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“Space” and Identity Creation of Thai Siam People in Kelantan, Malaysia¹

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to 1) analyze the identity creation of Thai Siam people in Bangkaew community (pseudonym) and 2) analyze the identity creation of Thai Siam people living in Bangkaew community (pseudonym) with Edward W. Soja’s Third space conceptual idea. This study adopts the qualitative research method. The study found that the identity creation of Thai Siam people was conducted intendedly to support their struggle, negotiation and preservation of identity amid living in the pluralistic society. The identity creation adhered to the “space” as follows. Firstly, their house “space” appeared in the identity restoration of “Thainess” through the ritual of house front worship. Secondly, their temple “space” appeared in the scramble for temple space between Thai Siam people and Malaysian authorities in order to ensure Thai temple in Malaysia obtained the land ownership. In the end, Thai Siam people in the community could utilize their temple space to restore “Thainess” identity through the ritual of Wai Tong worship. Thirdly, their road “space” appeared in “Thainess” identity creation through Loi Krathong tradition to ensure people from other groups who belonged to other different religions and culture understood the identity of Thai Siam people who struggled to maintain and preserve their identity in spite of living under the rules of Malaysian nation-state or in the pluralistic society.

Keywords: Space, Identity Creation, Thaines

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1. Introduction

The identity of Thai Siam people has been created and combined with the other that is “Thainess” so the original identity has faded since the border line of Thainess was quite ambiguous (Thongchai Winichakul, 2013, 265-269), however, it could be applied in their struggle, creation or production or emphasis or reproduction of their identity. The identity is not an inactive, certain and inflexible thing, but it is the struggle for the right to create own definition or meaning of elements forming our identity and the other. In

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this regard, the identity appeared as space could not be settled since there were confrontation and cooperation among discourses (Chairat Charoensin-o-larn, 2011, 322) or the process of confrontation and cooperation between the identity and the other led to new creation of identity as a combination or so-called hybridity, remixed identity without essentialism (Thirawut Senakham, 2003, 24-25).

Thai Siam people's “Thainess” identity was not explained or created in the context of Thailand only, according to Irving Chan Johnson (2012, p. XIV-XVII), “Thainess” identity did not appear in the social and political context of Thai nation-state which defined Thai citizens' Thainess according to Thailand's histories. However, the Thainess existing in Kelantan, Malaysia relates to a people group living outside Thailand borders and under Malaysian politics. This results in “Thainess” created from ideology and imagination in order to define the identity and social borders and group's culture. In the same time, the Thainess identity appeared in this group is still ambiguous and expressed at certain period. According to Phornchai Nakseethong (2016), the “Thainess” identity" has an influence over Thai Siam people after they watched television programs broadcasted from Thailand. It does not only offer enjoyment, but also pass through “Thainess” in terms of language, religion, belief, custom, tradition, culture, recreation, value and dressing and enjoyment tastes. These aspects become part of normal daily routine and a vital part in “Thainess Conscience Creation”.

However, Thai Siam people's identity, in the other words, “Thainess” identity is not only created in the midst of living with other groups who belong to different and various religion and culture under the pluralistic society or context of Malaysian nation-state in which Islamic law is strictly enforced, but the identity reflects the adaptation and identity creation of groups for struggle, negotiation and preservation of identity amid living in the pluralistic society. The identity creation is social action adhering to “space” with wider meaning than physical elements. It also covers social and politic spaces and relates to the struggle, negotiation and scramble for political power in daily life (Opal Prapavade, 2004, 9). Likewise, Thanaphon Watthanakun (2007, 46-47) argued that spaces surrounds us in society are one of political space. The politics of space in each society and era has different practice of space. For example, “city” is not natural issue but about struggle, stipulation of regulations and rules for creation, control, inspection and defining social spaces' meaning. So, daily life of people in society relate to the space and be full of struggle for scramble, definition and giving meaning to surrounding spaces.

Nevertheless, the “space” is key element of enlightening Thai Siam people's thinking method and way of life. To create outstanding identity not affecting living in the pluralistic society is to determine which the “space” is suitable and not resulting in the cultural assimilation by other ethnics. At the same time, it wishes to preserve its own ethnic's identity because the ethnicity is still “space of living” of those who belong to culture consisting of combined physical and imaginative dimensions. Accordingly, the social identity on the basis of difference among other group of people so-called the ethnicity has political dimension that is acquiring and losing benefits. The symbolic or meaning dimension of ethnic group happens within certain identity creation. Social space so-called ethnicity is dynamic space. All elements including ethnographic collection, ethnographic practice or even people under such ethnicity always change. If it has a condition causing acquiring or losing benefits from the ethnicity expression, the ethnicity is the space of image creation and meaning creation conducted by insiders or having meaning created by outsider (Pirote Kongthaweesak, 2012, 178-179).

Thus, the author is interested in “Thainess” concept which adheres to way of life and is a part of daily life of Thai Siam people in the context of Malaysia until it has become or been assembled for identity, in particular the identity creation through ritual and tradition which the author studied in case study of the selected community for explanation of this research that is Bangkaew community (pseudonym). “Thainess” identity is created through ritual and tradition in the “space” with the “third space” concept of Edward W. Soja as follows. First space/Perceived means the space appears empirically or space happens naturally or appears physically. Second space/Conceived means the space happens from imagination and ideology decorated with symbols and signs and Third space/Lived space means living space consisting of social trust and social action. The third space is important to “Thainess” identity creation.

2. Objectives

1. To analyze the identity creation of Thai Siam people in Bangkaew community (pseudonym)
2. To analyze the identity creation of Thai Siam people in Bangkaew community (pseudonym)

with Edward W. Soja's Thirdspace conceptual idea

3. "Space" or "Third space" Concept

Understanding the "Space" or "Third space" concept always provides explanation that it adheres to identity. According to Stuart Hall, the "space" is the key element of meaning creation and the Third space is dynamic for any fixed identity creation (Tanawat Nitipaparnan, 2015, 25-26). In the early years, the interest in study on the "space" concept was to explain the geography of geometric space, physical or social and cultural space as well as absolute space separated from outside world after the interest lied in the relative space which studied in-depth relation between space, time and human activities. Subsequently, the postmodernism thinkers argued that the "space" was the cultural invention with coded space. In their opinion, the physical space was not just an object, space or surrounding environment waiting for people to utilize them. Meaning creation and space management reflected their thinking method and definition of their position in the space or society (Apinya Feungfusakul, 2000, 66). The space is not only an inactive background which supports the social phenomena. On the other hand, the space is a determinant and interacts with the social phenomena by itself. Occurrence or existence of one space is a combination of physical and social process creations. This is a fundamental study as an actor who create an appearance, identity and meaning for people living in society (Sutharin Koonpho, 1998)

Henri Lefebvre is an influential figure among theorists concerning the spatial concept with an explanation suggests that space and society are unified. The space has been divided into 3 categories namely physical space, mental space and social space based on the assumption that the space is a fictional or imagined thing (Edward W. Soja, 1990 p.148). Later, Edward W. Soja (2000: 10-11) argued the "space" concept introduced by Lefebvre extensively that the "Third space", which is a new extended perspective on explaining the third space as social space or social action space with dynamically changeable concept, occurrence, phenomenon and meaning all the time and described each space as follows.

First space/Perceived is the space formed empirically or the space formed naturally or physically.

Second space/Conceived is the space of awareness caused by imagination and ideology; in essence, this space displays signs and symbols in written and spoken forms.

Third space/Lived Space is the residential space which consists of social reality and social action. The material world of current experience and reality overlaps the physical space as the product of such two spaces abovementioned.

According to Edward K. Soja, what the postmodernism thinkers focused on in the third space is the connection and adaptation of a new cultural politics development which consists of brining culture and postmodernism which disagree with the binary opposition and spatial significance production leading to the change of politics for equality.

Therefore, the new cultural politics generates interest in the difference, identity and representative creation issues in the third space and reflects through new consciousness with relationship between space, knowledge and power. This is an effort to step over the binary opposition concept such as physical or empirical space, abstract and concrete, our and other territories, male and female, mind and body, etc. influenced by Western philosophies and sciences belonging to the binary opposition concept. Even the binary opposition is still influential currently (Edward K. Soja, 2000: 364-365), but the third space concept refuses to come to a standstill or settle with any identity inflexibly and to stay beyond the space of power and oppression because the power and resistance are not independent from each other. The resistance means to not compliance with staying in the determined space (dislocation) with may strategies such as obscuring the territory between the spaces or alternating between spatial aspect at various levels as well as the production of a hybrid identity which is a political matter of the space. This case opens up the resistance aspect and generates a new style of thinking infinitely without requirement of overthrowing the old power or enemy (Apinya Fuangfusakul, 2000: 85-86).

4. Research Methodology

In this research, the author conducted the qualitative research to offer opportunity for other researchers to understand the mental realm of human including emotion and consciousness reflect through the interview with story so that the researchers understand their story fully and clearly. At the same time, the researchers will not forejudge their actions which may lead to devalue the interviewees' humanity. As the researchers took part in the participant observation for their ritual and tradition adhering to identity creation of Thai Siam people in the “space”, the content analysis was conducted to find out potential key issues from related documentary collection and their descriptive content from the interview and participant observation. Then, the data was analyzed, interpreted and correlated primarily and reasonably to determine which data could be summarized as a finding or conclusion of this research.

5. Data Analysis Results

The data presentation analyzes the interview and participant observation according to the third space concept as follows. The First space/Perceived is the space formed empirically or the space formed naturally or physically. The Second space/Conceived is the space of awareness caused by imagination and ideology; in essence, this space displays signs and symbols in written and spoken forms. The Third space/Lived Space is the residential space which consists of social reality and social action. The material world of current experience and reality overlaps the physical space as the product of such two spaces abovementioned. Bangkaew community (pseudonym) was selected as the case study.

5.1. Case Study: Bangkaew Community (Pseudonym) with the “Thainess” Identity Creation

Bangkaew community (pseudonym) is a community with a physical space located in Tumpat District, Kelantan, Malaysia. The community's prominent point is its large space which means a great number of Thai Siam people live together in the space. Also, the community has few other ethnic groups living there and its surrounding spaces have other Thai Siam communities settling down. Significantly, this space location is not far from Thailand border namely the territory of Tak Bai District, Narathiwat Province. Bangkaew is located 20 miles or 32 kilometers from the immigration station or Pengkalan Kubor border checkpoint, Kelantan, Malaysia. The result accords with the research of Niphon Thipsrinimit (2011, p. 12), the Bangkaew is a central part of Tumpat District. Phikunthong Wararam Temple is located as a center of their village and surrounded by Thai people houses. Therefore, with physical space aspect, the community may be called a center surrounded by Thai Siam people living in other surrounding communities near Thailand border. As a result, Thai Siam people in this community adhere to Thai customs and traditions and share the same thought and belief with Thai people in Thailand (Chanthas Thongchuay, 1983, p. 6). With their territory or physical space is near Thailand, Thai Siam people in this community have interacted with Thai people in Thailand usually as well as watching television programs broadcasted from Thailand. Not mention to their enjoyment, “Thainess” identity has been passed in terms of language, religion, belief, custom, tradition, culture, recreation, value and dressing and enjoyment tastes. These aspects become part of normal daily routine and a vital part in “Thainess Conscience Creation”, so this group of people maintain relationship with Thailand. (Phornchai Nakseethong, 2016, p. 31).

5.2 Space: Struggle, Negotiation and Scramble to Create Identity

The way Thai Siam people have established their outstanding Thai identity is not easy because their existences are under the rule of Malaysian government introducing the strict Islamic rule and they have to live with many ethnic groups. Accordingly, Thai Siam people in Bangkaew community (pseudonym) had to struggle, negotiate and occupy the “space” while they managed to create a meaning or definition of their own space by borrowing “otherness” and mixing them together with their own identity until people in the community enjoyed relationship with their living space. The space has been used in the identity creation for living in the pluralistic society.

According to the study, “Thainess” identity creation of Bangkaew community (pseudonym) people has been connected to the “space” especially the spaces called houses, temple and roads used in operations or “Thainess” identity creation.

The physical spaces (First space/Perceived) include houses and temples having influences on their drives or identity creation. Such spaces have been the beginning of casting and cultivation of their thinking method and way of life under the rule of government introducing strict Islamic policies.

House....*is the place we were born in Thai environment, but we didn't adopt our Thainess from Thailand. We were born in Thai environment but in Kelantan. We've lived as a community. This means we are independent of any influence. Since I was born, I've lived with family, father, mother and neighboring villagers. We've lived in harmony. Since I was a child, we have had our tradition here. The part I remembered is going to Templemy grandmother always took me to the temple since I was a child. I've witnessed our religious rituals since I was a child. My grandmother taught me to pay homage to Buddha image and give food offerings to monks. I felt like I loved going to temple when I was a child. When I went to temple, I felt like I had everything there. Since then I have been educated that house and temple are indispensable parts of our lives since childhood. We've acknowledged its necessary. Now, if we look back to ourselves in the past, we love this place or our way of life. We feel safe and warm. (Miss Chan, Interview, 25 May 2018)*

According to above interview, a house reflects to term "our space" which is the space of awareness and meaningfulness (Second space/Conceived), in other words, "house means our community" which explained by the issue the interviewee mentioned to her birth and growing up in the space surrounded by her people group or the same group. At the same time, a temple is a space to enlighten and ensure their people respect and believe in their customs and traditions. Subsequently, the spaces of house and temple are important and become the spaces enabling people recognize identity or their own group. This leads to an effort to protect and preserve these spaces. To prevent and maintain their house and temple spaces, Thai Siam people have been in struggle and negotiation to secure the scramble of the space in order to create "Thainess" identity.

5.3 House: Space of "Thainess" Restoration through Ritual of House Front Worship

"House" is not only the physical space, but an implication of "house" has been invented and fulfilled with imagination of creating meaning and the space of social action (Third space/Lived Space) in Bangkaew community (pseudonym) especially using the space as a part of "Thainess" identity creation through the local "House Front Worship" ritual. The author found that the villager's inherited "House Front Worship" ritual which is an annual ritual arranged after Songkarn festival or sprinkling water onto a Buddha image ritual in the morning. Then, around 8 p.m. according to Thai time, the villagers gathered at a "house" determined by a shaman or a ritual leader in the neighborhood. The study found that 4 locations of "house" spaces were used in the ritual, the shaman performed the ritual to make the "house" space sacred for each location. The ritual background reflects the relationship between people and space. The "House Front Worship" ritual is a ritual reproduced and revived by the community villagers. The author remarked and raised a question after participating in the ritual. "Why did the villagers not gather to perform ritual together? Why did they separate to each location?" The author received the following answer: "Have you noticed houses of Thai people living here? Why do they have no a spirit house like house in Thailand? Thai people have a spirit house located in their house. But Thai people here have not preferred that since the past. So, this is the way we worshiped our ancestors. This is the way we do. We believe that our ancestors have dwelling around here in trees, they don't go anywhere. (Aunt Pat, Interview, 15 April 2018)

According to above viewpoint, the study found that the arrangement of house front worship reflected their adherence to the relationship system between people and supernatural and belief system or thinking method towards the space such as space of house, space of spirit house and space of forest. In particular, the "forest space" has been imagined and created to explain in the view of the villagers who believed that forest was a sacred space where their ancestral spirits live without creation of "space of spirit house". However, the creation of "house space" as are produced space and creation of "Thainess" identity appeared in such ritual. However, the "house" is not just the space used for ritual, but it becomes meaningful through their imagination to create sacredness in order to determine or divide the territory of people in the community and use a part of "Thainess" identity creation. This result accords with Cisneros, (2013) who argued that community has right to choose their identity patterns created from their own imagination and existing in the space, concretely or abstractly, such as symbols or signs, rituals, media, thoughts, beliefs or

views, statues or monuments. These items are adhered to the imagination created as a part of identity, emotion and motivation for social space establishment (Cisneros, 2013, p. 6-13) Therefore, the house front worship invented or created in the space is a restoration of “Thainess” identity in accordance with Hobsbawm invented tradition which argued that a social phenomenon in relation to the social organization transmitted in the form of rules and regulations (Set of Practices) such as religion, beliefs, rituals, stories, legends, folklore, history and symbols or collectively called ancient materials. Prominently, the reference to social past has been used to create an invented tradition until it becomes reproduction, formalization and realization with references inherited from the ancestors (Eric Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 1, as cited in Thanawat Nithipananan, 2015, p. 144). As the social conditions have changed, other communities of Thai Siam in Kelantan rarely perform this ritual at the present time.



Illustration 1 and 2: People gather to perform the ritual of house front worship

5.4 Temple: Space of Scramble, Negotiation and “Thainess” Restoration through Wai Tong Tradition

Living under the rule of Malaysian nation-state with the Islamic rule results in Buddhist Thai Siam facing a situation of struggle and negotiation in their way of life, especially, a situation in the space called “temple”, the physical space (First space/Perceived) which is people’s central space for religious activities and spiritual anchor space (Second space/Conceived) of Thai Siam people. However, the author found that “temple “has become the space of scramble or space of social action (Third space/Lived Space) between the powerful authorities, especially the state government (Kelanta) and Thai Siam for a long time. Thai Siam in the Bangkaew community (pseudonym) have struggled and demanded the ownership of temple land. Now, if we ask the state government (Kelantan) to help anything, we start from small issue such as building and funding, but they give us a small portion. We keep asking for assistance from the state government, but each issue took a long time. However, we had the opportunity and now we succeeded in request for the land 99% (Mr. Win, Interview, 25 May 2018) The struggle of Thai Siam people in the Bangkaew community (pseudonym) reflects the strategy of space scramble. They started with a request for a small budget followed by developing their ability until obtain the temple land ownership completely. The reason behind such scramble is their feeling and concern that the community might lose their temple. The temple is a spiritual center and reflects that the temple has become a space presented in a social operation or “Thainess” creation. We have built and lived with temple for hundred years. For example, our Pikulthong Temple was built about 500 years ago, but in the end the land we built was under control of the state government. It made us felt uncertainty. We had to have our own temple, we couldn’t live without temple. If Malay people had their mosque, we’d like to have temple and didn’t want anyone to occupy our land because if our temple was taken, we become homeless people. We could do nothing in our house fully. Until, we thought about how to request the land from the state government. I tried to do research and knew that the state monks were under the legitimate constitution, and they would have the rights over the legitimate temples. We talked to the state government. In fact, I think the state government has already known what the rights of monks is but we only knew from studying the Constitution of Malaysia (Uncle Yod, Interview, 1 May, 2018) Above interview reflects that the laws of Malaysia provide an opportunity for Thai Siam to have the right to negotiate, especially key religious

leaders to exercise the right to use the temple land. However, an interesting issue from the study in the community is after the constitution law allows this group to obtain the land rights, the villagers try to maintain the temple space by filling and defining a full meaning of temple space which is not only a spiritual center for the villagers, but many activities occur in the temple space. If we have activities in our land, they (the state government) cannot occupy our land we do activities there. Any day, we do not have activities, they occupy the land (Mr. Win, interview, 25 May 2018). Organizing religious activities are performed to ensure that temple becomes the space of social action (Third space/Lived space). These activities in the temple space reflects the determination or dividing of territories along with “Thainess” identity creation, especially local tradition. The author exemplifies the important tradition restored and reproduced in the community called “Wai Tong Tradition” “We still have Wai Tong tradition. It a spirit worship. Villagers jointly arrange this tradition every year. Now, only a few communities have this tradition. This is an ancient ritual. We use tube-shaped flags to worship the ancestral spirits and perform 3-round circumambulation. Brahmin shamans perform the Brahmin ritual, Manohra shaman perform its version and Monks also pray in the ritual. Then we take stuffs used in the ritual, for example, sprinkling polished rice from the ritual in our field for blessing and aphid prevention. (Village Chief Charoen, Interview, 14 April 2018) The struggle and negotiation are not to obtain the rights to temple land only, but they occupy and create a new meaning in the space, namely, jointly reproduction and restoration of Wai Tong tradition. The tradition is a local ritual of Thai Siam and used as a strategy in their struggle about the land. At the same time, organizing the community activity, Wai Tong tradition, reflects the dimension of political identity implemented in determining social and cultural territories. Therefore, houses and temples become the space of social action (Third space/Lived Space) by restoring the local rituals for creating “Thainess” identity of villagers. Background of restoration of the house front ritual and Wai Tong tradition is therefore the space appearing in both physical and imaginary space created and used as a tool for struggling, negotiating and reproducing their own identity among the existence of various nationalities and ethnic groups. The process of “Thainess” identity creation through local rituals accords with Selina Chan (1998, as cited in Thanawat Nithipanan, 2015, p. 147) who argued that the creation of identity of local groups uses the “Invented Tradition” and uses as a tool to struggle or protect themselves. Therefore, the invented tradition is what interpreted by the social members for continual history so that local people can use to negotiate for their social survival in the modern world.



Illustration 3 and 4: People gather to perform the Wai Tong Tradition

5.5 Road and Signal Movement of “Thainess” through Loi Krathong Tradition

Loi Krathong festival is a crucial tradition of Bangkaew community (pseudonym) which arranges the festival for a long time as other communities in Kelantan, but at the same time, the study found that the tradition is quite distinct and different from other traditions. If mentioned to Thai Siam’s Loi Krathong festival in Kelantan, people must think of this community. The distinction of this community is Loi Krathong festival. We are the first community who arranged the festival before other communities who copied and followed

our practice, but our festival is bigger. Now, tourists know and visit here every year (Mr. Win, Interview, 25 May 2018). Loi Krathong tradition does not only reflect an effort of the community to become the big venue to hold the festival and attract tourists, but the author found that under the tradition villagers have strategy to attract tourists to the festival. Also, the tradition is also an important strategy in struggle and negotiation. We use Loi Krathong festival in negotiation and driving for our survival. Loi Krathong, this year correspond to Thursday, according to the Thailand calendar but normally on Thursday, Islamic people will not organize festivals. However, we have already arranged once. We asked for permission from the Malaysian authorities after explained our festival to them. We argued that the festival had to be such day. We explained until they understood, and we invited the government senior officials to join so that they witnessed how this tradition was important to us. Finally, Loi Krathong tradition is listed in the government's tourism calendar. They tried to conserve the traditions of each nationals. The other (other communities) didn't negotiate with them but we could do that because we have been doing for a long time. (Mr. Win, Interview, 25 May 2018)The villagers' struggle and negotiation used Loi Krathong tradition to drive their demand until they have justified their existence in multicultural society and been accepted by the government officials. This case reflects the signs and myths created so that “others” including tourists and government officials accept and believe that Loi Krathong tradition is only a festive event which “others” cannot understand its specific target especially in struggle and negotiation for “Thainess” identity creation through Loi Krathong. The festival with hidden signs has the meaning and myths creation defining the social and cultural territories between “community villagers or us” and “others” who are outsiders. The signs used as a support tool in “Thainess” identity creation through Loi Krathong is borrowed from Thailand and adapted in such tradition. Our community are close to Thai border. So, we received many things including traditions such as Loi Krathong from Thailand and car parade ... In the past, the abbot visited Sukhothai Province and saw a car parade, so he brought this festival back here. In the car parade, we also have Miss Noppamas pageants performance after we saw in Thailand, but the show jus features the pageants performance, not a contest in Thailand. We also have animal statues pageant such as tiger, elephant, dragon, rat and turtle. We invent this pageant by ourselves to attract tourist because our festival is a state level festival (Kelantan).So we have to have something strange to show. (Mrs. Phorn, Interview 14 April 2018)



Illustration 5 and 6: Car Parade and Animal Statues in Loi Krathong Festival

According to above interview, the study found that “Thainess” identity creation through Loi Krathong tradition borrowed some elements from Thailand Loi Krathong tradition to integrate and create villagers’ “Thainess” identity. The elements shown the meaning signs in the tradition include car parade and Miss Noppamas. These are the “reproduction” process to convey the meaning of myths and signs of “Thainess” identity creation. At the same time, thinking and designing animal statues to attract visitors is producing more influences and awareness of other ethnic groups or even tourists.

However, the author found that the car parade also reflected the movement of “Thainess” identity creation flowing out of the community’s physical territory. It means Loi Krathong is different from other traditions which usually arranged within the space of house and temple, “our space or our territory” but Loi

Krathong tradition is organized as “movable” festival with car parade on the road outside the temple space. When the villagers organize movable activities or traditions outside the temple space, they have to receive permission to use space from government officials. In the early stage when we made parade car, we asked for permission from the district authorities. If we couldn’t get permission from district level, we asked for permission from the royal palace. We had to do this because if we would parade anything out of temple space in crowded place for example, Loi Krathong festival has car parade on the road outside temple space, we must ask for permission from government officials according to the law. (Uncle Yot, Interview, 14 April 2018) Holding Loi Krathong car parade reflects the “movement” of “Thainess” identity creation beyond the community’s physical territory. In the past, most villager rituals took place within the space of temple and house which are reproduced and mentioned in the community’s physical territory. At the same time, under the territory, active “Thainess” identity creation reflects the community identity through local rituals which rarely take place in other Thai Siam communities in Kelantan. The villagers in the community do not create “Thainess” identity within the community’s physical territory only, but it takes place in the physical space of the government territories namely the road outside the community. In this case, their identify performances are controlled by state laws or regulations. Remarkably, even the villagers acknowledge that identity performances of “Thainess” through the Loi Krathong tradition must be “movable” towards the community space outside and take place on the road space, which is the government territory, but the tradition is free from restriction or legal action. Even though it requires permission from the state authorities, the villagers have strategy in making Loi Krathong tradition as a festive tradition but the hidden background is to use this tradition as a tool to struggle and negotiate in order to create “Thainess” identity through the creation of signs and myths to conceal the truth until general public do not aware and become familiar with this nature finally. Therefore, “Thainess” identity creation of villagers in Bangkaew community (pseudonym) has appeared through local rituals and been defined to take place in “our space” regardless of the space of house or temple. At the same time, “Thainess” identity creation through the tradition outside the community territory defined as “movable” tradition reflects the flow of the territory to the identity creation in the space of road, which is the space under the lawful control of government officials. The tradition creates the hidden signs and myths to prevent government officials from knowing that Loi Krathong tradition is a process of struggle and negotiation on “Thainess” identity creation of villagers in the community.

6. Discussion

According to the research objectives and above data analysis, the discussion summed up as follows. In the analysis of the identity creation of Thai Siam people living Bangkaew community (pseudonym), the study found that the existence in pluralistic society of Thai Siam in Kelantan, Malaysia did not only cause this group to adapt for their living, but also their adaption presented the conditions of struggle, negotiation and scramble for “Thainess” creation. As considering their “Thainess” creation process of Thai Siam people living Bangkaew community (pseudonym), it was found that their identity adhered to “the other” that is the cultural signs or symbols borrowing of cross-border network, Thailand. Whereas, this borrowing was considered whether it was suitable for the context of Malaysia which belonged to other religion and culture as they prevented the loss of “Thainess” identity and preserved the identity of their own ethnic. Also, they had to consider which cultural signs or symbols to be chosen or borrowed for their “space” in order to enhance their distinction and make other group who belonged to other religion and culture understand and recognize Thai Siam people’s identity. In the analysis of the identity creation of Thai Siam people living Bangkaew community (pseudonym) as found in the three “spaces”, the results were found as follows.

1. The “house” space was not only the physical and residential space, but the house space was selected for “Thainess” identity creation through the house front worship since Thai Siam people in Kelantan, Malaysia believed in ritual of guardian or ancestor spirit worship. This was not different from Thai people in Thailand who erected a spirit house for worshipping guardian spirit and praying for house protection. However, interestingly, Thai Siam people did not prefer to have a spirit house and believed that every house had its own guardian spirit. The house front worship observed by every villager was not only

paying respect or worship of guardian spirit, but the ritual reflected their unity and identity creation. Significantly, the ritual was not performed in every house, but just one house was used and became the “space” of assembly for identity creation and public guardian spirit worship.

2. The “temple” space was not only the physical space, but it became the “space” of social action or “Thainess” identity creation through Wai Tong worship. Temple was key element in identity expression since temple was a center and spiritual anchor space of Thai Siam people greatly. Living in the environment with other religion and culture made “temple” became the “space” was available for these people to express their identity and perform religious activities the most. However, in the past, the temple failed to obtain its land ownership, so it was hard to perform any activities. The temple was the space which Thai Siam people had to scramble for with Malaysian authorities in order to obtain the land ownership. In the temple “space” scramble process, the ritual was used to create identity to evade the confrontation and dispute with the government authorities. The temple “space” was not only the space for identity creation of “Thainess” distinction through Wai Tong worship, the temple became the space of scramble so that the government authorities recognized that temple was important to Thai Siam while ensued that other ethnic groups understood that the temple was the center and spiritual anchor “space” of Thai Siam people.

3. The road “space” was not only the physical space for traveling or transportation, but the road was meaningful in “Thainess” identity expression through Loi Krathong tradition. It aimed to attract outsiders to understand the tradition. The road was the space making Loi Krathong tradition outstanding greatly. The signs and symbols decorated in car parade, Miss Noppamas and animal statues pageant were borrowed from Thailand to apply in the tradition as the hybrid identity process.

7. Summary

The research found that “Thainess” identity of Thai Siam in Bangkaew community (pseudonym) has been created through “space”, namely house, temple and road which are the physical spaces. Each space is not only an empty space or physical space, but identities found in every “space” consisted of combination from the cross-border social network in Thailand. However, the “original identity of group” found in “Thainess” identity restoration was existed as follows. Firstly, the house front worship was performed in the house “space”, so the house space became the “Thainess” identity restoration space which maintained the ritual of house front worship. Secondly, the “Thainess” identity restoration through the ritual of Wai Tong worship was performed in the temple “space”. It represented the land scramble between Thai Siam people and Malaysian authorities, in essence, to obtain the land ownership so that villagers could use the temple “space” to restore “Thainess” with the ritual of Wai Tong worship. Thirdly, “Thainess” identity creation with Loi Krathong tradition was performed in the road “space”. The road “space” use represented that Thai Siam people could negotiate with government authorities to have Loi Krathong tradition. This social action became the space of “Thainess” identity expression so that other groups belonged to other religion and culture understood the identity which Thai Siam people who managed to maintain and preserve even living under the rule of Malaysian government or in the pluralistic society.

Nevertheless, Bangkaew community (pseudonym) borrowed the cultural signs or symbols or so-called “the other” and used them in “Thainess” identity creation because its location located near Thailand boarder and its people interacted with Thai people in Thailand as usual. Accordingly, the identity creation found in the “space” was in various forms. The created identity was intentionally selected to happen in specific “space” for its distinction and ensuring strong existence of their identity in the pluralistic society.

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