

# The Prototype of the Community for Urbanization Development: A Case Study at Sam Sen Riverside Community, Dusit District, Bangkok

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**Abstract**—The research paper on “The Prototype of the Community for Urbanization Development: A Case Study at Sam Sen Riverside Community, Dusit District, Bangkok” is aimed at 1) the study of changing conditions based on economic, social and ways of life factors of the long-lasting Sam Sen Riverside Community, and 2) the study of the participation of people in the community toward the physical geography management and land usage of the Crown Property Bureau. The qualitative approach is a major tool in the research while the quantitative data is also appreciated. This community, where most of its habitants are poor, is in grave danger and appears to be deteriorating. Helps are needed in the forms of housing restoration, the income generation, and the development of express-boat port. Health and sanitation of people in the community as well as fire protection are also among those top priority helping-efforts.

**Index Terms**—the prototype of the community, the urbanization

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the area of Dusit District, Bangkok, there are many informal communities both old and new that have been formed and developed before the proclamation of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Act B.E. 2528 scattering around in the area. In case of the old communities, there are evidences that some of them can possibly utilize their own heritage in terms of economic, social, and indigenous cultural perspectives to strengthen the community in order to survive and the others that seem to lack their necessary characters in order to be prosperous [1]. The Sam Sen Riverside Community is in grave danger and falls into the deteriorating stage. The community is in the great need to be restored to regain its brilliant past as an ancient community.

The Sam Sen Riverside Community is located by the Chao Praya River in the west, where Samsen canal, Sukhothai Palace, and Prasat Bunyawat Temple are in the east. The community conjoins the private property in the

north and faces with Kuakarun College (or Navamindradhiraj University) in the south. The only exit of the community is on Samsen road. The community itself cannot expand due to the most important buildings that surround its exact physical location. This community is the first pilot community that the Crown Property Bureau manages to have “Ban Mon Kong” Project (Stable Housing) in which those who have lived in the community for at least a year can participate into the program. The program asks for a monthly deposit of at least a hundred baht from the participants. And when those particular participants can save up to 20,000 baht, he or she will be entitled to ask for a loan from the project of not more than 200,000 baht in order to restore and/or to build his or her new houses. Meanwhile, the community committee has been trying to cooperate with the Bangkok Metropolitan Office in order to build the express-boat port in the area to increase the number of commuters passing through the area in the hope that the community will be “reborn” again. At present, the community experiences

1. The decaying physical environment due to the bad condition of dilapidated wooden houses and building. This condition is not only unpleasant to the eyes but also makes the whole area unfit to dwell.

2. There are new dwellers who come to live in the community because of the low renting rate and the ease of communication.

3. There are a lot of senior populations living in the area. These people have meager or no income at all. They live here for a long time and have no desire to go to live anywhere else.

4. The community is prone to health problems and the possibility of fire. There are building constructions in the area which produce lots of dust. On top of that, there is migration of foreigners, say Burmese, Indian, Khmer and Easterner Thai people who cannot be verified about their health records. The community also experiences drainage floods in some of its areas where they could be sources of mosquito breeding and other diseases.

Based on the above mentioned problems, the people in the community saw that:

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1. The physical environment of the community has been changed due to the passing of time. There is hardly any recognition of the ancient prosperity left in the area. People just live day by day with doubt whether they are able to bring back the glorious past.

2. The economic conditions in the community have been changed. In the past, Sam Sen Community was considered as one of the major waterway business centers in the country since the World War II (B.E. 2484-2488) had ended. After that, the community has entered in the stage of decline up until now in which there is no trace of those golden periods.

From the above incident, the community environment has been changed because of the disappearance of commercial activities or being known as capitalism. With the high competition in the capital, ways of life of those who live in Bangkok have changed also. It is clear that economics, ways of life and/or culture have all contributed to the problems of the community. As the time passes by, these problems become accumulated, and to make the matter worse, there is no solid solution about the future plan of the community. All of these problems will definitely have a great impact on the future of people who live in the community and the community as a whole [2]. However, after the field-trip into the community, it is found that:

1. Some of the people still have hope for being eligible to live in new houses in the community provided by the Crown Property Bureau.

2. The hope that the community will have an express-boat port which is expected to boost up the economic activities in the area. This proposal has been already submitted to the responsible authority.

Even, the above expectations seem likely possible and they ignite the precious hope of the people in the area but there is still no mention about the splendid past of the community. How the community can connect its past to the present and how the community can, not only to survive but also have a bright future of its existence as a part of prestigious community in the Bangkok Metropolitan area. These are the interesting questions that are worth studying. Thus, the researcher is proud to present the research entitled "The Prototype of the Community for Urbanization Development: A Case Study at Sam Sen Riverside Community, Dusit District, Bangkok"

## II. OBJECTIVES

1. To study the changing conditions based on economic, social and ways of life factors of the long-lasting Sam Sen Riverside Community.

2. To study the participation of the people in the community toward the physical management and land usage of the Crown Property Bureau.

## III. METHODOLOGY

This research applies qualitative method to collect and analyze the data. The quantitative data is also utilized to support the data analysis. The methodology used includes:

1. The study of related documents pertaining to history and anthropology of the community formation including the evolution of the community starting from the first stage of formation, its peak, maturity and finally declining periods.

2. The in-depth interview with 10 individuals who are of at least 50 years old and were born into the area.

3. The participated observation of the researcher during the year 2013-2014.

4. The focus-group discussion of those who live in the areas with vivid memory about the community.

5. The in-depth interview with those who were considered as the prominent and/or interesting figures/players in the community. These individuals include Dusit district councilor, community leaders, both in the past and present, the abbot of the Prasatboonyawat Temple, Hindu people, and Indian people.

6. The direct participation in the academic services rendered to the community in the fiscal year of 2014 totaling 14 projects.

From the research, it is found that:

1. Most of the people in the community are senile people. These people however are considered as very reliable informers, with their vivid memory, they can track down each individual incident that had happened in the community in terms of physical environment, economic conditions, social phenomenon as well as the traditional culture of the community without disruption. This information can be used to cross check with the available data in order to draw the true-to-life picture of the community since the prosperous period up until its doom day. The data definitely help to discover the true identity of the community.

2. The community in the past is considered quite a small community in the sense that everybody knows each other well and this also means each other's background.

3. People in the community are satisfied and have the intention to stay in the area since they have no plan and/or preparation to move to live anywhere else. The community not only has provided safety for the people who live in the area but also served as a very convenient location to travel to any destination in Bangkok. The community neighbourhood is quite peaceful and kind and is willing to participate in any type of activity organized by the community. Despite the interracial differentiation, people in Sam Sen Riverside Community can depend on each other and live together happily.

## IV. FINDINGS

From the data analysis, it can be described according to the research's objectives set at the beginning of the study that:

1. The changing conditions based on economic, social and ways of life factors of the long-lasting Sam Sen Riverside Community, Dusit District, Bangkok;

1.1 Historical dimension: There is no formal written record of the community settlement. However, it is plausible to rely on the tale-tell or myth of the name "Sam Sen" in which a Buddha image was found in the canal and it really took 300,000 (it pronounces "sam sen")

in Thai language) people to rescue the Buddha image out from the river. As a result, the word “sam sen” becomes a topographical term to describe the area. Moreover, the study of Thai history during the third reign of Chakri dynasty, the king granted the land to build monasteries for Vietnamese and Khmer people at Baan Yuan area. There are also data concerning the restoration of Buddhist temples such as Ma Kwit (Prasat Bunyawat temple) temple, Som Kliang temple, and Ratchapha Tikaram Worawihan temple to fit for the monk to perform their religious ceremony and for the general people to reside [3].

The settlement data becomes clearer during the reign of King Mongkot when he was ordained at Wat Samorai (Rachathiwas Temple) where there was a trace of people living in the community [4]. On top of that, the available data about the royal audience of Jean-Baptiste Pallegoix with King Monkot in 1852 supports the settlement of the community living in the areas next to Sam Sen location. The data obtained from the anthropological study reveals that there is a Chinese settlement during the dredge up of Klong Phadung Krung Kasem in 1851 in Thewet area. In the reign of King Rama the 5<sup>th</sup>, Chinese population was allowed to live in the areas of Sam Sen which belonged to the Crown Property Bureau. Back then, most of the transportation especially commercial routes utilized Sam Sen canal that connected to Chao Praya River, therefore, Sam Sen area became one of the most important communication centers during the World War II and/or 25<sup>th</sup> Buddhist century.

1.2 According to the anthropological discovery, it is found that the Chinese population in the Sam Sen community is Teochew and Hainan. Each individual group is equipped with different knowledge and skills and invests their share of expertise in various businesses, for instance, sawmill, shipyard and other dependable and/or related businesses. As a result, Sam Sen area becomes the commercial transportation center where commercial boats paddling from Phosanulok, Sukhothai, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya staffed with paddy, rice, sand and charcoal to sell in Bangkok. These trading activities create inevitable participation and cooperation of people living in the area despite of their racial differences.

1.3 The social and cultural dimension: The Chinese population once they have achieved the strong settlement, they built Tee Kong Shrine under the bodhi tree to protect the whole location of the community and to bless everyone in the community let's say factory workers, labourers, and all merchants. As for the Buddhists, Wat (temple) Prasatbunyawat is the center for conducting religious ceremony and experiencing spiritual confinement. People in this particular Sam Sen community had a closed-relationship with the the Sukhothai Palace since the reign of King Rama the 7<sup>th</sup> and Queen Rambhai Barni. At present, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn and, his royal consort, Her Royal Highness Princess Sri Rasmi, graciously reside in the Sukhothai Palace. Their Royal Highnesses gave away life-sustaining materials to the people in the community during the big flood in Bangkok

a few years ago. Besides, they also give their fullest support to Prasatbunyawat Temple in order to provide necessary education for the Buddhist monks. This kind of relationship creates a special type of bond uniquely known as “Baan,” “Wat,” and “Wong (resident, temple, and palace).”

Baan or house means the relationship among those who live alongside of the Chao Praya River and the travelers who come to trade their commodities. In the past, people in the community would conduct businesses in order to serve the tug-boat owners, for instance, fuel, food, coffee, various commodities including rice. For the boat people, they would provide major products like, paddy, rice, charcoal, and sand. The expenses for the use of utilities such as electricity and water would be charged in a friendly manner. As the time passes by and the waterways becomes obsolete, the boat people disappear leaving the very one last boat in the area in which it belongs to aunty Pen or being known as Pen's boat. This boat is now served as a resident for its owner. The boat people also brought with them the noodle selling method and recipe called boat-noodle or Kuey Teow Ruar.

Wat or temple refers to Prasatbunyawat Temple which represents as a spiritual center for both Buddhist and Hindu people. The consecrated precinct of a temple is used for organizing various sacred ceremonies such as alms-giving activity and/or other auspicious ceremonies.

Wong or palace means Sukhothai Palace which holds a strong connection with the community. First, in the past, the area behind the palace was a playground for children in the neighborhood and served as a short-cut to Si Yan market. The royal entourage conduct their businesses in the community market. People in the community are well aware of the royal patronage of King Rama the 7<sup>th</sup> and Queen Rambhai Barni. At present, people in the community are allowed to live in the area that belongs to the Crown Property Bureau. On top of that, they also continuously receive royal support from His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn and Her Royal Highness Princess Sri Rasmi whenever they graciously pay their royal visit to the community.

2. The participation of people in the community toward the physical geography management and land usage of the Crown Property Bureau.

2.1 The Stable Housing Project was organized by the Saving Committee, Sam Sen Riverside Community, in 2005 with the bold objective to provide permanent resident to the people living the area. People who have lived in the community for at least a year can deposit a certain amount of money every month into the community saving account called Sam Sen Community Saving Account. This saving money gives the depositors the right to be eligible to ask for the loan to build and/or restore their residents. There are two types of deposits and it is mandatory to the members to make those two. First, people must save the money by buying stocks. The stock price is 10 baht. A minimum of one stock must be bought every month in order to maintain the membership of the program. Second, it is known as the accumulated saving. The members of the program put a certain amount

of money of at least 100 baht every month into his or her saving account. When the member can save up to 20,000 baht he or she will be eligible to ask for the loan by using his or her saving amount as collateral. At the moment, there are 343 individuals participate into the program with the total money of 7.5 million baht (approximately U.S. \$ 250,000) in the bank account.

2.2 The Stable Housing Project was considered successful a program. More than 80 percent of the households participate into the program. The project not only provides the right to live in the community but also the appropriate living standard of the people concerning their shelter. Now, the Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization), the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, has already granted the loan for the total amount of 60 million baht to the program. The first phase of the program will begin in 2015 in which there will be more than ten houses to be built in the 20<sup>th</sup> zone. It is expected that within the six months period the first phase will be completed. According to the saving committee, the whole project will be completed in the year 2017. Once the project has been completed, it will definitely improve the landscape of the whole community. The project provides hope and secures the future for the people who live in the area.

2.3 However, there are a small number of people who do not participate into the program. From the research, it is discovered that the reason why people who do not participate into the program is due to the monetary factor. Some people cannot afford to make the required monthly deposit. The other reasons may be the lack of information. For those who do not participate, they do not understand the process of the program. They do not trust that the saving committee could do what they have promised. In this case, more and more public relations are needed in order to create the awareness and the trustworthy of the program. Besides, some people view the saving amount as a loss since they cannot withdraw their money that they have put into the program. Although, the saving committee would allow the member to withdraw his or her saving amount from the account, this action will forfeit his or her membership right forever. This requirement serves as an obstacle for the people when they decide to join the program in the first place. The unsophisticated reason of people not joining the program may be understood in a form of psychological factor. Those who live in the community for a long time feel that they own the property. They have a negative attitude toward the program and cannot find any reason why they have to participate. For them, the length of time of their stay should be enough to give them the right to live in the community. Once again, the communication plays a vital role in order to make sure that people understand of how to live together in a changing environment [5].

## V. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In the Study of "The Prototype of the Community for Urbanization Development: A Case Study at Sam Sen Riverside Community," it can be concluded that:

The Sam Sen Riverside Community is a community located in an urban society. The community is situated at the mouth of Samsen canal in which it is geographical known as a River Linear Settlement [6]. The development of community is paralleled with the development of the Bangkok capital when the waterways once were the main streams of commercial activities in the country. The study of the development of the community has some concerns with historical perspectives and structural functionalism theory.

According to historical dimension, the available data on the settlement of Bangkok together with the data on the migration of people to live near by the river especially the Chinese people who are very keen in conducting businesses with the local people as well as with the travelers. The changing situation from using waterways as a means of transportation to the land communication, and the peaceful co-existence of Thais, Chinese and Indians in the area under the royal patronage are those pertaining to the history. Talcott Parsons, based on his theory on structural and functionalism, saw that society is obliged to produce family systems, political systems, governmental systems and belief systems and, on top of that, to inculcate members of the society. The said theory explains that changes that happen in the society causes changes in this production.

1. Since 1985, there has been tensions between the Crown Property Bureau and the community when the former revoked the rental contract with all of the tenants in the community. Five years later, in B.E. 2533, there was a big street protest organized by the community dwellers marching to the Crown Property Bureau office to object the ideas of turning the community into a modern shopping mall. An attempt of constructing the residential flat in the particular area for the people to move in was a failure since the terms of contract were breached. This incident put fuel into the fire and caused much further tension between the two parties. During Taksin's administration, the Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization) initiated the Stable Housing Project for the Sam Sen Riverside Community. This program is expected to ease the problem between the land owner and the people who live in the community. To a certain level, the said program is considered a success.

2. The study of "The Prototype Community for Urbanization Development: A Case Study at Sam Sen Riverside Community, Dusit District, Bangkok," is in congruence with Kittitonthai's research on "Canals and the Economic System of Thailand A.D. 1824-1910" (1977), Piyanart Bunnag on the study of The Development of Communication in Thailand in the Nineteenth Century" (1981), Oratip Tessiri's research on "Land Tenure During B.E. 2444-B.E. 2477: A Case Study of Bangkok Precinct" (1981), Tunn Cheewakorranawat and his study on "Factors Affecting the Settlement in Bang Lum Poo Area" (2001), Yaovaratt Puttimanorradee and her research on "The Changes of Bangkok During the reigns of King Rama V-VII and Its Subsequent Environmental Impact on the People" (1984),

Piyanart Bunnag, Duangporn yNoppakun, and Suchada Thadaniti and their research on “Canals in Bangkok: History, Changes and Their Impact (A.D. 1782-A.D. 1982), Kanitha Chitchang’s work on Rights of Thai People to Land Use and Land Ownership, 1901-1925: A Case Study of the Lower Chhaopraya Basin (2004), Chanin Wisethsithkul and his work on “Changes of Urban Social Life in Rattanakosin Island, Bangkok” (2004), Somsri Sirikwanchai’s work on “The Eco-Culture Analysis of Human Settlement: A Case Study of Mon Community at Koh Kred, Nonthaburi” (1998), Rapeepan Sujin and her research on “The Study of the Evolution Pattern of City Expansion in the Phasi Charoen District, Bangkok” (2001), Amorn Boontao’s research on “The Study of Power Structure of the Community in Bangkok: A Case Study at Ratchapha Tuptimroumjai Community” (2003), Nunthiya Sawangwuttham’s research on “The Identity of Khlongphum People, Yannawa District” (2003), Suriya Jirawong’s work on “The Changes in Society, Culture, and Politics: A Case Study Nong Pakchee Village, Ratchaburi” (2001), and Wimon Sri Limthanaul and her research on “The Consequence of Modern City System and its Impact on Zoning System in Bangkok” (1994). Finally, it is recommended that, firstly, the governmental units still play a vital role in initiating the program concerning land management and land usage. And, secondly, to guarantee the success of the program, the trustworthiness of the landlord and the wholehearted-participation of the tenants must be secured. And last but not least, to ensure a mutual understanding between the two parties, effective communication is required to make sure that both parties receive adequate information concerning the matters.

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