

ABSTRACT

Title of Research Paper : Background of Thai Buddhists in the Rural Community and the Social Structure of the Community : A Comparative Study of the Urban Community, the Semi-urban and Semi-rural Community and the Rural Community in Pattani Province

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This basic research examined the background of Thai Buddhists in the rural community and the social structure of the community to compare these characteristics among the rural community, the semi-urban and semi-rural community, and the urban community in Pattani Province. The data were collected from 255 people in all the communities where more than 20 percent of the villagers lived. The geographical area under the study included all the tambons in Yaring, Kokpho, Nongjik and Mae Lan districts in Pattani Province. It was aimed at finding out whether the social structure of individual communities was mainly in the form of the kinship-system, the patron-client system or the factional-system. It also aimed to find out whether these social structures were related to the people's background. Besides, the study compared the social structures of the three Thai Buddhists communities : the rural community, the semi-urban and semi-rural community, and the urban community. The descriptive statistics-percentage and mean-were used to describe the data.

It was found that the social structure of the rural community was mainly in the form of the kinship-system, followed by the patron-client system. The factional-system was just supplementary. It was found that the difference in background of the samples did not affect the social structure. Besides the social structure of the community went in the direction of urbanization. That is, the more urbanization, the less the importance of the

Kinship-system would replace the patron-client and the factional-systems, the progress of which was very rapid.

The reason for the social structure to be in the form of the kinship-system was that the community was located in the same land area. Thai Buddhists were a minority in the area, so it was necessary to depend on relatives. They were closely related as in the traditional society. They respected seniority and led a simple life. Compromise was highly prevalent and the society seemed slightly changed. The fact that people to have higher education and income would lead to the less importance of the kinship-system.

Recommendations

The kinship-system is primarily held out in the rural community. This can be seen in the traditions and customs or rites and rituals, such as pouring water on the elderly's hands to show respect and joining the cremation of the relatives. However, these traditions, customs, rites and rituals should be conserved to be the spiritual center, which can be done through the religions institutions and the education institutions. At the same time, the quality of life of rural people should be raised. The government should encourage rural people to play an important role in social, economic, political and educational development in the form of "community", so that they will be able to adapt themselves to the rapidly changing society.