

# The Way of Life of the Civil Servant Community under the Bureau of the Royal Household: A Case Study of Tha Wasukri, Bangkok

Vilasinee Jintalikhitdee, Saowapa Phaithayawat

**Abstract**—The research on “The Way of Life of the Civil Servant Community under the Bureau of the Royal Household” aims to study 1) the way of life of the people who live in the civil servant community in Tha Wasukri, and 2) the model of community administration of civil servants under the Bureau of the Royal Household. This research is conducted qualitatively and quantitatively by collecting data from interviews, focus group discussion, participant and non-participant observation along with the data from questionnaire based on age groups which include elder group, working age group and youth group.

The result of the research shows that the origin of this community is related to the history during the Rama V’s reign. It has been a harbor for the king to boat in any royal ceremonies; this custom is still maintained until today. The status or position of person who serves the king in terms of working is often inherited from the bureau of the Royal Household based on his/her consanguinity and, hence, further receives the rights to live in the Tha Wasukri area. Therefore, this community has some special characteristics demonstrating the way of living influenced by the regulation of the Bureau of the Royal Household such as respecting elders and interdependence in which there is internal social organization with the practice of bureaucracy in going in and out the community. The person who has rights to live here must be friendly to everybody so that this community will be a safe place for lives and property. The administration based on the model of Bangkok for local administration was used as an external structure only, but the way of living still follows the practice of the Bureau of the Royal Household.

**Keywords**—The way of life, Community, Tha Wasukri.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**T**HA WASUKRI is the name of a royal harbor for the kings to boat in royal ceremonies such as the Royal Kathin Ceremony (merit-making ceremony) during Rama V’s reign that used the royal yacht boating across Chao Phraya River to Wat Arunratchawararamratchaworamahawihan (the Royal Temple of Dawn) in November. This custom has been maintained since Rama V’s reign till the current reign; this is more than 100 years in total. At the same time, Tha Wasukri’s area has become a royal haven due to its beauty which suits to the royal court preserved for royal ceremonies. Moreover, court officials are allowed to live in this location in which they are able to go to work at Chitralada Villa Royal Residence

Vilasinee Jintalikhitdee is with the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand (phone: +662-160-1303; e-mail: vilasinee.ji@ssru.ac.th).

Assoc. Prof. Saowapa Phaithayawat is with the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand (phone: +662-160-1342; e-mail: saowapa.ph@ssru.ac.th).

conveniently. In other words, court officials can travel around more comfortably. As the duties of the royal court expand increasingly, the amount of court officials is increased too. Therefore, the royal court uses some areas of Tha Wasukri as residences for court officials.



Fig. 1 Royal Heaven

Due to the fact that Tha Wasukri is an area of the royal court that provides residences for court officials to live in flats by having 3 buildings 219 rooms. Those who live in Tha Wasukri will have rights to live while working. In the past, Thailand gave this as welfare to the workers and their families as mainly shown in military or police service. Presently, there are official residences for these civil servants to live in the official area for workplace. However, in order to facilitate those who are on duty, when the civil servants who are working for the royal court and have to be on duty in the evenings, living in official residences that are close to their offices should be the welfare that government provides since they start working until they are retired.

The provision of residences to court officials in Tha Wasukri’s area has been carried on for more than 40 years. Every resident needs the permission to reside. In the area accessing the residences in front of the community, there are keeper’s boxes to monitor people who come in and out. This makes the resident’s lives and properties in this area safe while living as court officials which shows the respect to the royal institution as shown in the activities of the community. If it is an important day that is concerned with the celebration of

the king's birthday anniversary, people in the community will give importance to the decoration of the symbol flag and candlelight ceremony. If there is an important event such as the royal funeral ceremony, people in this community will wear mourning clothes according to the regulation of government.



Fig. 2 Flat Style

In addition to the way of life of people in Tha Wasukri's community, to serve and work at Vimanmek Mansion and Chitralada Villa Royal Residence, the residents who live in these official residences are counted as the one of the communities in Dusit district, Bangkok that uses the regulation of Bangkok Metropolis Administrative Organization as the principle to practice as it receives the rights as polling station at local level and parliamentary elections at national level. Although the overall image of the community is looked after by the Bureau of the Royal Household and Bangkok, the way of life of people in this community pay attention to the respect towards the royal institution and also pass on the loyalty to their lineage. When they grow up, they will work in the same organizations where their ancestors worked. Therefore, residing in the area is a sustainable way of living in Thai kinship system by focusing on the person who is the commander in work. When they live in same community, they will take care of each other. This is the source of special relationship. A court official will receive his/her salary from the Bureau of the Royal Household. In general, they will not receive high salary as same as public and private sectors, but the residents will be proud of serving to the king. The prominent point in maintaining Thai culture in this community will reflect that if a community is the center and does not live competitively or use capability for living, for example, the new style of working might aim for excellency in achievement and might lead to the stress to the way of life of performers, but people in the Bureau of the Royal Household's officer community in Tha Wasukri still have humble lifestyle. This can be observed by their court uniforms in the mornings and in the evenings. The residence's area has such a good atmosphere at the riverside, recreational places of

their lineage, and the peaceful way of life in rural society. This is the specific characteristics of these people, so it is interesting to study the way of life of these people which is a humble lifestyle in urban society.



Fig. 3 Tha Wasukri Area located near Chao Phraya River



Fig. 4 Playground in Community Area

## II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To study the way of life of residents in civil servants community of Tha Wasukri and to study the model of administration of civil servants community under the Bureau of the Royal Household.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is conducted qualitatively and quantitatively by having the process as follows:

- A. Studying the historical documents concerning the habitation of this community
- B. Collecting fundamental data about economic, traditional, language and literature in the area
- C. In-depth interviewing 10 elders who have lived in this community for 50 years
- D. Participant observing in the important activities like merit-making ceremony in the community and other

social events such as New Year's Day and Songkran festival

- E. Group discussion of representatives in the community that consists of 10 people from elderly group, working-aged group and youth group
- F. Non-participant observation over the way of living in weekdays and holidays of people in the community
- G. Surveying by using questionnaires about the satisfaction in the way of living of people in the community

#### IV. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

- A. The kinship lifestyle in which the residents have known each other from generations to generations makes them respect each other. Especially, the elderly group is respected by all other groups of people in community. Elders must speak politely and must not be drunk. They must not be roguish or burdensome to the community.
- B. People in the community do not use their free time on drinking alcohol. No matter they are adult group, children group and young people group do not establish a troublesome gang in the society. In the community, they are strict specially in bringing a stranger come to the community. Therefore, this is a drug-free community. There are no motorcycle gangs founded by teenager group.
- C. People in the community pay respect to the commander in the workplace. When they stay at the residences in the same area, they are always courteous. People in the community strictly follow the rule of the community.
- D. The area of the community is a particular area that is all-time secured as it is located in the area under the Bureau of the Royal Household. The supervision over the people in the community is operated in good order. More importantly, the size of the community is quite small and everyone knows each other, so the investigation within the community is the way of mutual surveillance.
- E. To work for the Bureau of the Royal Household, persons must be chosen carefully in terms of manners and socialization. Hence, inhabitants in the community must be better-behaved than normal citizens in general.
- F. Other than the way of living, in terms of the happiness of the people in the community, it found that the kinship system enables the enhancement of self-development; for instance, increase one's knowledge and capability in working by entering after-hours educational system. To encourage the lineage of the people in the community to enter the primary schools and secondary schools, the leader of the community will help and give attention to children and youth in the community to enter to the educational institutions close to the community thoroughly in order to reduce the workload and stress in the community.

#### V. DISCUSSION

The way of living of this community is operated under the Bureau of the Royal Household. This conforms to the history

of this place which is the area under the Bureau of the Royal Household's authority during Rama V's reign that used all of the area as a palace for one of his sons. However, this area was not used as it was planned for. Afterwards, when this place turned to be the area for the king's boating, it became a specific harbor of the kings. Moreover, some parts of the area are used as the residences for court officials in order to take care of their property. These areas have been expanded to be the residences of civil servants under the Bureau of the Royal Household until now. Thus, the historical content of this area significantly influences the land-use approach of today residents [1].

As the group of residents is the same group under the permission from the Bureau of the Royal Household, this affects the existence of the community based on the 3 main principles which are 1. relatives, patronage system, and caste system, 2. environment and ecology, and adaptation to an environment and ecology, 3. culture and ideology system, giving value to anything both in spiritual and material realms that influence the interdependence of the inhabitants [2].

This community has been growing as a community with unique characteristics. The Bangkok Metropolis Administrative Organization developed the area into an urban community which is administrated by the community leader. The welfare management is operated with the purpose of community development (according to Bangkok Metropolis Administrative Organization). Although the area is governed by two models, the inhabitants give importance specifically to the traditional practice of the area owner.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

Tha Wasukri's community is a community that has unique characteristics, and has maintained the way of life of the civil servants under the Bureau of the Royal Household. There is the use of the area of the Bureau of the Royal Household as the residences. This is an example of communities that conserves the respect towards the royal institution. This community does not bother Bangkok Administration in terms of monitoring and security. The community can maintain the internal decorum by themselves while there has been no incident that needs the police intervention. People in the community receive welfare for living from the patronage of the Bureau of the Royal Household. Although court officials do not have high salary as much as working for the private sector, the residents are proud of the inheritance of the work from their ancestors. Furthermore, this can be considered as a sustainable way of living. This finding is consistent with the study about the Thai way of living based on Thai personalities for family happiness [3]. And also [4] indicates the coexistence of Thai people in terms of integration in the area, which is the most important factor to live their life. The culture and traditional conception is that the people have a belief in accordance with their Buddhist faith, since most of the people are Buddhists and they involved in Wat Pracharabuedham establishment. The temple is always as everybody's mind center. Afterward, there were some people moving in and brought in their own culture, tradition, and

belief, however, it was similar to the old people. There was no conflict between them. The culture and tradition that the people respect since the establishment are New Year Celebration and Songkran Festival [5].

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author is very grateful to Institute for Research and Development, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University ([www.ssrุ.ac.th](http://www.ssrु.ac.th)) for encouragement and supporting.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Kanokwan Chaiyatad. (2005). "*Cultural modernity : a spatial aspect of Dusit Palace-Wat Benchamabophit-Ratchadamnoen Avenue in the reign of King Rama V*". Thesis, sociology and Anthropology, Thammasat University.
- [2] Arthur Dupham. (1958). "*The Strength of Community*" is Available from <http://isc.yu.ac.th/PS0000210.doc> accessed 5 April 2009.
- [3] Chadtip Nathasupha. (2010). "*The modern Thai with community idea*". Bangkok : Sangsanbook.
- [4] Duanemduang Bunkong. (2006). "*The continued existence of the residential community in Krung Ratanakosin area : A case study of Lang- Wat Ratchanadda Community*". Thesis, Architecture (Housing), Chulalongkorn University.
- [5] Phusit Phukamchanoad. (2009). "*Study to ways of life in Wat Pracharabuedham Community of Dusit District, Bangkok*". Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.