
A Guideline for Promoting the Mon's Traditional Culture by Buddhist Peaceful Means

U Khanti¹ PhraMedhivajrapundit²

Phramaha Weerasak Abhinandavedi³

International Buddhist Studies College. Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University^{1,2,3}

Corresponding author email: khanthiramsi@gmail.com¹

Received 08/04/2025; Revised 11/11/2025; Accepted 20/08/2026

Abstract

This qualitative study examines challenges affecting the preservation of Mon traditional culture and proposes culturally grounded guidelines based on Buddhist peaceful means. The study pursued three objectives: (1) to examine the context, problems, causes, and preservation needs of Mon traditional culture; (2) to analyze relevant cultural-preservation theories and Buddhist principles; and (3) to formulate practical guidelines for promoting Mon traditional culture through peaceful and participatory approaches. Data were drawn from documentary sources on Mon culture, cultural heritage, peacebuilding, and Buddhism, along with field observations and interviews with Mon Buddhist monks and cultural stakeholders. The findings indicate that Mon cultural continuity is challenged by modernization, cultural assimilation, declining intergenerational transmission, and weakening participation in selected traditional practices. At the same time, monasteries, religious ceremonies, Mon-language education, community festivals, and local cultural leaders remain important resources for cultural resilience. The study identifies four mutually reinforcing areas for cultural promotion: non-violent cultural preservation, community engagement and education, adaptive cultural transmission, and intercultural dialogue. Buddhist principles of non-harming, loving-kindness, compassion, mindfulness, and communal harmony provide an ethical orientation for these strategies, while contemporary heritage and peacebuilding perspectives emphasize participation, education, cultural rights, and locally grounded institutions. The resulting framework positions cultural preservation not as the static protection of inherited customs, but as a peaceful process of transmission, participation, adaptation, and dialogue. The study contributes a context-sensitive model for strengthening Mon cultural identity while supporting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

Keywords: Mon traditional culture; Buddhist peaceful means; Cultural preservation; Community participation; Peacebuilding

Introduction

The Mon are one of the long-established ethnic communities of mainland Southeast Asia, with a cultural heritage closely associated with Theravāda Buddhism, Mon-language traditions, religious ceremonies, community rituals, and distinctive forms of social organization. Historical and contemporary studies of Mon communities in Myanmar and Thailand show that Buddhist institutions have played a central role in sustaining religious practice, education, language, and collective identity (Jinadhaja & Dhammahas, 2020; Phra Raphin Buddhiso et al., 2019; Tiptas, 1998). In Mon State, monasteries and religious networks continue to function not only as spiritual institutions but also as sites of cultural transmission.

Cultural continuity, however, cannot be taken for granted. Modernization, migration, changing educational patterns, globalization, and the growing influence of national and transnational media may weaken intergenerational transmission and alter the meanings attached to traditional practices. Research on cultural heritage has increasingly emphasized that preservation requires more than safeguarding objects or ceremonies; it also depends on education, community participation, institutional support, documentation, and the capacity to adapt traditions to changing social conditions (Achille & Fiorillo, 2022; Mekonnen et al., 2022; Tuncer, 2023). For Mon communities, this challenge is particularly important because language, ritual, Buddhist practice, and ethnic identity remain deeply interconnected.

A peace-oriented approach offers an important perspective on cultural preservation. Peacebuilding scholarship emphasizes social relationships, participation, local institutions, dialogue, and the transformation of conflict rather than the mere absence of overt violence (Fernandez-Dols et al., 2004; Lederach, 1999). Buddhist approaches add an ethical orientation grounded in non-harming, compassion, mindfulness, and reducing hostility. Within this perspective, preserving Mon culture should not be framed as opposition to other communities or as resistance to all forms of change. Rather, it can be understood as a process of strengthening cultural dignity while cultivating cooperation, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence.

Despite existing studies of Mon history, beliefs, Buddhist development, architecture, and cultural practices, less attention has been given to an integrated framework that combines cultural-preservation strategies with Buddhist peaceful

means. This study therefore examines the principal challenges and needs affecting Mon traditional culture, analyzes cultural and Buddhist resources relevant to preservation, and proposes practical guidelines that can support cultural continuity without intensifying social division. The study focuses on the role of monasteries, education, community participation, cultural adaptation, festivals, dialogue, and peaceful advocacy as mutually supportive components of cultural resilience.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the context, problems, causes, and preservation needs of Mon traditional culture.
2. To analyze contemporary cultural-preservation approaches and Buddhist principles relevant to promoting Mon traditional culture.
3. To develop guidelines for promoting Mon traditional culture through Buddhist peaceful means.

Literature Review

The literature relevant to this study can be organized into three themes: cultural preservation and identity, peacebuilding and participation, and the role of Buddhism in Mon cultural continuity. Cultural-heritage research increasingly treats preservation as a living social process rather than the protection of isolated artifacts. Education, professional training, community involvement, and experiential learning can strengthen public engagement with cultural heritage (Achille & Fiorillo, 2022). Studies of heritage conservation also emphasize the importance of local participation, institutional capacity, documentation, and managing pressures arising from modernization and development (Mekonnen et al., 2022). Globalization may generate cultural hybridization rather than simple cultural disappearance, making selective adaptation an important component of continuity (Sirikanchana, 2018; Tuncer, 2023).

A second body of literature concerns peacebuilding and social cohesion. Lederach (1999) argues that sustainable peace depends on relationships and locally rooted networks that connect community leaders, institutions, and ordinary citizens. This perspective matters for cultural preservation because cultural institutions can either deepen social boundaries or become platforms for cooperation and reconciliation. Fernandez-Dols et al. (2004) similarly emphasize that a culture of peace involves social norms and practices that support non-

violent conflict management. Cultural rights scholarship further suggests that communities require meaningful opportunities to maintain and express cultural identity within broader social and legal frameworks (Renteln, 2015). Together, these approaches support a model of cultural promotion based on participation, dialogue, and non-coercive preservation.

The third theme concerns Mon culture and Buddhism. Research on Mon communities shows the continuing importance of Buddhist institutions, ethnic identity, and traditional beliefs in social life. Mar Latt (2012) documents the close relationship between traditional Mon beliefs and Buddhist practices in Hinthagon, while Jinadhaja and Dhammahas (2020) identify Buddhism as a significant element in the continuing development of Mon State. Studies of Mon communities in Thailand likewise demonstrate how religion, language, architecture, and collective identity remain intertwined across geographic settings (Phra Raphin Buddhiso et al., 2019; Tiptas, 1998). The preservation of Mon culture therefore cannot be separated from the role of monasteries, monks, religious ceremonies, and Buddhist education.

Buddhist peaceful means provide an ethical complement to these cultural and peacebuilding approaches. Applied Buddhist peace scholarship emphasizes non-harming, compassion, mindfulness, dialogue, and cultivating peaceful relationships (Phra Pramote Vatavajito et al., 2019). At the same time, Buddhist traditions should not be romanticized as inherently free from conflict; the relationship between Buddhism and violence requires critical attention to social and political context (Deegalle, 2003). The research gap therefore lies in developing a balanced framework that uses Buddhist ethical principles to strengthen Mon cultural transmission while also drawing on contemporary approaches to participation, education, cultural rights, adaptation, and peacebuilding.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework integrates three analytical domains: (1) challenges and needs affecting Mon traditional culture, (2) contemporary cultural-preservation and peacebuilding approaches, and (3) Buddhist peaceful means. These domains are synthesized into practical guidelines for cultural transmission, community participation, adaptation, and dialogue, as illustrated in Figure 1.

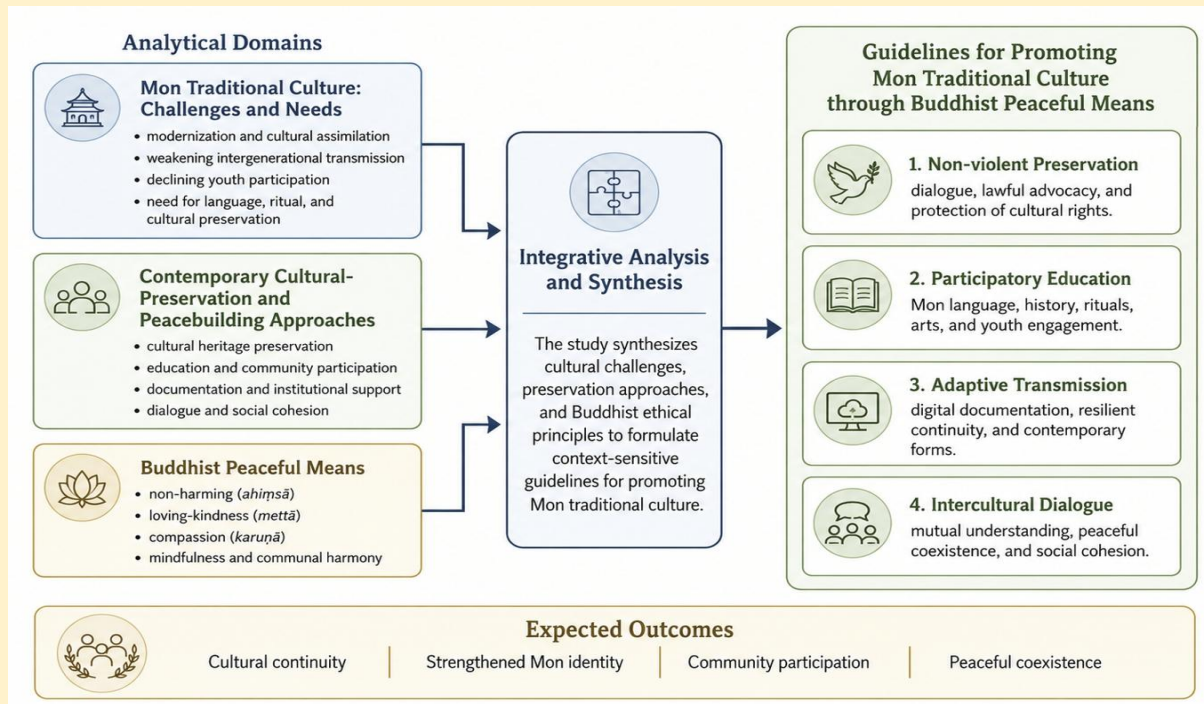


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design combining documentary analysis, field observation, and interviews. The design was appropriate because the research sought to understand the cultural meanings, preservation challenges, and community-based strategies associated with Mon traditional culture rather than to estimate population-level prevalence.

Research Design

The documentary component examined academic books, journal articles, research reports, and Buddhist materials related to Mon culture, cultural heritage, peacebuilding, and Buddhist peaceful means. Field observation focused on cultural and religious practices relevant to transmitting Mon identity. Interviews were used to obtain perspectives from Mon Buddhist monks and cultural stakeholders on perceived challenges, preservation needs, and feasible strategies.

Data collection

Data were collected from documentary sources and field-based materials relevant to the three research objectives. Documentary evidence was organized thematically around cultural identity, preservation challenges, education, community participation, religious institutions, adaptation, and peaceful coexistence. Observational and interview data contextualized these themes within Mon communities.

Analysis and synthesis

The data were analyzed thematically through repeated reading, coding, categorization, and synthesis. Findings from documentary sources, observations, and interviews were compared across the three objectives. The final guidelines were developed by identifying recurrent themes and examining how contemporary cultural-preservation approaches could be integrated with Buddhist ethical principles. Because the manuscript does not specify the number or selection procedure of interview participants, these details should be added before publication to improve methodological transparency.

Research Result

Objective 1: Context, Problems, Causes, and Preservation Needs of Mon Traditional Culture

The findings indicate that Mon traditional culture remains strongly connected to Buddhist institutions, community ceremonies, language, and intergenerational practices. Monasteries continue to function as important cultural spaces in which religious knowledge, Mon-language literacy, chanting, ritual practice, and community memory are transmitted. This finding is consistent with studies showing that Buddhism remains a central institution in Mon social and cultural development (Jinadhaja & Dhammhaso, 2020; Mar Latt, 2012).

At the same time, participants and documentary sources identified pressures associated with modernization, migration, changing educational preferences, and the declining participation of younger generations in some traditional activities. These pressures do not imply that Mon culture is disappearing; rather, they indicate uneven transmission and the need to strengthen the institutions through which cultural knowledge is learned and practiced. Similar heritage studies emphasize that cultural continuity depends on community involvement, education, and institutional support rather than preservation through documentation alone (Achille & Fiorillo, 2022; Mekonnen et al., 2022).

The principal needs identified were stronger Mon-language and cultural education, greater youth participation, support for monasteries and community organizations, documentation of vulnerable traditions, and opportunities for intergenerational exchange. Festivals and religious ceremonies remain especially important because they combine ritual practice, language, dress, music, food, and collective participation within a shared social setting. These activities function not merely as performances but as mechanisms for reproducing cultural identity.

Objective 2: Contemporary Approaches and Buddhist Principles for Cultural Promotion

The second objective identified a strong complementarity between contemporary cultural-preservation approaches and Buddhist ethical principles. Heritage scholarship emphasizes education, participation, documentation, institutional collaboration, and adaptive transmission (Achille & Fiorillo, 2022; Mekonnen et al., 2022). Peacebuilding approaches emphasize locally grounded relationships, dialogue, inclusion, and non-violent social processes (Fernandez-Dols et al., 2004; Lederach, 1999). These perspectives provide practical mechanisms for organizing cultural preservation.

Buddhist peaceful means contribute an ethical orientation to these mechanisms. Non-harming discourages coercive cultural defense; loving-kindness and compassion support respectful relationships; mindfulness encourages reflective rather than reactive responses to cultural change; and communal harmony supports dialogue across generations and ethnic or religious boundaries (Phra Pramote Vatagovito et al., 2019). These principles are most useful when applied to concrete cultural practices rather than treated only as abstract ideals.

The findings therefore suggest that cultural promotion should neither reject modernization nor passively accept cultural assimilation. A more sustainable approach is selective adaptation: preserving core meanings, language, ritual knowledge, and communal memory while allowing forms of presentation and transmission to evolve. Cultural-hybridization research similarly indicates that traditions can change while maintaining meaningful continuity (Tuncer, 2023).

Objective 3: Guidelines for Promoting Mon Traditional Culture through Buddhist Peaceful Means

The synthesis produced four interrelated guidelines. First, cultural preservation should be explicitly non-violent and rights-respecting. Community leaders, monasteries, and cultural organizations should use dialogue, education, documentation, and lawful advocacy rather than confrontation. This approach is consistent with peacebuilding principles that prioritize relationship-building and locally grounded conflict transformation (Lederach, 1999).

Second, community engagement and education should be strengthened. Monasteries, Sunday Dhamma schools, summer programs, cultural associations, families, and local educators can work together to teach Mon language, history,

arts, ceremonies, and Buddhist values. Heritage education is particularly important for younger generations because active participation creates stronger cultural attachment than passive exposure alone (Achille & Fiorillo, 2022).

Third, cultural transmission should be adaptive and resilient. Digital media can document oral histories, manuscripts, music, ritual knowledge, and community events, while festivals can be redesigned to involve younger participants without removing their historical and religious meaning. Adaptation should therefore be evaluated by whether it strengthens continuity, participation, and cultural understanding, rather than by whether a practice remains completely unchanged.

Fourth, cultural dialogue should connect preservation with peaceful coexistence. Mon cultural activities can provide opportunities for exchange with neighboring ethnic and religious communities, enabling cultural difference to become a basis for mutual learning rather than exclusion. In this sense, Buddhist peaceful means transform cultural preservation from an inward-looking project into a contribution to social cohesion.

Discussion

The findings suggest that the central challenge facing Mon traditional culture is not simply cultural loss but the weakening of transmission mechanisms. Language, ceremonies, festivals, monastic education, and community participation remain present, yet their continuity depends on whether younger generations can encounter them as meaningful parts of contemporary life. This interpretation is consistent with heritage research that emphasizes participation, education, and institutional capacity as central to sustainable conservation (Achille & Fiorillo, 2022; Mekonnen et al., 2022).

The study also supports a relational understanding of cultural preservation. Lederach (1999) argues that sustainable peace depends on networks of relationships rather than isolated interventions. Applied to Mon culture, this means that monasteries, families, elders, youth, educators, cultural organizations, and public institutions should not work independently. Cultural continuity is strengthened when these actors share responsibility for education, documentation, ceremonies, and community decision-making.

A further contribution concerns the role of Buddhist peaceful means. Non-harming, loving-kindness, compassion, mindfulness, and harmony do not by themselves constitute a preservation strategy; their value lies in shaping how cultural action is undertaken. They encourage non-coercive advocacy, respectful intergenerational exchange, dialogue with other communities, and cultural adaptation without hostility. This is especially important because Buddhist identity should not be used to romanticize conflict or assume that religious affiliation automatically produces peace (Deegalle, 2003).

Finally, the findings indicate that preservation and adaptation should not be treated as opposites. Mon culture has historically changed across locations while retaining recognizable linguistic, religious, and communal features. The objective should therefore be cultural continuity with integrity rather than cultural immobility. Digital documentation, youth-led activities, and contemporary educational formats can strengthen rather than weaken tradition when communities retain meaningful control over what is transmitted and why (Tuncer, 2023).

New Knowledge from the Research

The principal new knowledge generated by this study is a four-dimensional framework for promoting Mon traditional culture through Buddhist peaceful means. The framework integrates *Non-violent Preservation*, *Participatory Education*, *Adaptive Transmission*, and *Intercultural Dialogue*. These dimensions are mutually reinforcing rather than sequential. Non-violent preservation provides the ethical boundary for cultural advocacy; participatory education transmits knowledge across generations; adaptive transmission keeps cultural practices relevant amid changing social conditions; and intercultural dialogue connects cultural identity with peaceful coexistence.

The framework adds a Buddhist ethical layer to contemporary cultural-preservation practice. Rather than treating Buddhist principles as separate religious teachings, the model operationalizes them within cultural action: non-harming guides advocacy, loving-kindness and compassion guide community relationships, mindfulness supports reflective adaptation, and harmony guides dialogue. The resulting proposition is that cultural resilience is strongest when identity, participation, adaptation, and peace are developed together.

This model also reframes preservation as a living process. Mon traditional culture is not sustained merely by protecting old practices from change; it is sustained when communities continue to learn, practice, reinterpret, and transmit those traditions with a clear sense of cultural meaning. The framework therefore offers a practical basis for future community projects and comparative research on Buddhist approaches to cultural resilience.

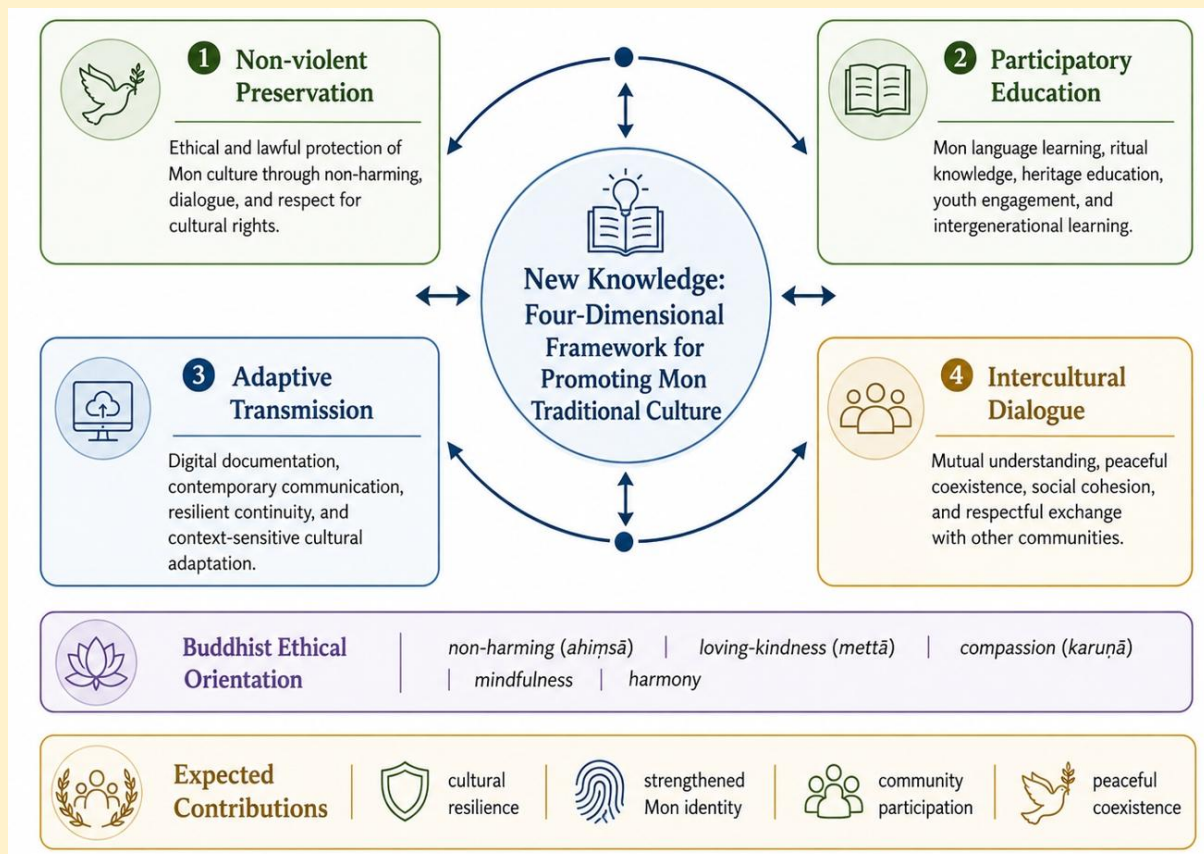


Figure 2 New knowledge from research

Conclusion

This study examined the context, challenges, and preservation needs of Mon traditional culture and developed guidelines grounded in contemporary heritage approaches and Buddhist peaceful means. The findings indicate that Mon cultural identity continues to be sustained through monasteries, language, religious ceremonies, festivals, community relationships, and intergenerational learning, while modernization and changing participation patterns create significant pressures on cultural transmission.

The study identifies four priorities for sustainable cultural promotion: non-violent preservation, participatory education, adaptive transmission, and

intercultural dialogue. These priorities connect cultural heritage with Buddhist ethical principles of non-harming, loving-kindness, compassion, mindfulness, and harmony. The framework does not seek to preserve culture as an unchanging artifact; instead, it emphasizes Mon communities' capacity to maintain cultural integrity while responding constructively to social change.

The practical implication is that cultural preservation should be community-centered and institutionally supported. Monasteries, families, educators, youth groups, cultural organizations, and relevant public institutions should collaborate in language education, documentation, cultural events, digital preservation, and intergenerational exchange. By linking cultural continuity with peaceful participation and dialogue, Mon cultural promotion can contribute simultaneously to ethnic identity, social cohesion, and peaceful coexistence.

Recommendations

Future research should examine the proposed four-dimensional framework in specific Mon communities using clearly defined participant groups and transparent qualitative procedures. Comparative studies may explore differences between Mon communities in Myanmar and Thailand, generational differences in cultural participation, and the role of digital media in language and heritage transmission. Action research involving monasteries, youth, educators, and cultural organizations would be particularly useful for evaluating which preservation strategies are sustainable in practice. Future studies should also report participant numbers, sampling procedures, interview protocols, and ethical-review information in sufficient detail to meet contemporary journal standards.

References

- Achille, C., & Fiorillo, F. (2022). Teaching and learning of cultural heritage: Engaging education, professional training and experimental activities. *Heritage*, 5(3), 2565–2593.
- Deegalle, M. (2003). Is violence justified in Theravada Buddhism? *The Ecumenical Review*, 55(2), 122–131. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.2003.tb00077.x>
- Fernández-Dols, J. M., Hurtado-de-Mendoza, A., & Jiménez-de-Lucas, I. (2004). Culture of peace: An alternative definition and its measurement. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 10(2), 117–124.

- Jinadhaja, N. P., & Dhammahaso, P. H. (2020). An analytical trend in the development of Buddhism in Mon State region of Myanmar in the next decade. *The Journal of International Buddhist Studies College (JIBSC)*, 6(1), 1–11.
- Lederach, J. P. (1999). *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Mar Latt, Z. (2012). Traditional belief of the Mon nationals living in Hinthagon. *University Research Journal*, 5, 1–16.
- Mekonnen, H., Bires, Z., & Berhanu, K. (2022). Practices and challenges of cultural heritage conservation in historical and religious heritage sites: Evidence from North Shoa Zone, Amhara Region, Ethiopia. *Heritage Science*, 10.
- Phra Pramote Vatagovito (Pantapat), et al. (2019). Human on peace and Buddhist peaceful means. *Journal of MCU Nakhondhat*, 6(10), 46–98.
- Phra Raphin Buddhiso, Thangto, P., & Klomkul, L. (2019). Different ethnicities of Myanmar Buddhist monks in Thai Buddhist University of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University in Ayutthaya Province. *ASEAN Journal of Religious and Cultural Research*, 2(1), 7–14.
- Renteln, A. D. (2015). Cultural rights and cultural defence: Cultural concerns. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed., pp. 491–497).
- Sirikanchana, P. (2018). Preserving cultural identity in an interconnected world: The case of Thailand. *JIBU, Special Edition on Vesak Celebrations Conference*, 479–480.
- Tiptas, P. (1998). An architectural analysis of the Mon community in Phra Pradaeng, Samutprakarn. *MANUSYA: Journal of Humanities*, 1(2), 68–75.
- Tuncer, F. F. (2023). Discussing globalization and cultural hybridization. *Universal Journal of History and Culture*, 5(2), 85–103.