



# *Journal of Arts & Humanities*

## Rationality in the Social Mobility Process of Vietnamese Thai

**Krishna Thongkaew<sup>1</sup>, Somsak Srisontisuk<sup>2</sup>, Viyouth Chamruspanth<sup>3</sup>**

### ABSTRACT

Rationality is employed in explaining actions in various contents. Researchers had argument that in the social mobility process content having the rationality in action of all processes. It can be said that rationality is a key part of social mobility process and leads to the solution of family problem. This paper aims to study the social mobility process of Vietnamese Thai family by undertaking the qualitative research. The data were collected through observation, life history, in-depth interview, group interview of 10 families from 4 provinces: Udon Thani, NongKhai, SakonNakhon and Nakhon Phanom. The contents were analyzed and its result was presented by the descriptive analysis.

The result found that the social mobility process of Vietnamese Thai people based on the rationality with three stages totally. Firstly, a practice for rationality followed by an abstract thinking and generalization; a disciplinable action, finally. The Vietnamese Thai has strict action and rationality so that it results in the upward mobility. On the other hand, family not being strict in rational action causes the downward mobility.

**Keywords:** Rationality, social action, Vietnamese Thai.

Available Online: 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.

This is an open access article under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License, 2015.

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen Province 40000, Email: Charyhistory@yahoo.com.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen Province 40000, Email: somsr4@kku.ac.th.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen Province 40000, Email: viycha@kku.ac.th.

## 1.0 Introduction

The social mobility is subject to the rationality. In the feudal system, there is also social class rationality such as intergenerational mobility transferred from father to children; governed by the social class (Rapeepat, 1969) intergenerational mobility with reason set out by Buddhism and sacrifice during state of war (Boonnak, 1985). In the following, an economic reason such as earning income and having properties emerged, Thai society has changed. Oversea Chinese people worked as a merchant before accumulated their funds and moved to the Bourgeoisie or Middle Class by the economic reason (Iewsriwong, 1982). In Modern Nation State, expansion overlooked rationality in family unit leading to the Social Mobility and having Individualism (Van den berg, 2011) and social network (Chamaratana, 2011). In social content (Platt, 2005), state agency (Rajarshi, 2010), private section (Theeravekin, 2011), community (Donsom, 2012) having gradual mobility, instant concentration and inadvertence (Chamaratana, 2011). Nevertheless, Social Mobility is always subject to the rationality.

According to the phenomenon, Vietnamese Thai people have changed their social status leading to social acceptance with social measurement namely Legitimate Power, Prestige and privilege (Thongkaew, Srisontisuk & Chamruspanth, 2014). The researchers assume that family has taught its member with rationality. Therefore, the researchers argue that “How does Social Mobility subject to the rationality?” which leads to research paper titled “Rationality in the social mobility process of Vietnamese Thai” under Max Weber’s thesis explaining the social action that has formats and processes to be considered by social fact having social relationship (Koser, 2004). The social action is a full consequence of rationality that is calculated by number mixed with practice and asceticism. The rationality combining with practice results in the abstract thinking (the idea type) which plays role in discipline and regulation so that such idea leads to action followed by continual action and regular behavior of people’s way of life or general (Wongyannawa, 2013). It summarizes as the Social Mobility that can explain a phenomenon of Vietnamese Thai people in three stages as follows: 1) Practice for rationality, 2) Abstract thinking and general and 3) Disciplinable action.

## 2.0 Methodology

In this paper, the researchers adopt an interpretation following the Weber thesis together with the qualitative research. The study, also, uses the case study approach including data collection via observation, personal history record and in-depth interview of major informants which are representatives of Vietnamese Thai people as amount of 32 families in order to capture data according to the research purpose. The researchers use the Weber thesis, 1) Practice for rationality, 2) Abstract thinking and general and 3) Disciplinable action, in interpreting the phenomenon of Vietnamese Thai people’s social mobility in Udon Thani, NongKhai, Sakon Nakhon and Nakhon Phanom provinces areas with key purpose of studying the Vietnamese Thai people’s social mobility process.

## 3.0 Result

Social Action’s approach of Weber explains the social mobility process caused by social relation (Weber, 1968) of Vietnamese Thai families. It concludes in the following process: 1) Practice for rationality, 2) Abstract thinking and general and 3) Disciplinable action. Subsequently, members of Vietnamese Thai families achieving the social mobility would be taught socially by their families through these processes.

### 3.01 Practice for rationality

#### 3.1.1 Rationality asceticism from Vietnamese Thai family

Vietnamese Thai Family in Thai society regards as a social institution whose family members have close relationship within their own families and which is an area that Thai state’s authorities approach decreasingly. In particular, their traditional beliefs in paying respect to Fatherland shrine, ancestor

shrine and President Ho Chi Minh's image that is compared as an immortal saint (Chiengkul, 2011) with teaching quote declaring that "Viet Thai than thien muon nam" meaning "Relation between Thai and Vietnamese people is prosperous extremely". Furthermore, some Vietnamese Thai people acknowledge that President Ho Chi Minh is "saint who practices impeccably" (Group interview with Mr. Kerm, Mr. Jin and Mr. Rat, 2013). This doctrine leads to teaching and practice of family leaders reasonably in order to be an ideal person for subsequent family members. For example, Vietnamese family conducts a ceremony called "PhukSiew" (Friendship Making) with Thai family for living with local people safely in Thailand (In-depth interview with Mr. Hung, 2013) and expresses their deep appreciation of Thailand providing them dwellings and chances in earning their livings so that they collect fund for supporting the Army of Vietnam in saving their country. Their families will be awarded bronze, silver and gold medals honorably (Life History of Mr. Ba, 2013). According to the examples, teaching based on belief and respect to shrine plays key role in compromising their thoughts into action. This is, in other words, the practice of family members reasonably which, ultimately, leads to the abstract thinking and generalization in next stage.

### 3.1.2 Rationality asceticism from Vietnamese language school

Around decade of the 1930s-1960s, Vietnamese children meeting school-age principle, mostly aged about 7 years old, had to attend a school provided by Thai authority during the day. Then, after returning from school, students would go to Vietnamese Language School taught by Vietnamese teachers by assembling 5 students into a group per one teacher at teacher's house. These teachers were a former student graduated at Prathom 6 (Grade 6) pursuant to principle of Vietnamese Language School (In-depth interview with Mr. Hung, 2013). Consequently, the education comprised of creating knowledge like mathematics because there were purpose stating that all Vietnamese people needed to gain knowledge concerning calculation so that they could apply in business and earning their living. Another reason was they were obstructed by Thai authority to serve in government service. The mathematics was the first subject to study in Prathom 1 (Grade 1) and teach in every class through Prathom 6, (In-depth interview with Mr. Hung, 2013) "...Vietnamese Language School identifies the mathematics as the first priority because teacher told that math can makes us do business...". (Life history of Ms. Hai, 2013) Learning mathematics gave Vietnamese people a reasonable calculation skill, especially reasonable commercial judgment according to interview with Miss Lay as quoted that "Due to having good calculation skill, every time I go to anywhere, I always think and calculate about small investment all the time, for example if I buy this and change its packaging, I could make more profit..." (In-depth interview Miss Lay, 2014). However, rationality education, currently, was a responsibility of family solely due to an end of Vietnamese Language School that once taught covertly. Education format has changed namely, the old education was provided by their family but, for the new one, family assigned members to plan and perform education by themselves because family believed that member had already had enough knowledge (In-depth interview with Mr. Tein, 2013). This Rationality from Education of Vietnamese Language School phenomenon contributed to the abstract thinking and general in next stage.

Nevertheless, as for family not receiving the rationality practice from their family or Vietnamese Language School like family of Kai Oer Lay (Assumed Name) caused a Downward Mobility because this family did not have the rationality education and grandpa's house did not have the land shrine and behaved their walk of lives like ordinary Thai people.

As grandpa is an adopted child of a chief district officer and amassed Legitimate Power in charismatic authority with his hard working, economy and patience characteristics that brought about creating family status having business. Funds made family proud of prestige and fame recognized by people; privilege in government service and business fields gave them access to knowledge in the government service and business systems (Kai Oer Lay, 2013). As compared to Kai Oer Lay's family persevered until accessed to the government service field and brought about prestige from government service structure, an outer structure. It also included family's privilege only from the government service field.

In conclusion, it found that Kai Oer Lay's family not receiving the rationality practice experienced the Downward Mobility, accordingly.

### 3.02 Abstract thinking and general

#### 3.2.1 Abstract thinking of Vietnamese Thai

Subject to Weber thesis, part of abstract thinking element was developed from individual base that had chance, time and practice and conducting penance until rationality emerged (Wongyannawa, 2013) but Vietnamese Thais had developed until it performed duty in connecting family. (Thongkaew, Srisontisuk & Chamruspanth, 2014). Since they had been born, but Vietnamese Thais had been educated by their families with the doctrine from the Fatherland shrine (1947-1957) brought philosophical teaching of Confucianism mixed with President Ho Chi Minh's teaching. The teaching has 4 directions: top, right, left and down of the shrine and Vietnam national flag together with President Ho Chi Minh's image are displaying within the shrine. Nevertheless, a teaching affected in family level was teaching engraved on the left sidethat "Can Kiem Liem Chinh" meaning "diligence, economy, honesty, virtue" (Srijampa, 2005). These terms could be clarified as follows: the "diligence" term means work all the right jobs, work all jobs for earning the right money (Life History of Mr. Ba, 2013). The "economy" term means know how to spend and save money. Vietnamese people divide money into 3 parts: first part was a permanent saving, second part was a reserved saving for emergency case, if not, it would be put in the first part. Third part is spending in (Charoenrath, 2008). The "honesty" term refers to keeping truthfulness towards family members, neighbors and customers. If promised, it shall be fulfilled (Life History of Mr. Ba, 2013) and the "virtue" term means they live and die for making advantage and merits for common interest such as helping their neighbor. Consequently, Vietnamese Thais' abstract thinking would be reproduced always, in particular, in Tết (Vietnamese New Year) festival, Buddhist Lent and other important days (Life history of Mr. Lok, 2013).

Moreover, an ancestor veneration ceremony accorded with a Vietnamese Joss House including Dai Vuong temple located at Village No. 5, Najok village, NongYat sub-district, Meuang district, Nakhon Phanom province. Found in 1898, the temple has been respected by Vietnamese Thai from past until now in Thai society. Dai Vuong temple arranges 3 ceremonies: Tết festival, Buddhist Lent and Kae Bon (vow to god fulfillment) ceremony (Life history of Mr. Lok, 2013). Consistency of action during ceremonies related to Vietnamese Thai family because these 3 ceremonies would occur as most of family members attended the sacred rite. In other words, it was an assembly of relatives. Occasionally, some members did not show up at the ceremonies due to working or studying abroad. Currently, reproduction of Vietnamese Thais' abstract thinking would not depend on the land shrine anymore, but the first and second Vietnamese generations have still remembered this mindset and showed, frequently, a dissatisfy at failing to carry down and educate their descendants. However, as for the most important factor in education, Vietnamese Thais did not regarded as the education but their ideal actions.

#### 3.2.2 General of Vietnamese Thai

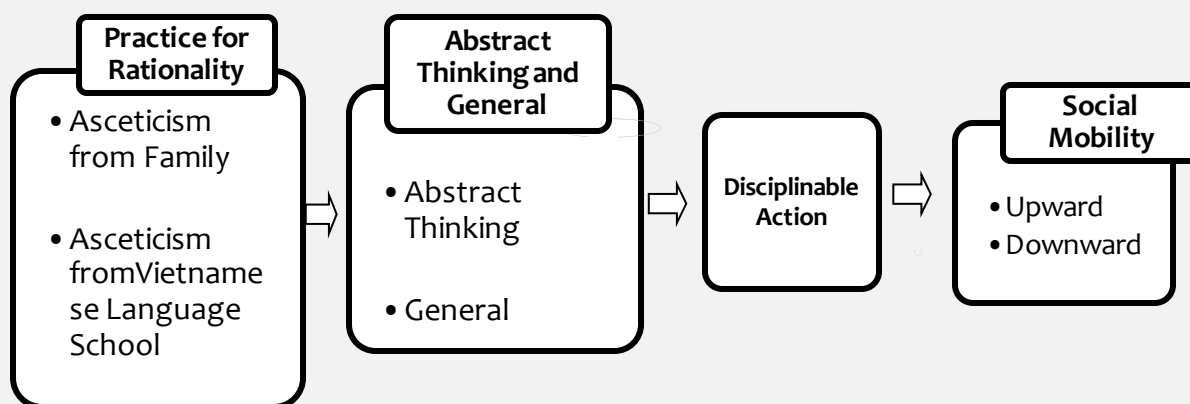
General of Vietnamese Thai is a continual action aiming to mode of production and repeated business until it became their way of lives. In the past, Thai authority controlled and governed the social status of Vietnamese Thais, for example prohibited from various occupations except business and being employee. In consequence, set of abstract thinking had been educated leading to way of business and being employee mostly. Irrespective of any activities of family members, in their daily lives, it related to production and business. "...Vietnamese must work for family. It differed from Laotian Thais such as playing with friend; Vietnamese has to look after younger brother/sister at the same time. Another case, Vietnamese friend must work hard and practice doing business by selling things at school for earning more income. That is a practice for business skill..." (In-depth interview with Mr. Pis, 2013). According to Mr. Pis and Miss Ley's families, it found that generalization characteristics of Vietnamese Thai could be described that activities or works educated Vietnamese children was rationality set

explained distinctly. They had to wake up early to help family members, fulfill duty- even went out to play but needed to look after younger brother/sister. This was because all members had been educated with abstract teaching that idle was prohibited until it became part of way of lives purposely. Weber said that performing any action purposely called “Behavior” having reason and action clearly (Koser, 2004). According to above statement, playing with friends was unreasonable and purposeless, so children had to look after their brother/sister while playing. This set of abstract thinking was a reasonable and purposed action. As analyzed destination of Vietnamese Thais’ actions and behaviors, it found result in economic issue. Annexing reasonable action and general way of lives of Vietnamese people were one process leading to a disciplinable action in next stage.

### 3.2.3 Disciplinable action of Vietnamese Thai

Disciplinable Action of Vietnamese Thai People is a regulation needed to follow by strictly. Even no one enforces, we must force ourselves to follow the rule because we have been trained since we were a child. Diligence, economy and patience are in our blood (in-depth interview with Mr. Lame, 2014) because education by behaving as an ideal person of parent makes children remember struggle in their lives. In Vietnamese discipline, there was a foresight and numerical calculation working all the times, so Vietnamese people could calculate cost, profit and profit speculation effectively. One of remarkably powerful discipline was “if you want to do something, you need to reconsider and ask family members before” at least 3 days. This rule was passed on all second generation of Vietnamese Thais and current generation has still respect this rule. (Group interview with Mr. Dow, Mr. Rut and Mrs. Din, 2014). Moreover, there were traditional rule in arranging President Ho Chi Minh’s birthday anniversary and National Day. These activities were organized officially, had a concrete target and crated discipline for family members through generations. However, as descendants attended into an education institute of Thai society, discipline maintained by first and second generations of Vietnamese Thais had been ignored partially in third generation and fourth generation during child and adolescent years. Still, after they had their own family, discipline on purchase consideration had been kept. The discipline came from basis of rationality, worthiness and profit speculation. If the discipline resulted in the most valuable decision, Vietnamese Thais brought this approach back to apply as they had their own family that differed from being member of primary family with less responsibility (Group interview with Mr. Dow, Mr. Rut and Mrs. Din, 2014). According to this phenomenon, it found that family structure had various approaches including performing as ideal person and resolution agreed by family were instrument in creating and keeping discipline that family members had to comply with. Expectation of this structure was subject to basis of diligence, economy and patience.

**Illustration:** Social mobility of Vietnamese Thai family





#### 4.0 Conclusion and discussion

The social Mobility of Vietnamese Thai family has three major stages as follows: in first stage is the practice for rationality from family and Vietnamese Language School. Vietnamese Thai family intends to provide numeric calculation skill through the doctrine in the land shrine, partly thanks to occupation controlled by Thai authority. Second stage is the abstract thinking and generalization stating continual thought and ideal action in daily lives constantly such as ideal thought about diligence, economy and patience displaying in daily lives. Final stage is the disciplinable action that family performs as an ideal and causes disciplinable succession to family members. Consequently, Vietnamese Thai family who has strict and reasonable actions in all processes comes up with result in their upward Social Mobility. Meanwhile, the family who does not pay attention to reasonable actions receives result in their downward Social Mobility as compared to parent family generation.

The process of social mobility is subject to the rationality. The study found that all actions have its reason occurs in all processes such as diligence, economy and patience the people perform continually for purpose of social mobility. Intended action, continual working and great patience are causes of Vietnamese Thai family's more fortune. Their action dividing money into three parts for saving and reserved fund results in the most effective financial management. Disciplinable action with concrete goal, trying their best by themselves and social patience, also, are the rationality causing the social mobility. Above rationality of Vietnamese Thai family show image of Weber's action thesis comprising of purpose, process, meaning, value and habituation of long practice (Weber, 1968). Accordingly, Vietnamese Thai family setting their social mobility goal practices themselves and family members to have rationality in all actions. Lastly, the results can be applied in policy in order to improve quality of living of the people. Amongst unpredictable changes in modern word, people have to adjust themselves hardly to live in new circumstances. Family's instruction will be an important part to take people get through the problems. Therefore, it is necessary for governmental agencies to contribute family unit to instruct family members with the right guideline.

#### Reference

- Ba, Mr. (Assumed Name). (2013, December 19). Life History. Nong Khai Province.
- Boonnak. P. (1985). Analysis of Social Mobility in Thai Society in 1781-1850. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University.
- Burudphat, Kachadpai. (1983). Ethnics Group in Thailand and the Security of Nation. Bangkok: Phrae Pittaya.
- Charoenrath, Teerawuth. (2008). How to raise a child like the Viet Kieu in Thailand. Nakornsawan: Rim Ping.
- Cheangkurn, Witayakron. (2011). Ho Chi Minh: mans of the oppressor. Bangkok: Sry Thotean.
- Chuan, Mr. (Assumed Name). (2013, December 21). Life History. Udon Thani Province.
- Coser, A. Lewis. (1971). World of Philosophy. Translated by Karngapan Angkopg and Others. Bangkok: Sa Tha ban Vi Tei Touch.
- Dao, Mr. Assumed Name). (2013, September 20). Life History. Nakhon Phanom Province.
- Donsom. C. (2012). Identity Construction of Thai-Vietnamese Ethnics in Nachok Village. Khon Kaen: Center for Research on Plurality in the Mekong Region Khon Kaen University.
- Gam, Jin & Rat, Mr. (Assumed Name). (2013, August 22). Group Interview. The Viet Nam Association in Udon Thani.
- Hai, Ms. (Assumed Name). (2013, December 19) Life History. Vietnmese Thais in Nong Khai Province.
- Hung, Mr. (Assumed Name). (2013, August 21). Life History. Udon Thani Province.
- Iewsriwong. N. (1982). Bourgeois Culture and Novels in Rattanakosin Regime. Thammasart, 11 (1): -35-50.
- Kai Oer Ley, Mrs. (Assumed Name). (2013, August 26). Indepth Interview. Province.

- Kuvinpan. P. (1983). Research Report "Social Stratification in Bangkok". Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University.
- Lame, Mr. (Assumed Name). (2013, September 13). Life History. Sakon Nakhon Province
- Lok, Mr. (Assumed Name). (2013, August 20). Life History. Nakhon Phanom Province.
- Majumber, Rajarshi. (2010). "Intergenerational Mobility in education and Occupational Attainment: A Comparative study of Social Class in India," *Margin: The Journal of Applied Economic Research*. 4(4):463-494.
- Pit, Mr. (Assumed Name). (2013, June 13) Life History. Nakhon Phanom Province.
- Platt, Lucinda. (2005) "The Intergenerational Social Mobility of Minority Ethnic group" *Sociology*. 39(3): 445-461.
- Rapeepat. A. (1969). *Thai Society in Rattanakosin Regime in 1781–1872*. Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Projects.
- Srichampa, Sophana. (2005). *Encyclopedia ethnic groups in Vietnam*. Nakhonprathom: Mahidon.
- Sripana, Thanyathip & Trinh Dieu Thin. (2005). *Viet Kieu in Thailand in Thai–Vietnamese Relationship*. BKK: Chulalongkorn Press.
- Thanapauge, Chamaratana, (2011). *Social Network Construction of ISAN Labor Brokers*. Thesis in Sociology. Khon Kaen University.
- Thongkaew, Krishna Srisontisuk, Somsak. & Chamruspanth, Viyouth. (January-April, 2014). "Viet Kieu families and the pattern of social mobility in Thai society", *KKU International Journal of Humanities and Social sciences*. 4(1): 44-61.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (June – December, 2014). "Viet kieu: Family mobility based on the motherland shrine", *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. 6(2): 157-174.
- Tien, Mr. (Assumed Name). (2013, August 27). Life History. Politician of Nong Khai Province.
- Van den berg, Marguerite. (2011). "Subjective Social Mobility: Definitions and expectations of 'moving up' of poor Moroccan women in the Netherlands," *International Sociology*. 26(4): 503-523.
- Weber, Max. (1968). *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. Translated by A.M. Henderson and Talcolt Parsns. London: The Free Press.
- Wongyannawa, Tanae. (2013). *Max Weber: the path of asceticism and political career*. Bangkok: Siam.