

The Identity Of Thai People Of Vietnamese Descent Who Are Roman Catholic: A Case Study Of Saowapa Phongsri Community, Ongkharak District, Nakhon Nayok Province, Thailand

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Abstract

This research is qualitative research. The objectives of this research were to study the way of life and religious beliefs that are the identity of Thai people of Vietnamese descent who are Roman Catholic: A case study of Saowapa Phongsri community, Ongkharak District, Nakhon Nayok province. The sample group consisted of people in the Saowapa Phongsri community, administrators of local government administrations, education-related agencies, and cultural agencies, totalling to 66 key informants. The study was conducted using participant observation and non-participant observation in community areas, as well as in-depth interviews and analysis of results using the content analysis technique. The results of the study found that 1) the background of Thai people of Vietnamese descent from Saowapa Phongsri community is a group of people who migrated from the Vietnamese community at Sam Sen, Bangkok since 1900, initially came to the Baan Yuan community (Vietnamese) which later expanded to cover the Saowapa Phongsri community, which includes Baan Yuan area, Talad Kao area, Talad Mai area and Baan Nai area 2) preserving the Vietnamese way of life that is culture and traditions, overall, the way of life changed according to the socioeconomic status but still retains some of the Vietnamese way of life that is culture and traditions such as making merit for ancestors, conveying lifestyles with religious beliefs 3) Roman Catholic beliefs that are the important identity of the community include the Procession of the Virgin Mary, the Cemetery Blessings in three languages: Thai, Vietnamese and Chinese 4) important identity of Thai people of Vietnamese descent who are Roman Catholic is to adhere to the principles of religion, creating a community of faith, a positive driving force, gratitude for ancestors, pride in being a Thai of Vietnamese descent, and living in harmony with society through solidarity.

Keywords: Thai people of Vietnamese descent, Preserving culture and traditions, Cultural identity.

Background

Thai people of Vietnamese descent who immigrated to live in Thailand, in many areas such as Bangkok (WadKean, 2561), Ayutthaya (Kuboonya-aragsa, 2018), Nakhon Phanom (Auraiampai and Jutaviriya, 2017), Udon Thani (Amnuayngertra, 2017), Nong Khai, Ubon Ratchathani (Kuboonya aragsa, 2018), Sakon Nakhon (Thongkaew et al., 2014). Entry into each area can be due to several

factors such as religious persecution and pressure, poverty, fleeing the suppression of government officials, being taken as prisoners of war, and for commercial reasons (Kuboonya-aragsa et. al., 2018).

The first group of Thai people of Vietnamese descent who immigrated to Thailand were in the Ayutthaya area who came during the reign of King Narai the Great (Ramathibodi III) of Ayutthaya. They came

with foreigners from the western world such as Portugal, and the eastern world such as Japan, who came to live in the community of foreigners which is outside the city of Ayutthaya (Poole, 1970).

The next group of Thai people of Vietnamese descent who immigrated to Thailand are Thai people in the north-eastern region of Thailand such as Nakhon Phanom, Udon Thani, Sakon Nakhon, Nong Khai, Ubon Ratchathani, who entered in the early Rattanakos in period (the reign of King Rama I since 1765 onwards) until after World War II (late 19th century). The main immigration factors are persecution and pressure from religious differences, poverty, fleeing from government suppression, being taken as prisoners of war, and for commercial reasons (Poole, 1970; Thongkaew et al., 2014; Kubonya-aragsa et al., 2018; Auraiampai and Jutaviriya, 2017; Amnuayngertra, 2017).

Thai people of Vietnamese descent who immigrated to live in Bangkok are Roman Catholic, Vietnamese people who came to Thailand during the reign of King Rama III (Pranangklaao Chao Yu Hua) in 1832. The immigration factor was prisoners of war from the Siamese–Vietnamese War at Cho doc, Pouthaymat, which is a border city. Therefore, they were taken captive and set up houses in the area of Wat SmoKing, Samsen, Bangkok. King Rama III donated his personal property to build the first church called St. Francois Xavier Church (later changed to the name St. Francis Xavier Church), allowing the Vietnamese people to self-rule according to their old style in Vietnam. Afterwards, Roman Catholic Vietnamese people who were being persecuted by other Vietnamese people for their religious differences have migrated to live there more (WadKean, 2561).

The entry into Thailand of the Vietnamese, in the first phase, they were in groups with the Vietnamese themselves, but later interacted with the surrounding society. This led to an increase in the number of Thai people of Vietnamese descent (Kubonya-aragsa et al., 2018). The cultural mix is a new

culture that blends properly (Robert, 1965). By ethnicity, some parts have changed according to the situation, but some ethnicities can still be preserved, such as language, religion, clothing, consumption behavior etc. Members of each group select, resulting in the identity of each area group (Barth, 1996).

It was found that the importance of ethnicity, that many groups of Thai people of Vietnamese descent in Thailand have preserved, is the process of moulding family members through 3 steps which are 1) practicing rationality 2) cultivating ideals, discipline, diligence, patience, and gratitude 3) creating conditions within the family, creating social groups, and relationship of social groups (Thongkaew et al., 2016).

For Nakhon Nayok Province, which is the location and the integrated area in learning management, research and academic services to society of St Theresa International College, the study found that there are Thai people of Vietnamese descent who have been living in the area of Ongkharak District within the SaowapaPhongsri community for a long time as well. The researcher believes that a study should be conducted on the history of Thai people of Vietnamese descent in the SaowapaPhongsri community, preserving the Vietnamese way of life that is culture and traditions, and Roman Catholic beliefs that are the identity of the community. This will benefit community administrators, local administrators, and educational administrators in the area. They can use the information to create preservation of arts and culture of the community, create a community identity, and set an example for other racial groups in preserving arts and culture that is their identity in order to develop coexistence on cultural diversity, which is one of the college's missions to serve society in accordance with the university policy to serve the community (U2T) to be strong and sustainable.

Research Objectives

To study the history of Thai people of Vietnamese descent of the Saowapa Phongsri

community, study the preservation of the Vietnamese way of life that is the culture and traditions of the community, and study the way of life and religious beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church, which is the identity of the Thai people of Vietnamese descent community, a case study of Saowapa Phongsri community, Ongkharak District, Nakhon Nayok province.

Research Methodology

This research is qualitative research. The researchers conducted the study using non-participant observation, and participant observation in the areas of the Saowapa Phongsri community, Ongkharak district, and Nakhon Nayok province. Afterwards, verified the information using in-depth interviews with 41 people from the Saowapa Phongsri community, 11 administrators of local government administrations, 9 people from education-related agencies, and 5 people from cultural agencies, totalling 66 key informants. The selection of key informants was done using the snowball technique. The researchers collected data from January 2020 – January 2022. The interview results which have been examined using the triangulation method will be analyzed using the content analysis technique and summarize the results subsequently.

Findings

The researchers conducted the study in 3 key areas: study the history of Thai people of Vietnamese descent in the Saowapa Phongsri community, study the preservation of the Vietnamese way of life that is the culture and traditions which remain, and study the Roman Catholic beliefs that are the identity of the community. The results of the study were as follows:

I. History of Thai People of Vietnamese Descent in the Saowapa Phongsri Community, Ongkharak

Thai people of Vietnamese descent living in the Saowapa Phongsri community, Ongkharak District, Nakhon Nayok province, Thailand are

a group of Vietnamese immigrants to Thailand, in Samsenarea, Bangkok. Later in 1900, a few Thai people of Vietnamese descent who are members of the Nguyen family have moved from Samsen area, Bangkok to live in Ongkharak district. The main factor of migration from the Samsen Vietnamese community is its rapid expansion and continuous increase in population, causing crowded housing and increased difficulty to make a living. In addition, the Ongkharak area has conditions suitable for occupation, and is located not too far from Bangkok. In the first phase, they were gathered as a village, leading to people in the traditional area calling the village “Baan Yuan Community” (Vietnamese Village) until this day.

In the migration of Thai people of Vietnamese descent from Samsen, a Vietnamese priest from Samsen Church (or St. Francois Xavier Church), Father Min Ye (Michel), came to take care of the parishioners who came to live in the Baan Yuan community, and stayed at Baan Akornklaow, which is close to Chao Pho Ongkharak Shrine (now demolished) and built the first chapel. The building was made of wood, with kite roof tiles. In the beginning, the Church was called Hua Kwai Church, which was renamed to Sri Sa Krabue Church, and later changed to Saowapa Church, named after “Pratunam Saowapa Phongsri” which is in front of the old Ongkharak Market.

Over time, the number of Thai people of Vietnamese descent increased and the number of families also increased. Thai surnames are used; from Nguyen to several surnames such as Suwichakorn, Chanthapiriyakul, Ruangboonsuk, Chuenchom, Rattan Kriangkrai, Wuttisakchaikul, Weera-anantamit, Thongwiang. The people in various families extended to live in the surrounding area of Baan Yuan village, including in the old market, new market and in the area known as Baan Nai (area around Klong 14 and Klong 15).

Because the first church was located on an island area, there was flooding regularly during the rainy season. Therefore, the church was temporarily moved to Baan Ong Hao (Ong

Yaap - the prayer leader), and the Baan Nok group was the chapel (the second church) instead. In 1903, Ta Jin, a well-known and faithful Christian who lived in a high area slightly away from the Baan Yuan community, offered the large house to the church (the canteen area of Christasongkroh School in the present). Therefore, Father enlisted parishioners to help move and build the third church, to replace the former church. Shortly thereafter, when the number of parishioners increased, the latter church became too narrow. Consequently, Father Joachim, pastor of the church at that time, built a new church as the fourth church (the area in front of St. Peter building) adjacent to the third church. This church has a raised platform, thatched roof, and a small terrace around the church. The third church was used as a presbytery.

In 1913, the fourth church has begun to deteriorate. Father John Hieng Sae Lim (Nitayo) wants to build a new permanent church, and with the help of Father Desiree John Baptist Durang (pastor of Holy Family Church Lam Sai, Pathum Thani province) who assisted to find a church plan according to the example of the Holy Redeemer Church in France. Father Yuang therefore made a copy, drew a plan, and in 1915, began the construction of the fifth church in the area adjacent to the fourth church, with Father Toma (San Nuwichian) as the construction supervisor. After the construction of the church was completed, Bishop Rene Perros of Bangkok, Thailand was invited to consecrate the church and consecrate three bells and renamed the church from Saowapa Church to "Holy Redeemer Church Saowapa" until this day.

The fifth church is special because it was built on a pond, with a cement base support, surrounded by water, and no part of the church is on the ground. These are the wisdom of Thai people of Vietnamese descent which designed to prevent ants and termites from damaging the church building. This church was celebrated twice, in 1940 (25 years of construction), where there was a silver jubilee

celebration in which Vietnamese drama from the parishioners of Samson Church was also performed in the ceremony, and in 1965 there was also a celebration of the church's golden jubilee. Later, the soil in front of the church often collapsed, which led to the soil being in contact with the church building, therefore causing termite damages too dilapidated to be repaired.

In 1977, Father Peter Samak Jengsuebsan proceeded to construct the sixth church to replace the old church, moving slightly from the original position. There was a change of direction for the front of the church to turn towards Rangsit-Nakhon Nayok Road. Additionally, a new bell tower was built in front of the church on the left. The sixth church is still in use today and used as a centre of faith for Thai people of Vietnamese descent in the Saowapa community all along.

2. Preservation of the Vietnamese Way of Life that is the Culture and Traditions

The way of life for Thai people of Vietnamese descent has changed according to the socioeconomic status, but still maintains a Vietnamese way of life with practice of Catholicism that is their culture and traditions in many ways such as:

2.1 Having a diligent, frugal, patient, and economical lifestyle. Although there are very few remaining traditional occupations like agriculture, farming, freshwater fishing, and mat weaving, there are still career tools maintained for children to study (some were donated to the church for creating a museum) which allows preservation of the Vietnamese occupational culture in the community. Furthermore, by maintaining a smart and diligent living culture, Thai people of Vietnamese descent are successful in business careers with thriving commercial ventures.

2.2 Participation in building and maintaining religious sites such as churches for religious ceremonies, which throughout the past, found that Thai people of Vietnamese descent in Saowapa community are actively involved in continual co-creation and

maintenance which indicates the uniqueness of the nation.

2.3 Participation to preserve religious ceremonies involve 1) rites performed in daily life, such as the Sacrament of Baptism, in which all Christians must be baptized from birth or during early childhood. This is the first sacrament to receive based on the religious belief that every person has sin from birth. If not received, one cannot receive other sacraments. As children grow up, they begin to receive the Eucharist, Sacrament of Penance, and Sacrament of Confirmation 2) rites performed each year that have been passed down from ancestors, such as birth, marriage, and death traditions, as well as other Christian holy days.

2.4 Remembrance of deceased ancestors. Currently, Thai people of Vietnamese descent in the Saowapa community are Thai people with other ethnicities as well such as Thai people of Vietnamese and Chinese descent, Thai people of Vietnamese and Lao descent, however, it was found that Thai people of Vietnamese descent in Saowapa community still pay respect to their ancestors and remember their ancestors on various occasions including remembrance on the New Year or other important days.

2.5 The use of Vietnamese language, which nowadays, its use to communicate is limited to elderly Thais of Vietnamese descent in the Saowapa community who are able to use Vietnamese language to communicate. For its use in writing, it was found that nobody in the Saowapa Community could use Vietnamese language for everyday writing. Nevertheless, since Father Soodjen Fonruang became the pastor, he has restored Vietnamese prayers from elders in Baan Yuan community for use during Cemetery Blessings which now when Father Watcharin Samanchit is the pastor, it has continued to this day. This has become another way to preserve the Vietnamese spoken language in the community.

3. Roman Catholic Beliefs that are the Identity of the Community

The beliefs in worship are expressed in the rites of the Catholic community. Important worshipping encompasses worship of Jesus and praying to the Virgin Mary, along with saints and especially the respected saints.

The Roman Catholic belief that is the important identity for Thais of Vietnamese descent which is maintained in the Saowapa community is the Procession of the Virgin Mary and the Cemetery Blessings with use of Vietnamese language.

3.1 Procession of the Virgin Mary

The Procession of the Virgin Mary, in general, is a Procession of the Virgin Mary around the church during the month of the Virgin Mary (October). The Procession of the Virgin Mary for Thai people of Vietnamese descent in Saowapa community involves a Procession from the church to the houses of the Christians covering all 4 areas which are Baan Naiarea, Talad Kao area, Talad Maiarea, and Baan Yuan community area. Whenever the Procession of the Virgin Mary reaches any home, people in the Saowapa community will attend the ceremony at that house in the evening, and in the next day, they follow the Procession which continues to the next home until the last house volunteers. Then, the Procession of the Virgin Mary returns to the church. This is a tradition that creates love and unity for people in the community to help and support each other firmly.

3.2 Cemetery Blessings with Use of Vietnamese Language

Most Cemetery Blessings in Thailand are conjured in Thai language, except for some areas, where the Cemetery Blessings will be conjured in English. In the area of Thais of Vietnamese descent, Saowapa community, originally, the Cemetery Blessings were in Thai and Vietnamese. Over time, the number of elders with Vietnamese descent began to decline so the Cemetery Blessings only used Thai language. Moreover, Thais of Vietnamese descent in the Saowapa community began to marry more and more Thai people of Chinese descent, creating Thai people of Vietnamese and Chinese descent. Chinese culture has come

to influence unconsciously. At present, the Cemetery Blessings at Holy Redeemer Church Saowapa are held during the Chinese New Year and prayers were in three languages, namely Thai, Chinese, and Vietnamese. Integration of this tradition enables Thai people of Vietnamese descent in the Saowapa community to maintain the spoken Vietnamese language and to preserve their beautiful identity.

Conclusion

The results of the study are summarized as follows:

1. History of Thai people of Vietnamese descent, Saowapa Phongsri community

Thai people of Vietnamese descent living in the Saowapa Phongsri community, Ongkharak District Is a group of Vietnamese immigrants to Thailand, in Samsen area, Bangkok. They came to Ongkharak District in the 1900 and most of them are members of the Nguyen family.

Father Min Ye (Michel), a Vietnamese priest from Samsen Church (or St. Francois Xavier Church), came to take care of the parishioners. In the first phase, they were gathered as a village, leading to people in the traditional area calling the village "Baan Yuan Community" (Vietnamese Village) until this day.

The main factor of migration from the Samsen Vietnamese community is its increase in population, causing crowded housing and competition in careers. In addition, the Ongkharak area is near the canal, it has suitable conditions for occupation and is located not too far from Bangkok, so it is convenient to visit relatives.

In the beginning, the Church was called Hua Kwai Church, which was renamed to Sri Sa Krabue Church, and later changed to Saowapa Church, named after "Pratunam Saowapa Phongsri" which is in front of the old Ongkharak Market. Later, the name was changed to "Holy Redeemer Church Saowapa" by Bishop Rene Perros of Bangkok Thailand. According to the fifth church plan

taken from the example of the Holy Redeemer Church in France, although the church was rebuilt later, the name "Holy Redeemer Church Saowapa" is still used to this day.

2. Preservation of the Vietnamese way of life that is the culture and traditions of the Saowapa Phongsri community

The way of life for Thai people of Vietnamese descent has changed according to the socioeconomic status, but still maintains a Vietnamese way of life with practice of Catholicism that is their culture and traditions in many ways such as:

1) Having a diligent, frugal, patient, and economical lifestyle, as well as smart living will lead to success in business careers with thriving commercial ventures 2) participation in building and maintaining the church continuously and being a good Catholic 3) participation in preserving religious ceremonies including rites performed in daily life and rites performed each year that have been passed down from ancestors 4) remembrance of deceased ancestors on various occasions like the New Year or other important days 5) restoration of the use of Vietnamese language through prayers in three languages: Thai Chinese and Vietnamese etc.

3. Roman Catholic beliefs that are the identity of the Thai people of Vietnamese descent of the Saowapa Phongsri Community

The Roman Catholic belief that Thai people of Vietnamese descent have maintained all along is the belief in worship, according to Catholic rites, worshipping Jesus and praying to the Virgin Mary along with respected saints. The outstanding Catholic beliefs which are an important identity for Thai people of Vietnamese descent in the Saowapa community are the Procession of the Virgin Mary and the Cemetery Blessings using the Vietnamese language during Chinese New Year. In this way, Thai people of Vietnamese descent in the Saowapa community still maintain the spoken Vietnamese language and preserve their beautiful identity.

4. The important identity of Thai people of Vietnamese descent who are Roman

Catholic: a case study of the Saowapa Phongsri community, Ongkharak district, Nakhon Nayok province is 1) to adhere to the principles of religion, creating a community of faith, and use the faith to create a positive driving force 2) gratitude towards ancestors 3) pride in being a Thai of Vietnamese descent 4) living in harmony with society through solidarity. By creating a good community identity, Thai people of Vietnamese descent in the Saowapa Phongsri community have success and prosperity in life.

Discussion

From the study which found that the way of life for Thai people of Vietnamese descent in the Saowapa community still maintains an important Vietnamese way of life, including having a diligent, frugal, patient, and economical lifestyle, and maintaining a smart and diligent living culture, which leads to successful business careers with thriving commercial ventures. This is consistent with the results of a study by Thongkaew et al. (2016) which found that the importance of ethnicity, that many groups of Thai people of Vietnamese descent in Thailand have preserved, is the process of moulding family members through 3 steps which are practicing rationality, cultivating ideals, discipline, diligence, patience, and gratitude, and creating conditions within the family, creating social groups, and relationship of social groups.

From the study which found that the identity of Thai people of Vietnamese descent is the Procession of the Virgin Mary, and the Cemetery Blessings With use of Vietnamese language held during the Chinese New Year. It is consistent with the study of Kuboonya-aragsa et. al. (2018) which found that when Thai people of Vietnamese descent interacted with the surrounding society, it led to an increase in the number of Thai people of Vietnamese descent. As well as the concept of Robert (1965) which found that Thai people of Vietnamese descent will form a cultural mix, a new culture that blends properly, such as language and religion, the choices of members

of each group result in the identity of each area group (Barth, 1996).

Teachers need to readily adapt their teaching and learning process in order to keep up with the changes. This is applicable for teachers, coaches, and learning facilitators. Optimal Blowfish Algorithm based Technique for Data Security in Cloud, Tripartite partite key assignment scheme for security of cloud data classes are also would be benefit to the health education management and technology industry sustainability (Reddy, Bindu, 2017, Reddy, bindu, Praveen, 2017; Reddy, Bindu, Praveen, 2016). Survey of Precision Medicine Strategy Using Cognitive Computing for English proficiency and A dataset for automatic contrast enhancement of microscopic malaria infected blood RGB images, Data in brief and Image Segmentation Technique Using SVM Classifier for Detection of Medical Disorders also included in digital literacy era to understand the digital literacy in health, food, education and technology aspects for English proficiency (Ramu et al, 2018, somasekar et al, 2019, Janardhan et al, 2019).

Recommendations

Recommendations for applying the research results:

The research conducted indicates that Catholicism, the identity of the community and of Thai people of Vietnamese descent within the Saowapa Phongsri community, is the Procession of the Virgin Mary and Cemetery Blessings using the Vietnamese language during Chinese New Year. Therefore, community administrators, education-related agencies, and cultural agencies should apply the lessons learned to cooperatively preserve the community identity for future years to come.

According to the study, the identity of Thai people of Vietnamese descent in Saowapa Phongsri community who are Roman Catholic is the adherence to the principles of religion, forming a community of faith, and use it as a positive driving force, gratitude towards ancestors, pride in being Thai with Vietnamese descent, and living in harmony with society

through solidarity. Therefore, local administrators should support the process of elevating identity preservation for the people of the community, in order to serve as an exemplar for other nationalities in preserving arts and culture which is their identity. This would be a development of coexistence upon cultural diversity, as well as conservation of the community's arts and culture to build a strong community, derived from the lifestyle of the people in the community.

Recommendations for further research:

The research reveals that Thai people of Vietnamese descent in the SaowapaPhongsri community are a group of Vietnamese who migrated to Thailand in the Samsen area, Bangkok, and relocated to Ongkharak District in 1900. An important factor for relocation is the increasing Vietnamese population in the Samsen community, which resulted in crowded housings, and the fact that the Ongkharak district area is adjacent to the canal, which has suitable conditions for occupation and is proximate to Bangkok. However, this study is a qualitative research obtained from observations and in-depth interviews, therefore, additional studies through other research methods such as document analysis or quantitative research should be conducted to further verify the results. This would be beneficial towards curriculum development for educational institutions in the community, and further development of the quality of life for people within the community.

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