

Songkran

A Sprinkle of Thai Fiesta

由泰國發到香港的 in Hong Kong

歡樂潑水節

文、圖 梁名漢，香港中文大學人類學系

Text & Photography Rick Leung, Department of Anthropology,
The Chinese University of Hong Kong



Sa-nuk 是泰國人常常掛在口邊的一個詞，代表歡樂和好玩。泰國人真的很喜歡熱鬧，他們懂得如何從平淡的生活中尋找樂趣，所以他們經常笑臉迎人。在這個愛玩的民族裏，最令人們覺得特別歡樂的節日，就是宋干節，俗稱潑水節。宋干節的日期，正是

東南亞半島民族（柬埔寨、老撾、緬甸、雲南傣族）所相信的「新年」伊始，節日原意是在新年前夕和首兩天為來年行善祈福，當中包括向別人灑水的習俗，希望替別人沖走霉氣，帶有祝福的寓意。現代的潑水節則發展成炎炎夏日之中的街頭水戰。泰國人是香港主要的少數族裔，超過一萬名泰國人在港定居或工作，每年潑水節泰國人都會集中在九龍城歡度節日。通過認識泰國人在香港的潑水節，可以了解到泰國文化和兩地關係。

Sa-nuk is a common Thai word that means “joy” and “playfulness”. Thais really love fun, and they know how to make fun in their insipid life. To these larky people who often wear big smiles on their faces, the Songkran Festival - commonly known as the Water Festival - is recognized as their happiest time of the year. Songkran is the New Year's Day to communities on the Southeast Asian peninsula (including Cambodians, Laos, Burmese and the Dai people of Yunnan). The festival was meant to be lasting from New Year's Eve to the 2nd day of New Year for blessings of a start over. One of the customs is to splash water at one another to “cleanse bad luck” and bring good wishes. The modern Water Festival has become a street party to cool off the summer heat. As a major ethnic minority in Hong Kong, there are more than 10,000 Thais who live and work here. Every year they gather at Kowloon City to celebrate Songkran. You may get to know more about Thai cultures and the Thailand-Hong Kong relationship through this water fiesta in Hong Kong.

香港的泰國人 *Thais in Hong Kong*

香港泰國人協會的Wichai先生解釋，在不同時期，泰國人來香港有不同的原因。早期來港的泰國人都具有華族血統和懂華人方言。在五十至七十年代，印尼和緬甸陸續發生排華事件，雖然泰國沒有出現實質排華活動，但一些華裔泰國人人心惶惶，於是慢慢遷到香港居住。當時香港作為東亞地區其中一個最主要的轉口港，在泰國的華商成為兩地貿易的橋樑。七十年代後期，香港出現了一批來自泰國的「過埠新娘」，她們的丈夫是一批來自中國內地、於難民潮時期南下的低下階層男士。可是，後來不少婚姻以離婚收場，那些泰國婦女選擇繼續留在香港照顧子女或再婚。八十年代後期，香港政府開始輸入泰國家庭傭工，由於泰語跟廣東方言接近，泰傭比較容易學懂廣東話，融入香港社區。有一部份泰傭不再從事家傭工作後找到了本地夫婿，選擇在香港落地生根。

In general, Thais who relocate to Hong Kong in different eras have different reasons, explains Mr. Wichai from the Thai People Association of Hong Kong. The pioneers had Chinese blood and spoke Chinese dialects. From 1950s to 70s, anti-Chinese movements broke out in Indonesia and Burma. Although Thailand was not actually affected, some Thai-Chinese jittered and in turn moved to Hong Kong. Hong Kong was then one of the major East Asian entrepôts. Chinese businessmen in Thailand helped bridging trade activities between Hong Kong and Thailand. In late 1970s, a number of Thai women came to Hong Kong as foreign brides, marrying lower-class men from China who surged south to Hong Kong as refugees. Yet many of these marriages broke, and the Thai women chose to stay in Hong Kong to take care of their children or marry again. Late 1980s saw the introduction of Thai domestic helpers by the Hong Kong government. Due to similarities in Thai and Cantonese, they found it quite easy to learn the local language and mix with the local community. Some Thai domestic helpers even met local husbands here, then quitted their work and struck their roots in Hong Kong.

九十年代開始，來香港定居的泰國人主要從事餐飲業和貿易，並開始於九龍城聚居。九龍城成為香港的「小曼谷」源於一間泰國餐廳的成功，後來引來更多泰國同鄉來港開菜館而無心插柳地發展而成。喜歡一群人一起勞作是泰國人的民族習性，體現工作的樂趣，於是他們不斷介紹鄉親到香港當廚師和侍應，更加開設泰國人的生活用品店、雜貨店、髮廊、泰拳學校。一九九八年，啟德機場關閉，九龍城一帶人流減少，廉價店租有助泰國餐廳和這個泰國人社區蓬勃發展起來。



Since 1990s Thais moving to Hong Kong were mainly restaurant owners/workers or traders, and they began to inhabit Kowloon City. The district became the “Mini Bangkok” in Hong Kong by chance following the success of a Thai restaurant, which brought more Thais here to touch the pie. Thais praise collective labour and find it fun to work in this way, so they recommended more fellow townsmen to earn living in Hong Kong as cooks or waiters. They even operate home goods stores, grocery stores, hair salons and Muay Thai schools here. As Kowloon City saw fewer visitors after the closure of Kai Tak Airport in 1998, the lowered shop rents helped the Thai restaurants and the Thai community here flourish.

潑水節的習俗 *Customs of the Water Festival*

宋干節好像中國人的農曆新年一樣，每年都在西曆不同日子出現，為了方便向外宣傳推廣，泰國政府近年將宋干節固定於每年西曆四月十三至十五日。大多數資料皆指出宋干節是發源自現代泰國人在雲南山區傣族的先祖。在充滿神秘色彩的古代東南亞歷史之中，潑水節的起源傳說有十數個，不約而同都是關於在古代某個時期，當人們活在水深火熱之際，有些人見義勇為，如以潑熄火災拯救了大眾，於是人們就以互相潑水象徵紀念或祝福。其後佛教的興盛，令本為民族節慶的宋干節加入更多宗教內容，例如浴佛活動。泰曆跟隨佛曆，以釋迦牟尼的涅槃之年為元年（公元前五四三年），因此今年（二零一五年）是泰曆的二五五八年，可見佛教在現代泰國人心目中仍然佔有重要位置。雖然其他很多傳說尚待考證，泰國人已經甚少理會，就當宋干節是一個民族節日，痛快地去慶祝就夠了。

Just like Chinese New Year, each year the Songkran Festival falls on different dates of the Western calendar. To better promote the event, the Thai government has fixed it to April 13-15 in recent years. Most sources point out that Songkran originates from Dai ancestors, who had lived in the mountainous areas of Yunnan and is believed to be progenitors of modern Thais. Throughout the mysterious history of ancient Southeast Asia there are a dozen of legends regarding the origin of Water Festival, but all with the plot that once upon a time when people were suffering, there would be heroes who stepped out and “put out fires with water”. That was how water splashing became a memorial or blessing. Subsequently, the rise of Buddhism complemented religious aspects to this ethnic festival, for example the Buddha bathing ritual. Thais adopt the Buddhist calendar which begins at the Buddha’s nirvana (543 B.C.). It is now (2015) Year 2558 in Thailand. It shows that Buddhism still has a great influence to the Thai people. There are actually more legends yet to be proven, though the Thais mostly ignore them as if it is just an ethnic day to craze about.

傳統上，泰國人在三天的宋干節之中有兩個習俗。第一，篤信佛教的泰國人會穿上新置的傳統服飾，並帶著食物上佛寺奉予和尚，祈求新一年平安順利。他們然後向佛像叩拜、合十祈福許願，祈福後為佛像貼上金箔、戴上茉莉花串，接著輕輕淋水清洗佛像，並會放生禽鳥，寓意帶走前一年的霉運。第二，他們會把混入香水和花瓣的清水輕輕用手指灑在認識的人的頭上，水在這個節日代表純潔和淨化，可以洗走身上的穢氣與邪惡，迎接新來的福氣。根據傳統習俗，年輕一輩必須把受過祝福的水倒在長輩的手中，以示對長輩的敬重和祈求保佑。在泰國文化古都清邁，至今還保留著古式巡遊。



There are traditionally two customs during the three-day Songkran Festival. First, Buddhists put on a new set of traditional clothes, and offer foods to the monks in the temple to pray for a good and smooth new year. They then worship the Buddha and pray in *wai*; place golden foils and a corolla of jasmine onto the Buddha; bathe the Buddha by gently pouring water over the statue; and set birds free to “carry away bad luck of the past year”. Second, they sprinkle lightly with their fingers water mixed with perfume and petals on the heads of acquaintances. Water represents purity and purification in the Festival, thus may wash away filthiness and evil to greet new blessings instead. According to tradition, the younger generation must pour blessed water into the hands of their elders as an offer of respect and prayer. An old-style parade is still held at the ancient cultural capital, Chiang Mai.



今天，潑水節成為了曼谷政府重點推銷的旅遊項目，每年四月中旬都吸引大量遊客到曼谷體驗泰國民族風情（泰國其他地區的潑水習俗比較溫和）。除了參加潑水節的人愈來愈多，潑水的方式都有所轉變，變得誇張得多，由把水輕輕沾在別人的頭上，演變成在大街或小巷上狂歡式向路人潑灑大量的水。在潑水節期間，一走到街上，衣服濕透實在在所難免。小朋友更會出動水槍互射耍樂，潑水節期間周圍都喜氣洋洋。

The Festival had become a highlight in tourism promotion by the Bangkok government; tourists flock into the city for the exotic experience every mid-April (customs in other areas of the country are more moderate). Apart from the soaring numbers of participants, the manner of water-splashing has gotten more exaggerated - from a gentle dip on the head to a carnivalesque massive spilling on streets and alleys. It is basically impossible to stay dry once you head out during Songkran. Kids even muster their water guns in a jolly battle. It is a time when the city beams with jubilation.



香港的潑水節 *The Festival in Hong Kong*

在香港，隨着越來越多本地人認識潑水節，加上居港泰國人越來越多，過去只在九龍城泰國人社區小規模地進行的潑水節，現時已經非常知名。來玩水的除了泰國人，更有很多香港人和西方遊客，互相潑水，充滿趣味。香港由於沒有大型泰國佛廟，所以居港泰國人的節日習俗都簡化了，但他們仍然會放下工作，從

香港各處走到九龍城與親友慶祝一番。當天觀察所見，泰國人特別喜歡穿上鮮艷的大花紋恤衫，一些泰國餐館和雜貨店會在店外設小佛壇，讓人們向佛像供奉及潑水，虔誠的泰國佛教徒見佛就拜。泰國人地區聯盟過去數年一直在打鼓嶺道休憩花園舉辦活動，開設佛壇，又播放泰文賀年歌，並設唱歌、舞蹈表演和遊戲，然後在九龍城的打鼓嶺道、城南道、賈炳達道載歌載舞巡遊一圈。

As more Hongkongers come to know of Songkran and more Thais reside in Hong Kong, the once small-scale festival in the Kowloon City community had grown into a hit. In addition to the Thais, many Hong Kong citizens and western tourists now take part in the sopping fun. Without major Thai Buddhist temples here, Thai residents have simplified their customs. Still, they drop their work for celebration with family

and friends to gather at Kowloon City from all over the territory. From my observations they have a special liking for bright shirts with huge patterns. Some Thai restaurants and grocery stores would set up small Buddhist altars outside, at which crowds would enshrine or splash - dedicated Buddhists would worship any statue they come across. In the past few years, the Thai Regional Alliance had been orchestrating activities at Tak Ku Ling Road Rest Garden, installing altars, playing Thai New Year songs, staging singing, dancing performances and

games. This is followed by a parade of songs and dances along Tak Ku Ling Road, South Wall Road and Carpenter Road in Kowloon City.





下午三時，水戰正式開始，以打鼓嶺道休憩花園外和城南道為主戰場。男男女女、成人小孩、泰國人、香港人、西方人都配備好水槍和大大小小的水桶，向街上的行人潑水祝福，其熱鬧場面一點也不比曼谷是隆路遜色。參加者又用爽身粉塗在別人的臉上表示祝福。期間有商店索性拉出一條水喉，向路人灑水，令到現場氣氛更加高漲。城南道本身就是泰國商店的集中地，多間店鋪的店員播放著節拍強勁的泰國的士高音樂，在店前忘我地唱歌跳舞潑水，就像街頭的嘉年華會一樣，充分顯示出泰國人隨和熱情的性格。





The water war officially kicked off at 3pm. All of a sudden, the outside of Tak Ku Ling Road Rest Garden and South Wall Road transformed into a major battleground. Thais, Hongkongers and Westerners alike were armed with water guns and all sizes of buckets, showering passers-by in watery blessings, a scene not less lively than that along Silom Road in Bangkok. Participants also smeared

baby powder on each others' faces as strokes of luck. Amidst the frenzy a shop simply rolled out a hose, sending the mayhem into climax. South Wall Road is itself a congregation of Thai stores; several shopkeepers were blasting Thai disco music, singing, dancing and splashing engrossedly in front of their stores as if in a street carnival. The air was full with cheerfulness and amiability typical of Thais.

一位全身濕淋淋的泰國女生興奮地向我說：「今天的九龍城是屬於他們的！」的而且確，九龍城雖然稱作「小曼谷」，但平時泰國人都默默地在區內工作和生活；而在潑水節當天，他們高調地慶祝，並跟很多慕名而來的本地人一同玩樂，加添了他們泰國人的民族自豪感。

A drenched Thai girl told me in excitement, "Kowloon City belongs to them today!" It is true - although the district is known as "Mini Bangkok", most of the Thais here are working and leading their lives unnoticed; while on the day of Songkran, they engage in a flagrant jollification, having fun with locals attracted

to the event and refreshing their national pride.

潑水節的水戰相信來年也會在九龍城上演，下一年在玩水的同時，不妨用泰語問候泰國人：「Sa-nuk 咪？」（好玩嗎？）他們定必對你哈哈大笑。💧

We are certainly going to see another water battle in Kowloon City next year. Planning to join in the fun? Try greeting the Thais with a simple "Sa-nuk mai?"; they would return a roar of laughter for sure. 💧

