

Name : **Chutima Sidasathian**
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(บทชาติพันธุ์วรรณาชาวโรฮิงญาในบริบทสังคม การเมือง และวัฒนธรรมไทย-เอเชีย)
Affiliation : **Doctoral Program in Asian Studies, School of Liberal Arts, Walailak University, Southern Thailand**

Abstract

This research proposes to study the Rohingya community, an ethnic group living in what was formerly known as Arakan State, but is now known as Rakhine State of the Union of Myanmar, located in the northwest of the country. The aim of this research is to study the way of life of the Rohingya in the context of Thai-Asian politics and culture by putting emphasis on how the community inherits and formulates its identity in the context of its interaction with Thai society. This includes the creation of their network and social capital to survive in the multi-cultural Thai-Asian societies.

One of the most important results of my research is that the Rohingya's economic behavior indicates significantly their involvements in self-employed business. Choosing to be small business owners is consistent with traditional Rohingya's way of life. This results in a good qualitative interaction according to the Rohingya's global perspective and is consistent with other consequent lifestyle processes in Thai society. Rohingya settle in Thailand are getting part of Thai society, gaining sufficient economic benefits for a certain level of happiness and the creation of social values.

The researcher has studied Rohingya living in Thailand continuously from 2008 until now (2012) which has resulted in a much better understanding of the global perspective of the Rohingya cultural group and the Rohingya community than the one which is reflected by the distant perception of Thai authorities. The result of this anthropological survey suggests that the Rohingya community is a Muslim society with an ascetic, peaceful lifestyle, piously adhering to Islamic practices and preserving their ethnic identity, posing no social threat and no challenge to national security. Although the Rohingya's unwelcome migration has yet to be stemmed either in Thailand or the wider Asian region, the result of the case study in Thailand points towards a more meaningful response based on the respect for human dignity and basic human rights. An adequate assurance from Asian countries should offer a solution to the Rohingya that can both maintain their dignity and also convey the civilization of the 21st century to Thailand and ASEAN countries.