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Cultural Cooperation on Religious Different Points

Chetnarat Orachun

*Political Science Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Rambhai Barni Rajabhat University
chetnarat.o@rbru.ac.th*

Panya Wongtai

Rambhai Barni Rajabhat University

Abstract

This article primarily presented background information about Pattani, one city of the three southernmost provinces of Thailand. Its main purpose is to study ways of accommodation between two polarized sides of Thai Muslims and Thai Buddhists, both residing in Pattani. The study of Chanampai (2005) revealed that Buddhism's principles of kindness, not making others suffering, and maintaining peace potentially influenced Buddhists to have companion relationships with Thai Muslims. Chula Ratchamontri, an interpreter of Sunni sect's Koran, has played an important role of reducing intensity of contradiction between Thai Muslims and Thai Buddhists. The Chula Ratchamontris use the television as a channel of teaching and interpreting Sunni sect's Koran.

Chanampai (2005) interviewed one research participant in order to find recommended ways of accommodation among two polarized sides. The results can be divided into four themes: *ways of treating*, *attitudes*, *cultural issues*, and *other issues*. In terms of treating, the interviewee's verbal reports revealed five pieces of recommendation: 'do not restrict yourself to certain doctrines,' 'attending activities together,' 'respect rights of others,' 'giving more than taking,' and 'obeying the law.' This is similar to internal factors, which might contribute to accommodation, suggested by Chanampai's (2015). The internal factors included attitude, notions of understanding cultural differences, respecting others' rights, being companions without racism, sincerity, and compromise. Additionally, external factors of accommodation are mainly in relation to education which helps people to become well-mannered.

1. Introduction

Three southernmost provinces of Thailand refer to Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat provinces, which are interconnected with one another. These provinces are situated on the east side of Thailand's coastal area. Most populations of the three southernmost provinces practice Islam. The Islam's lifestyles are likely to be Malay while the Buddhists' lifestyles are likely to be Thai (Jampaklay, Sakulsri, Prasithima; 2012).

The three southernmost provinces are situated over 1,000 kilometers from Bangkok. The distance from Bangkok to Narathiwat is about 1,149 kilometers. From Bangkok to Pattani is about 1,055 kilometers. From Bangkok to Yala is about 1,084 kilometers. In the past, these interconnected provinces were called a Phataani empire, which was highly prosperous in terms of economy, culture, education, and religions (Che Man, Wan K, 1990).



2. Scopes of Study

This article presented Islam's reconciliation means with which Buddhism philosophy might be integrated. The author studied Nikorn Chanampai (2005)'s qualitative research study, named "attitude and behaviors of living under cultural differences: a case study of Pattani's people". The author drew certain issues about reconciliation ways between Thai Muslims and Buddhists, which will be discussed hereinafter. The study revealed that there was a variety of ethnic people living together in the Phataani empire (e.g. Malay, Java, Indian, Arab, Champac). The Phataanis were claimed to practice Animism. Later, there were missionaries of certain religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam immigrating into the land. In the Phataani, cultural differences from various religions were intermingled with various ethnics (e.g. Malay, Java, Indian, Arab including Thai and Islam). Moreover, western culture was also claimed to be associated.

Eventually, the phenomenon of cultural crossing established certain unique characteristics of intermingled culture within the Phataanii.

3. Geographical, Cultural, and Demographical Information of Pattani

Pattani is a city, situated in the south of Thailand. Most houses are artistically built from wood and Vetiver grass. There are a myriad of mosques there. Thai-Chinese people are in a higher proportion than native Thais. There are three official languages: Malay, Thai, Chinese. Thai-Chinese often build shrines while Thais often build Buddha images.

Although intermingled culture emerged in Pattani as a result of cultural crossing between a variety of ethnics, religions, interaction, socialization, and cultural inheritance from generation to generation could potentially reduce the intensity of uniqueness within each individual ethnic group. In this respect, it is quite difficult to assign a specific characteristic of any group under a phenomenon of cultural diversity among Pattani's people. However, a phenomenon in which Islam and Buddhism still exist as two mainstream religions in Pattani is interesting. The practitioners of these two religions have to follow their own ways of practicing their individual doctrines. These two different doctrines are claimed to be associated with the separation between Thai-Buddhism and Thai-Muslims. (Chandrangarm, 1999)

In the past, Pattani was the main city of the Phataani. Nowadays, Pattani is one of the southernmost provinces of Thailand. There were 12 Amphoes, 115 Tambons and 636 villages. The area covers around 1,940.356 square kilometers. The population is about 634,619. The ratio between Thai-Muslims and Thai-Buddhists and other practitioners was about 80.75: 19.20: 0.23. Most people are rubber growers, orchardists, and fishermen. The income per capita is about 47,927 baht. The Pattani Provincial Center Mosque is a tourist attraction, which is famous for its beautiful architecture, including Chang Hai Temple and Lim Kor Niew Holy Shrine.



Figure 1 : Thai Muslims accompanying Thai Buddhist Monks

Since the Pattani has a variety of ethnic groups and religions with two different sets of doctrines, this is claimed to be concerned with different ways of leading their own individual lives according to their different ethno-religion beliefs. Muslims try to maintain their identities of Malay-Islam with Thai nationality. On the other hand, Thai-Buddhists tend to follow Buddhism's doctrines which most of the Thais practice. These two polarized sides don't have to encounter contradiction with each other if they are mutually exclusive. Actually, they cannot be doing so since human beings are social animals, demanding, exchanging, and relying on one another. Therefore, human beings could divert towards one another and wish to interact with one another in positive ways. However, contradiction might be difficult to be avoided as a result of two different religion pillars. One religion may foster a particular deed while the other may prohibit this. This is quite sensitive. Hence, two main types of relationship between Thai-Muslims and Thai-Buddhists might be accommodation or conflict. One distinctive way of accommodation between Thai-Buddhist and Thai-Muslim can be seen as there is a village whose mayor is a Muslim governing Thais as well as a village where a Thai is governing Muslims.



Figure 2 : Thai-Muslim Women with Toon Bodyslam, a Thai Singer

4. Issues of Religions

Here are some doctrines of Thai-Buddhists in relation to accommodation: kindness, not making others suffering, and maintaining peace. Chanampai suggested that Thai Muslims might have a companion relationship with Thai-Buddhists as a result



of these influential doctrines within Thai-Buddhists. This phenomenon indicated that the accommodation has arisen a long time ago. However, there are some influential factors among Thai Buddhists and Muslims. Looking back, the author found that Arsis Pithakkhumphon, the 18th Chula Ratchamontri, is a consultant of Koran's interpretation in the Sunni sect. In the past, Arsis Pithakkhumphon often gave some pieces of advice to the Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education, Thailand.

Chula Ratchamontri had a position in the royal affairs of King Borommatrailokanat since the Ayudhaya period. Later, he was often on TV to teach, interpreted Islam's doctrines to reduce intensity of contradiction.

Another evidence of accommodation included a Thai Muslim who is working in a Thai Buddhist's organization or a Thai-Chinese's organization. This could tighten their relationship bonds. In addition, Thai Muslims also participated in Thai Buddhists' ceremonies such as funerals or weddings. Thai Muslims normally attend the ceremonies but they do not pray, do not pay respect to the dead body, do not bless a couple in the wedding ceremony by using holy water. In the wedding, Thai Muslims often give tokens to Thai Buddhists or help catering food during those ceremonies to show their kindness. Thai Muslims are limited to participate in an ordination ceremony, but Thai Buddhists are not allowed to participate in the Islam religious ceremonies.

5. Recommended Ways of Accommodation between Thai Muslims and Thai Buddhist

With regard to contradiction between Thai-Muslims and Buddhists, Chanampai found that the causes of contradiction might not be resulted from differences between two different cultures and doctrines.

Here are some recommended ways of accommodation between Thai-Buddhists and Thai-Muslims from a research participant of this current study. There are three main aspects as follows.

1. Treating

1. Do not restrict yourself to certain doctrines.
2. Do activities together.
3. Respect rights of others.
4. Give more than take.
5. Obey the law.

2. Attitudes

Learn the differences between the two doctrines and cultures.

Do not limit yourself to some values of particular ethnics or doctrines.

Do not stereotype - Thai Buddhists as "selfish people" or Thai Muslims as "low-educated" people.

Do not stereotype Thai Muslims as problem activists.

Muslims should not inculcate the values of hating other practitioners.

3. Culture

Learn cultural differences.

Understand differences and know how to live with others.

4. Others

Change attitudes and do activities together.

Create job opportunities in order to provide more job opportunities for

people



Provide equal opportunities for Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims.

According to the study of attitude and behaviors of living with each other under different cultures, accommodation can be made as a result of internal and external factors. Internal factors included attitude, notions of understanding cultural differences, respecting others' rights, being companions without racism, sincerity, and compromise. As a result, worldwide attitudes, changing attitudes according to social changes are quite essential and recommended for Muslims. External factors include education which helps people to become well-mannered. Education can boost the economy, cause harmony, and can also reduce crime including drug and gambling.

This poses Thai government needs for creating policies of accommodation.

There is no guarantee whether the policies will work properly. When the policy is in relation to Thai-Muslims' ways of life, it might probably work. When the policy is not in relation to Thai-Muslims' ways of life, it might not work properly, causing distrust.

In summary, a universal core of any doctrine is inclined towards peace. In terms of Buddhism, which is atheism, Summum Bonum is the ultimate. With respect to Islam, residing in the Kingdom of God is the ultimate. Consequently, loving the god, loving yourselves, and not making others suffering, kindness, and forgiveness are regarded as similar points of different doctrines (Office of National Culture, 2015). These universal practices could potentially foster sustainable accommodation within the three southernmost provinces (Yasae, 2007).

6. References

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