

# อัตลักษณ์จากเรื่องเล่าของคนเวียดนามอพยพในประเทศไทย กับการสร้างความสัมพันธ์ชุดใหม่ระหว่างรัฐไทย-เวียดนาม

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## บทคัดย่อ

การนิยามตนเองสามารถแสดงออกผ่าน “เรื่องเล่า” ในฐานะวาทกรรมที่เกิดขึ้นจากประสบการณ์และความทรงจำของผู้เล่า กรณีคนเวียดนามในประเทศไทย เรื่องเล่าการอพยพและปฏิบัติการในชีวิตประจำวันของพวกเขาแสดงให้เห็นการประกอบสร้างตัวตนคนเวียดนาม ทั้งนี้ตัวตนดังกล่าวได้ส่งผลกระทบต่อความสัมพันธ์ที่ตึงเครียดระหว่างรัฐไทยกับเวียดนาม บทความนี้ต้องการนำเสนอตัวตนคนเวียดนามผ่านเรื่องเล่าส่วนบุคคลของคนเวียดนามรุ่นที่ 1 ที่อพยพเข้ามาในประเทศไทยช่วง ค.ศ. 1945-1946 กับกระบวนการสร้างความสัมพันธ์ชุดใหม่ระหว่างรัฐไทยกับเวียดนาม การศึกษานี้ใช้แนวคิดในการศึกษา คือ self-construction of Identity ร่วมกับแนวคิด narrative identity ผลการศึกษาชี้ให้เห็นว่า เรื่องเล่าส่วนบุคคลของคนเวียดนามในประเทศไทยสะท้อนให้เห็นการสร้างตัวตนที่ไม่ตายตัว แต่มีการผลิตซ้ำและประกอบสร้างใหม่อยู่ตลอดเวลา ผ่านเรื่องเล่าที่สัมพันธ์กับเงื่อนไขความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้คนกับรัฐ ตลอดจนความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างรัฐกับรัฐ ทั้งนี้ตัวตนดังกล่าวไม่ได้ถูกประกอบสร้างขึ้นเพื่อรับใช้ผู้เป็นเจ้าของเรื่องเล่าเท่านั้น แต่ได้ถูกรัฐนำไปตีความใหม่เพื่อใช้เป็นเครื่องมือในการสร้างความสัมพันธ์ชุดใหม่ระหว่างรัฐกับรัฐด้วย

**คำสำคัญ:** อัตลักษณ์ตัวตน อัตลักษณ์เรื่องเล่า คนเวียดนามอพยพในประเทศไทย

# Narrative Identity of Vietnamese Migrants in Thailand: A New Construction of Thailand and Vietnam Relationship

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## Abstract

Self-definition can be expressed through “narrative identity,” which are forms of discourse that emerge from the narrator’s experiences and memories. In the case of the Vietnamese migrants in Thailand, their stories of migration and daily life activities reflect the self-construction of their Vietnamese identity. This identity has an influence on the relationship between Thailand and Vietnam. This article presents the narratives of the identity of first-generation Vietnamese immigrants who migrated to Thailand between 1945 and 1946 and the process of forging new relationships between Thailand and Vietnam. This study employs the theoretical concepts of self-construction of identity and narrative identity. The results reveal that the narratives of the identity of Vietnamese people in Thailand reflect the ongoing reproduction and reconstruction of identity through narratives relating to people’s relationships with the state as well as the relationship between states. Their identity is constructed to serve the narrative owner and as a tool for establishing new relationships between states.

**Keywords:** Self-Identity, Narrative Identity, Vietnamese Migrants in Thailand

## Introduction

The Vietnamese in Thailand are a group of people with diverse self-definitions and relationships with state power and the relationship between states. From 1945 AD until before Vietnam joined the ASEAN Community, the Thai government regarded Vietnamese immigrants as a group of people who were a threat to the security of the state. Their stories cannot be told or revealed due to the political ideology differences between Thailand, which was a liberal democracy, and Vietnam, which was a communist regime. This affected the policies and measures that the Thai government had towards Vietnamese immigrants, as Thailand viewed them as part of the Vietnamese Communist movement and a threat to Thai national security. (Sajjapala, 2018)

Subsequently, when the relationship system of all countries in the Southeast Asian region changed from conflict and distrust to a relationship under the conditions of economic cooperation, Vietnam's acceptance as a member of the ASEAN on July 28, 1995, affected the restoration and development of the relationship between Thailand and Vietnam, leading to cooperation in various aspects both at the state and grassroots levels. This positive relationship allowed older generations of Vietnamese to have the opportunity and space to share their personal history, memories and collective memories. At the state level, they were regarded as a group of Thai citizens whereas according to the Vietnamese state, they were the descendants of Vietnamese immigrants living abroad who had a great significance to the history of Vietnam. Therefore, the stories not only represent the identity of the Vietnamese people in Thailand but also serve as a tool to foster a new relationship between Thailand and Vietnam in the context of a new relationship set.

Based on an examination of relevant documents and research. The concept of ethnic identity has become increasingly popular in research on Vietnamese people in Thailand in the last ten years, as it has been discovered. Vietnamese identity throughout various periods, particularly studies that



aim to sift through Vietnamese identity in the sociocultural dimension, have served to shape and define the meaning for Vietnamese people in Thailand in a stereotypical fashion. This may not allow us to understand Vietnamese identity in the current context, which is complex and constantly changing.

Defining oneself is determined by individuals or others through a complex and continuous process related to the constantly changing social context. It is influenced by various factors, including genetics, upbringing, cultural influence, life experience, and interactions with others. The definition of self can be reflected through narrative identity or discourse, which is created through experiences and memories of the narrator concerning the dimensions of time and space. The narratives are interpreted, repeated, or reconstructed, leading to diverse and ever-changing self-definitions in different contexts. (Miller, 2000). This is a crucial point that this article aims to present.

## Research Method

This study aimed to 1) Explore Vietnamese identity through narrative history that focuses on the case of the first generation of Vietnamese immigrants residing in Thailand. 2) To study Vietnamese identity through personal narratives that influence the development of new connections between Thailand and Vietnam in the ASEAN context.

This research is a qualitative study Research design using the concept of identity creation and self-descriptive identity documentary research and fieldwork in the provinces of Nakhon Phanom, Sakon Nakhon, and Mukdahan in Thailand and obtain information through in-depth interviews. The study presents its findings through phenomenological analysis. This study was ethically reviewed and approved by the Ethical Review Board of Mahasarakham University. The sample group serving as key informants consists of Vietnamese people who migrated to Thailand in 2488-2489 BCE (1945-1946 CE) and currently live in Nakhon Phanom, Sakon Nakhon,

and Mukdahan provinces. There are direct memories of the history of migration and memories of Vietnamese life in Thailand from their arrival until today.

The researcher employed a purposive sampling method to select informants with characteristics aligned with the research objectives. A snowball sampling technique was also utilized, whereby initial informants with desired characteristics recommended other potential informants with similar attributes. Once comprehensive data on the research topics were gathered, the data collection was concluded to ensure in-depth and comprehensive information aligned with the research objectives.

## Data Analysis

This study employed the concept of self-construction of identity and narrative identity To show that Vietnamese identity emerges through social costs within the Vietnamese people concerning the ever-changing social context over time. Although society determines the value system, the identity of Vietnamese immigrants in Thailand is dominated by the state discourse through status, roles and duties. As a result, the Vietnamese have to create an identity that meets certain needs and constraints imposed by society and the state. Instead, the Vietnamese have used their own carefully selected life stories and stories in a new context to create a Vietnamese identity in the current context. Both Thailand and Vietnam have used their Vietnamese identity to create new relationships.

## Research Results

The results are presented as follows;

### 1. Vietnamese Identity in Narratives History of Crossing Borders in the Northeastern Region of Thailand

The Northeastern Region of Thailand, called Isan, is a region where a large number of people of Thai Vietnamese descent reside. Since the 17th century, Vietnamese have lived in the northeastern region even before



Thailand became a nation-state. When the French attacked Laos from 1945 to 1956, a significant number of Vietnamese migrated from the left bank of the Mekong River into Thailand. (Goscha. 1999). They settled in provinces along the Mekong River such as Nong Khai, Nakhon Phanom, and Mukdahan, and built communities. Some Vietnamese migrants, such as Udon Thani and Sakon Nakhon, also traveled to the provinces farther from the Mekong River for safety reasons. (Stuart-Fox, 1997; Nguyen Van Linh, 2010).

In 1946, Thailand was under the administration of the government of Pridi Phanomyong, who launched a policy to support the national liberation movement of neighbouring countries in Indochina (Le Quoc San, 1989). The Thai government provided assistance to Vietnamese migrants by easing their status of entry into the city, granting them refugee status and allowing them to temporarily reside in various provinces along the Mekong River, such as Nakhon Phanom, Nong Khai, Mukdahan, and Ubon Ratchathani (Taerungreung, 2007). In addition, the Thai government also provided jobs and allocated a budget to assist Vietnamese migrants in investing in their professions (Burutphat, 1972; Jampasiri and Suphan, 1976). Although Vietnamese migrants faced difficulties due to the war, the assistance provided by the government of Pridi Phanomyong enabled them to reside and make a living. They had their system of mutual aid and activities and could express themselves freely, which led them to create a strong social community among Vietnamese migrants. (Sripana and Trinh, 2005)

The narratives of the Vietnamese immigrants to Northeast Thailand between 1945 and 1946 reflect the difficulties they faced as migrants and their daily struggles in an environment of distrust between the Thai government and the Vietnamese people. Moreover, the narratives encompass accounts of secret actions in support of the Vietnamese nationalist movement in the Isan region, which are often retold and passed down among the Vietnamese community and their descendants. Nonetheless, they typically conclude the stories by mentioning the help they received from the local community.

Mr. Le, 72, born in Thakhek, Laos, living in Nakhon Phanom province, told the stories of his family's migration: "My parents walked from Vietnam to Laos to escape death during the French Colonial period. They initially settled in Kham Keut, Tha Khaek, Laos, but due to the difficult living conditions, they decided to move to Thakhek. The attack in 1945 forced my family to cross the Mekong River to Thailand. Most of the Vietnamese migrants in Nakhon Phanom Province lived in a group in the Ban Pohn Bok. Everyone helped each other. My family was lucky to receive help from the Thai people. The Thai people were compassionate and allowed my family to stay in the barn under their house temporarily. My parents repaid their kindness by helping them on the farm. They did everything they could to help until they gained trust and were seen as good people. Later, the Thai people divided a small area of 4x3 meters for us to build a small house. At the time, we did not believe we could return to Vietnam, so my parents decided to live in Thailand. At first, we had no job, so we lived by burning charcoal. Fortunately, the Thai government hired my father to dig soil and build roads, and my parents worked hard to earn money and save up. Eventually, we were able to buy pigs to raise. My mother started making and selling "tao huu" (a type of steamed food). We grew vegetables, cut wood, and burned charcoal to sell at the market. My family has started our trading business since then." (V.K Le, personal communication, July 15, 2022)

From 1948 to 1975, Southeast Asia's political situation was marked by significant changes and challenges that shaped the region's political landscape. During this time, although many Southeast Asian nations achieved independence from colonial rule, some of them still struggled to establish stable democratic governments and faced internal conflicts. This context significantly impacted the Thai-Vietnamese relationship, causing fluctuations and shifts in accordance with global political developments and regional conditions.



During the reigns of Prime Ministers Phibun Songkhram and Thanom Kittikachorn, from 1948 -1975, Thailand demonstrated its stance as a pro-western nation in opposition to the communist North Vietnam regime. Thailand's policy towards North Vietnamese migrants in the country was marked by tension and hostility. These migrants were considered a threat to Thailand's stability and were treated as "others." (Burutphat, 1972; Jampasiri and Suphan, 1976; Teerawekhin, 1978). Government policies restricted their freedom, residency in designated areas, and job opportunities. Their behavior was strictly monitored, and they were prevented from forming groups or even receiving education in their own language. Suspected communist activities among the migrants led to arrests. The Thai government established and implemented the policies previously mentioned to maintain stability and security (Sripana & Thinh, 2005).

Mr. Nguyen, a 70 years old Vietnamese descent from Sakhon Nakhon province, said, "I was born in Thakhek, Laos, before my parents immigrated to Sakhon Nakhon in 1946. My parents always taught me to love our homeland and adhere to Ho Chi Minh's teachings: "Love the country, love the people, study well, work well, unite well, be disciplined, maintain cleanliness, be humble, be honest, and be brave. When I was 18 years old, I was selected to be a Vietnamese leader in Sakon Nakhon province. My responsibility was to take care of the Vietnamese people and to build solidarity while instilling a sense of patriotism in them. I also secretly coordinated with the Vietnamese government by informing them of the news of requesting support and donations to send back to support the Northern Vietnamese migrants. In 1971, the situation between Northern Vietnam and the United States was tense, and Vietnamese migrants in Sakon Nakhon were very afraid because they were living in difficult conditions. The movements were almost halted. The government officials saw that I was intelligent and able to provide information about the Vietnamese migrants, so they assigned me to be a representative of the Vietnamese migrants to coordinate with Thai government



agencies and create an understanding for the Vietnamese migrants to follow Thai laws strictly. The teaching that Vietnamese migrants hold onto and pass on to their children is to “unite with Thai friends. Follow the laws of the host country.” This means that when they come to live in Thailand, they must live together with Thai people and follow Thai laws (T.H. Nguyen, personal communication, July 20, 2022)

The story of the Vietnamese migrants and their struggle to survive as displaced individuals, as well as their participation in the national liberation movement, has been passed down to their descendants as social memories that help create a strong bond within the Vietnamese migrant community and serve as a testament to their bravery, resilience and determination in the face of adversity and the loss of their homeland. Their ideas are reflected in their daily lives as stateless people who listen to and comply with what the Thai government specifies in order to show their identity, even though the Thai government once defined them as someone else. Despite this, they have a sense of gratitude for the assistance and attachment to Thailand.

## **2. Becoming new Thais: the identity of Vietnamese people in Thailand**

“Our parents brought us here, and we grew up here. We love Thailand. Vietnamese migrants consider themselves having two mothers, Vietnam as their birthplace and Thailand as their nurturer.” (A.T. Ly, personal communication, March 12, 2022)

Various operations demonstrated that Vietnamese migrants were an integral part of Thai society, and they were not different from ordinary citizens. The expression of the Vietnamese identity was influenced by the state’s power to gain the government’s trust. Under the leadership of General Sarit Thanarat, a strict security policy was implemented, which resulted in more stringent and tense control measures for Vietnamese migrants. In 1959, an agreement was signed, the so-called Rangoon. Such an agreement was signed by both the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the Thai Red Cross societies on the repatriation of Vietnamese migrants back to North



Vietnam. The repatriation process continued by sea from 1960 until 1964. A total of 46,265 Vietnamese migrants in northeast Thailand were repatriated to North Vietnam. However, the operation had to be permanently halted due to the North Vietnamese government using the pretext of security concerns that might arise from clashes in the Gulf of Tonkin. (Burutphat, 1988)

Between 1976 and 1977, the tension between Thailand and Vietnam increased after Vietnam had sent troops into Cambodia. The Thanin Kraivichien government took a clear stance against communism and Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia, resulting in the intense suppression of individuals suspected of having communist sympathies. Those who exhibited any behavior deemed suspicious faced severe crackdowns. As a consequence, Vietnamese migrants tried not to attract attention from Thai authorities to prevent detention or deportation to Vietnam. They participated in public activities and tried to build relationships with the local community. However, they were still subject to investigation or house searches if there were any reports from Thai citizens or officials indicating suspicious behavior by Vietnamese migrants. Mr. Tran, a 75-year-old Vietnamese resident of Udon Thani province, described the daily lives of Vietnamese migrants in Udon Thani by saying, "During the North Vietnamese Army's invasion of Cambodia, the situation in Thailand was also tense. Vietnamese migrants attempted to live in accordance with the rules of their home country. They did not break the law and had no problems with the Thai people. Whenever any family or community had any merit-making activities, we would go and help. Sometimes we were inspected by government officials, but we did not resist because we understood that they had to follow the Thai government. Vietnamese migrants understood and sympathized with officials and did not want to cause any trouble. When my son was still a child, a Thai teacher came to ask for my son to stay with them at their home. They took care of him and sent him to school. I was touched by their kindness. Thai people have good hearts and are compassionate, helping Vietnamese

migrants greatly, which has allowed us to live to this day.” (D.T. Tran, personal communication, March 8, 2022)

After the end of the Cold War in 1995, Vietnam demonstrated its commitment to peace in the region by withdrawing its troops from Cambodia. This resulted in ASEAN admitting Vietnam as a member. Thai-Vietnamese relations have evolved. The Thai government has been more lenient towards Vietnamese immigrants, permitting them to participate in community activities.

Mr. Dang, a Thai-Vietnamese from Sakon Nakhon province, recalled, “I firmly hold on to and practice Ho Chi Minh’s teaching that to live here you need to love them, and when you go back, make them miss you. Since Thailand and Vietnam have a good relationship, Vietnamese people in Sakon Nakhon can participate in public events like the Candle Castle Festival in Sakon Nakhon. Vietnamese people would join the event to help build the candle castle and participate in the procession of the local temple where they lived. My parents would take me out to help at the temple. I had to behave like everyone else. Vietnamese women would wear Sakon Nakhon traditional clothes to participate in the procession. Every year, the Sakon Nakhon people pay great attention to this event, and the Vietnamese community participating in the procession usually wins the first prize. Besides the local festivals, when the province organizes important events related to the Thai monarchy or charity, representatives of the Vietnamese Association in Sakon Nakhon will always be sent to participate.” (V.Q. Dang, personal communication, April 10, 2022)

Mr. Tran, an 80-year-old Thai Vietnamese from Sakon Nakhon province, said, “People in Sakon Nakhon recognize Vietnamese as one of the province’s ethnic groups, as the Chinese. In the past, they denied our requests by not participating in activities with Thai people. But now, every Thai government agency values Vietnamese people. They invite us to be committee members and participate in activities organized by the



province every year, such as the Loy Krathong Festival and the New Year's celebration. We cooperate fully because we love Thailand and feel we are Thai. In short, if there is a Thai boxing competition with other countries, we cheer for Thai boxing.” (D.B. Tran, personal communication, April 11, 2022)

The Vietnamese narrative is multi-dimensional suggesting the narrative itself and the context of the events being recounted and intertwined. The story consists of selected facts about what should be said while others are eliminated. To be consistent with the purpose, the narrator will choose to express his identity using past events and actions from his own life story (Riessman, 1993; Erikson, 1993).

Therefore, the Vietnamese immigrants' self-identity results from their decision to present the “We” or “They” identity. To establish relationships within a group of Vietnamese people, they will pick unity as the immigrant creates his or her identity from this collection of memories. Moreover, they want to gain recognition and become a local group of the Thai state, and the narrative demonstrates that they are already a part of the state.

### **3. Vietnamese identity as a mediator in the formation of a new relationship between Vietnam and Thailand**

In the context of the development of Thai-Vietnamese relations, the identity of Vietnamese people in Thailand has a multilayered dimension of being both a part of the Vietnamese community and a part of the Thai state, particularly if they have been granted the status of new Thai citizens or Thai-Vietnamese. As evidenced by the tales of their migration and efforts to save the nation of Vietnam, they play an important role that has been recognized by local communities and the Thai government. In the current context, these tales are no longer secrets or stories that must be concealed but may be retold and used to build relationships and cooperation between Thailand and Vietnam.

In the context of Thailand and Vietnam's growing regional relationship, especially in the economic sphere, the Government of General Chatchai Chunhawan initiated a policy to transform Indochina from "a battlefield into a marketplace" to strengthen politics, economy, and society through economic diplomacy, by supporting investment in Indo-China communities, particularly in Vietnam (Maisrikrod, 1994)

After 1986, Vietnamese foreign policy began to change. Vietnam became more open to trade with foreign countries regardless of political ideology. (Thayer, C. A.,1999). The Vietnamese government also responded and promoted bilateral relations with Thailand, settling the issue of Vietnamese people in Thailand being accepted and living peacefully. In 1997, the first generation of Vietnamese refugees who had foreign status was granted legal status. The second and third generations, who were born in the Kingdom of Thailand to Vietnamese refugee parents, were granted Thai citizenship and considered "new Thais". They have full rights and duties equal to those of Thai citizens. (Sripana & Trinh, 2005; Vang, 2007). This led to the formation of Thai-Vietnamese community associations in local areas such as Sakon Nakhon, Nakhon Phanom, Udon Thani, Ubon Ratchathani, & Nong Khai in 2014, as well as the Vietnamese Association in Thailand. Since then, this positive relationship has contributed to the acceptance and recognition of the Vietnamese community in Thailand.

The establishment of the Vietnamese Association in Thailand, which both governments have acknowledged, represents an acceptance of the presence of Vietnamese people in Thailand. The Vietnamese people themselves have served as a mediator between Thailand and Vietnam. Mr. Nguyen, 82 years old, a Thai Vietnamese from Sakon Nakhon province, said, "In 2014, Mr. Nguyen Thanh Tan, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, presided over the opening ceremony of the Vietnamese Association in Thailand in Sakon Nakhon province. He stated, "The Vietnamese Association in Thailand is evidence of the strong friendship and relationship between the people of Vietnam



and Thailand, which is being continuously maintained and developed in accordance with the desires of the Thai government and the people of both nations. On behalf of the Vietnamese government, we hope that the Vietnamese Associations in Thailand's provinces where Vietnamese people reside, as well as the Vietnamese Association of Thailand, will flourish and serve as a model for Vietnamese Associations worldwide" (V.S. Nguyen, personal communication, April 18, 2022)

Moreover, the Vietnamese identity in the context of Thai-Vietnamese relations has influenced the transformation of the Na Chok community in Nakhon Phanom province from a site of conflict to a place of friendship. In the past, Na Chok village served as a refugee settlement and a gathering place for Vietnamese revolutionaries in the Northeast of Thailand. Regarding the conflict between Thailand and Vietnam, the village was considered a communist enclave that the Thai government had to regulate strictly. Since the development of Thai-Vietnamese relations, particularly during the administration of General Chatchai Chunhawan, Na Chok has become a tourist destination supported by the Thai and Vietnamese governments as a friendly Thai-Vietnamese village. The Thai government has improved and promoted Na Chok as a historical learning center for tourism. In contrast, the Vietnamese government has supported the construction of the Ho Chi Minh Museum as a historical tourist attraction in Na Chok.

Mr. Nguyen, 82 years old, a Thai Vietnamese from Nakhon Phanom province, described the construction of the Ho Chi Minh Museum in Na Chok village, Nakhon Phanom, "In 2013, when the Secretary-General of the Communist Party of Vietnam visited the Vietnamese community in Nakhon Phanom, he inquired about our desires. We informed him we needed funding to build a Ho Chi Minh Museum in Na Chok. The issue was brought to the attention of the Communist Party of Vietnam by the Secretary-General of the Communist Party of Vietnam. In 2014, The Vietnamese government allocated a budget of 44 million baht for

the museum's construction, which was eventually completed in 2016. Since then, there have been a large number of visitors, including Vietnamese tourists. The association additionally celebrates Ho Chi Minh's birthday and Vietnam's National Day annually at the museum. Vietnamese citizens in every province are willing to support Thai policy, and the Vietnamese Association in Thailand acts as a liaison between Vietnamese and Thai government agencies, similar to a postal service connecting the two nations." (V.L. Nguyen, personal communication, April 25, 2022)

The history of Ho Chi Minh's movement in the village of Na Chok and the cooperation of Vietnamese immigrants at the time contributed significantly to the Vietnamese government's recognition of the importance of the Na Chok village and funding the construction of the Ho Chi Minh Memorial. While Thailand and Vietnam maintained good relations, the Thai government allowed the construction of the Ho Jin Minh Memorial in Na Chok village, and they elevated the status to the Thai-Vietnamese Friendship Village. Vietnamese identity through storytelling has contributed to the coordination of state relations. At the same time, the state has interpreted and defined the Vietnamese narratives as the establishment of a Vietnamese identity in its eyes. This has resulted in the promotion of a new set of relationships between Thailand and Vietnam, with their relationship becoming increasingly positive.

## Discussion and Conclusion

As the center of political, economic, and cultural power, the nation-state plays an important role in shaping the nation's history so that the people have a sense of belonging that leads to national unity and security. Historical data and evidence were used to create and explain it until it became a nationalist history created by the state. Since the policy state of the convention by Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, the development of the history of nationalism of the dynamic Thai state has led to people of

different ethnicities growing together as part of the Thai people. The history of the state with a racial character has thus become one that emphasizes centrality and Thainess. The history of the state, with its ethnic character, has thus become a history that emphasizes the centrality and the Thainess that hovers over the ethnic diversity that exists in different places in the country. (Wanlipodom, 2006).

Narrative identity recounts a narrator's experiences and recollections that become a collective social memory. It is fluid and context-dependent, and it fluctuates based on the conditions of the context and the passage of time. It depends on how the narrator intends to use or connect it to a specific group or society (Steward, 1992; Sorensen, 1997). In this regard, the narrator wishes for storytelling to reflect both his or her self-identity and the social identity to which they belong. The story's content may be selected, discarded, or embellished and elevated to become part of the historical narrative of the people and the state, thereby influencing social practices (Miller, 2000; Abbott, 2002)

The narratives of Vietnamese migrants are multi-layered, with a sequence of stories combined with the context of the narrative, where the content of the narrative is a true story, choosing what to mention and what to omit. The narrator himself selects the past events and actions. (Riessman, 1993) The identity of Vietnamese immigrants thus results from the choice to present themselves either in his or our dimension. They build relationships together within the Vietnamese group. They choose to share their memories as immigrants and create an identity from these memories. (Erikson, 1993) Vietnamese identities are reflected in complex narratives in which they use stories about their past as immigrants in relation to the volatile context and policies of the Thai state. The changing social context has influenced the construction of Vietnamese identities through storytelling. Stories about Vietnamese life experiences, while showing the negative experiences they face, often reflect positively that they are not resigned to their fate but try to adapt in order to survive and that the negative experiences they face are always the main drive for them to have a positive outlook.



The case of the Vietnamese in Thailand describes their migration and daily life practices, beginning with their displacement and ending with their integration into Thai society. It demonstrates how their identity, consisting of both their original and new identities, overlaps with external factors that influence them. It focuses on Thailand's social and political climate, which viewed Vietnamese immigrants as “others” at first. However, the relationship between the Thai state and the Vietnamese community shifted from hostile to friendly, and Vietnamese immigrants became a subgroup of the Thai population known as “new Thais.” However, the Vietnamese did not permit themselves to be solely defined by the local and Thai definitions. They used narrative to establish their identities and define their significance beyond the confines of local and Thai norms (Sorensen, 1997)

This study demonstrates that narrative history reflects the construction of an identity that is not fixed but produced, repeated, and reconstructed through storytelling in relation to the conditions and context of interstate relationships. This identity is not solely constructed for the benefit of the narrator; it can also be utilized to forge new relationships between states. In addition, the identity constructed from narratives of history can be reinterpreted to generate a new set of inter-state relationships



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