

The cultural Influence of Hinduism Toward Thai : Sri Maha Mariamman Temple (Hindu Temple) as the Case Study

Jakpong Pemmatra¹, Supaporn keawpong², Arirat Ututhvichienpanya³

Rajapark Institute^{1,2,3}

Email: jak3942@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

The research titled “the cultural influence of Hinduism toward Thai: Sri Maha Mariamman Temple (Hindu Temple) as the Case Study” had the objectives (1) to study the process which let the individuals who have cultural differences be able to live together peacefully and (2) to bring such knowledge to construct the concept and the prototype for managing the multicultural society harmoniously and peacefully. This was the qualitative research applied the hermeneutics paradigm as the methodology. Population used in this research were people who had the domicile around Sri Maha Mariamman Temple. Semi-structured interview, document analysis (relevant documents, memorandum, and research papers), and non-participant observation were used as the research tool for data collection. The research finding was-as follows: Regarding the aspect of “the Concept of Population”, this concept believed that the individual who gave respect to the god and divinity in Hinduism would get good things in return, especially as prayed to each particular god. However, there were few people explaining the main concept of Hinduism (or Brahman) well. Most people would understand and explain the main concept of Hinduism quite similar to the one of Buddhism

Keyword: The cultural influence; Hinduism toward Thai; Sri Maha Mariamman Temple

Introduction

Buddhism is the main religion practiced in Thailand for long times. Buddhism spread to Thailand in 307 B.C. same age with the spread of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. King Ashoka an Indian Emperor promoted Buddhism expansion by appointed knowledgeable monks to go forth as emissaries and



these monks were assigned to nine destinations in surrounding territories. At that time Thailand were included in the territory call Suwannabhumi which has the large boundaries. There are total 7 countries in this territory which are currently Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Malaysia. Thailand was influenced by Brahmanism and Hinduism since Iron Age before history of Sukhothai and Ayuddhaya aged. The established of the city during the age of King Rama I, he was try to revived and supported the art, culture and royal ceremony by called the Brahman from south and other area who are the war refugees back to work for him as the Royal Brahman. He was reviving art and culture, traditions and literature (Bamroong Khamek, 2015, the history of Brahmanism and Hinduism, role of Royal Brahman, Sculpture and Mural, Royal Ceremony and Literature that were influenced by Brahmanism and analysis about influenced of Brahmanism and Hinduism in each dimensions.

Until the age of King Rama V during year 1879. Mahamariamman Temple was built by the group of Indian people who was live in Rattanakosin which could say that this temple is the oldest Hinduism temple in Thailand that still operates and has the religious ceremony until now. This cause the passing of cultures and believes to people who live surrounded the temple. And because Thai people has the foundation of cultures combined from the variety of cultures as states in the history and many memorandums also mentioned that Thai people was consist from the gathering of many races. So it is high potential that both cultures and way of living of people who live around Mahamariamman Temple is different from people who live in other area. The researcher interesting the influence of Hinduism culture towards Thai people who live around Mahamariamman Temple. This culture should absorb the main influence from the belief of Hinduism that inherit and practice for long time from the Indian people who migrated and settled in this area finally coalition with local people and become the same culture with Thai social.

Objective of Research

- 1) To study the process that make the group of people from different cultures stay together peacefully and to apply that knowledge to create the concept.
- 2) To present primary form for the management of cultures variety society to stay harmonizing and peacefully together.



Literature Review

Culture generally mean a form of human activities and a symbolic structure that make those activities outstanding and important. The lifestyle which is the behavior and the thing that was centered by group of human by learning from each other and using among their group which could be change by the generation and suitability. However, culture in term of citizenship mean that things which human adjust to get more civilized and continue from generation to generation (Royal Institute Dictionary, 1982).

Hinduism or Nativity is the religion that believes in many gods that developed from Brahmanism which always call as Brahmanism-Hinduism. However, it is not mentioned clearly that who is the prophet. The principal is Vedas and there are congregation ranking at 3rd in the world which total approximately 900 million people (Wikipedia.com).

This religion believes in many gods call “polytheism” each gods in each ages have the different rolls and history. In different area each god will has different beliefs. Basically Hinduism believes that the supreme divinity that separated into 3 forms (trinity) or calls “Trimurti” is Brahma the creator, Shiva the destroyer and Vishnu the preserver.

Mahamariamman Temple knows by local people as “Wat Khaek Silom” was built in 1879 in the era of King Rama V by a group of Indian people who live in Rattanakosin. Vaithi and his relative who immigrated and stay at Silom road in present days has strong believes in Hinduism and build this temple to be the shrine for Maha Uma Devi. The small pavilion was named “Sala Sriamman” follow to The cults of Hinduism. The board such as Vaithi Padayatchi, Narai Jethi and Koba Rati asked for exchange their land with Mrs. Pun Ubprakararakosakorn. The internal of the temple have many sculptures of Hinduism divinity that were built for Hinduism people. This place is under the care of Indian Tamil who brought the east cultures spread all over Asia (The note of Mahamariamman Temple).

The foreigner who live in Silom Road nowadays started to settle in this area since almost last twenty years. The first group who is the pioneer is Indian people. The habitats were built densely along the street from Tum Pee Sa alley to Mahamariamman Temple or known as “Wat Khaek”. From that day the community was continue expanded and it may say that nowadays these foreigners can be seen in every small streets and alleys along Silom Road. This is same to the community of Thai people that settle the residence close to Temple. These foreigners also do

the same as can be seen from the above case of building of Mahamariamman Temple for the purpose to officiate the Hinduism, a part of this also can see the building of Mosques in Islam community where located in Silom 20 alleys (Sai Pradist). (Sorawan Jirareungwong, foreigner live in Silom Road 2008).



Figure 1 Sri Maha Mariamman Temple (Hindu Temple)

Sri Maha Mariamman Temple is locally known as Maha Uma Devi Temple and commonly called Wat Khaek. The word "Khaek" is a casual term used to describe people of Indian and Middle Eastern origins. Despite an increasing infamously of the term, the word remains mainly neutral and commonly means "guest". Wat Khaek is a South Indian architecture style Hindu temple in Bangkok, Thailand. Vaithi Padayatchi, a Tamil Hindu man who immigrated to Thailand decided to build the temple in 1879 as a reminder of his culture and reflection of his belief.

Research Methodology

The researcher uses Qualitative Research to do the research at this time as follow.

1. The researcher have studied and analyzed the information from the documents or use Documentary Research by consider the concern concepts, theories and literatures. The researcher study from academic documents, researches, the academic articles that concern with culture and society surrounds Mahamariamman Temple and concept of Hinduism including academic documents from electronic media or from the website.
2. The Non-Participant Observation by observe the auditing operation in every process in order to understand the process and database to include in the development of in-depth interviews. Which the information gain from the observation are including as followings. (1) Places and context of situation or phenomenal (2) Concerned people (3) Operations of situation or phenomenal that have observed (4) Details of the things that happen during observations (5) The history and results of situation or that phenomenal.
3. In-depth Interview is the interview and estimate of opinions from Key Informants that have experience about this research which are people who are old family or live in the surrounding area of Mahamariamman Temple not lower that 40 set of information, local state officer, religious and academicians or specialists by using in-depth interviews with all people concern. The researcher will use Semi-Structured Interview Guide to the people who are from the old family or live in surrounding area of Mahamariamman Temple will count as people number 1 which use the question that conclude with 3 main part are, part 1 is open-end question about the characteristics of people who answer the questionnaire, part 2 open-end question about concept and practice that been continued by generation for Mahamariamman Temple part 3 is suggestions.

Research Results

The research found that there is the process that somewhat similar to each other as follow.

- (1) Notice the difference of people who have different thoughts and different practices which come from the situation that ously have advantages and disadvantages to themselves.
- (2) There is the comparison between those thoughts and practices, both in good way and bad way.



(3) There is the combination of different cultures. That is the more notice of benefits of those things such as easier, more comfortable, more convenient and more clearly. That could help to create the combination of different cultures. By applying the new things that have more benefits to add on or replace the existing. The new culture must have some similarities or same common ground as well.

The Culture of Thai Society

Thai society is the society that has base culture of Buddhism for long time. There are many evidence represented clearly, regardless of stone inscriptions in Sukhothai and Ayudhya age or beliefs and so many things that carry on from generation to generation such as the believes of the return of results of goodness and badness behavior or call Khama and the living style that influence from the theory of Buddhism, that are precept, conscious, concentration and wisdom. However, in the high society or Royal family will have the combination belief of Hinduism. From the study and analyze found that this combination should happen in the age of King Jayavarman I. At that time Thai is one of his colonies and King Jayavarman I also very concern in preserving the Brahma Hinduism that could be cause a lot of practices in Brahma and Hinduism that carry on through the times (conclude from interview).

Center of Thai Culture and Hinduism Culture in term of Logic

Hinduism will have the culture of belief in many gods refer from the legend and religion believes. While Thai Culture has the highest respect to Load of Buddha same as gods in Hinduism. This cause the belief of Hinduism come to Thai Culture easier and the more of belief and stories that send from generation to generation about the good thing that happen after believe and pay respect with Hinduism gods is the more that make two cultures collaborated easier. Some group of people unable to identify the difference between Buddhism and Hinduism. Some even practices Buddhism while they practice Hinduism by pray respects to Maha Uma Devi as well. However, in the core of Poramataman that is the philosophy of Hinduism less talking about Maha Uma Devi but talking more about philosophy of Buddhism that focusing on do goodness and badness which go follow the belief in rule of Karma in Buddhism. Even if the highest belief of Hinduism call Mesmerize (Moksa) that can be say the most similar to highest belief of Buddhism Call Nirvana. But there is none of people talking about this. (Conclude from the interview).



In term of practices. From the observation found that in the Mahamariamman Temple will have the religion activity every day, that is the pray in the afternoon which lead by the Hinduism priest. And in the morning the temple also opens for every people to pray worship which will have the recommendations by staff and the priest to make the people understand and do follow the belief of Hinduism correctly. Which the reverence and the worship to the idol have different prayer in different gods. In the prayer and respectable to the different idols has also show in Thai Culture for long time ago. That make the practices of worship and prayer can be collaborated easily. But the interesting point are the others surrounded cultures such as the flowering to the idols or the purchasing of idols which all these things are the phenomenal of Thai Culture or call Buddhism Commercial however it turns to be the part of society surrounded Mahamariamman Temple without anyone against. Moreover, from this, the thing that cause of easy collaboration is the belief that all good things that pray to those idols will come true after follow this practices. But the principle of Hinduism that call Ashrama none of people that been in this interview could be answered clearly. The majority of answers are the small part of Ashrama. (Conclude from interview).

The main central that cause cultures collaboration and combination with peaceful is these group of people have some desire in their life such as successful in their careers and commercial cause those group of people looking for the restraint or the way that could be response to these thing easily and most comfortable. The belief telling about respect and practices toward each Hinduism idols will help the wish of these people come true and successful. So that make the respective and practices more to respond their needs.

The primary form for social management that has plural cultures could be live in harmony together with peaceful. From the early results found that the primary form of plural cultures management has to figure out the complicated needs or similarity of those group of people and then clarify where is the point of similarity in different cultures and focusing on respond of the desire of those people by not need any separation. Which in the management has to identify clearly into the thought and practices and results. To have the real happened samples or thing that can be done easily will be more effective.



Discussion of Research Results

From the analysis of theory and information that come from research can be understand that the process that make people in different cultures can be live together with peaceful has the major combination that is the collaboration of cultures. Which similar to Mary Yoko Brannen said in her research that the collaboration by not create the feeling of cultures different that cross the line and limit (Merging without alienating: interventions promoting cross- culture organizations integration and their limitations 2008, Mary Yoko Branner). If there is the merging of cultures happen will cause working and living together smoothly. To make the happening of cultures merging must have the situation that encourages by that situation does not need to be good or bad situations. Just affect to every people who concern culture merging. In the study of all documents about history found that There are many things that happen from cross-cultures merging or collaboration of traditional in Thailand that are totally not Buddhism such as respect to ghost, pray to forefathers and attention to important day of others religion such as Christmas or Ramadan.

Which the primary form of the social management that has plural cultures to be live in harmony together and peacefully has to support the cross-culture merging. From the research of sample group found that variable that will be main of management are as follow.

1. Respond of the needs of people in that society by not need to be the good or bad response, just respond right to their needs. The theory of human motivation (A Theory of Human Motivation 1943, A.H. Maslow, pp. 370-396) said about human behavior will go follow the level of direction of need which same as this research show that just be able to respond to their need so that will promote recognition and could live together peacefully. Moreover, the theory of conflict management (Alper, S.; Tjosvild, D.; Law, K. S., 2000). “Conflict Management, efficacy, and performance in organizational teams”. *Personal Psychology*.53, pp. 625-642) was say about direction to try to eliminate negative which agree that when there is the conflict between thoughts and practices of different party if thoughts or practices of which party could have the result that satisfies another party will cause no conflict finally.

2. Easy and Comfortable. In which technology currently has more progressed and send full affects to convenient lifestyles. This cause the easy and comfortable becomes one of the important variable to cross-cultures merging. Which same as the easy and comfortable becomes part of life



now. Amarin Buppasiri (new syndrome for Thai children in 2017) was say about this article that to follow the more comfortable of life come from technology that has progressed a lot and it invades lifestyle of people in nowadays.

3. Clearly and easy to understandings. Due to the change of behavior of Thai people in terms of reading and knowledge that majority not ready to read and try to understand all the things with more details. Which in other hand could be understand from roughly read or listen instead of pay attention in reading or practices will respond more. The cross-culture merging will not be able to be real without clearly of practices and easy to understand in term of too many philosophies The thing that go in the same way with the research of reading behavior of Thai people by Faculty of Economic Chulalongkorn University (The study of reading behavior and book purchasing of Thai people) which indicate that the number of Thai people who not read to the book is as high as 12 percent and time spend to read is only 28 minutes per day. Moreover, this the result also reveals that the majority of thing that Thai people read is not knowledgeable thing that need to analyze or practices but are the general thing is daily news 83.2%.

4. Fast and consistently results. From the study of documents found that the cross-cultures merging must start from the creative of motivations when practices and get the fast results. By use as the core to encourage consistency practices and lead to final results that could happen again. Why the result need to be faster, it is because if the results of practices is slower or never becomes real will cause the interesting and attention disappears. But if there is the faster and consistency result it could have motivation to that behavior in long term. Which go the same way with Dr. Kent Berridge who test about rewarding (Affective neuroscience of pleasure: reward in humans and animals 2008) and Alasdair A.K. White (Form Comfort Zone to Performance Management 2010) that has talk about this above direction.

Suggestions

From this study cause the found of surprising result that the main principle of sustain or discipline of the better mind from religion is slightly disappear from people who practices in those religion. As the research show that Hinduism Philosophy that call Poramaman not show in the group of people who participate the Hinduism activity. Even if the arrangement of The Navaratri Night at Mahamariamman Temple which have many participants but these people despite the people



who claim that they are the person who pay respect to Hinduism still could not answer the Paramaman Philosophy. In the way they practice also has no clearly performance that lead to the highest core of Hinduism that is Moksa principle. This can be say that it is the practice for self-pleasure and to reach the wish that they have been pray for. They not even expect or acknowledge that these practices will lead to the highest point of Hinduism or not. They just focusing on their benefit and satisfy result only and even the one who call themselves as the representative of each idols, they do not even teach people or tell about core of Hinduism. They just preform as the representative of those Hinduism Idols in order to response to the question of people or response that those people need to know. For example, to create ad informed the lucky number for lottery or do magical which all these things have not mention in the Hinduism or Buddhism scripture at all. However, it become the general thing in society and finally become the culture that need to be happen and badly that there is the advantage of buying and selling the idols sculpture or call rental of idols sculpture from specific group of people who see that there are many people beliefs in these things by not even care that it is correct in the religion principle or not.

The benefits of apply research result to use in term of social follow the principle of culture, evolution of culture and human basic needs principle. This can be show clearly explanation that is the variety of culture able to stay in harmony together and with peacefully must be based on the benefits and advantage of people who stay together or at least no any disadvantage to each other's. If it is the cohabitation that send more in negative way in any way, will cause the loss of harmony and peacefully. Bae on the information that cannot be refuse in the social that benefit to the study.

Reference

- Preeda Pulsin. (2011). Research project has corporation from community to arrange the knowledge of art and culture: case study of Sommanas Temple that funding from Department of Cultural Promotion. Ministry of Culture, Budget year 2011.
- Pornusa Prasongwana. (2013). The study of sample community with different religion that stay together peacefully in Kanlayanee Temple, Thonburi district. Bangkok. Thesis of Master



of Arts Program in Buddhist, Social Development, Master Degree, Chulalongkorn University.

Amara Pongsapitch, (2006). Diversity of Culture (paradigm and role in civil society) (5th edition). Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University.

Bamroong Khameak. (2015). Influence of Brahmin-Hinduism in early Ratanakosin era. Research from Silpakorn University Research and Development Institute, Budget year 2005.

Memorandum King Rama II 1812, Original of Samudtaida from The Secretariat of the Cabinet. 7 July 1939. Number 26 Book of Black Magic and Idols at day 2 12 4 The year of dog. Mr. Thim Meetem copy.

Jirapat Prapunvittaya,. (2002). History and prayer to gods Shiva, Narayana, Genesha. Bangkok: Dhevasathan Brahmin Shrines.

Herzberg, F., & others. (2002). The Motivation to work. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

White, L. (1949). The Science of Culture: A study of man and civilization.

Weber, Max. (1966). The Theory of Social and Economic Organization. (Handerson & Parson Trans) Handerson and Tallcott Parson, (4th ed). New York: The Free Press.

Wikipedia from <https://th.wikipedia.org/wiki/research> in 20 August 2018.

Website

Adherents.com (from http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html research from 30 September 2018).

<https://www.takemetour.com>.