

The Social Movement of the Phuan in Thailand

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Abstract: Problem statement: The changing, modernization and globalization had the impact to the Phuan ethnic in Thailand. They faced the problem to adapt themselves and they returned to have ethnic resurgence. The purpose of the article were to study the social movement forms of social organization and to study the causal factor effecting or involving the identity construction in various contexts like capitalism and marginality. **Approach:** It was a qualitative research. Data collection included interviews and participation observations, document analysis and data fields. Research data was classified into groups on study topic and analyzed on the purpose of study by using descriptive analysis. Informants included 65 key informants were the Phuan informants from 4 provinces were Nhong Khai, Sukhothai, Nakhon Nayok and Lopburi. **Results:** The results of the study were as follows: The social movement of the Phuan in 1975 a group of the Phuan people who separately earned their living in Bangkok made an appointment to gather, interact and hold the meeting and having the get-together party starting from a small group and gradually enlarging later. In 1977, they establish the club and draft the regulations for enforcement. There were some Phuan volunteers to study as the Phuan co-ordinators in their own provinces. In the first meeting, there were 8 representative attendants' provinces from 25 provinces-Nakhon Nayok, Pracheen Buri, Chacherngsoa, Suphan Buri, Singh Buri, Sukhothai, Pichit and Lop Buri. The organization for social and cultural operation movement in the form of club was an obvious starting point of the Phuan identity construction and resurgence and became the first step to collect the resource and capital for establishing the foundation and Thai Phuan Monks United-geographical Organization of Thailand (Sahaphoomsong Thai Phuan). The Phuan organization was firstly for collecting groups for only cultural and traditional preservation. Because they believed that even though some parts of traditional culture were destroyed by globalization, some other parts were still existing especially ethnic consciousness, shared descent feeling and social value which changed more slowly than material culture and could be resurged. In fact, the present state of 30 years old Thai Phuan Club and foundation with steadily increasing members from various walks of life from the Phuan themselves and outsiders. From this point of view, it meant that opening more space or public exposure of the Phuan society was to satisfy social acceptance needs or to be regarded as equivalent part of national state society and deserved "hearing" in the public forum involved in their own interest, economic, politic and social status. **Conclusion:** The using of culture as the tool for group collection and coordination was the best way of constructing and motivating the sense of selfness and same party of the Phuan. Thus, the Phuan culture was the Phuan social practice at present.

Key words: The social movement, the Phuan in Thailand

INTRODUCTION

The changing from development of modernization based on economic system was the causing of modern societies affected to adapt for human survival in the borderless or globalization age, human-beings will face the dramatically changes in every dimension including various ethnic groups turn back to the original relations

once being accustomed to either religious belief or cultural bond of their own groups. From this linkage point of human societies amid the influential modernization, this main column effect the new phenomenon called "ethnic resurgence" implied by at least three dimensions; firstly, its own ethnic group such as sense of ethnic belonging different from the majority in terms of history and culture including

prominent group leaders in various matters esteemed as the successful models later becoming symbols or potential human capital to assure their prestigious ethnic resurgence; secondly, the definition of “resurgence” means referring back to the past tie of ethnic relation with the past; thirdly, the ethnic resurgence seems to challenge the existing social and cultural organizations; the modernization deprives people from their own identity replaced by global culture causing the crisis of clash of civilization as called by some academics as the Phuan in Thailand need the social movement for social organization construction and cultural space.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

It was a qualitative research. Data collection included interviews and participation observations, document analysis and data fields. Research data was classified into groups on study topic and analyzed on the purpose of study by using descriptive analysis. Informants included 65 key informants from 4 provinces were Ban Panlam Tambon Visit Amphoe Buengkan Nhong Khai province, Hadsiew municipality Amphoe Srisatchanalai Sukhothai province, Ban Klang Sopa Tambon Nongsaeng Amphoe Pakpli Nakhon Nayok province and Ban Kuay Tambon Ban Kuay Amphoe Ban Mee Lopburi province. They were the Phuan informants consisting of club committee, foundation members and members of Thai Phuan Monks United-Geographical Organization of Thailand, provincial Thai Phuan leaders.

RESULTS

The social movement of the Phuan in Thailand: In the social movement of the Phuan in Thailand, did most Phuan people perceive the importance and the ethnic sense derives by individual realization or was directed by organizations, or others. The Phuan people who were living in regions or rural areas and engaged in agricultural occupation did not perceive the importance and understand the purpose of the established organization activities and the productive outcome for their ways of life. On the other hand, the ethnic sense and realization of being the Phuan was still intensive and individualized realization. This was because this ethnic group did still believe in their mores and strictly practice in the traditional ways of life. The coming to gather in a large for attending and holding the ceremony was their regular pattern ways of life without any announcement or invitation. All of them knew that it was the inevitable “duty” because it was the matter of

relation between human and super natural power instilled in their spirituality and full of sacredness. The ceremonies held by the Phuan on some occasions were regarded as the established mores to practice along the life circle. In the case of the Phuan that settled in the urban community, had more chances to touch the globalization; most of them spent their lives through cross-culture and exchanged knowledge among other nearby ethnic groups to learn to live together survive and seek benefits from business (Sati *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, they had to construct and own the socio-cultural space as much as possible.

Thus, the construction cultural space of the Phuan in urban community more regarded the importance and necessity of social movement. The urban Phuan tended to expose themselves in the public and sometimes tried to show their ethnic identity more obviously to guard their socio-cultural space against the cultural intrusion by other ethnic groups and most importantly to secure the group right and interest. However, the social relation patterns for the Phuan’s ways of life in the rural areas, social members, were more closely and tightly related by joining family members, relatives and neighbors, together in the same group and shared the same cooperative value derived from the instilled marked tradition, culture and belief as the social norm, which was “Bonding relation” (Lach, 1977). Their ethnic sense was exposed by inner condition. For the Phuan in the urban community, social relation structures, marks as “bridging relation”, were looser, especially their ethnic sense which was originally instigated by outer conditions like economic, social, political, or accept ion of the process of cultural commodification. Therefore, the value was exposed in the form of competitive value among groups up to the marketing which always led to bargaining, retaliating and symbolic emphasizing.

The culture organization construction of the Phuan: In the dimension of ethnic identity construction as the adjusting the relation to be more equal, self defining, or new identity constructing to solve the social equation for ethnic equilibrium. The Phuan organization for cultural practice of the Phuan in Thailand was then regarded as the social phenomenon of the minority group subculture. It was the attempt of opening space and seeking an opportunity for their group. It was clearly seen that the alertness and creative idea to establish the club derived from the middle-class Phuan living in big city like Bangkok. Since they live in the modern and consumptive society, they could concretely learn various changes around them and also predicted what would happen in the future.

The establishment of Phuan foundation and united-geographical monks was consequently regarded as the coordinative center of social networks for supporting and assisting less-chanced Phuan and meanwhile included implied complex social control. It was notable that the Phuan movement in Thailand did not petition any right from the state or operated through state machinery; it was just the personal adaptation as the socio-cultural practice by their own to improve ways of living and globalization for existing of the Phuan.

DISCUSSION

The social movement of the Phuan made an appointment to gather, interact and hold the meeting and having the get-together party starting from a small group and gradually enlarging later. They establish the club and draft the regulations for enforcement. There were some Phuan volunteers to study as the Phuan coordinators in their own provinces. In the first meeting, there were 8 representative attendants' provinces from 25 provinces. The organization for social and cultural operation movement in the form of club was an obvious starting point of the Phuan identity construction and resurgence and became the first step to collect the resource and capital for establishing the foundation and Thai Phuan Monks United-geographical Organization of Thailand. The Phuan organization was firstly for collecting groups for only cultural and traditional preservation. Because they believed that even though some parts of traditional culture were destroyed by globalization, some other parts were still existing especially ethnic consciousness, shared descent feeling and social value which changed more slowly than material culture and could be resurged (Smuckarn and Breazeal, 1988).

CONCLUSION

For the social movement as the social control process which was found in the study, it could be interpreted in to two points. Firstly, since the urban Phuan, mostly well-educated, more adaptive to new interest around them, could see the impact from globalization and faster established the organization. The marginal Phuan quality of life was at the lower level than the urban Phuan which caused more difficulty in grouping and controlling members resurged. Therefore, it was overall agreed that there had to be traditional social resurgence and reorganizing new group process for the Phuan from all parts of the country to have bargaining power and establish the

Phuan networking for exchanging ideas and creating more social interaction (Smuckarn and Breazeal, 1988).

Secondly, the Phuan identity was constructed by interest groups, both of the Phuan themselves and outsiders; they thought that globalization caused their social capital changeable. As the social status was more complicated, individuals had more identities because each member belonged to several units. Being membership of different units might lead to identity conflict (Sati *et al.*, 2005). There was group transfer; changing status from "Phuan" to "Others" negatively affected their interest so it was necessary to resurge the new relation by using identity and ethnic sense as the instrument for the Phuan solidarity in internal and external country.

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