

Bangkok Urban Community of Ban Yuan Sam Sen: Inhabitants' Awareness of Cultural Space Gentrification

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ABSTRACT: This research explores the perceived impacts of gentrification on the residents of Ban Yuan Sam Sen community, a historic catholic settlement in Bangkok founded by Vietnamese immigrants during the reign of King Rama III. This research aims to understand the cultural and socioeconomic factors that influence various transformations of the community's environment; how residents perceive those changes; and the state of cultural inheritance in modern society. Utilizing qualitative semi-structured interviews with fifteen interviewees from different age groups, this research explores residents' perceptions and experiences of the ongoing transformation process. The findings reveal that although most physical components of the community remain the same, cultural displacement does exist. This includes the disappearance of traditional occupations, such as diving and fishing; the fading presence of Vietnamese culture; and wavering Catholic festival participation, especially among younger generations. Additionally, while technology and modernization allow for easier access to religious events, they also dilute the meaning and inter-generational engagement in those events. Moreover, behavioral shifts in younger generations have also contributed toward cultural erosion in the community, aligning with theories of symbolic preservation and social fragmentation present in other studies. According to these insights, it's apparent that the conventional frameworks on gentrification must expand to cover nonphysical changes, such as cultural dynamics shifts and intangible heritage loss, specifically in culturally distinct Southeast Asian urban communities.

KEYWORDS: Behavioral and Social Sciences, Sociology and Social Psychology, Gentrification, Cultural Transformation, Vietnamese.

■ Introduction

The Community of Ban Yuan Sam Sen has a long history of around 200 years. It was settled during the reign of King Rama I.¹ During its long history, it was known as one of the biggest Christian communities in Bangkok, leaving a unique and valuable cultural heritage in the area.

Gentrification has changed the community and its residents, both socioeconomically and in their lifestyles. Over the past few years, numerous events from both within and outside the community have impacted the people, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to the Destruction of the houseboat community and the erosion of many traditions, ultimately fostering significant cultural changes. This includes the fading of the famous traditional maritime culture of the community that lasted over 200 years, and the shrinking of the population from younger and Houseboat residents having to emigrate. Moreover, the government also played a huge part in transforming the community; for example, in 2005, the government launched a housing development project to manage and provide living space for the people in the Sam Sen area, which included Ban Yuan Sam Sen. The project aimed at encouraging people to live in the area, and the project was considered successful. However, the Crown Property Bureau, a quasi-government entity, played an important role in the transformation process, creating tension between the community and the agency due to their attempts at gentrifying the area by building residential flats to replace the traditional residential

areas. This failed project reflected a long-time conflict between the community and the landowner.²

Theoretical Framework on Gentrification, Cultural Displacement, and Technological Impact on Community:

Many papers talked about gentrification, a process of urban development that involves wealthier people moving into lower-income neighborhoods, highlighting the withering of cultural heritages. For example, Biro³ explores the contrasting effects of gentrification, highlighting both positive and negative effects. They have pointed out that understanding the positive and negative impacts will help justify or condemn gentrification. Moreover, they have observed that accurately measuring gentrification is challenging due to most data being collected after the area has undergone gentrification for an extensive amount of time already. Many other researchers have also raised the question of a tradeoff between economic growth and cultural decay. Atkinson⁴ has suggested that some policy-makers, researchers, and commentators see gentrification as a way to capitalize upon the land and revitalize the surrounding environment, while others argue that there's an immense social cost, involving forced displacement of low-income residents. This can be seen in Adarkwa & Oppong,⁵ a study on Kumasi's central business district in Ghana, which found that gentrification involved replacing traditional residential buildings with high-rent commercial developments, disrupting long-standing architectural and lifestyle patterns. This process led to the displacement of residents and significant changes in land use,

ultimately eroding traditional community structures. In addition, Song Lu, Xiaofang Rao, and Pengxiao Duan⁶ stated that gentrification brings more diversity to the conventional community from outsiders moving in, and people returning to the community. Gentrification also causes changes in the cultural landscape, such as old traditional buildings being removed, and some impacts on the economy. Gentrification can change local culture due to the arrival of culture from immigrants, blending with the local culture. Moreover, Gibbons *et al.*⁷ found that gentrifying neighborhoods often experience a decline in community connection, with residents reporting lower trust, belonging, and cooperation. The study highlights how social cohesion deteriorates even as neighborhoods change economically and demographically. Yujie Zhua and Plácido González Martínez⁸ said gentrification is an economic and political process. Beyond the abstract official understanding of 'residents', heritage-led reconstructions are accessible to new social elites and the middle class.

When it comes to the topic of technology and cultural preservation, Mendoza *et al.*⁹ stated that the use of technology to preserve tangible and intangible cultural heritage constitutes smart cultural heritage management, a term used worldwide. From this, it can be concluded that the technological elements and resources available today allow the inclusion of technology as a tool to contribute to the preservation of cultural elements and intangible heritage.

Regarding social cohesion and urbanization, Anja Jørgensen and Mia Arp Fallov¹⁰ stated that the impact of urbanization has changed the relationship between the largest cities, their hinterland, and the towns in the fringe areas. Organizing territorial cohesion due to urbanization requires a dual glance at structural forces coming from outside and at local societal and social forces stemming from local capital, traditions, and cultures. The impact of urbanization on places is linked to the specific composition of these physical, symbolic, and social aspects of the place.

Ban Yuan Samsen Historical Context:

Ban Yuan Samsen community is known for being a historical neighborhood in Bangkok with unique architecture that blends Portuguese, Khmer, and Vietnamese cultures.¹¹ In recent decades, this community experienced rapid urbanization due to the economic development in Bangkok, which gave rise to concerns about the displacement of residents and the decaying cultural identity. The first catholic settlement in Sam Sen was established in 1675 by Louis Laneau, Vicar Apostolic of Siam, after an area given to him by King Narai. The first group of catholic settlers in that area was 4 to 5 families of the Kuy people.¹² During the reign of King Rama I, a large number of Cambodians moved to Siam due to the unstable situation in Cambodia, and around 500 Cambodian Christians settled in Samsen. King appointed Nai Kaew as the leader of Cambodian communities and gave him the title of Phraya Wisetsongkramrampakdi; he also served in the Siamese army. Later, during the reign of King Rama III, Siam went to war with Vietnam. During the campaign in southern Vietnam, several Christian Vietnamese from Châu Đốc and

nearby areas pledged allegiance to Siam and asked to move to Siam. The king allowed the Vietnamese to settle in the Sam Sen area, north of the Cambodian immigrants' settlement. Later, the settlement was expanded to nearby locations.¹

The Cultural Landscape of Ban Yuan Samsen:

The Culture of Ban Yuan Samsen is a cultural landscape formed by Vietnamese immigrants from Vietnam, most of whom are Christian. Settle in the Area of Sam Sen, neighboring the Portuguese and the Cambodians. According to anthropological discovery, it is also found that the Chinese population in the Sam Sen area is mostly from Teochew and Hainan (Southern Part of China), each of the Chinese and the Vietnamese people has their own culture of fisheries. Moreover, the physical conditions that also affect the cultural landscape are that the area where the community is located is beside the Chao Phraya River, which supports their fishery activities. This area is well known for being one of the biggest Catholic communities in Bangkok.⁴ King Rama III donated his own money to build the churches for the community in 1837 and named them Saint Francis Xavier. Later, the church was destroyed by a storm, which was then replaced by a new church built in 1867. That church continues to exist to the present day and brought about the establishment of Saints Francis Xavier Convent College later in 1925, with many schools also established at that time, such as Saint Gabriel in 1920 and Joan of Arc School in 1919. During the reign of King Rama V, Bangkok expanded to the north. One of the projects is expanding road systems, making transportation more convenient, which causes a lot of changes in economics and society. The expansion caused the Khmer and Vietnamese communities to be more open to outsiders.¹³ The population in the area of Samsen is equipped with different knowledge and skills, such as sawmills, shipyards, and other dependents. As a result Samsen area became a key commercial transportation hub, with commercial boats coming from upstream embarking down the Chao Phraya river, carrying goods to sell in Bangkok. These trading activities create inevitable participation and cooperation of the people living in the area.⁴ During the Reign of King Rama I, most Vietnamese immigrants were equipped with proficiency in maritime culture and skills in navigation and shipbuilding. These skills brought them into the Royal Navy because the king wanted his navy to be able to compete with the European fleet.¹⁴ The People in the community were satisfied and had the intention of staying in the area and had no plans to move anywhere else. In the past, the community was considered to be small in the sense that everybody knew each other and their relative background.⁴

The area of Ban Yuan Sam Sen started as a refugee village filled with soldiers of Prince Nguyen Anh, who was defeated in Vietnam and fled to Siam back in the eighteenth century.¹⁴ The neighborhood is divided into Ban Yuan, which houses Vietnamese, and Ban Khmer, which houses Khmer people and Portuguese.¹ The community is located at the mouth of Samsen Canal, which makes this community a River Linear Settlement.⁴ The area was initially called Ban Portugal because it was originally inhabited by the Portuguese soldiers who

helped Ayuthaya in a war since King Narai's era. During King Rama I's reign, Catholic Khmer moved into the area, followed by the Catholic Vietnamese, both of whom were ordered by the King to move to the area. During the reign of King Rama III to King Rama V, more Vietnamese moved into the area, causing it to expand. In the reign of King Rama V, the Samsen road was built following the construction of Dusit Palace, which connected the community to the city's main road network. After World War II, a part of this land was turned into a college, which later became Rajabhat Suan Sunandha University. Afterward, in 1985, tension between the residents and the Crown Property Bureau arose because the bureau decided to revoke rental contracts with every dweller of this community. Five years later, the tension escalated into a mass protest. They march to the Crown Property Bureau office to oppose the bureau's plan to turn the area into a shopping mall. The bureau had previously tried to build a residential flat for the people of this community to move into, yet it failed due to the lack of fairness in the terms of the contract, which further escalated the tension between both parties. Under the Taksin Administration, the Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization) has established a Stable Housing Project for the Ban Yuan Sam Sen community, causing the situation to dwindle.⁴

In conclusion, many researchers have talked about the historical context, cultural heritage, and urban development of the Ban Yuan Sam Sen community, but very limited research has been conducted on anthropological perspectives of the area, especially the decline of collective cultural identity and ethnic identity in the community. Moreover, most case studies are viewed through the lens of physical transformation, such as architectural changes, but not intangible changes in cultural patterns and communal values. This research will incorporate various social and cultural displacement theoretical frameworks to study the transformation of the community's conditions based on socioeconomic and cultural aspects of the area; the cultural inheritance of the community and its adaptation and integration into modern society; and the level of gentrification perceived and experienced by the community's residents.

■ Methods

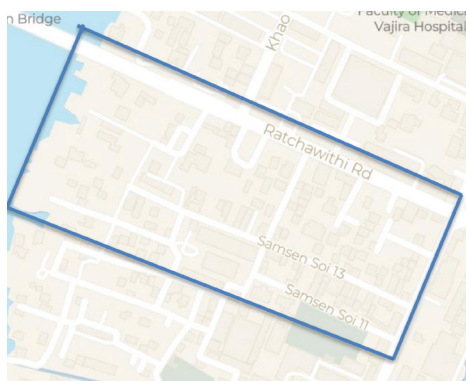


Figure 1: The map defines the boundary of the Ban Yuan Samsen Community where the research was conducted. The blue lines represent the margin of the community, running through the Ratchawithi Road, Sam Sen Road, Soi Sam Sen 11, and the Chao Phraya River.

This research will involve qualitative data collection methods and data analysis. The methodologies used are as follows:

1. Studying the background of the community through related historical and anthropological documents, including the historical development, cultural landscape, and urban development aspects.

2. The interview focused on the cultural and social aspects of the community with 15 residents who were born in the area and have a vivid memory of the community's history, which was divided into 3 different age groups consisting of:

- a. 5 people aged below or equal to 40 years old
- b. 5 people aged between 40 and 55 years old
- c. 5 people aged 55 years old or older

3. The interview was conducted from November 2024 to March 2025.

4. All names mentioned are pseudonyms.

5. The focused area is the entire Ban Yuan Sam Sen community shown in Figure 1, and its borders are defined as follows:

- a. The northern border starts from the foot of Krung Thon Bridge to the Sung Hi intersection along Ratchawithi Road.
- b. The eastern border started from the Sung Hi intersection along Sam Sen road to Soi Sam Sen 11.
- c. The southern border started from Sam Sen Road, running through Soi Sam Sen 11 and continuing along the St. Francis Xavier Church's southern wall until reaching the Chao Phraya River.
- d. The western border is defined by the Chao Phraya River.

■ Results and Discussion

Sociocultural context of Ban Yuan Sam Sen Community:

The main aim of this chapter is to incorporate the perspectives of residents to grasp the cultural impact of the transformation of the community's conditions through gentrification. This analysis is based on fifteen semi-structured interviews with five interviewees coming from different age groups. The interview design is centered around culture-related and socioeconomic questions, aiming to understand respondents' views through their experiences and expressions.



Figure 2: The Chao Phraya River viewed from the riverside area of the Ban Yuan Sam Sen community. The area was once the Houseboat cluster, as can be seen from the few remaining diving boats. (All photos are taken by researchers).

This community has changed tremendously in many aspects. Relative to the past, most respondents agreed that the

community has changed in some ways. Three interviewees cited the disappearance of houseboats (as shown in Figure 2) in the riverside community. They also provide the reason behind the removal perceived by the residents as its illegal status, the royal barge passing through the area, and the scenery improvement. However, it's worth noting that the government has compensated the removed residents. Consequently, diving, one of the economic activities conducted in the area, has disappeared from the community. Furthermore, Phattharaporn (31) has pointed out that Vietnamese culture is also fading away, citing the loss of Vietnamese speakers, and the use of the Vietnamese language in the church is also fading away. "When I was a child, there were prayers in Vietnamese, and many people spoke the language. But now, those traditions have disappeared." (Ms. Phattharaporn)

Moreover, three interviewees perceived that the community is more developed, convenient, and chaotic. However, Mr. Chaleo Saengsavang (65) gives a contradictory view that the number of people in the community has decreased, and only the older generation is left. Most younger people have moved elsewhere for career opportunities. He stated that nowadays, the original residents no longer stay in the community; many have moved out or passed away. The younger generations don't stay here; they move out for convenience, to be closer to work. Some people rent out their homes, and those who remain are mostly older residents who don't leave. Two interviewees also cited the integration of technology into society as a key factor in the change in this community. Mr. Thintham (37) further pointed out that the changing economic situation and migration have impacted the area. He stated that it has changed in response to social dynamics, mainly due to economic factors and the migration of people from other provinces. "It has changed in response to social dynamics, mainly due to economic factors and the migration of people from other provinces." (Mr. Thintham). Furthermore, Sukanya (19) noticed that there had been changes in the area, but didn't elaborate her answer further. However, four interviewees think nothing has changed. For example, Ms. Achiraya (25) thinks that people are still the same, and the community remains a catholic majority. While some others think the community remains nice.

When it comes to the topic of changes in business activities, three interviewees think business activities remain the same or have little change. For example, Ms. Nuan (87) stated that people in the community do the same things as before, conducting the same businesses. However, there are a lot of interviewees who think the economy is slowing down, like Mr. Therdpong (49), who thinks business in the community is much quieter now compared to before, Ms. Nusara (55), who thinks that the economy in the community used to be good, but now it's not doing well, and Ms. Ratchanok (40) who stated that the market has become quieter. She further elaborated that the market used to be lively, with many people walking around and shopping. Some suggest that the reason behind the economic slowdown is the harsh situation during the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, like Mr. Anuchart (65), who stated that in the past, the area was quite prosperous, the community was thriving, and many people lived here, but after COVID,

the situation got worse, making a living became harder, and now the economy isn't doing well either. He further explained that the transition between governments has also affected the economic situation of the community. Additionally, Ms. Lada (47) suggested that the reason behind the economic slowdown in the community is that the school in the community area is permanently closed. "In the past, there were many schools in the area, which brought a lot of business and made the economy more active. More people were moving around, making the community livelier. But now, many schools have closed, which has led to a decline in local commerce." (Ms. Lada)

Furthermore, Mr. Thintham (37) has noted that the community business activity has changed due to the arrival of the 7/11 convenience store. Moreover, two interviewees have pointed out that some local businesses are fading away, citing the loss of Vietnamese food stalls and restaurants, and the decline in the diving business, which is one of the economic activities conducted in the area that has vanished. Ms. Phatcharee (64) further pointed out that the noticeable change in businesses is the closure of the local schools and the arrival of a new university. Lastly, Ms. Sukanya (19) noticed that there had been changes in business in the area, but didn't elaborate her answer further.

When asked about major events that occurred and have had an impact on the community over the past few decades, two of the interviewees cited the closure of the school in the area. This includes Ms. Lada (47), who thinks the closure of several schools had a big impact, leading to a decline in the community's economy, and Ms. Nusara, who said that the decrease in student numbers was due to the closure of the school. However, Ms. Nusara also cited population decline due to emigration as another reason. Moreover, the other three interviewees pointed out that the biggest event was the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, while the other three interviewees cited the disappearance of houseboats in the riverside community. Mr. Chaliao (65) further elaborated that the removal of the riverside community led to a decrease in the community's population. "In the past, there was also a riverside community nearby, but they were relocated, so the population here has decreased. It used to be much more crowded." (Mr. Chaliao). Some interviewees also think the ongoing construction of the MRT in the area is the most notable event that occurred in the community. They stated that the ongoing construction caused traffic congestion and made transportation more difficult. Furthermore, two interviewees also think that the ongoing economic situation is a significant event that occurred in the community. They stated that the economic situation made the local market less lively and made businesses struggle. Mr. Thintham (31) also suggested that the major event is the arrival of the shopping mall in the area. However, Ms. Phattaraporn (31) thought that the major event was the rule from the church in the area, which caused people to leave the community. She stated that only Catholics could acquire the rights to use land, so many people preferred to move out and buy properties with proper land deeds. Since the land here belongs to the church, there are no land titles, and many residents just stay temporarily before moving elsewhere.

When asked if the neighbors are as friendly and approachable as they used to be, eleven of the interviewees said that the neighbors are friendly and approachable for several reasons, such as having known each other for a long time. However, three interviewees perceived that not all people in the community are as friendly and approachable as before, while two interviewees think that neighbors nowadays are not as friendly and approachable as before. They cited that people nowadays are focused on working and don't communicate with each other as they did in the past.

When interviewees were asked about the difference between the community in the present day and the past, two interviewees talked about the arrival of the new university (Nawamin University) in the area. Ms. Phatcharee (64) provides more information about the location of the university, stating that the area that is now the university used to be catholic orphanages run by nuns. In addition, Ms. Phatcharee (64), along with Ms. Phattaraporn (31), also highlighted the disappearance of Vietnamese culture in the area. Both interviewees stated that in the past, local churches used to have funeral prayers recited in Vietnamese, but they no longer exist. Ms. Phattaraporn further explained that the area used to have its local Vietnamese dialect, which Vietnamese from Vietnam can't understand, but now it's gone. Moreover, Ms. Ratchanok (40) cited the removal of the riverside community as a significant contrast between different periods of the community. "Yes, there have been changes. The most visible one is the removal of the riverside community." (Ms. Ratchanok) Mr. Somchai (53) further pointed out that those people who emigrated from the community resettled in Bang Krang, Nonthaburi. Furthermore, many more reasons were cited for the change in the community. This includes Ms. Chaliao (65) and Ms. Nuan (87) claim that the arrival of technology has modernized and developed every aspect of the community, Ms. Mingkwan (52) is concerned about pollution in the Chao Phraya River is caused by more people moving in, Mr. Therdpong (49) concerns over the decline in the engagement of the younger generation in community's activities caused by parental concern during COVID-19 pandemic and three more interviewees that think that there are some changes, but can't elaborate further. However, Ms. Lada (47) gives a contradictory view that everything remained the same, adding that people in the community are like an extended family of hers.

As a catholic community settled by Vietnamese immigrants, local culture and festivals here are influenced by Vietnamese and Catholic culture. When asked about their festival and culture, some interviewees gave more than one answer; however, most of the interviewees (10 interviewees) picked the one related to Catholicism. For example, Mr. Anuchart (65) and Ms. Phatcharee (64) broadly mentioned the church and the religious festivals, respectively. Additionally, some festivals are highly prioritized by the interviewees and are ranked by the frequency of mentions by the interviewees, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The list of festivals and events mentioned by the interviewees, ranked by the frequency of mentions. All mentioned festivals and events are based on the belief system of the Catholic Christians, indicating their strong influence on the community.

Mentioned events	Numbers of interviewees that mention
Christmas mass and other related activities	8
Conjured Cemetery Annual Festival	4
Religious processions (eg. the Feast of Our Lady Day)	3
The church's annual celebration	3
Good Friday and Easter festivals	1

Ms. Lada (47) further emphasizes the importance of the Conjured Cemetery Annual ceremony and the church's annual celebration as major religious traditions for the Catholics living in this community, while Ms. Ratchanok (40) emphasizes Christmas as the major event. Moreover, Ms. Mingkwan (52) also provided more details about the local activities during Christmas in the past. She said that they had Christmas trees, star decorations, and an outdoor movie screening in front of the church. She further explained that back in the day, families would gather around to watch the movie, and even popcorn stalls were present, adding that the event was like an old-time fair, but those traditions are gone now. It's worth noting that while others think about catholic celebrations and festivals, Mr. Thintham (37) stated that Vietnamese-style noodles in the area are the most notable local culture. "I've heard that this area has special local foods, like a type of Vietnamese noodle soup made with snakehead fish. I hadn't tried it before, but when I did, I found it interesting. There are also Vietnamese-style restaurants here." (Mr. Thintham)

In contrast, while most interviewees gave an opinion about local culture and festivals, the youngest interviewee, Ms. Sukanya (19), said that this community doesn't have any notable culture or festivals.

When asked about the change in the number of local festivals or ceremony participants, twelve interviewees said that the number of participants decreased. Some also suggest the reason behind it, such as Mr. Anuchart (65), who thinks it was due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and Mr. Somchai (53), who thinks that it was because of the disappearance of the riverside community, or Ms. Mingkwan (52), who thinks that it's due to the absence of younger generations in the church. "Younger generations don't go to church as much" (Ms. Mingkwan)

However, some other interviewees have contradictory opinions. This includes Ms. Ratchanok (40) who thinks that the number of participants increases, citing the increase from outsiders coming to see the local festivals and ceremonies, Ms. Sawiwan (49) who stated that the number of participants varies each year "It varies each year. Some years, there are more people; some years, fewer. It depends on whether people are busy with work." (Ms. Sawiwan), and Mr. Thintham (37) who noticed the change in the number of participants but didn't elaborate further.

When it comes to the topic of changes in the local culture, the majority of the ten interviewees said that it remains the same as in the past. However, the other five interviewees perceived that local culture and festivals have changed. For example, Ms. Achiraya (25) thinks that local culture and festivals are more systemic. Ms. Phatcharee (64) further provides more details that in the past, during New Year celebrations, Vietnamese and Chinese traditions were present, such as families exchanging oranges and traditional sweets, but now these traditions are gone. Moreover, Mr. Thintham (37) has stated that people nowadays continue their local festivals just to preserve their heritage, not by faith. This sentiment is echoed by Ms. Phattaraporn's (31) perception that the younger generation doesn't care about local culture anymore.

The respondents who perceived some changes in the community were further asked to give their opinion on the role of technology in the change of local culture and festivals. Two interviewees stated that technology attracted more people from outside to attend local festivals. For instance, Mr. Therdpong (49) stated that technology has made things more convenient, citing that people who move away from the community can still participate in religious ceremonies online. While others think that technology has a positive impact, Mr. Thintham (37) believes that technology has both positive and negative impacts. He explained that although technology allows easy recording and sharing of events, it has also diminished the necessity of traditions. To clarify, he pointed out that some customs were based on strong beliefs, but now technology has reduced their importance.

When asked about the participation of descendants of the local population who moved away, half of the interviewees reported a decline in the number of descendants who returned for festivals and ceremonies. Conversely, the other half stated the number remains the same. Three interviewees further specified that descendants usually returned to the community during festival time. For example, Ms. Mingkwhan (52) pointed out that they return on Sunday to attend church. In addition, Ms. Sawiwan (49) provides information that people who used to live on the houseboat also come back during the festival. It's worth noting that the interviewer didn't ask this question to the younger interviewees due to their age. (19 and 25).



Figure 3: The interior of St Francis Xavier Church, the main religious institution of the Ban Yuan Sam Sen community. The roof features an inscription written in Chinese characters, which is used by early Vietnamese immigrants. This indicates a strong influence of Vietnamese culture in the community.

The Community of Ban Yuan Sam Sen has a long history of being one of the biggest catholic Christian communities in Bangkok. Their culture is a mix of the Vietnamese people, or the "Yuan" People, and catholic traditions, as can be seen in St. Francis Xavier Church (Figure 3), and many catholic schools in the area. Three questions about their local traditions were asked to determine the level of gentrification and cultural transformation in the community.

When asked about their opinion on newcomers, most of the residents in the community have a welcoming, positive view toward the newer residents and view them as part of the community. For example, Ms. Ratchanok (40) said that most of the newcomers are renters, but they are not causing any trouble. Ms. Phattraphorn (31) further mentioned a special condition of having to be a catholic to rent the land owned by the church in the community, so the people who moved in usually have some prior connection to the community. However, some residents still think that the new residents are only here temporarily. For instance, Mr. Chaliao (65) said that some new residents are here for work and only rent a house. He then pointed out that they don't attend festivals or community activities as much, concluding that not all of them are integrated into the community yet.

When asked about the occupations of the people in the community, a lot of residents run small family businesses. For example, Mr. Therdpong (49) owned a small fish shop in his house. Other occupations are also mentioned. Mr. Somchai (53) said that back in the past, they used to go fishing and diving. "People fished. Some worked as divers, looking for underwater artifacts. But now, boats have nowhere to dock." (Mr. Somchai, 53). He further explained that there used to be a riverside community built on houseboats located within the community. The people there used to dive to find old artifacts underwater to sell them. He cited the reason being people's access to the outside world's media, technology, and education, and people who motivate others to move away from these jobs. Ms. Ratchanok (40) also shared the same opinion and cited that the younger generations mostly pursue higher education and work outside the community. Moreover, the demolition of the Riverside community also removed the people who occupied those jobs. Mr. Chaliao (65) also provided us with information about the new residents, most of whom run businesses related to the students studying in the school (St. Francis Xavier School), such as food vendors.

When asked about the conservation of the old traditions, many residents gave us similar comments that the old traditions of Ban Yuan Sam Sen are fading away over time. Most of the residents think that the chance to preserve most of the old traditions is nearly impossible, and many reasons were cited. For example, Ms. Phattaraporn (31) believes that younger generations don't hold on to the old traditions that they find boring, while Ms. Patcharee (64) believes that the shrinking population due to people migrating out of the community is the main reason. However, others gave us their opinion about some traditions that need more attention, such as Ms. Phatcharee (64), who stated that religious culture needs to be preserved, and Ms. Umaporn (52), who raised a concern over the commu-

nity being in danger of getting dissolved. It's worth mentioning that some members, such as Mr. Therdphong (49), believe that religion needs to adapt to modern society to survive. "The church and religious activities are already deeply embedded in the community. But if there's anything to improve, it would be adapting to modern times. If religious traditions are too rigid, younger generations might find them unappealing. Religion should be flexible enough to connect with younger people. If it remains too strict, it won't be able to unite all generations, and it might gradually fade away." (Mr. Therdphong).

Ban Yuan Sam Sen Community's Current Circumstances Amidst Socioeconomic and Cultural Dynamics:

This study explored the extensive impacts of gentrification on the Ban Yuan Sam Sen community by focusing on the socioeconomic, cultural, and perceptual transformation of the community. From fifteen interviews across three age groups, the findings revealed that the community has undergone and is still undergoing substantial changes. One noticeable aspect of this is the disappearance of some traditional occupations like diving and fishing, as a result of the removal of the riverside houseboat community. Consequently, older residents nowadays only operate small locally owned businesses, while younger people work elsewhere in the city. Moreover, many Vietnamese cultural elements, particularly linguistic usage and ceremonial practices, are also fading away. This cultural shift is also accompanied by an economic downturn exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of corporate retailing businesses in the area. Although some residents perceive minimal changes, most residents, especially older generations, express tremendous concern about the diminishing social cohesion and erosion of traditional culture. This can be seen in Catholic religious festivals, which are a central part of Yuan Sam Sen's communal life, where their participation level and cultural role have evolved. Notably, younger generations are diverting away from these traditions both physically through lower attendance rates and spiritually from the mindset of continuing the tradition only for the sake of its preservation. Technology has also played a vital role as a double-edged sword in many communal activities through accommodating access to activities, while also diluting its communal significance.

These findings reinforce and expand existing theoretical understandings of gentrification, especially in the context where cultural displacement occurs without complete physical removal. The case of Ban Yuan Sam Sen demonstrates how:

Structural gentrification created by infrastructure modernization, removal of traditional residential structures, and demographic shifts has disrupted the longstanding socioeconomic pattern.

The role of the Catholic Church (St. Francis Xavier) as a religious institution played in the preservation of local cultures. Although church policies regarding land ownership contributed to maintaining social harmony, its decision to stop using Vietnamese in the church has undermined the community identity.

Technology has changed the way traditions are being treated from lived religious intergenerational practices into a symbolic

performance; a pattern aligned with Zukin's¹⁵ theory of "symbolic preservation."

These insights combined suggest that gentrification in heritage-rich communities like Ban Yuan Sam Sen has transformed the economic situation, cultural meanings, and social relations in the area.

This study contributed to gentrification literature by contextualizing its impacts in Southeast Asian, culturally distinct Christian, urban communities. To clarify, it highlights a subtle characteristic of cultural gentrification through internal dynamics, such as economic shift and generational gap in communal engagement, in contrast to a large-scale redevelopment program often cited in similar studies.

The findings reflect Biro's² assertion that gentrification contains both positive and negative impacts and confirm Atkinson's³ argument about the existence of different perceptions of its impacts. In Ban Yuan Sam Sen, the fact that residents experienced cultural erosion (eg, fading Vietnamese traditions and declining festival participation) without physical displacement coincides with Gibbon *et al.*'s⁷ argument that gentrification can reduce social trust and cohesion. Furthermore, the church's policy of limiting land rights to Catholic people also complicated the process, which supports Zhu and Martínez's⁸ idea that gentrification doesn't occur independently, but often falls under the influence of economic and political pressure.

Additionally, this research affirms the immense impact of modernization and technology in disrupting traditional practices. Although it has helped preserve traditions digitally through remote participation, it's also diminishing its perceived importance in residents' lives. This corresponds to the idea of Mendoza *et al.*⁹ that technology plays a key role in cultural preservation, which also alters how those cultures are remembered.

However, this research is subject to several limitations. First, the small sample size might not capture the full picture of experiences perceived by the people in the community, especially younger residents (aged under 25), who were underrepresented. Second, the subjective nature of qualitative interviews creates a challenge in assessing the severity of gentrification happening in the area. Lastly, the study only has a time-bound perspective, which lacks comparison with other periods, making it difficult to predict future changes in urban development, technology, and policies that may influence the gentrification of the area.

Future studies could further expand upon this research by:

1. Conducting comparative studies in similarly gentrifying urban religious enclaves in Bangkok or across Southeast Asia,
2. Exploring youth perception of traditional values, cultural identities, and participation rate in other urban ethnic enclaves,
3. Designing a longitudinal study on the perceived gentrification of this community to track the evolution of the community's culture and traditions,
4. Examine the role of governmental and religious institutions in shaping gentrification-related policies that affect the cultural environment of the community.

■ Conclusion

Ban Yuan Sam Sen, as an old community with a long history, has been challenged by the effects of gentrification and modernization. This study aims to examine the cultural and socioeconomic transformation in the community, assess the state of cultural inheritance, and assess the level of gentrification perceived by the residents.

The research found that residents have experienced changes in their socioeconomic status and lifestyle as modern technology and new cultural trends diffused into the community. One economic transformation experienced by the residents is the shift in occupation. Furthermore, a worsened overall economic situation is also being perceived. The locals attributed this decline to the COVID-19 pandemic and the increase in competition from big companies. These shifts indicate a displacement of traditional economic customs towards more commercially viable but culturally disconnected enterprises. However, older residents stated that they didn't perceive major economic changes. This depicts that the impact of gentrification isn't uniformly felt across the community.

Moreover, the research found that the community's cultural identity remains strong under constant pressure and challenges. Despite the loss of Vietnamese cultural elements, such as the disappearance of the Vietnamese language in the community's church, and the evidence of cultural assimilation caused by exposure to urban development, Catholic traditions remain strong in the community, particularly in major events. Many residents view these festivals as a vital part of the community, fostering a sense of belonging. However, it's worth noting that the generational gap in cultural participation can be seen from the fact that fewer younger people are engaging in community events. However, some practices still happen as a symbolic preservation, not because they believe in it. This shows that a lot of the festivals in the area are turned into a performative culture, which lacks real community values. Moreover, modern technology has helped preserve traditions digitally through cultural integration into endangered communal activities. This highlights the positive impact that technology can bring in the context of the preservation of traditional community dynamics. However, technology also has some drawbacks, such as people losing faith in some traditions, as we mentioned earlier, or a reduction in face-to-face interaction. The last objective is the level of gentrification and cultural transformation perceived by the residents.

Furthermore, the research also found that in the aspect of culture, the community lost almost all of its Vietnamese heritage, despite being one of the oldest Vietnamese settlements in Bangkok. Although nowadays, Vietnamese heritage is rarely found, Catholic heritage remains strong in the community. When it comes to the topic of gentrification, residents cited noticeable changes in land use and social structure in the community, such as an aging population. Likewise, the lack of communal participation by newer temporary residents has weakened the sense of community, although some residents have a welcoming attitude towards newcomers. This church's land ownership policy also highlights how selective acceptance

makes religious affiliation play a key role in maintaining social harmony in the community. Nevertheless, the social dynamics in the community have undeniably been changed, as can be seen by the diminished communal interaction, the reason being the economic migration of residents and the change of lifestyle toward an urban, more modern lifestyle.

This community reflects the problem of cultural erosion and social fragmentation caused by gentrification and modernization. Despite being more comfortable and more convenient, these events often come at the cost of weakening social bonds in the community and the local culture. These insights show the importance of reevaluating the problems beyond their economic markers, or being comfortable with including the community's cultural heritage and social bonds in the community.

Despite a strong catholic influence in the community, the findings suggest that it's still a hard problem for the community culture to adapt traditions to contemporary contexts or attract the young generations. The other problem is the land policies, like the removal of the riverside community, as part of the scenery improvement program. All development needs to be concerned with local heritage and local lifestyle, which is a hard problem for development. However, some improvement and preservation need to be done before local heritage is phased out and becomes a memory.

This research provides valuable information on the topic of gentrification and its effect on the historical community with its unique culture in Bangkok. While the study is limited in scope and scale, it might spark awareness in the preservation process or open the way for future research about the costs of gentrification, particularly in culturally distinct, religious minority neighborhoods. As Bangkok continues to develop and modernize, the case of Ban Yuan Sam Sen will raise awareness about how development can proceed without disturbing the local culture, which makes the city rich in history and culture.

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