

Cultural Identity Preservation of Siamese in Perlis, Malaysia State of Academic.

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Abstract

This research aims to (1) to study history , cultural identity of Siamese people in Perlis State, Malaysia, (2) to explore the cultural identity preservation of Siamese people the state of Perlis, and (3) to study the ways of preserving the cultural identity of the Siamese people in the Perlis State, Malaysia. This qualitative research was conducted through data collection from documents, in-depth interviews with key informants, and focus groups and content analysis was employed to analyze.

Findings were as follows:

1) Although Siamese people in Perlis are in a society surrounded by Muslim culture and as a minority of Malaysian Plural Society, they in the community still continue to preserve their expression both in religion, belief, culture, and the use of Thai language. In the daily life, most of Siamese do farming, plantation rubber, and speaking a local southern dialect of Saiburee that is very close to an accent of Nakhon Si Thammarat and Songkhla.

2) In the cultural identity preservation of Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia, they still firmly preserve Thai identity, especially the faith in Buddhism, the use of Thai language, dhamma studies, culture, heritage, amusements and important festivals.

3) For guidelines for preserving cultural identity of Siamese people in the State of Perlis Malaysia in preserving the cultural identity of the Siamese in which temple is a cultural center with a way to learn systematically Thai language focusing on the conservation of Thai local language , a management of religious education in temples, learning Thai culture in the temple of the Siamese, setting up a strong community organization, the use of name and surname in Thai, and a marriage with the Siamese together.

Keyword: Cultural identity of Siamese people in Perlis state, Culture in the temple of the Siamese

Introduction

Former Malayan towns refer to dominion or the territory of a sovereign of Thailand (Siam) located in lower part of Malaya. These towns were called ‘Muangkhaek’ according to the body of the royal letter, they mean some of the people living in the southern parts of Thailand; Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah or Saiburee and Perlis State, including Pulau Penang, a part of Kedah. Most of these people believe in Ismaism. .

Malaysians of Thai descent or Siamese (popularly called in Malaysia) are Southern Thai people who have lived in this area for a long time. With the continuous settlement in these areas and later they became one of the tribes in the state of Saiburee, Perlis, Kelantan in the north of Perak. There are a number of people living in Penang and some of them were mixed with indigenous people. After this land was given to England, a group of these people remain Malaysia until present. According to the survey, the Siamese in Malaysia still preserves traditions of Thai culture in the past (Lertkrai & Nilkarn, 2016), as well as the unique language and religion that distinguish them from the Malayan people.

Claims from the Malaysian government of the Siamese based on the Buddhist approach to peace as a tool to negotiate were successful. To this day, Tai ethnic groups in Malaysia still maintain their identity for centuries among the racial, religious and cultural diversity. Generally speaking, the way of life of the Siamese people are still very similar to most Thais in Thailand in using local wisdom as a way of life (Lertkrai, Monliang, & Jitkla, 2016) as agriculturalists, Buddhists, and using the Thai language to communicate in everyday life.

Thus, it is said that what is of great importance to the people of the Tai community in Malaysia is threefold: nation, religion and the Thai language. The word 'nation' is Thai race. The word 'Religion' is Buddhism. The 'national language' is our Thai language. There are three things in our minds. If one is absent life is not perfect. Although we are Buddhists without knowing the Thai language. How can we communicate? How can we teach our children? Another deep part in our minds are we still respect the King of Thailand or our King. We almost have an image of the king in every house.

Learning the identity of the Siamese community in Malaysia can be clearly indicated that most of Siamese people have a way of dealing with the lines of Buddhism. Monks and temples are the spiritual centers firmly in the community. Traditions, rituals, and beliefs still resemble Thai traditions such as the ten month-ceremonies with form and details of the ritual based on the traditional people of Nakhon Si Thammarat. The strong cultural consciousness of the Siamese community in Malaysia is probably one of the factors that have contributed to the continued existence of the Thai language without seeing any change from the traditional Thai language that is used. Besides, Thai people are ready to announce the Thai language and culture as a good communication tool. It is glad that today the Thai government and the

government of Malaysia provide more support Thai language learning in a cooperative way. For example, the Royal Thai Consulate-General in Kota Bharu cooperated with the Royal Thai Army help Thai people learn more Thai language learning and teaching to strengthen the identity of the culture of Thai language to be more prominent.

In summary, Thai Society in Perlis (Malaysia), the northernmost border of Thailand on the coast of Satun province and on the land in Songkhla. It is the smallest state of Malaysia as the small town with prosperity and high ethnic relationship.

There are 400 Siamese villages consisting of 400 families, 2,500 people. There are 4 temples: Wat Matchimaprasit, Suwankiri, Wat Kubangtika, and Wat Phrom Vijit, including Kuankhanun monastery and Thung Tong monastery. People are faithful in Buddhism following the teachings of the Buddha inherited from the past till present.

From aforesaid, it is clear that Siamese in the State of Perlis, Malaysia are a civilized group with beautiful culture as a heritage transferred by ancestors for a long time. Thai culture is a national identity indicating Thainess and honoring dignity and pride in being Thai. Consequently, researchers are interested in studying the cultural identity of Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia, and Siamese community there still preserves Thainess with a strong sense of nationality. Researchers conducted this study in order to promote the preservation of the cultural identity of the Siamese in the State of Perlis, Malaysia to the young generation after.

Research Objectives

1. To study the history, cultural identity of Siamese people in Perlis State, Malaysia.
2. To study the preservation of the cultural identity of Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia.
3. To study the ways of preserving the cultural identity of Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia.

Research questions

1. How are history and cultural identity of Siamese people in the state of Perlis?
2. How is the preservation of Siamese Cultural identities in the state of Perlis?
3. How is the guideline for the preservation of the cultural identity of Siamese people? In the state of Perlis?

Research Methodology

Research scope

The current study aimed to study the preservation of the cultural identity of Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia. Researchers studied the related concept, theories, and research with the conceptual framework consisting of the followings;

1. Cultural Identity of the Siamese in Perlis State, Malaysia;
2. Preservation of the cultural identity of the Siamese in the State of Perlis, Malaysia;
3. Ways to preserve Siamese cultural identity in the State of Perlis, Malaysia.

The population in this study was Siamese in Perlis State, Malaysia.

Data Collection

In the study, the researchers themselves collected data using the In-depth interview method to collect data from the Siamese people in the Perlis State, Malaysia as key formats. The interviewees were given freedom to respond to the questions, focusing on knowledge about Siamese identity in the State of Perlis, Malaysia. For the reliability of information, the researchers made a note and asked for permission to record the interview as in the guideline provided.

In the procedure of analysis and presentation of information, data were collected from in-depth interviews and from the interview form, then data obtained were categorized into group for analyzing and synthesizing by means of descriptive methods to convey the information derived from the study to describe the identity of the Siamese in the State of Perlis, Malaysia to make data most accurate and reliable for the benefit and value in this research.

This research is a qualitative research using documentary research on the cultural identity of Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia employing in-depth interview and focuses group discussion as shown below:

A study of the meaning and importance of preserving the cultural identity of Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia from the content of the documents following the steps given below.

Data Collected from books, textbooks, papers and related research related to content in the context of qualitative research focusing on documents.

- 1) Primary Source viz., textbooks and related documents;
- 2) Secondary sources including research, academic papers, textbooks, articles, written materials, journals, related internet information.

The analysis was done according to sequent data, information on the meaning and importance of preserving cultural identities of Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia.

Study on the preservation of the cultural identity of Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia was based on documentary research and in-depth interview with details are as follows:

1) The stage of data collection from the study of books, textbooks, papers and related research related to the content of qualitative research, focusing on documents.

2) The process of gathering data from an in-depth interview (In-depth Interview).

Key informants to study the preservation of Siamese cultural identity in the State of Perlis, Malaysia consisted of 5 Buddhist monks, 5 local scholars, and 10 villagers by purposeful selection which is a rigid and unstructured selection of procedures and procedures that are not complicated. The main aim of selecting this sample is not for obtaining representative clusters, but for obtaining the best possible sample. The selected samples for the concept and objectives of the study is the "case-rich case" of which is very informative and can best reflect the reality and this can provide important information that best suits the aims and objectives of the study.

Key informants to study the preservation of Siamese cultural identity in the State of Perlis are 5 monks, 5 scholars, 5 villagers with a strict unstructured purposive selection with simple procedures. The main aim of selecting this sample is not to get the group, but in order to get the best possible example for the concept, purpose, and purpose of "Information-rich case" is the information that is deep in the classroom and can best reflect the fact that it is meant to be the main purpose of the study to obtain the key informants.

Construction of interviews

A construction of interviews on the preservation of Siamese cultural identity in the State of Perlis, Malaysia was done to gather data on the following procedures:

- 1) Studying the details the cultural identity preservation of the Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia from texts, papers, journals, publications and related research and learning how to create an interview form according to the 2nd objectives of the research;
- 2) Improving the interview form as suggested by the advisor;
- 3) Distributing the complete interview form to the selected key informants for gathering data.
- 4) Collecting additional information, gathering all parts to gain comprehensive data by interviews, voice recordings, photographs, notebooks and then transcribing to compilation.

Data collection

Data collection on the study on the preservation of the cultural identity of Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia was carried out by following the procedures as shown below:

1. In the process of key informant selection, the researchers consider the appropriateness and match with the needs in answering the questions about cultural identity preservation of Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia including the possibility to go conduct the study together with the convenience and safety in travel.
2. The researchers had submitted document requesting for cooperation to collect the data and then set the interview date. Such method is set to determine the researcher's the role.
3. Individual interview was conducted to understand the preservation of Siamese cultural identity in the State of Perlis, Malaysia, focusing is on the opinions of the contributors to the qualitative data, using descriptive information with clear issues in the interview along with the open questionnaire. Key informants were given time to prepared prior to the interview, with sufficient knowledge about interviewing and rapport. The researchers introduced themselves based on the role as set by creating positive interaction for interviewees to feel impressive, trustworthy and bold to disclose the information to the interviewers that need to collect information. In this research, the In-depth interview was employed taking amount 2 hours, which is considered to be the appropriate time for the interview to do qualitative research. In the study face-to-face interview was used and also the researchers had interviewed key informants on the phone in the case of the study to fill in the data while collecting to obtain more comprehensive data.
4. The collection of additional information was done to gather all parts to gain comprehensive data via interviews, voice recordings, photographs, notebooks and transcripts to compile.

Data analysis

An analysis of the cultural identity of Siamese people in the State of Perlis was conducted by taking details from documents and related research including results of the interviews related to the preservation of Siamese cultural identity in the State of Perlis.

In proposing the ways to preserve the cultural identity of the Siamese in the State of Perlis, the group discussion was employed and participants in the discussion group included key informants consisting of 5 Buddhist monks, 5 scholars, local learned persons, 5 representatives of local leaders, 5 representatives of villagers obtained in a purposive way.

The group meeting proposed the ways to preserve the cultural identity of the Siamese in the State of Perlis with comments and suggestions according to procedures as follows;

1. Informing the participants by a letter about the preservation of Siamese cultural identity in the State of Perlis, Malaysia to give comments and suggestions.
2. Conducting a discussion group to get ideas on the cultural identity of the Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia what way of identity preservation should be.
3. Record the results of the group meeting based on the opinions and suggestions of the participants.
4. Improving opinions and suggestions and the advisors provide complete guidelines for preserving the cultural identity of the Siamese in the State of Perlis, Malaysia.

Findings

The study of the preservation of Siamese cultural identity in the State of Perlis, Malaysia revealed the following findings:

1) Although Siamese people in Perlis live in a society surrounded by Muslim culture and as a minority of Malaysian society, Siamese people in the community still continue to preserve their identity both religion, belief, and culture, including the use of Thai language. In the daily life of the Siamese, most of them do farming and the rubber plantation and they speak the southern Saiburi dialect with a similar accent of Nakhon Si Thammarat and Songkhla.

Findings

The study of the preservation of Siamese cultural identity in the State of Perlis Malaysia revealed results as follows.

1. Although Siamese people live in a society surrounded by Muslim culture and as a minority of Malaysian society, they still continue to preserve their identity both in religion and belief, culture, and the use of Thai language. In the daily life, most of Siamese do farming and rubber plantation. They speak the southern dialect of Southern Thailand in accents similar to Nakhon Si Thammarat and Songkhla.

2. For the cultural identity preservation of Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia, Thai identity is still firmly preserved, especially the faith in Buddhism, the use of Thai language, dhamma studies, traditions, amusements and festivals.

3. Guidelines for preserving cultural identity of Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia are based on the ways of preservation and temples are cultural centers leading to a way to manage Thai language learning in a systematic way focusing on the conservation of Thai local language, management of religious studies in temples, learning Thai culture, an establishment of strong community organization, the use of name and family name in Thai, marriage with the Siamese together.

Suggestions

- 1) Research findings indicated that a temple is the center of foundation, development, and showed the identity of Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia. Therefore, people involved in the promotion of Thai identity in foreign countries, must give an important place in promotion and support to temple to sufficient resources to play a role in promoting the identity of the Siamese.
- 2) Preservation of Siamese identity in Perlis, Malaysia has been done with the transferring process through different cultural activities held at temples, the center of the community. So, the relevant sectors should earnestly support the cultural activities held in the temple.

Suggestions

1. Since temples are the center of foundation, development in showing the identity of Siamese people in the State of Perlis, Malaysia. So people involved in the promotion of Thai identity in foreign countries must promote temples with sufficient resources play a role to promote the identity of the Siamese.
2. Preservation of Siamese identity in Perlis, Malaysia transferring process can be done through cultural activities held at the temples, the center of the community. So, the relevant sector should earnestly support the cultural activities held in the temple.
3. Form of development to preserve Siamese identity in Perlis, Malaysia should be used in a cooperative model starting from related small groups to larger groups in order to create awareness of the development. So, people involved should take the model of cooperation to expand to the concrete form.

Suggestions for further studies

- 1) There should be participatory action research to create and develop a model for the preservation of Siamese identity in the state of Perlis, Malaysia for more concrete form.
- 2) Siamese community in Perlis Malaysia is a cultural settlement of Southern Thai culture. Those who are interested in studying Southern culture should study cultural settlement in the Siamese community in the northern state of Malaysia.
- 3) There should be a research on the role of temples in promoting Thai culture since temples play their role in preserving, inheriting Thai culture.

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