

# Co-existence of Thai Muslim People and Other in an Ancient Community Located in the Heart of Bangkok: The Case Study of Petchaburi 7 Community

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**Abstract**—The objectives of study are the following: To study the way of life in terms of one hundred years co-existence of the Muslim and local community in this area 2) To analyze factors affect to this community with happy co-existence. The study requires quantitative research to study a history together with the study of humanity. The result of this study showed that the area of Petchburi 7 community is an ancient area which has owned by the Muslim for almost 100 years. There is a sanctuary as & center of unity. Later Bangkok becomes developed and provides more infrastructures like motorway and other transportation: however, the owners of lands in this community still keep their lands and build many buildings to run business. With this purpose, there are many non-Muslim people come to live here with co-existence. Not only are they convenient to work but also easy to transport by sky train. There are factors that make them live harmonious as following: 1) All Muslims in this area are strict to follow their rules and allocate their community for business. 2) All people, who come and live here, are middle-aged and working men and women. They, rent rooms closed to their work. 3) There are Muslim food and desserts, especially Roti, the popular fried flour, and local Chachak, tea originated from the south of Thailand. All these food and desserts are famous for working men and women to home and join after work 4) All Muslim in this area are independent to lead their own lives although a society changes rapidly.

**Keywords**—Co-existence, Muslim and other group of people, the ancient community.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**B**ASED on the study of the history of Bangkok establishment in 1783, it is found that since Bangkok was a new capital city, local people were persuaded to reside there to be parts of the city founders. Moreover, due to the area where the new capital was set up used to be useless space, the risk of danger from war between Thai and Burma including the danger from thieves and robbers was unavoidable. However, thanks to the 417-year long establishment of Ayudhaya, and the continuation of being independent in Thonbur period, people in both Ayudhaya and Thonbur periods lived their lives with various groups of people with different religions and culture. Furthermore, based on the history, Thai governance allows people with different races, religions and culture live freely altogether. This enables the coexistence of Thais, Laos, Cambodians, Indians (Muslims), Christians, Hindus-Brahma, etc. In Thai history, there has never been separation among races. All groups of races can

share the community with Buddhists despite the difference of culture. Moreover, Thai Kings in the history granted freedom for their people to believe in any religion. These are key factors why the coexistence of people in capital city or remote areas leads to peaceful living. [1]

From the good result of the coexistence of Thais and groups of people with different races, religions and culture to the establishment of Bangkok, this kind of coexistence was the root of people's establishment during the first foundation of Bangkok in the year 1783. The center of the city in that period was The Grand Palace, and later on the Kings granted the allocation of land around the city for other members of the royal family with 14 fortresses as protection of the Palace. The area outside the Grand Palace consisted of Palaces of Princes while Residents of nobilities were inside. Besides official areas, space including on the bank of the Chao Phraya River and the banks of many other canals around Bangkok, local people were allowed to reside, organize trading, doing agriculture as they like by the officers. However, the people with different races, who could coexist with Thai people, include Chinese people setting up trades and later becoming famous Chinese trading area nearby the capital city. This area is called Yaowaraj and Sampeng, and groups of people with other races have been living in this area, and religious places are built for various religious ceremonies. These different races include Hindu, Sikh, Catholic, and Thai Muslim.

The pioneers of Thai-Muslim, who reside in Bangkok, are in various communities on the bank of the Chao Phraya River including the areas by the canals. The prominent groups are at Mahanak canal, and Sansab canal. It can be seen that Mosques were built by these Muslim as religious places in these areas. Samples in this study include the Muslim residing in Petchaburiso 7, who nearly 150 years ago passed by and came to do gardening and grow rice in the land near Sansab canal, and use the canal as means of transportation. Their ways of living were, therefore, related to the canal in terms of trading, transporting, and doing agriculture. Later on, due to the city expansion from the heart of the city to external areas, and the effect of westernization in terms of land transportation, a road was built to link the city center with the external areas where non-native Thai live in 1905 in the reign of King Rama V, and this road is named Prajaejeen Road meaning Chinese porcelain.

Since time passes, because of more road building to link the city center with the areas around with main roads, Prajaejeen Roas was renamed as Petchaburi to honor King Rama V's

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daughter; Somdem Jaofah Valaialongkorn Krommaluang Petchaburirachasirintorn. This road leads to the eastern region, and the King's daughter resided on this road surrounded by Thai-Muslims' gardens. When this road was firstly built, houses were built alongside and this area has become trading area of Thai-Muslims especially mattress business produces by Thai-Muslims from Bangkoknoi canal.

Since Petchaburi road is main road leading to the eastern region, this road links the inner city area and later it becomes the heart of Bangkok. In the beginning of 20th century, firstly land owners were Thai people including those in Royal Family, who donated their land as Educational Institution, and this caused the areas around Petchaburi road become fully occupied bit by bit with lots of branches of soi by Thai-Muslims from the vicinity of Bangkok. They established their community with Mosques as religious places. Since the growth of Bangkok was unplanned, more and more people came to reside here, and this led to the rise of population and the growth of city at the same time. The group of Thai-Muslims residing on Petchaburi road, which later Bangkok Metropolitan Administration allocated the area nearby the road into 1-7 small branches or soi and Thai-Muslims is at Petchaburiso 7 with the location of a mosque has become center of Thai-Muslims. However, at the beginning community was set up in the area around the mosque. These local people earned their living by selling food. Their houses were built of wood, and they lived their lives commonly. On Fridays, shops would be closed and the people would go to conduct religious activities in the mosque. Here is the conclusion of the community establishment at Petchaburiso 7 based on BMA regulations with some physical changes.

- A. The condition of home in Petchaburiso 7 has become concrete buildings. Since this area is within easy reach to Metropolitan Rapid Transit train stations, lots of apartment buildings were set up to serve the needs of working people to stay in temporary accommodation not far from their workplace. It is, therefore, estimated that there are 2.559 persons in 29,420 square kilometers in the area [2].
- B. Majority of people in the area is groups of male and female adults, who still live their lives strictly to the religion while Thai-Muslims working people earn their living by selling their popular food, namely KhaoMok Kai, Beef Noodle, and in the past 5 years the drinks called Cha Chuk (tea), and Rotee. Moreover, by the night, food vendors are allowed on the footpath.
- C. While the construction of high rise condominium can be seen in the areas around PetchaburiSoi 7, the influence of capitalism cannot make any changes to this area. Based on the existence of Thai-Muslim communities in the heart of the city, some questions arise. To what extent can the physical changes in the area turn the traditional culture and traditions to new city community? Does the existence of Thai-Muslims in the city indicate that factors affecting changes in culture are people not the area itself?

## II. OBJECTIVES

1. To study way of living under over 100-year coexistence condition of Thai-Muslims and other groups of people
2. To analyze factors leading to the happy coexistence of people in the community

## III. METHODS

Research methodologies include qualitative and quantitative research

- A) Study documents concerning history relating to the establishment of this community
- B) Interview 10 local people living in the area for over 50 years
- C) 1-year participatory observation
- D) Use a focus group find out the satisfaction of 20 informants including those residing in the area and being frequent customers of vendors selling Cha Cuk and Rotee

## IV. THEORIES EMPLOYED IN THE STUDY

- A) Historic theory of Franz Boas in which lots of methodologies are employed beginning with the study of the origin of culture, followed by observation, recording the changes in each period, and group of people's behaviour and analysing facts to find out the overall view of each particular area[3]
- B) Archeologist Theory includes the combination of Constructive Theory, and Duty to study the coexistence of people in the society, understanding and adjusting one's self. Based on the notion of coexistence [4], it is believed that community is center of people without boundary of land or space. However, the focus is on the interaction showing the similar interest and activities of people in the community.[5] Based on the study of the history of Thai economy, it is found that community is base of economy in the country side. However, due to the acceptance of westernization and the empowerment of state agency, there is an impact on the changes of community in terms of a lack of self-development based on the economy of the community [6].

## V. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- A) Factors affecting the existence of way of life of Thai-Muslims in PetchaburiSoi 7, and the coexistence of these people and those believing in different religions by the preservation of their culture are the practice of adult groups in the community, and the community's strict family living. For example, women wear hijab to cover their faces. On Fridays Muslims stop working to make merit at the mosque from 5 pm to 7 pm. In terms of food vending, different kinds of Harlan food are available, and single plate food or fast food is available in many food stalls. However, there is only one old food shop selling main dishes, such as KhaoMok Kai, Indian Salad, and Beef Soup. This reflects that there is no competition among food shops, and the old food shop is still running its business. Another prominent kind of food for Muslims

is Rotee which can be purchased easily in the community. Since the footpath of Petchaburi road from Soi 5-7 is wide, in the evening after work at 7 p.m., it is quiet. Groups of working people aging around 25-35 years old are on their way home, and they may relax in groups. The dessert and drinks, such as banana rotee, cha chak, toast especially cha chak, which Thai-Muslims from Pattanee province have passed on from Malasia, have become favorite snacks suitable for Bangkok, which is quite hot, and people always drink iced water. The price of these kinds of food is reasonable, and they are suitable for youngsters who enjoy themselves with food sold on the footpath.

- B) The religious prohibition in terms of the prohibition of alcoholic drinks has good effect on the community; the quarrel or fight caused by drunken is unseen. Moreover, those who come to live in "the community of Muslims" will adapt themselves so as not to cause any trouble to the community. Furthermore, another good point passed on by adults is respecting adults, being kind and generous to others especially to those youngsters, and living together harmoniously, and this leads to the strength of the community.



Fig. 1 Roti is the famous food of Thai-Muslim

- C) Factors affecting the coexistence of Muslims community in Petchaburi Road Soi 7 include the preservative characteristics of old Muslims, owners of mattress business. That is to say though over 20 blocks of buildings in front of Petchaburiso 7 are now surrounded by over 20-storey high rise condominiums, those business owners still make use of their own land doing the mattress business. Some mattress shops redecorated their shops as advertising campaign. For example, the 2nd floor of Rachatewee Mattress shop was redesigned as advertising show case of their mattresses to attract those motorists on Rachatewee flyover. This is an example of business preservation of the 2nd generation, who determine to pass on their ancestors' honorable mattress business. Another example is Thai-Muslims pay much attention to religious place, or mosque of the community. Though the new physical surrounding areas have become condominiums,

people in the community still preserve their culture strongly.

- D) The landlord who owns the biggest piece of land in the area is a Muslim, who strictly exercises a conservative practice based on Islamic faith. The original old mosque is still maintained and reserved for Islamic affairs for Muslim people in the community.

Besides the internal factors supporting the coexistence of Thai-Muslims in Petchaburi Soi 7 with simple way of living, external factors affecting the community's way of living include the existence of a Sky Train Route by the side of the community and the flyover in front, and this causes the community to have only one way out. It appears that this area is not suitable for business zone in terms of shopping center, but it has been adapted as temporary living accommodation like dorms and apartments. This area has become a passage to Bangkok leading shopping centers like Siam Square, Siam Paragon. Since this community is situated in old part of city, and it cannot be invested as modern community, the area of this old community is, therefore, only a passage to Bangkok modern business center.



Fig. 2 Entrance in Petchaburi Road Soi 7



Fig. 3 Buildings in front of Petchaburiso 7



Fig. 4 Local Chachak is a typical tea of Thai-Muslims



Fig. 5 Masjid Darul- Aman in Petchaburi 7 Community

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study leads to essential principle concerning changes of physical area in city community. Capitalism has strong effect on changes in physical and people's way of life from old community with roots of culture to new way of life paying no attention to traditional culture.

The study of the coexistence of Thai-Muslims in Petchaburiso 7 in the heart of the capital with their preservation of long standing old community results in the consumption that the growth of capitalism should not affect culture, and group of people enable the area to become roots of culture.

This study is in line with the theories and notions of archeological theories, history theories, and constructive and duty theories, which pay high emphasis on human behavior in their coexistence, the cultural building, and adaptation for coexistence [7] including the conceptual relation in the community coexistence of Karp, Stone and Yoets. Moreover, this study is, also, in line with the Chattip Natsupa's notion of modernization in Thai styles, which pays great importance on roots of community culture and cultural economy in terms of the ability to live ones' lives with roots of culture. The existence of old community is the result of the power of the community in terms of their attempt to protect their way of

living from the urge to demolish old houses for new town community, and from the relocation of old community for new city community. However, these kinds of problems do exist in such a large number of old communities in Bangkok that conflicts between communities and some governments are unavoidable. The peaceful coexistence should not, therefore, based on capitalism and modernization but communities should employ their power in the right way, in accordance with the law so that the coexistence in Thai style in terms of interdependent will be valuable and worth preserving for capital social lives at present and in the future. However, the urban communities people have firmly believed in sufficiency adhere and practice the teachings of religion. The intelligence have used in the way of their lives by focusing on the middle way and sufficiency. [8]

## VII. SUGGESTION

The study has got some suggestions for the Department of City Planning, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration in conserving the commercial buildings at the front of the community in the original design. As a result, the environment can symbolically reflect the root and origin of the place which is in line with the cultural conservation of the Thai- Muslim community.

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