmony within and across diverse groups. importantly, the findings reveal that Khmer local wisdom serves not only as a repository of cultural identity but also as a dynamic tool for addressing social fragmentation, promoting reconciliation, and enhancing communal resilience.

Significantly, by investigating its practices in areas such as intergenerational relationships, community rituals, and local governance, the article underscores the enduring relevance of Khmer cultural heritage in strengthening societal bonds and fostering sustainable peace in Cambodia.

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Also, this academic paper has been done through the documentary sources such as Khmer books, report, journal articles, and other sources, related to physical evidence with real locals practicing of own local wisdom in the Kingdom of Cambodia so far.

Keywords: Local Wisdom; Cultural Perspectives; Collective Labor

Introduction

The contribution of Khmer local wisdom is a profound expression of Cambodia's cultural identity, reflecting centuries of accumulated knowledge, practices, and values. It is a dynamic and evolving body of wisdom that encompasses various aspects of life, from community relationships and moral guidance to environmental stewardship and spiritual practices.

On the other hand, the contribution of Khmer local wisdom is more than a collection of customs and beliefs; it is a living embodiment of Cambodia's resilience, creativity, and spirit. It encapsulates the values, knowledge, and practices that have enabled Khmer society to thrive through generations. As Cambodia looks to the future, embracing and revitalizing this wisdom will be crucial in fostering social cohesion, sustainable development, and cultural preservation. Khmer local wisdom demonstrates to the enduring relevance of tradition in promoting harmony and balance in society.

In Cambodia, social cohesion has often been challenged by historical traumas, including decades of conflict, political instability, and economic transitions. Despite these adversities, the resilience of Khmer culture has played a pivotal role in rebuilding social trust and fostering unity. Local wisdom, transmitted across generations, has served as a guiding framework for interpersonal relationships, collective action, and community harmony. Practices such as collective labor (provas dai), religious ceremonies, and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms are integral to this wisdom and remain vital in promoting cohesion within diverse and evolving Cambodian communities.

This paper examines the contributions of Khmer local wisdom to social cohesion, focusing on its role in fostering solidarity, reducing tensions, and creating a shared sense of purpose. By exploring the interplay between traditional knowledge and modern societal needs, the study aims to shed light on the enduring relevance of Khmer heritage

in addressing contemporary challenges. Ultimately, understanding and revitalizing this cultural legacy can offer valuable insights into strengthening social bonds and fostering sustainable peace, both within Cambodia and in similar contexts globally.

The Source of the Contribution of Khmer Local Wisdom

Khmer local wisdom is deeply rooted in Cambodia's rich history, cultural traditions, and spiritual beliefs. It has evolved over centuries, drawing from various sources that reflect the Khmer people's interaction with their environment, their spiritual practices, and their collective experiences. These sources include oral traditions, religious teachings, historical events, and the agrarian lifestyle that has defined Cambodian society for generations.

1. Oral Traditions and Folklore

One of the primary sources of Khmer local wisdom is the oral traditions passed down through storytelling, proverbs, and folk tales. These narratives often carry moral lessons, practical advice, and guidelines for social behavior. Stories such as the "Reamker" (the Khmer version of the Ramayana) and numerous folk tales serve as both entertainment and educational tools, shaping values such as respect, humility, and communal responsibility.

2. Religious Teachings

Buddhism, particularly Theravada Buddhism, has profoundly influenced Khmer local wisdom. The teachings of the Buddha, integrated into daily life, emphasize compassion, mindfulness, and the pursuit of harmony. Monks and temples play a vital role in transmitting these teachings, serving as centers of moral guidance and cultural preservation. Additionally, elements of animism and Brahmanism, interwoven with Buddhist practices, contribute to the spiritual dimensions of Khmer wisdom, particularly in rituals and festivals.

3. Historical Experiences

Cambodia's historical journey, including the rise and fall of the Khmer Empire and periods of conflict and resilience, has significantly shaped its local wisdom. The lessons learned from navigating challenges such as war, colonization, and political turmoil have

been embedded into collective knowledge, fostering a culture of resilience and adaptability.

4. Agrarian Lifestyle

The predominantly agrarian way of life has also been a critical source of Khmer wisdom. Farming, seasons, and the way people work together in ‘provas dai’ show how people and nature are linked. This wisdom, centered on sustainability and cooperation, continues to guide rural communities in maintaining their livelihoods and fostering social unity.

5. Community and Family Structure

Khmer local wisdom is also derived from the tightly-knit community and family networks that have long been the foundation of Cambodian society. Elders, as custodians of tradition, play a crucial role in mentoring younger generations, ensuring the continuity of cultural knowledge. The emphasis on filial piety, mutual respect, and collective well-being remains a cornerstone of Khmer identity.

In understanding of these sources, it becomes evident that Khmer local wisdom is not static but a dynamic and adaptive body of knowledge. It reflects the Cambodian people’s ability to draw from their rich heritage while responding to contemporary challenges, making it an enduring asset for social cohesion and cultural preservation.

As following summary of the source of Khmer local wisdom has been found in social context through below:



Figure 1 The Source of the Contribution of Khmer Local Wisdom

Conclusion

Khmer local wisdom promotes collective responsibility, mutual respect, and communal harmony. It is reflected in communal farming, elder-led conflict mediation, and cultural-religious ceremonies that strengthen social bonds.

Its core strength lies in conflict resolution, guided by compassion, non-violence, and restorative justice rooted in Buddhist principles, crucial for post-conflict trust and unity.

Khmer wisdom also champions diversity, tolerance, and inclusion, fostering dialogue and cooperation in Cambodia's multi-ethnic society.

Amid modernization and globalization, it offers sustainable solutions-from ecological farming to cultural preservation-while remaining dynamic and adaptable.

Beyond Cambodia, its principles of interconnectedness, ethical living, and mutual support resonate with global movements for justice, sustainability, and peacebuilding.

Preserving and revitalizing Khmer wisdom is a strategic imperative-vital for building a just, inclusive, and resilient society, and a valuable contribution to global solidarity and harmony.

Discussion

This paper delves into the essence of Khmer local wisdom, rooted in oral traditions, religious teachings, historical memory, agrarian practices, and communal structures. It underscores the dynamic nature of this wisdom-constantly evolving to meet contemporary challenges while preserving its timeless core. The discussion demonstrates how Khmer wisdom shapes vital fields such as conflict resolution, sustainability, community development, education, mental well-being, and resilience. The article contends that integrating this traditional wisdom with modern realities enables Cambodia to safeguard its cultural heritage while driving sustainable societal progress.

However, a more critical engagement with its limitations, potential conflicts with modernity, and empirical evidence would enhance the robustness of the analysis. Addressing these aspects would provide a more balanced and rigorous analysis of the role Khmer wisdom plays in today's rapidly changing world.

In addition, the paper provides an in-depth analysis of Khmer local wisdom, emphasizing its historical and cultural significance. It connects traditional knowledge to contemporary challenges like sustainability and mental health, arguing that local wisdom is dynamic and adaptable. By integrating insights from anthropology, history, and social sciences, the paper highlights its relevance in social cohesion, particularly in conflict resolution and community development.

However, while the article presents Khmer wisdom in a positive light, it lacks a critical assessment of its limitations and does not provide empirical data or case studies to support its claims. Additionally, it overlooks regional variations and the impact of globalization, urbanization, and technological change on traditional knowledge.

New Knowledge from Khmer Local Wisdom

The contribution of Khmer local wisdom, though rooted in tradition, provides a rich foundation for generating new knowledge that addresses contemporary societal challenges. This process of knowledge creation involves adapting time-tested principles to modern contexts, ensuring their relevance in an evolving world. By examining and integrating elements of Khmer wisdom into current practices, several new insights emerge that contribute to various fields such as education, conflict resolution, environmental sustainability, and community development.

1. Integrative Approaches to Conflict Resolution

Khmer local wisdom, particularly traditional dispute resolution methods, offers valuable lessons for modern peace-building and conflict management. The practice of resolving disputes through dialogue and mediation, often facilitated by community elders or monks, emphasizes the principles of mutual respect, compromise, and restorative justice. This approach can inform modern frameworks for community-based conflict resolution, emphasizing reconciliation over retribution and fostering long-term harmony.

2. Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship

The Khmer people's agrarian lifestyle has cultivated an intimate understanding of environmental cycles, resource management, and sustainability. Practices such as rotational farming, water conservation through traditional irrigation systems like "baray,"

and reverence for nature reflect a deep ecological awareness. These practices can inspire new knowledge in sustainable agriculture, climate adaptation strategies, and biodiversity conservation, particularly in the face of environmental degradation and climate change.

3. Community-Centric Development Models

The collective spirit embedded in Khmer wisdom, exemplified by the "provas dai" (mutual aid) system, offers a blueprint for community-centric development. This principle of shared labor and mutual support can be adapted to modern cooperative models, fostering economic resilience and social cohesion. For example, applying this model to microfinance initiatives or community-based social enterprises can empower marginalized groups and reduce inequalities.

4. Cultural Education and Intergenerational Learning

Khmer local wisdom emphasizes the importance of preserving knowledge through storytelling, rituals, and oral traditions. This practice provides a framework for intergenerational learning, where elders pass down life lessons and cultural values to younger generations. Modern education systems can incorporate these methods to promote cultural heritage while fostering critical thinking and moral development.

5. Mindfulness and Mental Well-Being

Drawing from Buddhist teachings and traditional practices, Khmer local wisdom highlights the importance of mindfulness, compassion, and inner peace. These principles resonate strongly with modern approaches to mental health and well-being. Integrating Khmer mindfulness practices into therapeutic techniques or workplace wellness programs can offer innovative ways to promote mental resilience and emotional balance.

6. Adaptive Strategies for Resilience

The Cambodian people's ability to adapt and thrive despite historical adversities has created a reservoir of strategies for resilience. This knowledge can inform disaster management and recovery efforts, emphasizing community solidarity, resourcefulness, and spiritual strength. It highlights the importance of drawing from cultural assets to rebuild trust and cohesion in post-crisis scenarios.

By engaging with Khmer local wisdom in a critical and innovative manner, new knowledge emerges that not only preserves Cambodia's cultural heritage but also

contributes to addressing global challenges. This dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation underscores the transformative potential of local wisdom in shaping a more sustainable and harmonious future.

This new knowledge coming from the practices of Khmer local wisdom in society as following:

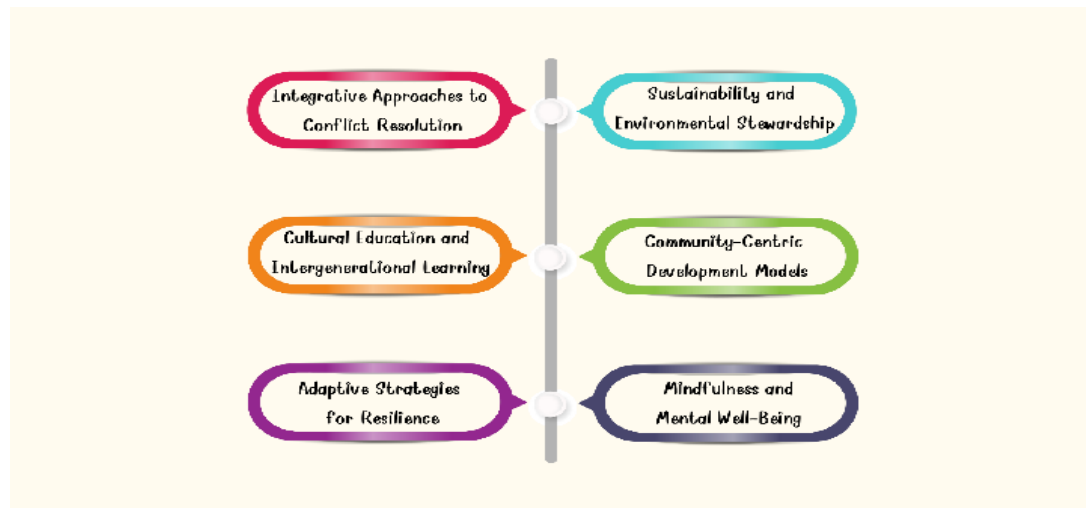


Figure 2 New Knowledge from Khmer Local Wisdom

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កម្ពុជសុរិយា៖ ទស្សនាវិទ្យា ផ្សាយខាងសាសនា និងអក្សរសាស្ត្រ ភ្នំពេញ បោះពុម្ពដោយ ពុទ្ធសាសនបណ្ឌិត្យ ឆ្នាំ ១៩៧១។

កែវ ណារ៉ុះ តន្ត្រី និងជីវិតខ្មែរ ភ្នំពេញ បោះពុម្ពដោយ បណ្ណាល័យ ឆតពណ៌រង្សី លើកទី២ ឆ្នាំ ២០១១។

យឹង ហុកឌី៖ អក្សរសិល្ប៍ខ្មែរ សតវត្សរ៍ទី២០ កវីនិពន្ធ និងកម្រងអត្ថបទ ភ្នំពេញ បោះពុម្ពផ្សាយដោយ បណ្ណាគារ អង្គរ ឆ្នាំ ២០០៧។

ប៉ាន់ វុត្តា៖ គ្រឹះទស្សនវិជ្ជាខ្មែរ (និក្ខេបបទបណ្ឌិត ឯកទេស ទស្សនវិជ្ជា) ភ្នំពេញ បោះពុម្ព លើកទី១ នៅរោងពុម្ព ជី វ៉ាយ ឆ្នាំ២០១៤។

ពុយ គា៖ កម្រងស្នាដៃក្រមង៉ុយ_ អ្នកព្រះកិរម្យភាសាអ៊ូ ហៅ ង៉ុយ (១៨៦៥-១៩៣៦) ភ្នំពេញ សហការជាមួយសេវាបោះពុម្ពផ្សាយរាហ៍ លើកទី២ ឆ្នាំ២០២០។

មៀង ប៉ុណ្ណៈ កម្រងឯកសារស្តីពី ប្រពៃណី និង ទំនៀមទម្លាប់ខ្មែរ ភាគទី១ បញ្ហាជាតិពន្ធុ វិទ្យា និងនរវិទ្យា ជំនួយដល់ការស្រាវជ្រាវ ភ្នំពេញ ចាត់ចែងបោះពុម្ពផ្សាយដោយ គ្រឹះស្ថានបោះពុម្ពផ្សាយ អង្គរ ឆ្នាំ២០០៧។

មៀង ប៉ុណ្ណៈ កម្រងឯកសារស្តីពី ប្រពៃណី និង ទំនៀមទម្លាប់ខ្មែរ ភាគទី២ បញ្ហាជាតិពន្ធុ វិទ្យា និងនរវិទ្យា ជំនួយដល់ការស្រាវជ្រាវ ភ្នំពេញ ចាត់ចែងបោះពុម្ពផ្សាយដោយ គ្រឹះស្ថានបោះពុម្ពផ្សាយ អង្គរ ឆ្នាំ២០០៨។

មៀង ប៉ុណ្ណៈ កម្រងឯកសារស្តីពី ប្រពៃណី និង ទំនៀមទម្លាប់ខ្មែរ ភាគទី៤ បញ្ហាជាតិពន្ធុ វិទ្យា និងនរវិទ្យា ជំនួយដល់ការស្រាវជ្រាវ ភ្នំពេញ ចាត់ចែងបោះពុម្ពផ្សាយដោយ គ្រឹះស្ថានបោះពុម្ពផ្សាយ អង្គរ ឆ្នាំ២០១២។

លាង ហាប់អាន៖ ព្រះរាជសម្ភារ កវីរាជសតវត្សរ៍ទី១៧ ភ្នំពេញ បោះពុម្ពឡើងវិញដោយ លោកស្រី ប៊ុនដន ឆ្នាំ ២០០៥។

វេទិកាជំនុំច្បាប់ខ្មែរ៖ កម្រងឯកសារសិក្សាសាកល្បងអំពី ទស្សនវិជ្ជាច្បាប់ខ្មែរពីបុរាណ ភ្នំពេញ បោះពុម្ពនៅព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា ឆ្នាំ ២០២៤។

- សុខ ប៊ុនធឿន៖ ប្រព័ន្ធច្បាប់ខ្មែរ ភ្នំពេញ បោះពុម្ពផ្សាយដោយអ្នកនិពន្ធ ឆ្នាំ ២០១៤។
- សិក្សាចក្រ៖ គន្លឹះខ្លះៗ ដើម្បីយល់អំពីទំនាក់ទំនង ដែលមានតាំងពីបួរលង់ រវាង
ប្រទេសខ្មែរ និងភូមិភាគខាងត្បូងនៃប្រទេសថៃ ក្នុងទស្សនាវដ្តីនៃមជ្ឈមណ្ឌល
ខេមរសិក្សា ចុះផ្សាយលេខ៦ បោះពុម្ពនៅប្រទេសកម្ពុជា ដោយរោងពុម្ព JSRC
ឆ្នាំ ២០០៤។
- ហ៊ែល ចំរើន៖ មរតកយុត្តិធម៌ខ្មែរ ភ្នំពេញ បោះពុម្ពឡើងវិញនៅព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា
ដោយរោងពុម្ព ដាយអ៊ីម៉ុន ព្រីនធីង ឆ្នាំ ២០១៩។