

## Abstract

The present anthropological research is a study of Muslims, an ethnoreligious group, who reside in a social context of a market town located along the Thai-Myanmar border. The objectives of this study are as follows: firstly, to study an economic life of a Muslim community in a border market town; secondly, to search for basic factors necessary for living in a plural society; and finally, to study Muslim ethnicity in the Thai-Myanmar boundary context.

What had been found empirically in this research is that there is a relationship between the main three facets, namely plural society, economic action, and ethnicity. Occupation related to an entrepreneurial trade seems to be the most important economic behavior of Muslims in spite of a diversity of economic life. It is not only a niche which they choose to do for a living among various ethnic groups, but it also reflects a compatibility of economic dimension and Islam ideology. According to data analysis, it is obvious that this is a presentation of the two levels of plural society: a Muslim community and a border market town community levels. Both levels interact among themselves internally and externally.

The above process not only allows Muslim identity formation which has been used to maintain social distance between themselves, but it is also a strategy to classify and distinguish their unique identity from other ethnic groups. Despite the fact that there is a socio-cultural diversity in the area, members of the group are still capable of living together in peace and harmony. This type of living pattern is a result of economic interdependence, social interactions, and common values of the group members.