

## **Multiculturalism and Its Impacts in the Deep South of Thailand: A Case Study of the Christian Community in Pattani**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is based on a qualitative study of the Christian community in Pattani focusing on the impact of multicultural policies on them. The research methodology comprises of documentary and field research. Forty key informants generate the core data for the study. The research found that since the violent situation in 2004, the awareness of cultural diversity in the deep south of Thailand has been increasing significant. Although southern violence has occurred due to several factors, it is argued that the main driver of the Pattani insurgency is the loss of identity of the local people. Nowadays, there is a global awareness of cultural differences, mutual respect, and acceptance to subordinate groups, and all are considered foundations for peace in the world. Accordingly, the bureaucratic policy applied to this area has brought about change. This has led to a major cultural shift away from policies of 'assimilation' to the introduction of 'multiculturalism'. This has created a public space for subordinate groups such as the Christian community and made them more visible in Pattani civil society. In the age of globalization, cultural diversity is regarded as unsurprising and commonplace. The question is no longer whether this is good or bad. Rather, the challenge is to seek social integration. The researcher scrutinizes that social integration means not simply mutual respect and tolerance between different groups but continual interaction, engagement and civic participation. Accordingly, in the politics of social integration, it is debatable that calling for improving opportunity and greater interaction between people of different backgrounds as a peaceful strategy in the deep south of Thailand would lead us towards a society where cultural diversity does not determine our destiny.

### **Keywords**

Christian community, Multiculturalism, Deep South of Thailand

## Introduction

Pattani is one of the so-called four southern border provinces of Thailand ( see Figure 1). It is a small province where the majority of the population are Malay Muslims, making up 74.5% of the population (see Table 1). However, the province today is collectively seen as a multicultural society, comprising of three important cultures: Islamic, Buddhist and Chinese traditions. In fact, there are other groups in Pattani such as 'Christians' living in this area for almost a hundred years. But the Christian community in Pattani is not widely recognized.

Since the violent situation occurred in 2004, the awareness of cultural diversity in the deep south of Thailand has been increasing significantly. Although southern violence has occurred due to several factors, it is argued that the main driver of the Pattani insurgency is the loss of identity of the local people and the crises of legitimacy of the Thai Government of winning the heart of the local people. Accordingly, the bureaucratic policy applied to this area has come to a change. This has led to a major cultural shift away from policies of 'assimilation' to the introduction of 'multiculturalism'.



**Figure 1** The four southern border provinces of Thailand

**Table 1** Population in Pattani divided by religion and belief

Religion/Belief	Number (Persons)	Percentage (%)
Islamic	513,841	74.5
Buddhism	94,507	13.7
Christianity	221	
Hinduism	77	
Confucius	58	
Sikhism	49	

Source: National Statistical Office (2010).

In the past, the Thai state had drastically rearranged and transformed Patani's elite and political structures, particularly governance, Islamic education and legal systems, into a more secularized, Thai-oriented system (Deep South Watch, 2014). The effort to promote assimilation of Malay Muslim communities in the south was particularly focused on displacing the pondoks (Muslim religious schools), which traditionally performed a central function in the reproduction of Malay Muslim culture and identity. One of the most controversial elements of the assimilation campaign was the 1921 Compulsory Primary Education Act, which required all children to attend state primary schools for four years and to learn the Thai language and also Buddhism. The use of education to promote Thai language and Buddhism emerged as particular causes of dissatisfaction (Osman, 2010).

The violence today is seen as a renewed version of the former confrontation between Thai authorities and Malay Muslims. How far the current unrest situations are linked to the previous generations of insurgents remains an open question, but the root-cause problematically embodies the same dimension of conflicts between the centralized state and the resistant movements representing interests and grievances of ethnic minority, and the multifaceted state-minority conflict (McCargo, 2008).

**Table 2** Statistics of violent incidents in the deep south of Thailand

Period of Time	Incidents (Numbers)	Dead (Persons)	Injured (Persons)
Year 2004 - 2016	16,181	6,850	12,547

Source: Deep South Incident Database (DSID), Deep South Watch

The latest statistics above (see Table 2) show that the total number of violent incidents increased to 16,181 with about 19,397 deaths and injuries altogether. Undoubtedly,

cultural diversity is potentially two-faced: (1) a source of great strength as it enriches cultural interactions and (2) its celebration-recognition may encourage social segregation, fear and conflict. A central problem is seen as balancing diversity with solidarity. Nowadays, there is a global awareness of cultural differences, mutual respect, and acceptance to subordinate groups, and all are considered foundations for peace in the world. The awareness relating to social pluralism has led to a major cultural shift away from policies of 'assimilation' to the introduction of 'multiculturalism' in the Deep South of Thailand.

Recently, there have been some policy changes. For example,

1. Thailand has been mobilizing efforts for unified operations that engage all relevant government agencies, in order to improve the situation. It has adopted the "politics leads the military" approach in peace-building operations in the Deep South. Two tracks have been pursued in dealing with the southern situation. One involves economic and social development to improve the people's living conditions, and the other involves law enforcement to bring about peace and protect the people's lives and property. From January 2008 to December 2011, the number of incidents of unrest had declined, which means that the "politics leads the military", structural political changes or reforms to solve the problems in the long term, had some, if not complete, fruitful outcomes. However, the use of economic development policy and civil affairs activities, as major components of the structural adjustment policy, arguably failed to achieve their intended goals, specifically in terms of socio-economic development. The most serious community problems are still related to illicit drug and substance use, unemployment, insurgency, and poverty (Deep South Watch, 2014).

2. The Southern Border Provinces Administration and Development Policy, 2017-2019, has adopted His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's royal advice to "understand, reach out, and develop" as the central strategy to tackle unrest in the southern border provinces, together with the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy as a path to well-balanced and sustainable development. The principles involve the tackling of southern problems through peaceful means, the participation of all sectors, local development on the basis of a multicultural society, and the upholding of human rights, rule of law, and respect for international rules and laws. The objectives are to create mutual trust, allow local people to play a greater role in local development and in solving southern problems, promote awareness of co-existence in a multicultural society, enhance the potential of local residents, build confidence in the peace dialogue process, and create better understanding about the situation in the Deep South (The Government Public Relations Department, 2017).

3. The head of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) issued NCPO Order No. 49/2016 on measures of patronizing and protecting religions in Thailand. The Order states that the patronization and protection of all religions are duties of all government

offices. Offices shall support and disseminate the correct teachings of each religion. They also have to set up measures to encourage understanding between all religious followers and measures to prevent sabotage of Buddhism and other religions. The government offices shall additionally provide information to foreigners on what to do and not do in each religion. The measures shall be presented to the Cabinet in three months. The National Office of Buddhism and Department of Religious Affairs shall report the updates on implementation of this order to the Prime Minister every three months (iLAW, 2016).

According to the NCPO order and national policies, many religious leaders from major faiths in the conflict area, surprisingly including Christianity were invited to public hearings. The meetings aimed at providing a platform for the participants to share knowledge and experience and exchange lessons learned and best practices for 'living in harmony' in their own areas by using religious approaches. Major topics of discussion included inter-religious dialogue and cooperation for conflict transformation and religious networking.

This paper highlights the impact of multicultural policies towards the Christian community in Pattani. It scrutinizes that multicultural policy helps channel the Christian community for self-disclosure, cross-cultural communication, and participation in broader Pattani civil society. These create a public space for subordinate groups such as the Christian community and make this small community visible. Benefits of the research findings could lead to a growing acknowledgement of cultural diversity and understanding of living in harmony. These support Pattani society in its preparation to welcome the greater cultural differences after the commencement of ASEAN.

### **Theoretical orientation**

"Multiculturalism" is a debatable term, of which conceptualization and operationalization seem to be an ongoing process. Multiculturalism can refer to a demographic fact, a particular set of philosophical ideas, or a specific orientation by government or institutions toward a diverse population. Much of the contemporary debate over the value of multiculturalism centres on whether public multiculturalism – that which finds expression in concrete policies, laws, and regulations – is the appropriate way to deal with diversity and immigrant integration.

For some people, the term "multiculturalism" is descriptive: It reflects the actual pluralism present in society. Such pluralism might stem from the coexistence of longstanding minority groups, or it might be due to the migration of people with different cultures, religions, languages, and origins, as is the case in many countries around the world. Most of the contemporary debate about multiculturalism centers on immigrants and their descendants rather than on longstanding minority groups. Indeed, in some arenas multiculturalism has become synonymous with the demographic and social changes that stem from migration,

resulting in the conflation of multiculturalism with immigration policy. This is sometimes seen in debates about whether multiculturalism as a demographic fact undermines social capital and social cohesion. When the term multiculturalism is evoked in these debates, it usually refers to population diversity, not a particular philosophy or public policy (Vertovec, 2010).

In this paper, multiculturalism refers to a body of thought in political philosophy about the proper way to respond to cultural and religious diversity. Mere toleration of group differences is said to fall short of treating members of subordinate groups as equal citizens; recognition and positive accommodation of group differences are required through 'group-differentiated rights' (Kymlicka, 1995).

Multiculturalism as a philosophical orientation recognizes *de facto* pluralism in a society, and celebrates that diversity. It also requires governments and institutions to encourage pluralism through public policy, though the precise way this is done can vary across places and time. For example, schools might require teachers to adopt a more diverse set of literary texts or highlight the contributions of ethno-racial, cultural, or religious minorities in history classes. In other cases, multicultural policies might make accommodations for the particular cultural or religious practices of minorities – such as providing a prayer room or allowing a particular style of dress on school grounds – or they might provide public funding for separate schools for racial, ethnic, or religious minorities.

This new form of policy reflects four principles: (1) 'Responsibilities of all' – people have a civic duty to support freedom and equality and enable diversity in our society to flourish; (2) 'Respect for each person' – people have the right to express their own culture and beliefs and have a reciprocal obligation to respect the right of others to do the same; (3) 'Fairness for each person' – people are entitled to equality of treatment and opportunity, free from discrimination on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, location, gender or place of birth; and (4) 'Benefits for all' – people benefit from productive diversity. Diversity works for all. This multicultural policy promotes good community relations and social harmony among all (Healey, 2005).

In spite of the fact that the policy position may not correspond to the sentiments of some separatist insurgent movements, public agencies try to promote community harmony and show the benefits of cultural diversity. Some scholars scrutinize that the bureaucratic approach to multiculturalism is likely much more on the level of social policy rather than active citizenship through collective participation in decision-making processes (Castles, 2000). However, at least, I argue that the introduction of multicultural policies applied in the deep south of Thailand helps create a public space for a subordinate group such as the Christian community and makes this low profile and small community visible.

## Research methodology

This research is a qualitative study comprising of documentary and field research. It engages primarily with ethnographic perspectives and employs two major qualitative research techniques in the fieldwork: participant observation and in-depth interviews. Participant observation involved living among the people under study for a lengthy period and gathering data through continuous involvement in their lives and activities; it is appropriate for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviours in their usual contexts. In-depth interviews are optimal for collecting data on the personal histories, perspectives, and experiences of individuals particularly when sensitive topics are being explored. Several other informal research methods were utilized, including informal interviewing and general observation (O'Reilly, 2005).

In this study, forty key informants of diverse socio-cultural background generate the core data for the study (see Table 3). In addition, the researcher was welcomed to attend community meetings and also church meetings. This contributed to a much greater understanding of the broader Christian community in Pattani. It was also helpful for data triangulation and to make the research as methodologically sound as possible.

**Table 3** Key informants' characteristics

Socio-cultural background	Persons
Church elders and leaders in Pattani	10
Church members in Pattani	7
Friends, classmates, colleagues, neighbors of Christians in Pattani	7
Respected Muslims, Buddhists and Chinese in Pattani	7
Persons in public & private sectors who dealt with Christians in Pattani	7
Other church leaders who dealt with churches in Pattani	2

However, this research is not without limitations. It is important to note that my professional and personal rationales for this research lie in my own background – a Christian who has accepted Christ in Bangkok since 1990 but recently returned to hometown and attended a church in Pattani since 2011. As a result, I am inevitably situated in the world I study. Rather than attempting to step outside the arena of practice and to distance myself from the research setting in order to claim a more impartial objectivity, I am speaking from within it, involved in and part of the world I am researching. However, I have realized that the experience of being an outsider, an insider and on the boundary between these two roles can cause some strain. Thus, while I have tried to get as close as possible to the action, I have

balanced this by stepping back so my eye is cast on how everyday realities are experienced, attempting to 'flow' with my informant's perspectives while being reflexive about my own meanings. So to some extent this data has a degree of objectivity in that it is not 'researcher provoked' data. This may ensure that reflexivity remains fundamental to the methodology.

### **Historical and demographic background of the Christian community in Pattani**

The Christian community in Pattani comprises two denominations: Roman Catholic and Protestant. During the early 19th century a strong missionary movement was launched from the West throughout Thailand. It is acknowledged that missionaries made substantial contributions to boarder Thai societies not only with regard to religion but also health care, education and foreign language skills (McFarland, 1999). In the deep south of Thailand, at that time there was an ongoing conflict between the military and Muslim liberation groups calling for independence for Thailand's predominantly Muslim provinces. Whereas there was tentatively no anti-missionary sentiment, the tense political climate made missionary work difficult and dangerous (Rusten & Rusten, 2003).

In 1935, two European Catholic fathers named Father Don Mario Ruzzeddu and Father Job Carnini were assigned to visit Christians and survey Southern Thailand from Prachuap Khiri Khan Province to Narathiwat Province. Their first arrival to Pattani was on 23 October 1935. After the survey trip a group of Catholic missionaries was assigned to visit Pattani and the deep south of Thailand about two times a year. Meanwhile, the China Inland Mission and Overseas Missionary Fellowship, the so-called O.M.F. International sent medical protestant missionaries to Pattani in 1952. Christian Saiburi hospital was opened in 1956 and village leprosy clinics in 1966. Unfortunately, these hospitals and clinics stopped servicing in 1979 due to the difficulties associated with foreign medical personnel obtaining work permits. To date, Pattani locals especially Thai and Chinese people embrace the gospel, but the response among Malay Muslims has been quieter.

Since the 1960s, foreign missionaries have sought to change their work into amore indigenous movement and so they have changed from being mission centric to native centric. This has promoted the independence of the church from western domination and allowed local leadership not only to take control but to take on the task of mission (Kim, 1980).

According to Thailand 2010 Population and Housing Census, there are about 221 Christians in Pattani, a small number, but well distributed throughout the Pattani Municipality. The Christian community in Pattani is not highly visible. There is no particular Christian geographic location in Pattani. However, churches serve as the focal point of the community. Mainly, there are six small churches in Pattani: one Catholic and five Protestant churches. The majority are self-care, found and fully led by Thai nationals. These churches are located in small street areas and slightly similar to residential housing.



## **Research results**

The research revealed that multicultural policies helped channel the Christian community: self-disclosure and cross-cultural communication, and participation in the broader Pattani civil society.

### **Self-disclosure and cross-cultural communication**

As mentioned earlier, the official policy applied to the southern conflict area has come to a change. This has led to a major cultural shift away from policies of 'assimilation' to the introduction of 'multiculturalism'. After the launch of the new policy, the Provincial Cultural Office of Pattani has adopted a multicultural emphasis. This has been undertaken through supporting community associations and their cultural activities in order to accommodate culture-based differences of value and social practice.

In 2005 (only a year after the beginning of current violence in southern Thailand), the provincial governor of Pattani initiated a celebration for Christmas on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December. This had never before happened in the deep south of Thailand. The provincial governor's intention was to address cultural diversity and to show that there are many religions and cultural traditions presented in Pattani. In this regard, almost all the Christian churches in Pattani were invited and assigned to be the main organizers of this event. Meanwhile, the provincial governor of Pattani gave partial financial support and purchased a 10 meter height Christmas tree for the celebration. The officials welcomed the event organizers to celebrate Christmas in a public area. From then on, Christian churches together with the public and private sectors in Pattani have continued to celebrate Christmas on 25 December each year as a provincial festival. Recently, Pattani celebrated its 12th Christmas festival. Each year, over 500 people of different ages, genders, occupations, and beliefs participate in this free community festival, in which all are most welcome. Food and beverages for Muslim participants are also provided. The festival is mainly sponsored by Pattani Christian community networks. Fund raising is done among churches in Pattani. The representatives of the local government agencies attend the event each year and preside over the opening ceremony. The private sector such as the owner of the C.S. Pattani Hotel is also invited as the Pattani Christmas celebration is usually held at a semi-open space in front of the C.S. Pattani hotel buildings.

The research investigated the community's intention and the content of the provincial Christmas festival. It is found that the Christian community has the awareness of cultural diversity in Pattani. Actually, Christmas could be seen as having religious significance. It is the memorial of Jesus Christ, the Lord of salvation. Christmas traditionally leads Christians to the church for devotion, praying, worship, receiving communion, and listening to a sermon. Christians in Pattani continue to attend their church on Christmas for

religious purposes. People in Pattani, who would like to experience more biblical traditions, are welcome to attend a church service on Christmas. However, the provincial Christmas is not operated as a religious ceremony or church service. The provincial celebration of Christmas in Pattani, even though it is organized by mainly churches, is favourably seen as a celebration of great joy, love, peace and offering. Particularly in the conflict area, the community intends to bring happiness to the boarder society.

However, the success of cross-cultural communication and community self-disclosure is based on mutual benefits and mindful consideration. The community assessment of whether or not actions are desirable or undesirable is most likely negotiated in the space that is formed between Christians and partners' values. In other words, under a pluralistic 'multicultural society' the freedom of expression to be a Christian may need to be balanced against behaving in a way deemed acceptable to others. For over ten years of celebration, the symbolic items of the festival have been: Christmas gifts, Christmas trees, Christmas carols and Christmas messages. These tend to be presented in a way that all participants of different age, gender, and beliefs can comfortably share the experience.

Nevertheless, risks may be incurred as a result of these processes. They are, for example: (1) possibilities of becoming victims/targets of violent incidents as the community stands out in the conflict area; (2) possibilities of encountering cultural barriers, misunderstandings and inadvertent offenses; (3) possibilities of igniting an offense among churches due to differences of organizational culture. The presentation of being a Christian needs to be in a way deemed acceptable to both Roman Catholic and Protestant stakeholders. The community realized that risk management is needed. It concerns issues such as: when to talk, what to say, where to start, intonation, hindrance, the art of listening, pacing and pausing, the degree of indirectness, cohesion and coherence.

#### **The community's participation in a broader Pattani civil society**

In 2005 (again, only a year after the beginning of current violence in southern Thailand), the Christian community was invited to be a part of the Provincial Cultural Council of Pattani. Then, eight years later, the Christian Association of Pattani was officially registered on 23 March 2013. Its establishment was made possible through the cooperation of the Christian churches in Pattani, and with the support of the Provincial Cultural Office of Pattani, which sought thereby to recognize and support the cultural diversity of Thailand's southern border provinces.

The Christian Association of Pattani was established with the following purposes: (1) To represent Christian communities and interact on their behalf with the government and other organizations, (2) To support the development of Christian personnel and places of worship, (3) To support cooperation and fellowship among Christians in the province of Pattani and throughout the Kingdom of Thailand, (4) To cooperate with charitable

organizations in doing charitable work, and with organizations devoted to the public interest in doing works for the benefit of the larger community, and (5) To support cooperation among Christians in doing works of charity and public welfare.

The Christian communities in Pattani, a term that refers to the networks of Christian organizations in Pattani, all believe in God and live according to the teachings of the Christian Bible. Yet they also have their own particular histories and organizational cultures, and this has caused them to differ in certain characteristics. The Christian Association of Pattani therefore considers it part of its responsibility to be a “facilitator of networking” among these organizations in order to support the development of greater mutual understanding, friendship, and social connections among the Christian communities of Pattani.

The network-building efforts of The Christian Association of Pattani have the following primary characteristics: (1) Social networking within Pattani’s Christian communities at the individual, group, and organizational levels should arise “voluntarily” through interactions or through collectively organized activities; (2) Social networking within Pattani’s Christian communities should be of a type that emphasizes “equality and fairness” in the relationships being formed; (3) Social networking within Pattani’s Christian communities should be of a type that shows mutual respect and “sensitivity” toward the culturally plural characteristics within their communities, being careful not to have their socially directed activities negatively impact the “independence and identity” of those individuals and groups with whom they interact, and (4) The development of the social networks of The Christian Association of Pattani should emphasize not only the development of relational networks within Pattani’s Christian communities but also the development of social networks across traditional community boundaries, creating better links with those people of other communities with whom the province’s Christians already interact with in their daily life. Both of these dimensions – within and across communities – must be pursued and developed at the same time and in the same measure.

Arguably, the Christian Association of Pattani seeks to promote social interaction and networking through the following four steps: (1) “Encountering,” that is, knowing and understanding oneself, knowing and understanding others, and knowing and understanding the socio-cultural contexts in which one operates; (2) “Moving Forward,” which includes such things as accepting and valuing oneself and others, developing a wider range of positive understandings of oneself and others, valuing the importance of others’ humanity, valuing equality, and beginning to see the potential for multi-dimensional relationships with each other; (3) “Coming Together,” that is, desiring to be in relationships with each other in both formal and informal ways, tearing down walls, and seeking strategies and techniques for creatively and supportively engaging with each other; and (4) “Integration,” which in this case does not mean cultural assimilation, and also does not mean communal or individual

separation, but rather has to do with attempting to adapt to each other and to develop together, doing so upon a foundation that accepts our society's multicultural characteristics, and joining together to seek ways to avoid unnecessary problems that might be encountered in the course of those relationships.

The Christian Association of Pattani immediately began a number of public activities, despite the violence that then prevailed in Thailand's southern border provinces. The Association's efforts were conducted in line with the Biblical teaching to "Love Your Neighbour as Yourself," with the word "Neighbour" in this case including the communities of diverse cultures which were different from those of the Christians themselves, yet among whom Christians were living or with whom they had other kinds of relationships.

One example of The Christian Association of Pattani's involvement in local social communities has been the provincial public celebration of Christmas on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December of each year. The organization and its members also cooperate to teach Christian ethics in educational institutions and government offices, to provide moral support and encouragement to soldiers, to visit and assist people who have been harmed in the area's violence, and to take part in the activities of the Provincial Cultural Council of Pattani. The activities of The Christian Association of Pattani are the work of a religious subordinate group that functions as a loose network that draws primarily on the limited funding and resources available from the Christian organizations in Pattani Province. However, the Association does not limit itself to religious activities, but also gives importance to activities conducted in the interest of the broader public welfare.

As a result, three members of the Christian Association's committee were eventually elected by Pattani civil societies and endorsed by the Provincial Cultural Office of Pattanito be a member of the Provincial Cultural Council of Pattani. Since 29 September 2016, the president of the Christian Association of Pattani was promoted to be the vice president of the Provincial Cultural Council of Pattani.



**Figure 2** Former Medical Protestant Missionaries in the Deep South of Thailand and Christians in the Pioneering Time

Source: This photo was taken in 1964 and contributed by Panyateep Yiengpruksawan



**Figure 3** The 2015 annual celebration of Christmas in Pattani

Source: These photos are contributed by the Christian Association of Pattani



**Figure 4** Visits of Cross-cultural study students hosted by Churches in Pattani

Source: These photos were contributed by the Christian Association of Pattani

## Conclusion and Discussion

This paper argues that the bureaucratic approach to multicultural perspectives assists the Christian community in Pattani for self-disclosure, cross-cultural communication and participation in Pattani civil society.

The Christian community in Pattani is not an overly closed or exclusive community. To them, multiculturalism does not lead to social fragmentation or segregation. The Association's working relationships with the Provincial Cultural Office of Pattani and the Provincial Cultural Council of Pattani has caused the Christian communities in southern Thailand to become more aware of news and information about the functioning of the government and about broader social developments in their community. It has also given Christians greater opportunities to exchange knowledge across conventional cultural boundaries.

Moreover, the annual provincial celebration of Christmas reflects that the freedom of expression to be a Christian is balanced against behaving in a way deemed acceptable to others. The presentation of being a Christian and the collaboration of living in harmony are joined to determine if actions are desirable or undesirable. These Christians prefer to be seen as peaceful participants.

To them, multiculturalism did not produce mobilization. They are not an example that defines group rights as sovereign rights. The community manages to put itself into the wider society. The exposure to the broader society can facilitate network building with non-Christian sectors. Such interactive mechanisms thus elaborate how the community is inextricably intertwined with the larger setting in which it exists. These enable others to gain a deeper understanding of the Christian community.

Through these processes, Christians are exposed to facts and information about their own cultures, preconceptions, mentalities and worldviews that they may otherwise not have contemplated. In this way, self-disclosure and cross-cultural communication could also help the community learn more about themselves.

### **Suggestion**

Firstly, contemporary societies tend to be composed of individuals and groups who have different cultural backgrounds. In societies that have such cultural diversity, if each group attempts to preserve its cultural individuality without accepting the cultures of the society's other groups, and if each group assumes that its own culture is better than that of the others, cultural conflicts are very likely to occur. For this reason, societies need to learn ways to deal with the cultural diversity that people encounter in their relationships. In the past, social arrangements to promote social harmony have taken a number of different forms. For example, in one set of social conditions, one social group might attempt to foster assimilation of a type that erases the cultural differences among people and that attempts to establish social unity upon similarities, interpreting the reduction of difference as the building of harmony among the nation's people. At other times, under different sets of social conditions, societies might enforce a policy of separation, in order to preserve distance between groups and to reduce the opportunities for contact between them, for example by dividing them into separate neighbourhoods, markets, and educational institutions. By contrast, the theory of multiculturalism is built upon the foundational idea that "subordinate groups within the state" have the right to be accepted and that they should be allowed to continue existing, without being assimilated into the majority culture. According to this way of thinking, "the state" has the responsibility to support minority cultures and groups for the sake of cultural diversity, with social unity resting not upon the foundation of sameness but rather upon a foundation of mutual acceptance among all the interacting groups.

The application of multicultural policies to the management of culturally diverse societies involves the application of social standards that allow for choices in patterns of behaviour, without enabling any one culture to dominate or be dominated. Society would accept cultural diversity and the principle that all cultures are of equal value, and "the state" would support the building of internal communal coherence in these groups, while also

creating public spaces for each of them. The relationships among cultures, that is, the social condition of having many cultures living together, would be one in which the various groups of people in society would interact with each other and use public spaces together. Even though each group would live in accordance with its own culture, its members would also make efforts to understand the cultures of the other groups without rushing to judgment, would care for the others, have sympathy for the others, and be patient and tolerant toward each others' differences. For this reason, the principle of broadmindedness or tolerance in intercultural relations does not consist of separating from each other, and it also does not consist of tolerating otherness in a way that fails to learn from those others who are different. The principle of broadmindedness or tolerance in intercultural relations involves, rather, a respect for differences, a respect that can give rise to greater mutual understanding of the other and thereby lead to improved interactions.

Secondly, when a marginalized minority culture becomes visible in the dominant society, it does not merely mean that the cultural minorities have gained increased opportunity for collective participation in decision-making processes. Recognition of such diversity has not necessarily led to equal rights for people of different cultures. There is a particular need to pay simultaneous attention to the contrasting forms of 'state multiculturalism' and 'critical multiculturalism'.

I scrutinize that multiculturalism is not solely the state's responsibility to manage. State multiculturalism refers to a tolerant attitude of the state toward cultural minorities that nevertheless continues to be enfolded in a belief in the state's authority to regulate that diversity under its own power. The state's primary purpose, under this approach, is to preserve the state's own security. By contrast, critical multiculturalism emphasizes the work of people from within the subordinate groups who believe that the creation of respect for each other's differences needs to be accompanied by an expansion of the rights of the subordinate groups themselves.

Arguably, multiculturalism managed solely by the state is not effective. The generosity and tolerance of the state for cultural differences may help members of society understand and have greater tolerance for each other's differences, and it might also help to keep those differences from becoming overly hardened against the state itself. Yet, members of subordinate groups may continue to be marginalized, so as long as there is no accompanying effort to expand the rights of those subordinate groups and to correct misunderstandings, biases, and stereotypes that members of the majority society may have towards them. Multiculturalism is therefore not only about the co-existence of different cultures, but also the improvement of democratic engagement and civic participation.

Thirdly, in the age of globalization, cultural diversity is regarded as unsurprising and commonplace. The question is no longer whether this is good or bad. Rather, the challenge is



to seek social integration. This paper argues that the design of social integration should be a masterpiece and shared imagination by all participating stake holders, including subordinate groups. In a diverse society, individuals may have different traditions but also share a common space together. It is therefore necessary to have a 'shared' understanding of what 'integration' is or what it means to live in a society where people come from different backgrounds. If we agree that integration is neither assimilation into a single homogenous culture nor a society of separate enclaves, then between those two extremes there is a great range and diversity of types of integration. The Crick Report's (2003), 'The New and the Old: the report of the life in the United Kingdom,' indicated that integration means not simply mutual respect and tolerance between different groups but continual interaction, engagement and civic participation. Accordingly, in the politics of social integration, it is debatable that calling for improving opportunity and greater interaction between people of different backgrounds as a peaceful strategy in the deep south of Thailand would lead us towards a society where cultural diversity does not determine our destiny.

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