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Cultural Identity Communication and Preservation about Thai Muslim Community of Malay Descent in Khlong Bang Pho, Pathum Thani Province

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Abstract

This study aims to (1) study the existence and change of cultural identity of the Malay-Thai Muslim community, Khlong Bang Pho, Lat Lum Kao District. Pathum Thani Province, (2) explore the role and function of communication in the persistence and change of cultural identity of the Malay-Thai Muslim community, Khlong Bang Pho, Lat Lum Kao District. Pathum Thani Province, (3) investigate the factors affecting the persistence and change of cultural identity of the Thai Muslim community of Malay descent, Khlong Bang Pho, Lat Lum Kao District. Pathum Thani Province, (4) examine the role of activities within the community in expressing the cultural identity of the Malay-Thai Muslim community, Khlong Bang Pho, Lat Lum Kao District. Pathum Thani Province, and (5) make recommendations for communication guidelines and maintaining the cultural identity of the Malay-Thai Muslim community, Khlong Bang Pho, Lat Lum Kao District. Pathum Thani Province amidst the social and technological changes in contemporary society. The research employed a qualitative methodology, gathering data through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations within the community. The findings revealed that the Thai Muslim community of Malay descent in Bang Pho maintains significant cultural identity through the use of language, religion, and the preservation of traditional customs. However, urban expansion and the development of information technology have impacted the use of the Malay language and the preservation of traditions. Communication between generations and the use of digital media have become crucial tools for promoting and maintaining cultural identity in a time of change.

Keywords: Communication, Preservation, Cultural, Identity.

Introduction

The Thai Muslim community of Malay descent in Bang Pho is an ethnic group with a long-standing cultural heritage. They preserve their identity through communication and daily practices such as the use of Southern Malay language in the family and religious ceremonies, performing Islamic rituals, and maintaining traditional customs related to the life cycle, such as marriage, fasting during Ramadan, and other religious rites. However, urban expansion and the development of information technology have led to changes in the language and culture of the community. This is particularly evident among the youth, who have grown up in the digital age and are influenced by the Thai language and modern media, resulting in a decline in the use of Malay in daily life and a challenge to traditional culture posed by globalization. Urbanization and the new economic system have significantly impacted the lifestyle of the community.

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Traditionally, the community relied on subsistence economies such as fishing, agriculture, and small-scale trade. However, with urban growth, many villagers have had to adapt to a capitalist economy, which has led to changes in the family structure. The extended family, where multiple generations live together, has been replaced by the nuclear family, where parents work outside the home and have less time to pass on cultural knowledge to their children. Additionally, the mainstream Thai education system has led children and youth in the community to primarily use Thai rather than Malay. The influence of entertainment media and digital platforms has further diminished interest in traditional culture, impacting the long-term continuity of their ethnic identity.

In addition to internal community factors, the existence of Malay identity within the context of Thai society faces external challenges. Cultural and religious differences between the Malay community and the mainstream Thai society may affect national acceptance, particularly in the context of education policies and the use of Thai as the primary language of the country. This may lead to the diminishing importance of promoting the Malay language. Furthermore, the representation of Malay community identity through mainstream media remains limited, causing the general public to only have a superficial understanding of the community's culture and traditions. This results in misunderstandings or the perception of Malay culture as merely a minority group within the broader Thai society. Therefore, the preservation of community identity requires knowledge and communication innovations to adapt to changing contexts. The use of digital media and social media to promote learning of the Malay language and local culture is one of the key approaches. Additionally, the creation of cultural spaces, such as community learning centers or cultural revival projects in schools and mosques, can help the younger generation understand and appreciate their cultural heritage. Intergenerational communication is, therefore, a key to transmitting culture from one generation to the next. Without the establishment of appropriate mechanisms for transferring ethnic identity, the community's traditional identity may fade amidst the currents of social change in the future.

The cultural identity of the Thai Muslim community of Malay descent in Khlong Bang Pho, amidst social changes, is a product of a long-standing history and social context. However, the current waves of change have led to the development and transformation of the distinct characteristics of this community. An important question that arises is how the cultural identity of this community has changed and what factors are crucial in maintaining or adapting the identity to fit the evolving societal context. One key issue is the persistence of the cultural identity in this community, which is reflected through lifestyle, traditions, and religious beliefs. Factors that help preserve this identity may involve religious institutions, family, and social networks that act as mechanisms for passing down identity from one generation to the next. At the same time, changes in economic and social contexts, such as the expansion of technology and modern communication, may affect the preservation of this cultural identity. Communication plays a crucial role in maintaining and changing the cultural identity of the Thai Muslim community of Malay descent. Communication within the community is not limited to traditional channels, such as passing knowledge through family or mosques, but also includes digital media that allow the community to access information and exchange ideas with the outside world. These communication forms and channels affect the community's adaptation, both in terms of conservation and transformation of identity, especially in an era where society is globally connected without boundaries. Additionally, the factors influencing the changes or persistence of the cultural identity of the Thai Muslim community of Malay descent are diverse. These include social factors related to the coexistence of different ethnic groups and cultures,

economic factors related to changes in the structure of occupations and lifestyles, and technological factors that require the community's communication and cultural expression methods to modernize. These factors all play a role in shaping the direction of the community's cultural identity. Cultural activities within the community also serve as a mechanism to promote and preserve the cultural identity of this Muslim community.

Research Objectives

- 1.study the existence and change of cultural identity of the Malay-Thai Muslim community, Khlong Bang Pho, Lat Lum Kaeo District. Pathum Thani Province,
- 2.explore the role and function of communication in the persistence and change of cultural identity of the Malay-Thai Muslim community, Khlong Bang Pho, Lat Lum Kaeo District. Pathum Thani Province,
- 3.investigate the factors affecting the persistence and change of cultural identity of the Thai Muslim community of Malay descent, Khlong Bang Pho, Lat Lum Kaeo District. Pathum Thani Province,
- 4.examine the role of activities within the community in expressing the cultural identity of the Malay-Thai Muslim community, Khlong Bang Pho, Lat Lum Kaeo District. Pathum Thani Province,
- 5.make recommendations for communication guidelines and maintaining the cultural identity of the Malay-Thai Muslim community, Khlong Bang Pho, Lat Lum Kaeo District. Pathum Thani Province amidst the social and technological changes in contemporary society.

Research Methodology

This research employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing document research, focus group discussions, both participatory and non-participatory observations, and in-depth interviews for data collection. The goal is to generate new knowledge about communication and the preservation of cultural identity within the community. The study population consists of Thai Muslims of Malay descent residing in the Khlong Bang Pho community in Lat Lum Kaeo District, Pathum Thani Province, and key informants from both within and outside the community. A purposive sampling method is used to ensure diversity and comprehensiveness, aiming to gather multiple perspectives and in-depth information on communication and the preservation of cultural identity. The sampling criteria and group sizes are as follows:

Focus Group Discussion with 10 participants, consisting of :

- Elderly (2 participants): To gather insights based on their experience in preserving cultural identity.
- Middle-aged individuals (2 participants): Those who may have a blended perspective between maintaining traditions and adapting to modern society.
- Youth (2 participants): Individuals who may reflect changes in communication methods and the preservation of cultural identity. These participants are representatives of the youth involved in community activities, such as volunteer groups, religious study groups, or cultural groups.
- Community leaders or influential figures in religion (4 participants): Religious leaders, scholars, and teachers residing in the community.

In-depth Interviews with 10 participants, consisting of :

- Religious leaders (4 participants): To gain perspectives on preserving cultural identity from a religious standpoint.
- Key figures in the community (3 participants) : Community leaders and local officials.
- General residents of the community (3 participants)

Research Findings

The data from the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions revealed that the responses provided by the participants were comprehensive, covering history, culture, changes, and the significance of preservation. These responses highlighted differing perspectives from both within the community and from outsiders, reflecting the persistence and transformation of cultural identity, and how technological changes impact communication and cultural preservation. This necessitates adjustments in communication strategies, cultural preservation, and the passing down of cultural identity for the Thai Muslim community of Malay descent in Khlong Bang Pho, Lat Lum Kaeo District, Pathum Thani Province.

From the in-depth interview data, it was found that regarding history and settlement, the history of migration of Malay Muslims to Central Thailand during the early Rattanakosin period is linked with political changes and the annexation of Pattani to Siam. The settlement in Khlong Bang Pho resulted from being forced to migrate and expanding trade networks. Malay Muslims began settling in the area on the eastern side of Bangkok in the early Rattanakosin period. Regarding culture and identity, the Khlong Bang Pho Muslim community focuses on preserving cultural heritage such as language, religion, and traditional customs, even while adapting to new surroundings. This reflects the importance of preserving cultural identity to stay connected with the community. Muslims in the community see religion as part of their identity that links them to their ancestors and the community, with a strong emphasis on religious practice and maintaining traditions. Based on the change and adaptation, the community has adapted in areas such as trade and building relationships with the Thai Buddhist society, while still preserving their original identity. The blending of traditional culture with Thai culture and the use of social media to preserve their culture has occurred. However, changes in communication methods, such as shifting from verbal storytelling to the use of phones and the internet, have caused some cultural elements to fade.

From the focus group discussions, it was found that the migration of Malay Muslims to this community led to the establishment of settlements, mosques, and religious schools, with a focus on preserving religion, culture, language, and traditions. The community accepts changes but still maintains the core of their religious practices. The blending of Thai and Malay cultures continues, along with the preservation of cultural identity, such as language, religion, food, and clothing, while adapting to Thai society and technological changes. The growth in the use of online marketing technology to promote community products and services represents how the integration of traditional culture with modern technology can help preserve culture and develop the community. The comprehensive perspectives on history, culture, changes, and cultural identity preservation, in connection with technological changes and the evolving social context, provide a clear picture of the preservation and transmission of the cultural identity of the Thai Muslim community of Malay descent in Khlong Bang Pho. Moreover, the field study data from the Thai Muslim community of Malay descent in Khlong Bang Pho, Lat Lum Kaeo District, Pathum Thani Province, showed a strong commitment to maintaining cultural identity despite

changes over time. Malay culture, including language, food, and rituals, continues to play a significant role in daily life. Although children may speak more Thai, important rituals, such as weddings and Ramadan celebrations, are still held with great significance. The community is united in maintaining traditions and caring for the mosque, which serves as the center for learning and socializing. Teaching the younger generation about the Malay language and traditions is emphasized by parents to instill pride in their heritage. Furthermore, presenting culture in new forms, such as food and art, helps attract younger generations. The Khlong Bang Pho community continues to preserve its Malay cultural identity with strength, even amidst change. Cooperation and pride in their culture are essential in ensuring the culture remains alive.

Discussion of Research Findings

The Muslim community of Thai Malays in Khlong Bang Pho, Pathum Thani Province, is one of the oldest Muslim communities, rooted in the migration of Malays in the past who settled in the Pathum Thani area. This community has a distinctive cultural identity that reflects its way of life, beliefs, and traditions passed down through generations. However, this identity has also been affected by the social and economic changes that have taken place in the present. The settlement of Malays in Khlong Bang Pho began during the early period of regional trade contact. They were welcomed by the local community and integrated with Thai culture to some extent, while still preserving their unique identity in aspects such as language, religion, and customs.

The settlement and traditional culture of the Thai Muslim Malay community in Khlong Bang Pho, Lat Lum Kao District, Pathum Thani, are connected to the history of Malay migration and settlement in central Thailand during the early Rattanakosin period, driven by political and economic factors. After the annexation of the Pattani kingdom to Siam in the reign of King Rama I, some Malays were brought to central areas such as Bangkok and surrounding regions to serve as labor and expand trade networks in more developed areas. The Malays brought to these areas were often organized into small Muslim communities that preserved their language, religion, and traditional customs, while also adapting to life in the new area, such as developing relationships with the Buddhist Thai community and adopting some Siamese cultural practices. The community also relocated for trade purposes and to establish communities in suitable areas. This community still preserves its cultural identity, such as practicing Islam, wearing traditional clothing, and eating distinctive Malay food.

The cultural identity that remains in the Thai Muslim Malay community in Khlong Bang Pho, Lat Lum Kao District, Pathum Thani, is related to their traditional way of life and customs, which reflect their Malay heritage and Islamic faith. Key elements still maintained include the Islamic faith, the use of the Malay language for communication, food, clothing, the preservation of traditions and religious activities, and the teaching in mosques. The transformation of cultural identity in the community has resulted from several factors, especially interactions with broader Thai society and changes in the social and technological context of the present day. Key factors leading to the transformation of cultural identity include politics and governance, social trends, technology, and education, which emphasizes blending both Thai and Malay identities, such as greater learning of the Thai language and access to diverse media like films and mass communication.

Looking ahead, the preservation and transformation of cultural identity in the Thai Muslim Malay community of Khlong Bang Pho, Lat Lum Kao District, Pathum Thani, may evolve in a direction that focuses on maintaining Malay identity while adapting to modern societal trends.

This may include the development of education and the preservation of relations between Thai and Malay cultures. At the same time, technology and social media could help the community preserve and promote its culture. Therefore, protecting and promoting the understanding of cultural heritage will be crucial in preventing the loss of the community's valuable identity. Although there have been changes in the community's identity, the community continues to uphold its religious beliefs and some aspects of its traditional culture, such as Friday prayers, Ramadan activities, and celebrating Hari Raya. The mosque remains a central hub for the community in both religious and cultural aspects. Over time, the community has faced cultural changes from its integration with broader Thai society, as well as the impact of urbanization. Despite changes in aspects like language and lifestyle, the community continues to strive to preserve its identity through religious activities and social values. There are also recommendations to support education and policies that promote cultural preservation to maintain the community's cultural identity. The cultural identity of the Thai Muslim Malay community in Khlong Bang Pho has changed over time, but core elements of their culture have been preserved. Most changes have come from the influence of modernity and changes in the economic and social structure. While the community has adapted to the present era, there remains a strong effort to preserve and pass on its cultural heritage to future generations.

The findings of this research are consistent with the work of Suwaibah Toha Thayang on "Identity and the Preservation of Identity of Thai Malays Who Migrated and Settled in Bangkok: A Case Study of the Muslim Community in Seri Thai Soi 4." This community, inhabited by Thai Malays, has preserved its cultural identity, such as language, dress, Islam, and traditional customs. However, certain aspects have adapted to the current social context, such as food and healthcare. The research highlights the efforts of the Thai Muslim Malay community to preserve its cultural identity despite facing social and economic changes. The adaptation for survival and the preservation of community identity are priorities for both communities, similar to the research of Suraiyani Sainui in the study "Melayu Nationalityless Persons," which addresses the issues of stateless Malays in Thailand. Suraiyani's work highlights the importance of preserving cultural and religious identity in the Malay community despite the challenges they face with legal and societal issues.

The research findings revealed that when considering other aspects, the interview data indicate that elders in the family emphasize teaching language and religion to preserve the Malay identity, using family and community activities as a medium. This aligns with the study by Rosukon Wongwatthanakun (2020) on communication and cultural transmission in Malay-Muslim Thai families, which found that families play a crucial role in passing down culture and values to the younger generation, particularly through language use and adherence to religious principles. Regarding the impact of social media on cultural preservation, the findings correspond with the study by Srisuwan (2021) on the influence of social media on cultural preservation in Thai Muslim communities in Pathum Thani. The study found that social media helps the younger generation connect with traditional culture more easily but also results in some cultural changes. The challenge of preserving the Muslim community identity aligns with the research by Noor, M. (2019) in the study "Urbanization and Its Impact on the Malay-Muslim Identity in Thailand," which revealed that urban migration causes the younger generation to adapt to modern culture, leading some families to be unable to fully pass on traditional culture. This corresponds with data from in-depth interviews with participants who stated, "I feel pressured when in urban society with a different culture, so I need to adapt, such as adjusting my attire and language."

The role of Islam in preserving the identity of the Malay-Muslim Thai community aligns with

Hassan, A.'s (2019) research "Islamic Education and Identity Among Thai-Malay Youths," which found that religion plays an important role in shaping and preserving cultural identity, especially through religious practices and community involvement. In the aspect of cultural integration and adaptation in a multicultural society, it is consistent with the study by Atchara, S. (2022) on the development and integration of Malay culture in central Thailand. The research showed that the Malay community has adapted by merging traditional culture with Thai culture to fit into a multicultural society.

In conclusion, the Muslim community continues to preserve an identity connected with traditions, culture, and Islam, even as it adapts to changing societal conditions. The history of the migration of the Malay people into this area during the early Rattanakosin period resulted in settlement, the establishment of mosques, and the preservation of culture and religion, with an emphasis on passing down language and traditional customs. Despite the need to integrate with Thai society and adapt to technological and economic changes, particularly the use of social media to promote and preserve local culture, the transformation of cultural identity in the Malay community of Klong Bang Pho is influenced by several factors, including the increasingly diverse political and social environment, as well as the development of technology affecting communication and the preservation of cultural heritage. However, efforts to preserve religion and traditions, such as performing Friday prayers and organizing Ramadan activities, continue. Even with the adjustments to societal and technological trends, the community strives to maintain its original Malay identity through language, religion, food, and customs, passed on through family teachings and community activities. To maintain and pass on the cultural identity of the Thai-Malay Muslim community, promoting education in language and religion within the family, as well as using technology to disseminate Malay culture to the younger generation, is essential so that the Malay Muslim community of Klong Bang Phoh can preserve its cultural identity in a changing society.

Recommendations from the Research Findings

The implementation of these recommendations can help the Thai Muslim community of Malay descent in Klong Bang Pho preserve its cultural identity amidst the currents of change and evolving society effectively, as follows:

1. **Promote Language Use:** There should be the development of curricula for teaching the Malay language and culture in schools and community learning centers, so that the youth in the community can learn about the language and traditions that are essential for shaping their ethnic identity.
2. **Support the Use of Technology:** The use of digital media and social media to promote learning about religion and local culture is an important tool for preserving and disseminating Malay identity.
3. **Foster Understanding in Thai Society:** There should be the creation of spaces for cultural exchange between the Malay community and Thai society to foster acceptance and understanding of cultural diversity.
4. **Revive Traditions and Cultural Activities:** Cultural activities, such as organizing important festivals and religious ceremonies in the community, should be held to enable the youth to participate and learn the value of local culture.
5. **Support Local Economic Development:** Integrating cultural preservation with economic

development in suitable forms, such as using social media to promote community products and services, can help promote the preservation of cultural identity alongside community development.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the data presented regarding communication and the preservation of cultural identity in the Thai Muslim community of Malay descent in Klong Bang Phoh, Pathum Thani, the following topics should be explored in future research:

1. The role of communication and strategies for preserving cultural identity within the community.
2. The adaptation of the Thai Muslim community of Malay descent to economic and social changes.
3. Changes in the use of the Malay language and methods of preserving the language through technology and digital media.
4. The integration of two ethnic cultures and the role of preserving cultural identity in Thai society.
5. The use of digital media and social media in promoting and preserving the culture of the Thai Muslim community of Malay descent.

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