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 Nhon 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, Chachernsoa, 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 resurgence. 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
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Phuan people perceive the importance and the ethnic
derived 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 resurgence (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 resurgence. 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 resurgence 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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REFERENCES