

学位論文の要旨 (論文の内容の要旨)
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Revitalization of Tradition through Social Media: A Case of the Vegetarian Festival in Phuket, Thailand

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In the contemporary world, social media has been increasingly used as an indispensable tool for information sharing and communication. Its ubiquitous use has not only resulted in the effective exchange of information but has also begun to affect the way in which people practice “traditional culture.” Especially, the dissemination of novel ideas and knowledge through social media had enabled the transformation of local traditional culture. This study deals squarely with such interaction between social media and local cultural tradition. By focusing on the case of the Vegetarian Festival in Phuket, Thailand, it discusses how social media has influenced the reconfiguration of this local tradition. Furthermore, it argues that social media has created a space where it has become possible to observe the contestation between a hegemonic institution and subordinated people in regard to the origin, significance, and authenticity of the festival. In this way, it is conceivable to examine social media as a space for counterpublics (Fraser, 1996), where the subordinated groups of people communicate their own views and interpretations on their local tradition vis-à-vis the hegemonic narratives of a local authority.

The case in this study is the Vegetarian Festival conducted in Phuket, Thailand. This Festival has been promoted as the largest touristic event in locality since the Tourism industry became main business domain in Phuket in the 1990s. Chinese descendants whose ancestors migrated from Fujian, China, received opportunity to strengthen their Chinese identity which had been oppressed in the era of Thai nationalism. Moreover, only some dominant groups who are believed to be knowledgeable persons have chance to clarify what is the authentic Vegetarian Festival of Phuket. The master narrative which explains a history of the Festival has been published by Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) as a result. Such narrative gives privilege to Phuket dominant shrines where various regulations are created in order to preserve the Festival. The shrine members whose practices are not in congruent with such regulations become excluded from the public sphere of dominant shrines. They become subordinates who choose to use social media as counterpublics, and strive to revitalize the Festival following their beliefs.

This research analyzes the factors which influence the process of revitalization of tradition. At the beginning of the revitalization process, the counter narratives have been proposed by younger generations who have questioned the authenticity of Phuket dominant shrines. They discover various resources written in Chinese language which deliberately describe the practices of the Vegetarian Festival as Taoism; however, the dominant shrines’ members rejected the practices of such Taoism since it is not congruent with the merit system (*bun*) of Theravada Buddhism which has been regarded as a civic religion of Thailand (Chapter 2). In order to preserve the tradition, the master narrative and regulations of dominant shrines are emphasized by many shrine-committee members who have authority to certify such narrative. The younger generations, however, still have a strong belief in Taoist knowledge (Chapter3) endowing devotees with prosperity; they choose to challenge the dominant shrine’s traditions for this reason. Younger generations seemingly have opportunity to exhibit their Taoist knowledge in some minor shrines. However, dominant shrine committee can still enforce most Phuket shrines to follow the regulations since such shrines have to register with the Chinese Shrine Club if

they want to conduct the Festival (Chapter 4). Consequently, various groups of *mah-songs* and *huatkuas* are excluded from the public sphere of dominant shrines, and become subordinates (Chapter 5). The social media then is used as counterpublics, a venue where subordinates can freely disseminate their counter narratives (Chapter 6). They construct a relationship, and expand their network among friends in order to exchange resources which are needed for maintaining their practices without a support from the dominant shrines (Chapter 7). Their practices become diversified in private sphere like house altars, and eventually influence the practices of the Phuket Vegetarian Festival (Chapter 8).

In summary, in the case of counterpublics, subordinates excluded from the dominant shrines are able to strengthen their ties and maintain their activities through the use of social media. The belief in shamanic practices flourished from the 1990s when tourism industry was introduced to Phuket. The Vegetarian Festival has been changed by the advent of modern economy which reduced the role of religious institutions. The religious belief, however, was combined with economic activities and becomes a popular religion, widely practiced as a way to receive prosperity (Kitiarsa, 2012, p. 31). The emergence of monetary system transforms the process of exchange between devotees and Phuket shrines. Conduct of the Vegetarian Festival promotes a particular name of a shrine in the public, entailing a donation from the devotees, which is then used to maintain the religious activities and renovate the buildings. The number of Phuket shrines increased from 13 shrines in the 1990s to 49 shrines in 2017. Out of these, 21 opted to conduct the Festival and consequently needed a great number of *mah-songs* since the *mah-songs* are intermediaries between the Chinese deities and the devotees. Devotees normally make a donation to a shrine if they have the opportunity to communicate with the deities they believe in. Thus, the growth of the Vegetarian Festival and increasing number of shrines and *mah-song* are coherent.

In particular, the social media plays the important role of circulating the practices of the subordinates. The practices of *huatkuas* and *mah-songs* have been gradually changed since 2005 when the website vegetarianfestival.com was initially established and the social media was the venue where the people are able to exchange their knowledge about the shamanic cults. Through the use of social media, new meaning and function of tradition were created as follows: Firstly, the younger generations strived to separate the pure Taoism from Buddhism by promoting the Taoist doctrine via social media wherein the practices of pure Taoism disregard the *bun* system of the Theravada Buddhism. Next, through the dissemination of pure Taoism information, the practice of the Vegetarian Festival is perceived as a way to bestow prosperity, luck, and longevity rather than to accumulate merit (*bun*) in the concept of Theravada Buddhism. Lastly, the religious practices circulating in Phuket were then considered as unorthodox.

Using the social media influenced a change in the Festival in the private sphere like the house altars rather than in the public sphere of the dominant shrines. The devotees can directly access the divine power of the Chinese deities through a shamanic ritual conducted in the house altars without the need of the support from the shrines. This phenomenon is referred to as “privatization of religion” (Giddens and Sutton 2013, 728) and “desecularization” (Berger 1999), in which a belief in religion becomes flourished but the roles of religious institutions have been decreased. Due to globalization, devotees tend to expose their religious belief as a local identity against the homogenization of cultures. People want to find their particular role in their religious communities owing to the need of establishing a self-identity such as a *mah-song*, a *huatkua*, a companion, or a devotee.

The social media then becomes not only an online venue where subordinates gather in groups but also a place where necessary resources such as financial support, voluntarily labor, and knowledge can be exchanged. It becomes the main mechanism for the revitalization process by empowering subordinates with the opportunity to maintain their practices without the support from the dominant shrines. Through the online communication, relationships among subordinates are greatly strengthened both in the social media and in the house altars, where participants usually gather and practice conducting the shamanic ritual. As a result, the duration of the Vegetarian Festival is expanded from 9 days to a whole year and the tradition of the Vegetarian Festival is transformed into pure Taoism highlighting the role of the *mah-song* and is recognized as a way to receive prosperity rather than a doctrine of making-merit following the foundation of the Theravada Buddhism.