

Revitalization of tradition through social media: a case of the vegetarian festival in Phuket, Thailand

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Abstrak

ABSTRAK

This paper analyzes the influence of social media in the revitalization of tradition. The case studied here is the Vegetarian Festival in Phuket, Thailand. This festival has been promoted as the largest local tourist event since the tourism industry became a dominant business in the 1990s. Through this festival, Chinese people whose ancestors migrated from Fujian have gained an opportunity to strengthen their Chinese identity, which was oppressed in the era of Thai nationalism. However, only some dominant groups have been accepted by the local government as knowledgeable enough to portray the authenticity of the Vegetarian Festival. As a result, a master narrative explaining the history of the festival has been published by the Tourism Authority of Thailand. The narrative gives prominence to dominant shrines in Phuket, where various regulations were created to preserve the original traditions of the festival. Subsequently, younger generations who questioned the authenticity of the practices of the dominant shrines found that the festival had its origins in Taoism. Due to social media, online counterpublics emerged where counter narratives were circulated among subordinates who were excluded from the public sphere of Phukets dominant shrines.