

# **The adaptation dynamic of faith-based traditions to ritual dance for improving the quality of mental health: A case study of Kwan performances**

**By**

**Naruebodin Saleepun**

Performing Arts, Faculty of Fine-Applied, Arts and Cultural Science,  
Mahasarakham University, Thailand  
<mailto:chaisaleepun@gmail.com>

## **Abstract**

1. The purpose of this study was to examine the artificial Isaan performing dance, dance concerning beliefs related to mental health, and Kwan's traditions. 2. To study the dynamics of artificial dances related to beliefs in Kwan, using a qualitative research process. With a sample population from performing showed "Beliefs about Kwan" as tools used in research. The study consists of surveys, observation forms, social media interviews, and interview forms studied from YouTube video clips, including introducing knowledge synthesis theory using the conceptual framework. Artificial Traditions, cultures, space and cultural dynamics, and analytical summary has been presented using a descriptive analysis method. From the research results, it was found that Kwan refers to the spirit. Therefore, it is a reciting "mantra" for worshiping, invoking, or inviting sacred things to the Su Kwan ceremony. The development of beliefs about Kwan in the Isaan and Mekong River regions has led to the continuous development of dance. By presenting the tradition of belief about the Kwan, it was created as a more ordinary space than ever before. In the past, it was linked to the holiness that is based on artificial traditions in the worldview of the Mekong River region. Most of them are still associated with the world of holiness according to traditional beliefs. Invention traditions about Kwan were connected, which is the nature of creating work to create a sense of joy in terms of mental health of performers and viewers in the belief to be auspicious and in terms of preserving and inheriting traditions in terms of value. This results in the dynamic movement of the dancing arts, and it continues from the basic concept of beliefs about the Kwan of the Mekong people, leading to the dynamics of contemporary dance development at the international level that appears today.

**Keywords:** Rite/Kwan/Performing arts/Cultural dynamic

## **Introduction**

Ritual traditions are group practices that pass down ideologies that exist at the family, kinship, village, community, and local level. Anantkanjanapun (Anantkanjanapun,2001:120) Su Kwan or Bai Sri is an old traditional of people in various provinces in the northeastern part of Thailand that was widely used in the past to the present from the belief that it causes the invocation of the Kwan in each person and the blessing for peaceful living, longevity, prosperity, and success, to comfort the heart, to give strength, freshness, and without fear. It is commonly performed on various occasions, such as naga ordination, marriage, housewarming, monks promoted to monastic ranks, and as a respected adult brought to the local. It is considered auspicious and has been performed both in small events within the family and in large ceremonies, depending on the status of the guests. The Su Kwan ceremony or villagers called Bai Sri is held by the elders who make a Bai Sri with flowers, incense, candles, betel

nuts, cigarettes, food, desserts, duck and chicken, boiled liquor, beautifully arranged in a tray, as well as blankets, clothes, mirrors, combs, necklace, ring, and many white strings that tie around the wrists. The ceremony begins with a parade and ceremony hall, with the general elders singing and joining to bless the celebration. In the aforementioned ceremony, there will be a chant or Brahman who will chant a gathering of angels, a Su Kwan speech, praying, and good luck wishes, then the wrist will be tied, and the ceremony will be completed. Professor Panaw Kamnerdkan had the opportunity to present the work of His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen in the reign of the 9th since the Buddhist era 2498 on the occasion that both of them visited the people for the first time in Udon Thani province in Thailand; at that time, Professor Panaw Kamnerdkan was assigned as the director of rehearsals and directed the performances by organizing four peacock performances (Peerapong Senesai, 1996:3).

Chachawan Wanprasert, a Buddhist era 1964 inventor, stated that "the performance at that time began with a slow dance accompanied by Bai Sri Su Kwan singing and then added to the rhythm of the drums. Then Soeng dance is widely known and has modifications to different types of sheds". From such information shows the origin of characteristics, beliefs, and cultural traditions presented in the form of art dance, from the invention, which resulted in the dynamic power of Isaan dance from belief rituals, resulting in the invention of the show about Kwan in the cultural community of the Mekong River region. This concept has resulted in the development of beliefs about Kwan in the Northeast region of Thailand and countries around the Mekong River region, resulting in continuous development in art dance. The Kwan beliefs were physically transformed into a common form other than the past that had been associated with the divine world, which is the basis of the invention tradition in most Isaan Thais' worldviews, which still relates to the world of holiness according to the original beliefs and traditions of inventing Kwan. It combines traditional and Indu Brahman beliefs based on the social and cultural aspects of the Isan people. The world of holiness is linked together, which is the nature of creating work to create a sense of joy in terms of preserving and inheriting traditions, thus satisfying the spiritual demands of Kwan's belief in tradition in dance. To generate power and creativity in performance, impacting the way Isaan native dance is driven powerfully and continuing from the basic concept of beliefs about the Kwan of the Isaan people, leading to the development of the Kwan of the Isaan people.

### ***Beliefs about Kwan***

Ritual beliefs are an essential component of human culture, and are linked to relationships from the past to the present. Beliefs related to the idea that humans were created from mysterious things in the sky, the name of beings above human beings in the sky in that era, make a note of the fear of natural occurrences, such as the fear of thunder and lightning, even earthquakes, so that such natural phenomena led humans to believe in gods, that the gods buy the feeling of dissatisfaction with human actions makes humans afraid for that reason. Starting a ritual in human society to worship and make redemption offerings that humans have done in the past, misconduct. As a result, when the ceremony occurs, there must be a ceremonial master, also known as a sorcerer, shaman, witch, or others, but if so, this type of person will communicate, claiming to be a child of God, capable of communicating between the gods and humans in the ceremony. Important ceremonies frequently sacrifice with their gods; when there is a ceremony, music is played to lull the participants in the ceremony, causing the mind to flow with the music.

Nowadays, mystical beliefs can be found in almost every culture; Mekong society is strict in its traditions, rituals are liberated, and deeply embedded in Mekong culture's adherence to Brahman and Buddhist spirits. This has two mottos: belief in ancestral spirits and belief in religion; however, people in the Mekong River region can combine both. The Mekong people's

combination of traditional and religious beliefs brings together the performance of various ceremonies, which is a myth, making the ritual appear sacred. These two beliefs became inseparable from way of life and living in a cultural society. According to this understanding, the word Kwan has two meanings: one is a person who spirals upward, usually on the head or other parts of the body, and the other is an abstract impersonal power similar to the power of idealism. Calling Kwan also means calling something well liked, such as Kwanjai, Kwanta, Mia Kwan, and Chom Kwan. According to ancient traditions, Mekong River region society has many beliefs about Kwan that have been held by many cultures, especially the Mekong River region, or if any action has Kwan that is difficult to call. If there is something bad that affects the mind again, it is called panic, mind bereavement, or mindful fear, and it must be done in a way called bringing it back.

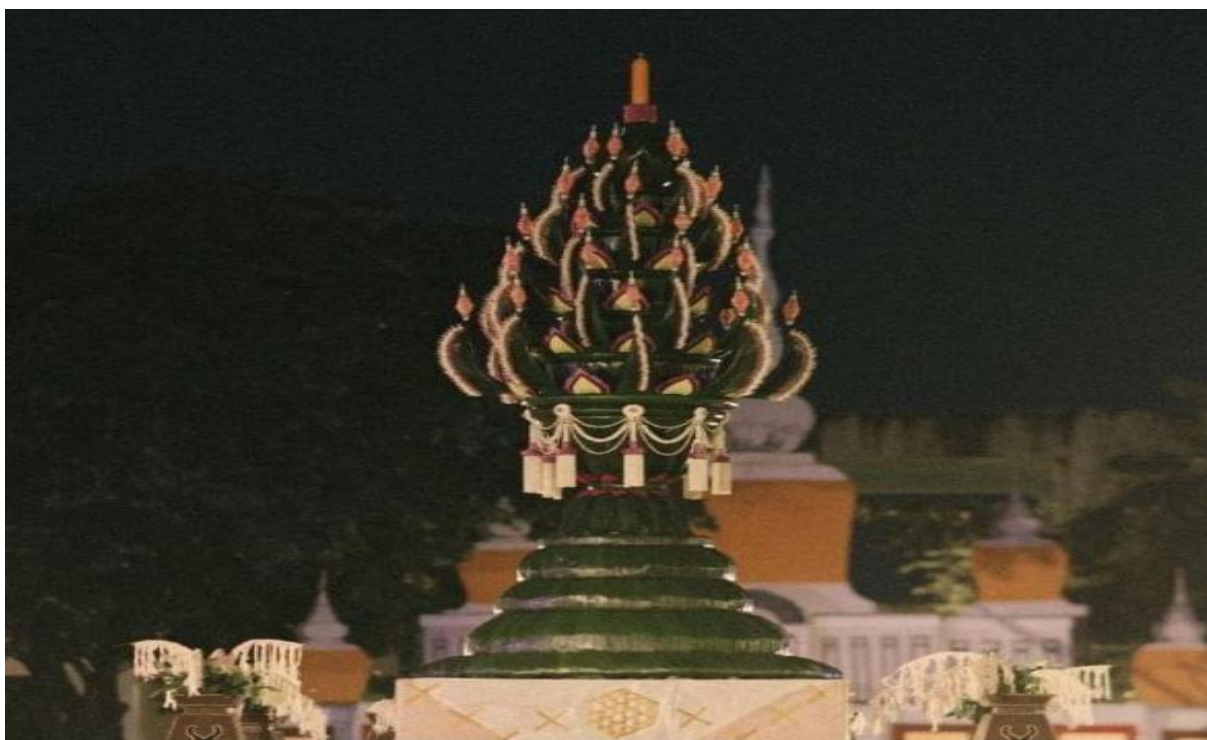
According to the original meaning of the understanding that calls Kwan or inviting Kwan, it is believed that everyone has a dream that everyone has in order to have encouragement, strength, happiness, and happiness that must have a ceremony to call Kwan or Su Kwan. Those who are healthy and free of pain or fever but wish to perform a ceremony to bring more prosperity to those who receive the blessing. It frequently brings happiness, prosperity, progress, and goodness in the form of joy in important rituals. Much of the motto is derived from Brahmanism, which believes in animism, gods, and sacred things, and is thought to refer to people who have passed away and have influential spirits and mystical powers, which can inspire those who live happily or will make those who were hurt, who became sick, get better. When Buddhism was introduced into the Mekong River region, the belief was still applied to Brahmanism, and the traditional beliefs of the people in the Mekong River region resulted in rituals of invoking Kwan, Su Kwan, and Kwan in various ways depending on the beliefs in each social context of that community.

### ***Su Kwan Ceremony***

According to the belief in Kwan, which has been ingrained since birth, whenever Kwan leaves the body, that person will be in poor health. Illness, a lack of radiance, or an abnormal appearance from the former person's body are among the conditions. People believe that such a ceremony had to take place in the Mekong River region. Su Kwan is derived from the word sutra, which in an ancient language meant reciting or complaining, as in sutra mantra (Mahasarakham Teachers College, 1979:1). At the same time, according to belief, the word Kwan means spirituality, and the Su Kwan ceremony thus recites recitations and mantras in order to worship, call, or invite sacred things into the Su Kwan ceremony. It is a ritual that still exists and was passed down from before Buddhism spread into the land of suvarnabhumi in China, Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar, and India, all of which have rituals to bring them together (Alongkorn Ittipon, 2015, 36-37).

The Bai Sri Su Kwan Ceremony evolved from a blend of culture, local beliefs, and the Brahmanic leader, with Bai sri derived from the phrase "Bai Si Su Kwan." It is an ancient and popular tradition that is thought to bring about happiness. Bai Sri used to look like a boss because it stands for Ba, which represents a man of royalty, Ba Kon, Ba Thao, and so on. Sri means virtue or goodness (Mahasarakham Teachers College, 1979:1). Su Khwan can be caused by one of two things: Su Kwan for a good cause, such as gaining fortune or pleasure. Secondly, for illness recovery, causing a ritual to bring Kwan to live with the flesh and body will make the person's mind happy or provide comfort from various misfortunes. The Su Kwan ceremony is typically performed in a similar manner, but in some localities, it is performed slightly differently. There may be a way to adapt even within the same locality. According to popularity, the beliefs of each individual, locality, and offenders' opinions.

The Bai sri tray, also known as Bai sri Pakwan or Bai sri, refers to a container of offerings used to invoke the Kwan. This accessory is made on a tray and is fully decorated with banana leaves and other natural elements. It is beautifully sewn together after being wrapped in a cone or folded at an acute angle. It could be a three-tiered, five-tiered, or seven-tiered Bai Sri, depending on the organizer's wishes, the status of the Kwan ceremony, and the number of tiers, in order of the person who arranges for invoking Kwan. Each Bai Sri tier is supported by a Phan, with the lower tier having a large Phan, and the upper tier having a smaller Phan. The lower layer contained Kwan's set or Miang mak betel, cigarettes, dried rice, boiled bean dessert, snacks, eggs, or sticky rice, all adorned with beautiful flowers, and the top layer was tied with white cotton threads and candles.



*Picture 1: Bai sri shape made from banana leaves wrapped in cones overlapping and beautifully flowered*

*Source: Naruebodin Saleephun*

### ***Performance about Kwan***

Performing arts is significant wisdom that demonstrates a group's way of thinking, beliefs, and identity. It uses gestures and performances, such as movements, speaking, singing, dancing, playing, lulling, and various plays that appear in ritual traditions and local affairs. These performances are beautiful and morally significant, and they are used to convey community members' collective consciousness in communicating with outsiders in order for them to recognize their own culture as distinct from other virtues. Visual representation reflects society and the way of life of a person who uses media to criticize or reinforce social order. Performances generally adapt to social changes; therefore, we must understand the social and cultural dynamics at work in each local performance. Performances may be used in contexts that have changed from those previously performed in religious ceremonies to performing for tourism and promotion of artistic cultural identity.

Local performances develop into cultural artifacts that are used to construct identities, create economic value, and adjust social norms. In terms of politics, the performing arts are creative works of all aesthetics that support the perception of a group's identity. We must



understand how various performances overlap when acting as a bridge between various social groups. Religious events exhibit a variety of characteristics. Lifestyle and local beliefs in which the villagers are depicted in different ways, such as dancing, chanting, singing, playing body motions in time with music, worshipping, offering sacrifices, and paying respect to sacred spirits, ancestors, or local gods. These artifacts exhibit the worldview and moral code. Through folk performances and a new dimension of performance, the implications of the socially fertile way of life can help us comprehend how each area functions.

The recounting of legends, tales, literary tales, and the history of the local people are all tied to such relations, as are rituals of belief and performance. Performances, such as plays, songs, dances, music, melodies, and gestures that evaluate numerous stories, reflect the way people think in the community. The performance literature demonstrates how social value systems are strengthened, replicated, or altered in response to social contexts. A variety of performances adapt to modern ways; for instance, to greet visitors, perform at traditional festivals, engage in leisure activities that bring in money for the villagers, or introduce changes under consumer culture to become a tool for marketing systems. To demonstrate the performance's economic value or to serve as a tool for the economy in contemporary culture, the so-called artist is changed into the product's image.

Different color schemes are used to transmit performances, which suggests that these pop culture performances reflect adaptation. a shift in the significance of contemporary methods to represent a diverse range of people. Pop culture also responds to the new generation of entertainment by reflecting on performances that have been changed to generate excitement and enjoyment to better fit the new generation's lifestyles. Professor Panaw Kamnerdkan had the opportunity to present the work of His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen in the 9th reign since the Buddhist era 1955, when both of them visited people for the first time in Udon Thani province in Thailand during the Bai Sri dance performance. At that time, Professor Panaw Kamnerdkan organized four performances, including Peacock's Tail Art Dance, Phu Tai Dam Bai Sri Art Dance, and waiting for blessing dedicate, and directed the rehearsals and performances (Peerapong Senesai,1996:3).

Chachawan Wanlprasert discovered the first inventor in the year 1964 of the Buddhist era. According to him, the performance at the time started with a leisure dance and Bai Sri Su Kwan singing, which was then added to the drumbeat. Soeng dance is well known and has variations for various shed types. Such knowledge reveals the roots of traits, convictions, and cultural customs, which are expressed through art dance. The inventive traditions of the Isaan community produced the dynamic power of Isaan dance, which led to the creation of the Kwan show in the cultural community of the Mekong River region. This idea has led to the development of Kwan beliefs in Thailand's northeast and other countries bordering the Mekong River, leading to ongoing artistic dance development.

Kwan beliefs were physically changed into a common form by presenting tradition, as opposed to the earlier state that had been connected to the divine realm. According to the original beliefs and traditions surrounding the invention of Kwan, this is the foundation of the innovation tradition in the worldview of the majority of Isaan Thais, who still ties to the world of holiness. According to the social and cultural beliefs of the Isaan people regarding the holiness of the world, it combines traditional and Indu Brahman beliefs. In the nature of creating work, a sense of joy is created in terms of preserving and inheriting traditions. Meeting the spiritual requirements of the dance-based Kwan religious tradition. Influencing Isaan native dance in a powerful way and continuing from the fundamental idea of beliefs about the Kwan of the Isan people is necessary to generate power and creativity in the form of performances.

As a result, improving one's mental health and success in the global dance industry will improve one's quality of life.



**Picture 2:** *Bai sri dance to welcome the newcomers Mahasarakham University 2022*  
Source: Student Organization

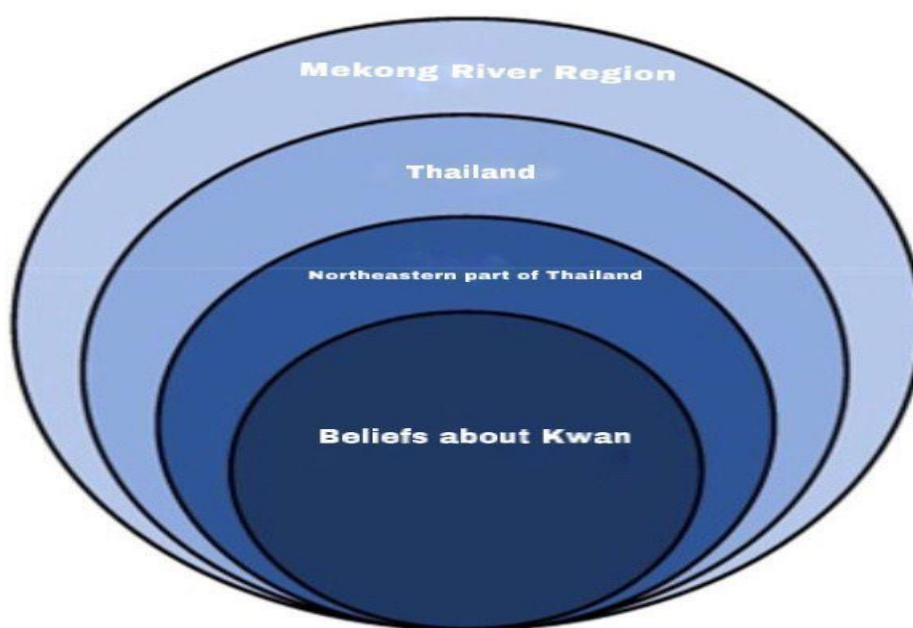
The Kwan documentary focuses on cultural ideas that address the demands of society with regard to mental health, which gave rise to performing arts (Mahasarakham University, 2022). The use of cultural resources resulting from such moral information in the investigation of causes and remedies for mental health issues. Both the Northeast and Mekong River regions can produce cultural patterns to be carved into current performances to develop beliefs in the creation of sustainable mental health and wealth of the population in terms of confidence about morals.

### ***Summary analysis and discussion***

The Kwan television program is a social symbol that conveys the spiritual importance of blending beliefs under the dominant culture of communities on both sides of Mekong society. Because there are many different ethnic groups in the Mekong River Basin with Kwan beliefs, this emphasizes the construction of sacred spaces. Ernest Durkheim In (1915, as cited in Parita Chalermkao Kawanantakul, 2003:4), it was suggested that the rituals and symbols of the holy are actual depictions of human society, as it is in daily life. By establishing a formal location for performance, the ritual of conflicting beliefs can be holy while still reflecting performance. The dance developed in the new age tradition and performed in a range of performance styles is an invention technique. In addition to presenting traditional dance performances, this culture also revives and harmonizes cultural traditions from the original roots that took part in the creation of heritage.

The culture of performance has changed. Currently, bringing together regions and communities is an act performed for a variety of political and social reasons that are altered in accordance with the local economy. These are excellent and fascinating examples of how to advance the trend of adding value and the importance of developing traditions from spiritual beliefs to social customs. Before, it became a show that evolved from the Kwan concept to satiate the Kwan sense in a meaningful culture (Culture as Meaning). The interpretation of Geertz (Geertz. 1973:89) distinctive meaning, define culture in regard to the statement "Cultural is meaningful," which is observed to be consistent with Weber's comparison (Akin Rapipat.2008; reference from Gretzky.1973:89). People are like spiders who hang from "meaning" strings. He created spiritual values by portraying the performance space as a holy place in human myths that affects social dynamics and Geertz, who sees culture as a web of connections from important thrillers.

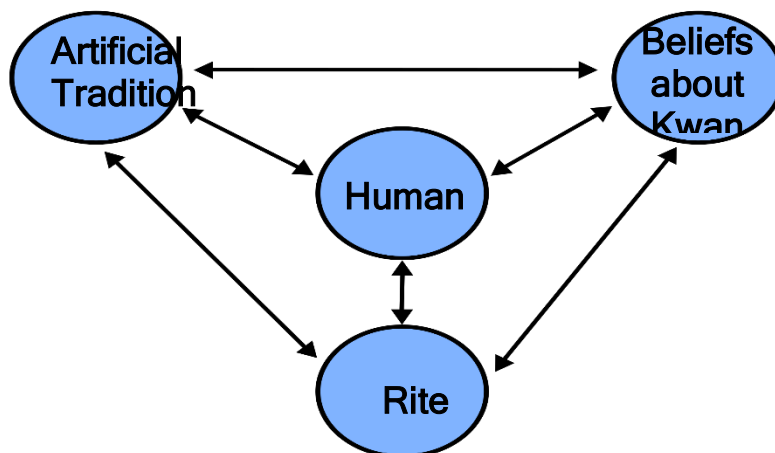
The program about popular Kwan: The belief in curing and warding off evil is brought about by current performances as opposed to traditional performance culture. Using symbols from numerous rituals, reinterpreting their original meanings, and creating various performances about the creators' Kwan inspires spectators and performers. The development of performance dynamics with the value of Kwan and the strength of the audience, however, is changed by maintaining a cultural structure and beliefs to create value from the original roots. The performer, who is both invisible and sensitive to the presentation's style, conveys the influence that faith's spirit has on the ideas' ability to spread. A tale about Kwan and performance that adds value and uses a range of formats while still preserving as long as possible the arts and culture of the Mekong River region's residents.



**Figure 1:** *Beliefs about Kwan related to Northeastern Thailand, Mekong River region.*  
*Source: Naruebodin Saleepun*

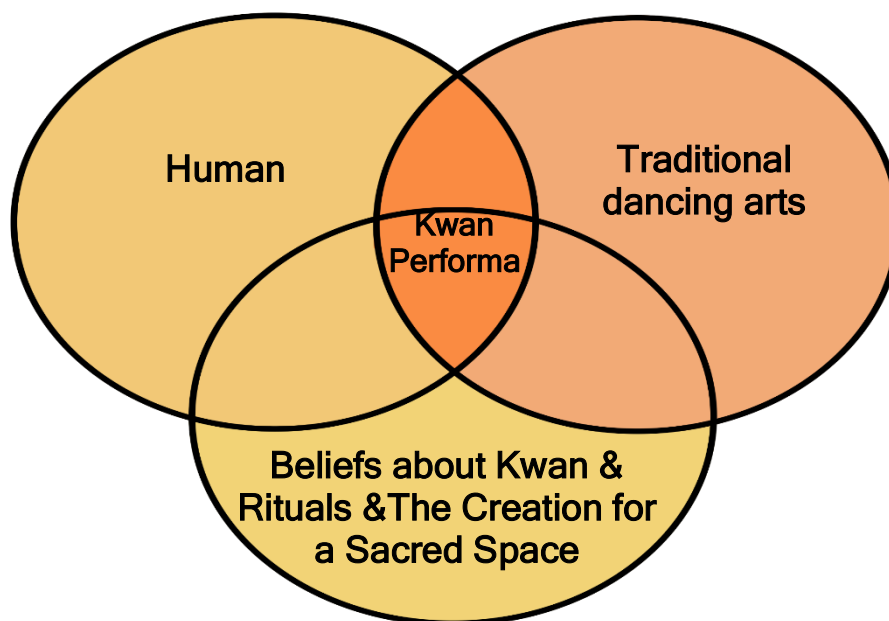
The rise of global relations of production, exchange of goods, culture, communication, and inclusive politics has resulted in the three global relations of production, exchange, and culture that constitute modern global society. Therefore, the nature of the relationship does not always need to be a nation or government official; it might also be one of the people, their views, or their religions. Numerous additional scientific linguistic specialties describe the interactions among various groups in the population (Shaw, 1992, p. 429).

The Isaan culture, which is present in Thailand and the Mekong River region, includes beliefs in Kwan. As a result, these two cultures are connected through a social and cultural context that includes nearby regions and beliefs. Parts of the people's beliefs in the ceremony area are connected similarly. Beliefs about Kwan are influenced by this cultural context, particularly the cultural flow that has been appropriated, enhanced, and used in each connected group's traditional culture. As a result, customs and beliefs persist in the region and are closely related to it.



**Figure 2:** Represents human beliefs, rituals, and artificial traditions.  
 Source: Naruebodin Saleepun

As a result, various performances occur within the context of believing in gifts as a way of life. The characteristics of artificial traditions created by humans are linked to identity, from ritual beliefs in Kwan to the ritual activity of humans. Beliefs in rituals of livelihoods also give rise to artificial traditions of performances concerning one another. Isaan and the civilizations of the Mekong Basin endure perpetuity as normative expressions of humanity.

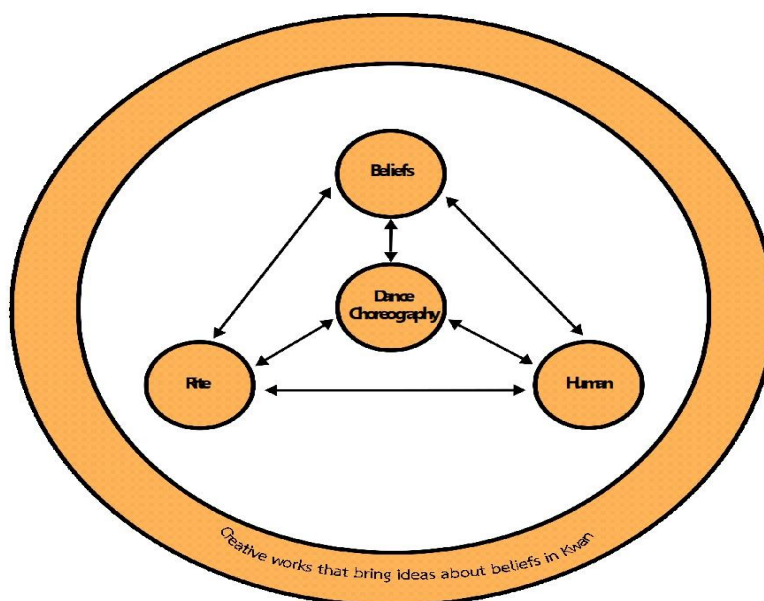


**Figure 3:** Diagram of the performance of Kwan Human dances, traditions, invent beliefs about Kwan, rituals, and creation of sacred spaces  
 Source: Naruebodin Saleepun



Traditions and customs are integral aspects of community life, demonstrating the social and cultural diversity of the area. Traditions are a crucial means of transmitting ideas and their significance. Modern society discovered that a number of them depict the image of dancing art in the context of north-eastern culture. The media reflects the performing process by presenting culture as a product. The process of developing a cultural invention provides

- a framework for the beauty of the performance
- the nature of belief
- Using space to represent holiness and auspiciousness to the performing process in the form of belief in Kwan adds value to the culture.



**Figure 4:** Represents dance choreography linked to human ritual beliefs that presents the creative works of belief in Kwan  
Source: Naruebodin Saleepun

## Conclusion

Creating a culture with a spiritual component has been caused by the design of dance moves that reflect human beliefs in rituals and create a sacred space presented in the form of creative performances about beliefs in Kwan. This phenomenon has led to the creation of value that is both creative and sustainable. According to the cultural beliefs of the Mekong River region, dance is a powerful, inventive tradition or culture of a dynamic nature that can change styles while maintaining cultural flow. For informational purposes, traditional dances are cultural innovations created in the modern world, which is the opposite of the original tradition that is still stable, fixed, and unchanged because it is considered a practice that has been inherited for a long time. The dance about Kwan has borrowed religious beliefs into the mix, creating creative ways to show the new form of Kwan's performance in the later stages of society. In particular, the Kwan tradition of building sacred spaces and evoking the joy of a performance communicates the relationship between human rituals and spiritual feelings. This occurs in a dimension of emotional way to develop human mental health to be joyful and has mental and physical strength. The process is linked to the strength to fight in life. The attitude of art dance enables us to examine how this kind of information is reproduced in modern society.

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