



The Three Cultural Lines of Buddhist, Christian and Islamic Communities in Phrapradaeng District, Samutprakarn Province: A Model of Peaceful Coexistence toward ASEAN Community

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[Abstract]

The Phrapradaeng District is the smallest district of Samutprakarn province. For over the past centuries, it is composed of the different ethnic and religious groups of people. In this paper, the common identities of the three cultural lines of Buddhist, Christianity and Islamic communities were investigated and to strengthen the affection, unity, and preparedness entering the ASEAN Community. The qualitative research method was adopted, using field observation and focus group; observation and group interviews. The results demonstrated that the identities of all three religions and communities were different; the community-based religious principles have stipulated and promoted the behaviors of the people; namely, living in the way of righteousness, social norms and cultures that are recognizable and known, loving fellowman, appreciation, forgiveness as religious teaching in the three communities. It's suggested that the three cultural line network of philosophers should be established and annual activities should be promoted actively.

Keywords: Culture, Buddhism, Christianity, Coexistence Prototype, Peace, ASEAN Community

Introduction

Phrapradaeng District, the smallest district of Samutprakarn province, consists of diverse ethnic and religious groups of people, including the Mon, Christian, and Islamic community. The settlement of the communities and peaceful coexistence among the diverse ethnic and religious groups of people has been apparent for centuries. From the past to the present, no problematic coexistence has been reported. The religious doctrines and practices for cohabitation among three communities mentioned-above have elicited the key characteristics of each cultural line. The culture as behavioral determinant results in peacefulness of the community and the public. With the diversity of cultures, traditions and cultural attraction, environmental conservation, sufficiency agriculture, it produces the income to the communities and Thailand continuously and it even deserves a good exemplar to other similar communities, particularly by the year 2015, when Thailand enters the full membership of the ASEAN Community, the ten member countries of ASEAN Community; including Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei are eligible to migrate, work, study, and access to medical treatment more easily as a citizen of the ASEAN Community, an important human resource (Prida Poomsin, 2011). However, in the midst of the rapidly-changing society with modern communication technologies, this may pose an impact on the way of life of the individuals and communities. The state necessarily promotes the communities in several dimensions; especially the culture as social capital that brings forth the benefits; connecting the people to co-exist peacefully and harmoniously.

In this study, the guidelines on community participation promotion to the cultural knowledge management was focused with targeting that the communities may acquire the art and cultural knowledge, dissemination, and conservation and promotion and development of arts and cultures in different respects across the communities, as well as improved community involvement in the management and planning, defining the objectives of operational guidelines, an appropriate share of cultural

resources. In this study, the three cultural line communities were investigated and it is considered as anchor of adherence in spirit and behavioral determinants of the community people in Phrapradaeng that they have coexisted happily and sustainably.

Objectives

1. To examine the identities of the three cultural lines of Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic communities in Phrapradaeng, Samutprakarn Province
2. To strengthen the affection and unity of the communities
3. To prepare the people to steadfast adherence to the national, religious, and monarchical institute upon entering the ASEAN Community

Literary review

Nattanai Prasanam (2007: Online) mentions “the identity is an individual’s sense of self: “Who am I?”. Identity occurs as resulted from the interaction between a person and others through self-reflection and reflection by others, self-awareness, and fundament belief when a person decides to choose something. A person expresses and accepts himself for what he determines. One may express or accept oneself intentionally for what the identity he chooses. The expression of identity is how a person identifies who I am; similar to or distinguish from other groups, and “who am I?” in the eyes of others. The term of “identity” is dissimilar to personality. The individual may possess the same state of personality, for instance, similar in some habits or other qualities. However, the identity of the individuals develops only when they share the certain condition; self-awareness, self-acceptance, and they express their identity which is similar or different from o other persons or groups.

White L. (1949) defines “culture” as the organizing of various phenomena, namely, organizing actions or behavioral patterns or ideas, beliefs, or knowledge. Culture involves the attitude and it depends on other factors, for examples, the use of the symbolic system. Culture begins when

the living creature has been developed into a mammal and communicates by means of the symbolic system. According to Max Weber (1966), the mainstream theorist, and Amra Phongsapich (2006), “the industrial development and the newly-emerging society have been taken place in the Europe from the basic liberal ideas where all human claim a freedom in the transformation of societies and cultures as evolved from the Christian reform.

In addition, the social development or propulsion have been embodied from norms, values, and thinking methods that are of the same orientation (Amra Phongsapich, 2006). With the current viewpoint or post-capitalism or Critical Theory cultural study, some scholars believe that modern societies have been of problems and the imbalanced condition. Thus, the concept of traditional culture is viewed insufficient to explain the changing cultural structures, since this important symbol results in the cultural transmission from one people to another.

Methodology

The qualitative research method was adopted, using the relevant documents and articles, field observation, discussion and focus group. The research instrument included observation Form and group interviews among the three cultural line communities, inductive approach and knowledge management. The methods are as follows.

1. Examine relevant documents and articles
2. Observation - field observation, discussion and focus group
3. Focus group – discuss with community leaders or leaders of three cultural lines of Buddhist, (Mon and Chinese lines), Christian, and Muslim community, and the official representatives of Phrapradaeng, Samutprakarn Province, and group interview questionnaires
- 4) Focus group is for criticizing the draft results of three cultural lines
- 5) Conclusion and presentation in of the development of the three cultural lines of Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim community: A Model of

Peaceful Coexistence in the ASEAN Community

Scope of the study

In this study, the three cultural lines of Buddhist, (Mon and from Chinese lines), Christian, and Muslim community in areas studied were focused. The population included community leader or three cultural lines leaders in the year 2014.

Results

• Mon Community

The result demonstrated that Mon community was ancient with prosperous civilization. “Mon was the first ethnic group settling down in Myanmar for centuries before the time of Christ (B.C), anticipating that they emigrated from central Asia to settle down in the south surrounding the Salween River Basin and Satong River, according to the China and India documents, this area was known as “Land of Gold”. The Mon tribal people in Phrapradaeng had a simplistic way of living, preferred to stay together, and adhered to the original identity firmly. The traditional way of life succeeded from predecessors under the socialization of the family, villages or communities. Regarding housing, it was a shanty low house; most were made of bamboo called “wall of plaited bamboo strips”, with thatched roofs. Some rich people preferred to Thai style house or modern house. The Mon tribal culture is unique, for instance, food culture, belief, tradition, and music culture, musical arts, for examples, Mon soup, Mon curry which taste is strange because of the ingredients of the okra and Roselle leaves. Other distinctions include the “crown” architecture, a palace with a pyramidal roof, as well as the musical art like “Mon Gamelan”.

• Muslim Community

Muslim’s way of life has been of self-reliance, based on the Islamic principles, and has been embodied as community problem-solving model, social and interpersonal understanding. Knowledge and education

are for the coexistence of diverse ethnic, social and religious groups. The religious doctrine has been adopted as a way to define the order and peace of the community and coexistence. The morality and ethics is considered a tool to create peace as whole. It's believed that peace occurs the community-based problem management has been achieved in the peaceful manner. These practices become a social participation model through self-management and develop a fundamental understanding for the youth, and promote the love for hometown love, accept the individual difference and diversity from the past to the present.

• **Christian Community**

Like the Mon and Islamic communities, it found that the Christian community of Prapradaeng District has a long history of settlements where the Chinese were the predecessors of the Roman Catholic community. The community-based Christianity culture and tradition provide benefits to locals and society. The local activities and traditions have not conflicted with Christianity doctrine but harmonized with Thai Buddhist culture currently.

Overall, Mon, Muslim, and Christian communities in Phrapradaeng District have the long history of the settlements for different grounds. However, the similarities are that these communities suffered from war or the original domination, pressing them to migrate to the neighboring country, Thailand where they were welcomed by the official authorities. They could live in harmony with the Thai people happily on the fair treatment basis; respect for human dignity. Hezberg Fredreck K. et al (2002) mentions that these communities inherited their own cultures and traditions by organizing activities on the grounds of belief, values, and faith in the religious teaching and practices that encourage them to do good deeds and live in a righteous way. All these are key determinants that communities in Phrarradaeng District, regardless of religion, develop a good interaction with each other, disciplines in the life, thereby resulting from that the society is in peace and order constantly until the present, as exhibited in the diagram.

Figure: Model of Three Cultural Lines of Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian Communities

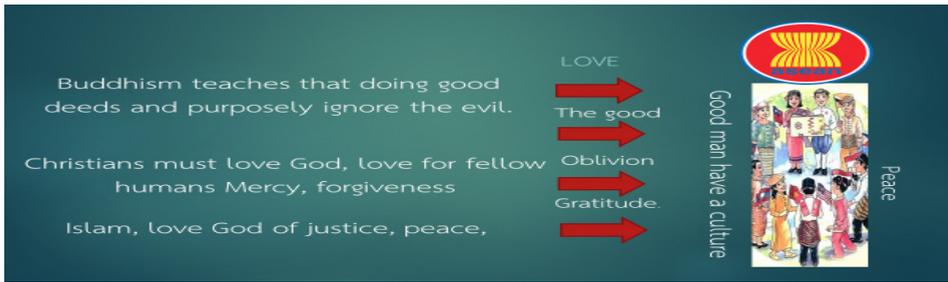


Figure 1 shows a model of three cultural lines of Buddhist, Christian, and Islam communities

A model of three cultural lines of Buddhist, Christian, and Islam communities has primarily rested on the important condition in determining and promoting the behavior of the religious to commit the way of “merit and cultural people” reflected by their behavior that has been recognized as “common good”; that is to love people, friends, do good deeds, forgiveness, and appreciation through the conflict management in a peaceful way with minimal loss in both short and long term concretely and abstractly, anti-violence for change in policies or behaviors by the state or influential people, but a peaceful means. (<http://cgsc.rta.mi.th/cgsc/index.php>; retrieved on September 8, 2014)

Discussions

The Mon tribal people in Phrapradaeng had a simple life, stay together, and firmly adhered to the original identity. The traditional way of life succeeded from time to time under the socialization of the family, villages or communities. Consistent with Warin Arame (2009), stating “the ethnic identity of the Mon people remains in the western Raman community; including traditions and rituals, as well as the revitalization of past cultures; that is produced in the patterns different from the past where the importance of the community has been represented.

Muslim community has a self-reliant way of life, based on Islamic principles in organizing the community as tool to build a peace on the ground that peace occurs the community-based problem management has

been settled in a peaceful way and it becomes a model of social participation and to promote the concept of love for hometown love and acceptance in the individual difference and diversity. Consistent with Rapihan Muhamad (2013), citing “Islam religion has a strong influence on Muslim living. The faith in Allah is the most important and is the social power that brings forth unity and community involvement. In addition, the religious leaders are key persons who have adopted the religious practices to remedy the Saen Saep Canal through radio broadcasting public relations where Imam Vinai Sama-un is responsible for explaining and instructing and persuading the locals to be responsible for the community where they live on the self-reliant community and human resource development basis

The Christian community of Prapradaeng District has a long history of settlements where the Chinese were the predecessors of the Roman Catholic community. The community-based Christianity culture and tradition have been grounded in the religious belief and community and social benefits. The local people have always participated in local activities and traditions that are not contrary to Christianity doctrine. Consistent with Sukhum Kitsa-nguan (Pastor, Abbot of the Sacred Heart of Mary Church, interview on October 5, 2014), stating “the Songkran Festival, the Sacred Heart of Mary Church assigned the St. Mary’s School to organize the faculties and students, together with the musical band to join the Songkran procession, in collaborating with Phrapradaeng District. It is an important and famous annual festival of Phrapradaeng. In addition, the community and Catholic Church organized the Saba games at the front of St. Mary’s School, aiming to promote the culture and traditions of the Phrapradaeng.

In conclusion, the Mon, Muslim and Christian communities have different histories for different reasons as driving force that the people emigrated to the Phrapradaeng district, Samutprakarn, Thailand, and earned a living together with the Thai people happily. Hezberg Fredreck K. and Others (2002) states “that these communities inherited their own cultures and traditions by organizing activities on the grounds of belief, values, and faith in the religious teaching and practices that encourage

them to do good deeds and live in a righteous way. Consistent with Pornusa Prasongwana (2014), citing “ everyone has a sense of belonging of the national identity and Thai citizen, the love for Thailand, all Thai people regardless of race when they have cohabited, it is considered to be a fraternal nationality. Besides, even though they are different in religion, they are common in the principle that all religions teach them to be a good people, mercy, generosity, and non-discrepancy, earning a living honestly for development of personal life, society, and the nation securely. All everybody is loyal to His Majesty the King. These are internal factors enabling the communities in Prapradaeng, regardless of religion have a good interaction with each other and discipline in the way of life, thereby resulting in the peaceful society continuously until the present.

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