

The Social Area Disclosure to Reduce Conflicts between Community and the State: A Case of Mahakan Fortress, Bangkok

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Abstract—The purposes of this study are 1) to study the over 20-year attempt of Mahakan fort community to negotiate with Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) to remain in their residential area belonging to the state, and 2) to apply the new social and cultural dimension between the state and the community as an alternative for local participation in keeping their residential area. This is a qualitative research, and the findings reveal that the community claimed their ancestors' right as owners of this piece of land for over 200 years. The community, therefore, requested to take part in the preservation of land, culture and local intellect and the area management in terms of being a learning resource on the cultural road in Rattanakosin Island. However, BMA imposed the law concerning the community area relocation in Rattanakosin Island. The result of law enforcement led to the failure of the area relocation, and the hard hit on physical structure of the area including the overall deterioration of the cultural road renovated in the year 1982, the 200 years' celebration of Bangkok. The enforcement of law by the state required the move of the community, and the landscape improvement based on the capital city plan. However, this enforcement resulted in the unending conflicts between the community and the state, and the solution of this problem was unclear. At the same time the community has spent a long time opposing the state's action, and preparing themselves by administrating the community behind Mahakan fortress with community administrative committee under the suggestion of external organization by registering all community members, providing funds for community administration. At the meantime the state lacked the continuation of the enforcement due to political problem and BMA's administration problem. It is, therefore, suggested that an alternative solution to this problem lie at the negotiation between the state and the community with the purpose of the collaboration between the two to develop the area under the protective law of each side.

Keywords—Pom-Mahakan Community, The Reduction of Conflicts, The Social Area Disclosure.

I. INTRODUCTION

MANY old communities in Bangkok have been built up by the unofficial gathering of temples, canals, fortresses, and city walls. Many people in the past settled down in those communities prior to the time when city planning and land holder laws were not used in Thai society. Bangkok was, therefore, filled with people who had their own identity and this led to the rapid expansion of the city of Bangkok. It was that both the Thai communities and the people were prosperous at the same time. People settled with the social

structure of relative type and self-sufficient economy. In the past, when the king needed to expand the city, he would make an announcement to move people out from the land. For example, in the reign of King Chulalongkorn, many fortresses and city walls were pulled down because of his administrative policy concerning the expansion of land transportation. Those local people did not resist the royal policy. However, when Thailand changed its governance system to democracy, Thai people declared their own rights and challenged the government administration. People could justifiably negotiate with the government by means of laws and court.

Pom-Mahakan community is one of those communities resisting the power of the state like as same as those communities that were expropriated by the government. People in the community did not want to move out from their land, so they negotiated with the government. Scholars and human rights activists supported them to exert their human rights to occupy their own land. They used their own land by means of eco-tourism; they sold their handicraft products to foreigners and Thais. However, the government paid no attention to support and negotiate with them, but enacted laws to solve the problem at last. Based on the government policy – the Rattanakosin island development, this area is supposed to be green areas for public parks. In 2011, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration did not officially expropriate Pom-Mahakan community. The conflict between the government and Pom-Mahakan led to the loss of the government's opportunity to be able to develop its city. As a result, the Pom-Mahakan community gathered enough people to oppose the government and protect itself from the government's expropriation. Meanwhile, the community remained poor and yet declined to violate the laws [1].

Pom-Mahakan community yearned for the revising of the power of the government. In reality, it needed the government to be concerned about the people's way of life and humanity. The conflict effected both the government and the people. Therefore, the new dimension of a modern Thai way can act as another way to help revise the government and its laws which have an effect on the relocation of the community. The main solution to bring peace to the community is to enact laws to help support the rights of the community residents, along with the community developing itself in the condition of the time living in the area.

The government administration by laws enforcement is the main part of its administration. However, under the democracy in Thailand the government always enacts laws and power to

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solve problems. It lacks the understanding of the facts of history, and this causes the gap between the government itself and the developing community, and this also becomes an obstacle of developing the society. In addition, people do not trust and doubt about the government administration, and this brings about people's new behaviour in terms of their collaboration to express their opinions about the government. For example, people in Pom-Mahakan gathered firmly to resist the government from in 2009 into 2010. Finally, both the government and the residents in Pom-Mahakan lost their opportunities to develop their state as people who were the owners of the land. Based on the over 20-year conflict between Pom-Mahakan community and BMA, it results in the state's inability to enforce the relocation of Pom-Mahakan community. However, in 2014 BMA is in preparation for the enforcement of the relocation again. At the meantime, the residents in Pom-Mahakan community are preparing for the negotiation to remain in the area. The existing questions are as follows;

1. Will the conflict be solved?
2. Since the situation has changed, the solution is seen in terms of maintaining the government's benefit in land using and the requirement of local people's involvement in land development. Is this regarded as guideline for the solution of the conflict?

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To study the over 20-year attempt of Mahakan fortress community to negotiate with Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) to remain in their residential area belonging to the state
2. To apply the new social and cultural dimension between the state and the community as an alternative for local participation in keeping their residential area.

III. METHODS

1. To study the history of Pom-Mahakan community based on historical documents. The period of study begins from the first day the community was established until now.
2. To apply qualitative research in participation and non-participation, group discussion, and an interview of the leader of the community. The research will take one year of study.
3. Anthropology theory to be applied in the research:
Symbolic Theory: 400 people in the community gather to protect their community. Community residents understand the laws, respect sacred objects in the community, and know how to be a good citizen [8].

Post Modernism by Michael Foucault (1984) and Henry Le Febe (1998): Foucault states that a state needs citizens who accept and follow its policies, commands, and its ideology. However, modern society has its own idea; people claim their right and their dignity, which causes the conflict of social classes and the power of the ruling class. This idea is the same as the idea of Henry Le Febe in terms of the people's idea of society [3]. The state uses its political power to control

citizenship, and modern society. People are dependent on their thinking which is a good reason why the state cannot use its own political power to limit people's opinion [4],[5].

Modern Policy Theory by Chattip Naksupa: It shows the change of Thai society in a developing country, in western style, and in a democracy. The political change in Thailand leads towards a more modern country, where the state does not concern itself about the ruled class. Therefore, to develop Thailand to become more modern, the state should emphasize on the cultural idea of a community which becomes the basis of society and culture. There are 5 topics: firstly to respect human rights of the communities' residents, secondly people earning for a living, thirdly the sustainable and fair use of natural resources, fourthly communication in society, and fifthly the decline of attitudes towards social classes which leads to the social gap [6].

4. In this study, the over 20-year conflict between the government and Pom-Mahakan community is the research source which can be studied in 2 dimensions.

The first dimension involves the group studying architecture and surroundings. This group supports the government to develop the physical area of Mahakan fortress with the area of 4 rai 3 ngan 59.35 square wa so that it will be beautiful, to relocate the residents, and to conserve the fortress and historic site under the renovation of Rattanakosin plan.

Social dimension is the study relating to Anthropology by paying attention to way of life, humanity, relation, the ruin of family institution, family member involvement in consideration, human right principle. The group analyses the power of speech and feeling using Michel Foucault's notion as frame work of the analysis. Moreover, the presentation reflecting new idea concerning the attention to local residents, their fight, local women's roles in the negotiation to remain in the area is highlighted. Moreover, the study has employed the notion of Henri Lefebvre entitled 'The Production of Space' to reflect the state's authority in enforcing their power in social area.

The theoretical study above with the study of 2 dimension are the sources of the historical study of the community and the study of new ways the community residents employed in peaceful fight in terms of the request of involvement in community development to be cultural tourism in Rattanakosin Island using knowledge and ability which is collective local intellect, and this can add cultural value and income to the local residents in the community.

IV. POLICY IMPLICATION

1. The country development and the physical change in society are necessary for the state to collaborate with the community residents. The state should give out information to the people in terms of laws and the government's plan to move them out from their own community. The state should also provide social security for the people.

Pom-Mahakan is related to the study of Thai history and archaeology because the fort was founded when King Rama I

established Bangkok as the capital of the country in 1782. This fort was then built in 1783.

The feature of this fort is a large one. The octagonal base is 38 meters long measuring from the northern to the southern outer ring. It was built with bricks with an underground base. It is a 3-story fort with staircases leading to the first and second level. On the top, it has an octagonal tower. The fort is entirely surrounded by battlements topped with squared stones excluding the expanding wall on the second level which was composed of pointed boundary stones indicating the seared ground of the Ubosoth (single stab; double stab) stones like those of the city wall. There are six cannons located on the battlements. The city wall which is connected to those of Pom-Mahakan along Mahachai Road has battlements that are topped with pointed Semaboundary stones. It is also 180 meters long with 4 open spaces and there are 3 curved topless doors on the wall under the ramparts. Beside the doors are stairs leading to the top of the wall.

In the reign of King Rama I – III, the major defense strategy was to fight a battle with Burma in which Thailand was defeated and colonized in the Ayutthaya Period – in 1767. When, later, the new capital was founded, the ruler of the country at that time decided to dig a defensive channel around the capital and another connected the channel called Khlong-Lod (Lod Canal). The channels were to defend the city from enemies. Along the banks of the city, there were walls with 14 forts. These channels were very useful for Thai people in the old days in the aspect of commerce and transportation.

Pom-Mahakan is one of the forts in the Bangkok city plan. The nearby places are the two picturesque temples, Wat Ratcha Nadda (1844) and Wat Theptidharam. The areas of the temples are large so in the past people were allowed to settle in these areas in order to attract people to the area and make the place busier. The construction of Pom-Mahakan was in the area of Wat Ratcha Naddaram as well. There were a large number of people coming to the area to settle down inside the walls of both Pom-Mahakan and the temples.

The area of Pom-Mahakan is located outside the Grand Palace and is therefore related to the way of life in each time period. In the reign of King Rama IV (1868 – 1851), the Golden Mount was built in the area of Wat Saket which is next to Pom-Mahakan. The Golden Mount is located on the hill making it more charming; therefore; many people were enchanted with its beauty and moved then to the area.

In the reign of King Rama V (1910 – 1868), it was the first time that this area around Pom-Mahakan had been changed. The lands were bestowed upon royal guards by the king; therefore, there were more people settling down in the area. There was no city planning at this time. The houses were built along Khlong Lod (Lod Canal) and Khlong Ong Ang (Ong Ang Canal). There was a 'Like' group (Thai traditional dramatic performance group) called Phraya Petpatee. This group was very famous. The performance of the group, later, is counted as the model for the central Thai 'Like'. In the reign of King Rama VI in 1916, the area was needed to build the OngAng Pier heading to Klong San Sab (San Sab Canal). There was also a major traditional festival of people in

Bangkok along this OngAng Canal. It was called 'Sakkawa' (a verse form of poetry which is sung). The event was annually held on OngAng Canal during the winter- from October – November. The purpose of this festive event was to entertain common people to enter a Sakkawa competition where they went each verse back and forth between men and women. This remarkable festival has been held till today.

The Importance of Pom-Mahakan as an archaeological site. The Thai government pays attention to the importance of the remaining forts in Bangkok which are Pom-Mahakan and Pom-PhraSumen. They have been preserved as major significant sites in Bangkok since the 20th Century. The picture of Pom-Mahakan was printed on the front of a 10 baht banknote which has been used since the last 50 years.

The area inside Pom-Mahakan was renovated and adapted to be a beautiful city wall along Ratchadamneoen Road. The government has reserved this place to be the place for welcoming the country's guests. The outer area was adjusted to be one of the important sites in Bangkok. The government finally gave the authority to the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) to take care of this area since then.

2. To enact the state's right, and human rights laws to be revised by the administration in a decentralized era to the local area.

The town of Bangkok was expanded in the 20th Century. More suburbanites had migrated to Bangkok causing land problems. In this modern period, temples asked for rent for their areas but at a low rate. In 1962, the area along Ratchdamnoen Road was a beautiful place. The cinema called 'Chalerm Thai' was built near Wat Ratcha Naddaram. Therefore, the area around Pom-Mahakan became the center of this capital city. Later, the BMA had arranged a new city plan in order to prepare for the celebration in of the ,1982 200th Anniversary of Bangkok. The negotiation to take back the area of Pom-Mahakan has begun.

There has been a negotiation to buy the land around WatRatchaNaddaram and Pom-Mahakan along with enforcing the law to expropriate the lands and change them into parks, in 1992. The BMA would then pay the expenses for demolition on the understanding that people in the community would move out from the area. Some residents had accepted the compensation and moved out, but some had not. They asked the BMA for a negotiation to live in the area around 1 Rai (approx. 1,600 square meters) as Thai tradition and cultural conservationists. For the rest of the area around 4 Rai, the BMA can turn them into parks and 318 residents would live inside the city wall area. They would sign the contract with the BMA to create the collaboration in developing cultural tourism. This was the first time that people had asked for their rights and participation in developing their community from the BMA.

The proposal from the community's people to stay in Pom-Mahakan area from 1992 – 2011

The community's people preserve their cultural heritages and manage the places to be information resource sites for Rattanakosin Island. These cultural heritages are as follows.



Fig. 1 An ancient teak house which is more than 100 years old

Fig. 2 represents the origin of arts. This place used to be the origin of 'Like' Thai traditional dramatic performance) called Phraya Petpanee in the reign of King Rama V. There are still some heirs from family. There are also ancient Thai musical instruments.



Fig. 2 The Phraya Petpanee in the reign of King Rama V

Fig. 3 represents the wooden crafted bird cages that are precious handicraft made by a skillful Muslim craftsman who brought this craftsmanship from the South of Thailand.



Fig. 3 Wooden crafted bird cages

Tiny sculptures of hermits' heads require skills and knowledge which have been passed from generation to generation in the community. This tiny sculpture of hermits' head is believed to be a talisman.



Fig. 4 Tiny sculptures of hermits' heads

People in the community live their lives in a simple way. They conduct a ritual worshipping Pho Poo Mahakan. This ritual has been acted since the founding of the fort. It is believed to bring happiness to the people in the community.



Fig. 5 Pho Poo Mahakan

People in the community still earn a living by making the traditional dove cages, raising fighting cocks and giving traditional Thai massages. This knowledge has been passed down from the older to the younger generations.



Fig. 6 Fighting cocks



Fig. 7 Traditional Thai massages

The people of the community are ideal citizens. They act decently without drug in the community. They provide activities, showing respect to the nation, religion and the king.

They love one another as if they were relatives. They have security in their lives – without robbery. For example, when they hang clothes outside their houses, if it rains their neighbours will pick them up and the owners can get them back later [9].

In addition, they train their young ones to preserve Thai customs like the ancestors who were passionate with making merit, doing Thai dancing, etc. If someone dies in the community, they will raise funds to help the sufferers. When young people meet an elder, they will greet by Wai (paying respect in Thai style) simultaneously saying ‘hello’. Classes in law also help people understand about human rights; therefore they live happily together regardless of religious differences – most of them are Buddhists and some are Muslims.

The community is one of friendship and hospitality, especially to foreigners who visit their houses behind Wat Ratcha Naddaram across from Pom-Mahakan. They will receive information along with introductory leaflets about the community. There are also some living spaces to welcome guests at the learning centre of the community.

When the people submitted the proposal to the BMA it was declined because the people have used the land owned by the government. When the government wants to use and change them into public facilities, the community must end.

For the continuing fight for human rights, the case study of PomMahakan Community is the first community to peacefully

fight for it. Outsiders took this issue to study and to create some statements based upon it.

One example is Aphiwat Seangpatthasima, an architect. He produced a short film titled ‘Behind the Wall’ which reflects the unhappiness of the people inside the walls. Over 10 graduate students chose this issue of Pom-Mahakan to be their research topics. One of them is specifically about the fight of the community’s people also.

Chaiyaset, Purithat published the research titled “Pom Mahakan: The production of space” is research from the Master of Science Program in Community Development, Thammasat University. The researcher illustrates the social phenomenon in the conflict between the Bangkok Metropolis Administration and the people in the Pom-Manakan community [7].

Chaipak, Pavinee published her research titled “Struggle of ‘women of Pom-Mahakan’ against the relocation policy” to fulfil her course in women’s studies, Thammasat University. It mentions the female leaders in 9 families. It reflects on their lifestyles and how the relocation would destroy them – the way of living together like families in the society and helping one another. It also presents the women’s roles in protesting the governmental authority. Moreover, there were 17 articles about this issue published in books in 2002 – 2003 as well as the judgment by the courts in 2011 that the people need to move out otherwise they would become offenders [2].

318 people, however, who live in the area of 1 Rai (1,600 square meters) from 66 families, have not relocated. The 8 leaders of the community are the representatives to fight for the human rights and the rights to stay. They have also planned the policy to stay in the community for the next 10 years as follows.

People in the community should gather together following the kinship system of Thai society and remain the strength of the community. The people should listen to the leaders and have been taught to be good – do not cause social troubles to the government.

Lawyers, private organizations and expertise became counsellors for the community’s people and named the policy as PEACE.

3. The revision and searching solutions to live together by modernizing the Thai style

This modernization, in the research that has been filed, focuses on the historical dimension which is the reformation of Siam in the reign of King Rama V. The government model influenced by the West was occupied to rule the country. The notions of people had also changed from tradition to international ways of thinking. As time goes by, the development in the country and the thoughts of its citizen’s lean towards a more democratic system. The country has turned into a civilization as a whole, but the real situation is still contrary to this. The contradiction shows in the various coups that Thailand is the country with the largest number of constitutions – 17 constitutions in all. Another sign is the complex opinions of people in the society about culture and economy with the new definition of the words “authority” and “virtue”.

The word “authority” appears for the person who rules the country and that commands people in the governmental system. The word “virtue” illustrates the act of the ruler without obvious intention, but through the people around him. The contradiction in Thai society, especially from grass roots in 1992 has defined “grass roots” with the new definition of people living in the society. This group of people takes part in governing the country in the aspect of developing community and the local area which follows the budget plan in the 8th National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997 – 2000). The phrase “Human Rights” also appears in the laws according the constitution (1997).

Thailand nowadays is in the period of contradiction. People claim for their rights as well as the political issues. Therefore, a peaceful negotiation is one solution to ease the conflict in the society where people have their own opinions and gather to object the governmental authority.

This modernization in Thai style applies the life style of Thai people to bring back the peace and happiness to Thai society by negotiation, paying respect to one another, helping one another as the way Buddhists should do.

V.CONCLUSION

The unending conflicts between Pom-Mahakan community and BMA have been in existence for over 20 years while the state enacts laws and the residents ignore the relocation. The limitation relating to local administration of the state includes the regulation of 4-year term of BMA governor requiring that there will be general election for BMA governor every 4 years, the urgent problems of transportation, economy, and social including the impacts of political conflicts between the government and people sector during the period of 2011-2014. These result in the different guidelines of political party responsible for BMA administration during that time in terms of the negotiation of the community relocation and this leads to the lack of continuation in the negotiation and the law enforcement based on the BMA plan on Bangkok physical area renovation. At the same time Pom-Mahakan community has stepped up various measures for the negotiation including the application of human’s right principle, and the establishment of internal organization for being independent community with the purposes of creating community self-security and preventing the state interference in way of living improvement and community security management. Although the community has planned to assign personnel to manage the fund for the fight of the area rehabilitation, the community weakness includes the training of those assumed to be community leaders for long running fight with the state. In order to achieve this goal, new members of community leaders are required to replace the old ones. However, due to the lack of real experience in negotiation of the new members, and the change of context and surroundings, this group new members is required to represent themselves to create trust for the community.

The impact of this problem on the state can be concluded as follows;

1. The failure of the state in terms of law enforcement for the community relocation results in the lack of area renovation especially the sight of old city area known as Rattanakosin Island enriching with the history of the establishment of Bangkok, the new capital. Moreover, the long standing and complicate conflicts between the government and the people sector over the political problem doubles the difficulty to solve this problem.
2. The impact on the residents in Pom-Mahakan with their ignorance of community relocation rooted from their claim of their ancestors’ right to own the land includes the lack of preparation for the establishment of their new community offered by the state, the poverty, the change of area for earning their living, the close family tie way of living and the relationship of Thai ways in terms of interdependence, the ruin of family due to the lack of confidence in living in new land.

The revision of the solution of this problem lies at the principle of peaceful sharing between the state and the people, and this can be a guideline for cooperative negotiation in terms of integrating the involvement of people in planning the area renovation and law enforcement with the purposes of the remain of the community in the area. Short and long plans should be created by extending the opportunities for the cooperation between the community and the state to raise awareness of the residents in the area about cooperative community development and their involvement with the state to pass on and conserve their way of living.

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