

CHAPTER III

THE OVERVIEW OF THAILAND GASTRODIPLOMACY

The gastrodiploamacy of Thailand was started in 2002 in order to increase the number of Thailand restaurant all over the world. Thailand gastrodiploamacy is a new way of Thailand diploamacy as well as to boost branding of the country to the world. Some programs were created by government to implement and support gastrodiploamacy campaign.

A. Thailand overview

1. Geographic

Thailand are mostly highlands, most of northern Thailand consists of mountains. The lowlands are located in the area around the Chao Phraya River flowing to the bay of Thailand. There is a bay of Bangkok to south. The highest mountain in Thailand is Doi Inthanon mountain with a height of 2,565 meters above sea level (Keyes, Hafner, & Keyes, 2017).

The government divides Thailand into six geographic areas. The six geographic areas differ in terms of population, natural resources, natural contours, and levels of social and economic development. Thailand is capitalized in Bangkok, which is also the center of politics, commerce, industry and culture. Politically, Thailand consists of 77 provinces including Bangkok. Provincial naming is tailored to the name of the respective provincial capital.

The area of Thailand reached 513,120 square kilometers, consists of land area 510.890 km², and sea area reached 2230 square kilometers. Make it the world's No. 51 in the world. Slightly smaller than Yemen and slightly wider than Spain. Thailand has a

length of 1,609 km and a width of 805 km. Thailand borders Laos and Myanmar to the north, with Malaysia to the south, with Laos and Cambodia to the east. The Thailand region extends into the Malayan peninsula (Keyes, Hafner, & Keyes, 2017).

2. Politic

Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia that has never been colonized by the West as like other Southeast Asian countries. It is because Thailand does not have abundant natural resources and less human resources. In addition, the Thai leaders were open to Western influence, so it was not difficult for the West to spread its influence. Bangkok is the capital city of Thailand, has a constitutional monarchy government system, led by the King as a protector of Thai Buddhism and the symbol of national unity. The head of government is Prime Minister chosen by parliament and is usually the leader of the majority party in Thailand. Parliament in Thailand uses a two-room system called the National Assembly which are divided into House of Representatives with a term of 4 years and the Senate with a term of 6 years (US Government, 2017). As the only country in Southeast Asia that does not experience Western colonization, it does not mean that Thailand has a stable political condition. This can be seen from a lot of coup d'états that occurred in Thailand because of the power conspiracy between the military and the political elite. There are 15 military coups, nine of them were successful (Samudavanija, 1986). The first coup d'état occurred in 1932 where the military regime emerged to replace the monarchist regime. At that time, the military succeeded in influencing the country's political elite and causing a change of system from democracy to military. Then the coup d'état happened

again in 1947 with the aim that top military officers get senior positions in government. In 1977, there was a coup d'état because of the political oppression by the military, that caused the people to rebel, especially since the issue of democracy was emerging at the time. Along with the development of democracy, in 1991, there was a coup by the military because of disagreement over democratization seen from many political parties and civil society who indirectly tried to lead the military. Although civil society is equally championing democratization, there are still gaps in its government (Samudavanija, 1986). The coup was not only in internal area of Thailand but also in external area. An example is the seizure of regional borders between Thailand and Cambodia. Both countries are fighting for Preah Vihear temple that located between Thailand and Cambodia. Conflict even warms up when UNESCO designated the temple as Cambodia's world heritage (Oktria, 2013).

Thailand seeks to create good relationships with other countries, in Southeast Asia and countries worldwide. In ASEAN, Thailand is cooperating with Indonesia through investment in 2013. In addition, Thailand is also working with Laos through the construction of a bridge between Thailand and Laos used to facilitate trade and transport. Outside of Southeast Asia, Thailand is also trying to establish cooperation, for example with the United States, Thailand formed a joint communique, which United States will help Thailand in case of attack from outside Thailand (Cipto, 2007). Thailand seeks to create good relationships with other countries, in Southeast Asia and countries worldwide. In ASEAN, Thailand is cooperating with Indonesia through investment in 2013. In addition, Thailand is also working with Laos through

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3. Economic

Thailand is a country with well-developed infrastructure, has an open economy system, pro-investment policy, and a strong export industry. Thailand's exports achieve steady growth, most exports are from industrial and agricultural goods, especially electronics, agricultural commodities and processed foods.

Bangkok strives to maintain growth by encouraging domestic consumption and public investment. The unemployment rate, less than 1 percent of the workforce, as one of the lowest unemployed countries in the world. Thailand also attracts nearly 2.5 million migrant workers from neighboring countries. Bangkok implements 300 baht per day according to the minimum wage policy, beginning on January 1, 2013 and using newly designed lower-tax reforms for lower middle-income people (Atase Perdagangan, 2013).

The new foreign policy applied by Thailand, it opens the door for the country to expand its relationship with other countries. Thailand's partnership with China is harmonized by the two countries by mutually enhancing cooperation in all areas and promoting long-term development, increasing cooperation in trade, investment, connectivity, energy, agriculture, and people exchange (Antara, 2013). Southeast Asian countries, for example ASEAN, Thailand participate in

cooperation in term of economic, trade and investment with Indonesia in 2013, economic cooperation relation between two countries has increased (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Indonesia, 2013). Neighboring countries like Laos, Thailand has recently made friendship between them by establishing a "Thailand-Laos Friendship Bridge" that links the Provinces of Nakhon Phanom (Thailand) and Khammouan (Laos). This bridge is very beneficial for the smoothness of Thai trade relations with Laos and as a means of supporting vital transportation (Martinsen, 2009).

Thailand's economic condition is basically increasing in line with the opening cooperation with other countries. In 2012, Thailand's economy grew 6.4% as it was driven by domestic demand. Consumption has increased in line with higher average incomes, both in agricultural and non-agricultural households. This is due to increased production of crops, especially rice, rubber, and cassava which have experienced expansion in the planting area and favorable weather conditions (Kementerian Perdagangan Republik Indonesia, 2013). In 2010, the main export commodities of Thailand are textile products, rice, computers, machinery, and cars. The main export commodities are then exported to various countries, especially all Asian and US countries (Economic Watch, 2010). Thailand's economy is experiencing a glimmer of the 1997 Asian crisis that started from Thailand

4. Social and Culture

In the period of modern Thailand, the culture of Thai society is less open to foreign cultural influences, especially in terms of government, although traditional

cultural values are still firmly held by the people, such as Buddhism, livelihoods, customs and so forth. Hans Hofer pointed out:

“Thailand is still basically a country of villages and towns following traditional ways; a full 80 percent of the population is engaged in agriculture. Tradition still exerts a powerful influence, even in the clamorous streets of capital.” (Hofer, 1991)

Thai culture is usually influenced by several other cultures. Culture from Thailand combines cultural beliefs and customary characteristics. These cultures reflect the customary characteristics and the area known as modern Thailand. In addition, the culture in this country is also heavily influenced from other countries, such as Ancient India, China, Cambodia, and other countries that are gathered in the neighboring cultural history of Southeast Asia.

The culture that related to the Thai people is part of the influence of Buddhist teachings that make up the majority of the beliefs of its inhabitants. Tuong Hung Nguyen pointed out:

"Thai culture is closely associated with Buddhist teachings. One is expected to do tum bun 'good deeds' or make merit in one way or another. Thais are apt to support charities and social activities " (Nguyen)

Buddhism is a national religion of the state that has never been impressed by the colonialism is 95% of the population, and the rest includes Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism. On the issue of belief, Thailand had a conflict with the Muslim community, most of whom are domiciled in the Pattani area. "The problem that is still a

pillar to the Bangkok government is that of ethnic Muslims in southern Thailand, different traditions and religions do make the connection between Thai Muslims and Buddhist ethnic Thai majority always to be overwhelmed by suspicions" (Cipto, 2007). Thailand has a low level of individualism, indicating a commitment within a family. The community fosters a strong relationship where everyone is responsible for their fellow family members. In addition, the worship of their forms of consecration is also applied with ancestor worship which is the link between the 'dead' and 'the living'.

B. History of Thailand Gastrodiplomacy

The origin of the Thailand is traditionally associated with the short-lived kingdom, the kingdom of Sukhothai founded in 1238. The kingdom was then passed into the kingdom of Ayutthaya, established in the mid-14th century and is a greater kingdom than the kingdom of Sukhothai. Thai culture is strongly influenced by Chinese and Indian culture. Thailand's relations with several major European countries began in the 16th century, despite intense pressure, Thailand remained the only Southeast Asian country that was never colonized by Europe (Mishra, 2010).

Previously, Thailand known as Siamese, then changed on to Thailand in 1939, after once switch back to its old name after World War II. Located in Southeast Asia and bordering the Thai Bay between Burma and Cambodia, Thai means free and Land Means Land so that literally Thai means free land. The Thai population has a lineage of Mongoloid races with the majority ethnic Thai and Lao (Peleggi, 2007). The climate and the cultural background in Thailand are tropical and also have a strong cultural history.

Thai culture is influenced largely by China and India, there is also the possibility to Thai cuisine. Thai cuisine is the result of the interaction of transnational going on for many years. About 1400 years ago, Thailand, Burma, Myanmar and China were united. Then the Chinese people immigrating to Southeast Asia from the immigration had an effect on the Thailand community was no exception to the cooking technique (Thai Foodie, 2013). Foreign trade is also an impact to the culinary development of Thailand.

The impact of foreign trade on the Thai culinary development was the discovery of curry in Thai cuisine is the influence of India. In the 15th century a chef who came from Khmer or now known as Cambodia, introduced Indian cuisine in Thailand in the form of coconut milk and curry, then in the 16th century the Portuguese traders brought chili to Thailand. Characteristic of the Thai food is spicy and sweet, but combined with a sour taste salty and bitter (Sunanta, *The Globalization of Thai Cuisine*, 2005).

Thai cuisine is known internationally, although in general its food has a spicy, sour taste and relatively tasteless. There is the philosophy and principles of harmonization of every cuisine. Thai cuisine is the result of acculturation of western and eastern cultures, thus creating the uniqueness of Thai cuisine. Characteristics of Thai cuisine itself depends on who is cooking, for whom the cuisine, where the location of cooking and for what event the dish. Traditionally, a cooking and its members need a long time to prepare the ingredients in cooking, therefore it takes cooperation to cook family meals (Watanasin, 2012).

The Thai cooking process explains the Thai family life, traditional and cultural traditions that reflect the great Thai family, where family members live together in a warm relationship. In cooking, Thai family members have a fair share, they help each other as a team (Lane, n.d.). For example, in cooking curry dishes, children will help with

light work, such as chopping basil leaves and ordinary adults squeezing coconut, chili and spices.

C. Thailand Government Program in Gastrodiplomacy

1. Global Thai

In 2002, the Thai Government Public Relations Department as a representative of the Thai government launched a program called "Global Thai", expected to establish more than 8000 restaurants in 2003. It is also the first Thai government program to integrate diplomacy with culinary elements. In its application "Global Thai" concentrates on improving the quality and technical standards of Thailand's existing overseas restaurants (Rockower P. S., 2012). Of course, according to the standards developed and established by the Thai government, because of that, typical Thai restaurant that spread all over the world became well-known. The restaurants run a direct role in take the public's attention to Thai culture. Thus, many people will know Thailand closer without having to visit it directly.

This Thai culinary globalization will indirectly promote Thai tourism. But beyond that, the importance of implementing this practice is to create relationships and open up greater opportunities for the Thai government to run its national interests. Customers who eat in Thai restaurants not only to fulfil their food needs but can also experience closer to Thailand. The restaurants were designed and decorated with a Thai cultural and aesthetic emphasis. The atmosphere in the restaurant can represent it by displaying classic Thai paintings, craft art, silk curtains, and photo scenery of places in Thailand. Most Thai restaurants also play Thai music while customers wait for traditional Thai-dressed waiters serving food in wooden bowls and using banana

leaves to decorate their dishes. For that reason, the Thai government specifically prioritizes standardization and quality, both in foodstuff, presentation, and even its human resources.

In the business and investment aspects of the Global Thai program it can also open up great opportunities for the Thai government. Although most owners of overseas restaurants such as the United States are not native Thai, it still provides employment opportunities for Thai citizens. In order to obtain the essence and quality of Thailand's specialty, these restaurants will usually recruit immigrant workers from Thailand. Start from choosing staff and experienced chefs from Thailand so their restaurant can give the impression of representing Thailand. On the other hand, many of the main ingredients in recipes that can only be obtained from Thailand directly. Especially in western countries that has different climate with Thailand will be difficult to find tropical fruits and vegetables. This will open the export door for Thai food commodities. This will have a good impact on Thailand's status as an exporting country.

2. Thailand Kitchen of the world

The second campaign was launched to further promote Thai cuisine abroad.

“Thai food and Thai cuisine from the past to the present are distinctive in their charms and characters. The cuisine is a proud heritage of the Thai people that they believe is second to none, and it has been handed down through generations. Apart from the delicate blend of tastes and the rich nutritional value, the elaborate arrangement of Thai food and the decorations with fruit and vegetable carvings make it all the more inviting. At the same time, Thai food and Thai cooking reflect

the wisdom and culture of the Thai nation. Today, Thai food and Thai cuisine stand ready to make Thailand a proud Kitchen of the World.”

The Kitchen of the World program started in 2002, aims to promote Thai food products. By creating awareness about food safety and producing high quality food with competitive prices. The government strategy covers the whole process from determining raw materials, improving product quality and helping distribution. The main strategy of the kitchen of the world program are:

- a. Expand the agriculture and food business
- b. Improving the quality of agriculture with advanced technology production process
- c. Support regional and international cooperation
- d. Support Thai investment overseas especially in building Thai restaurant chain. (Varanyanond, Fostering Food Culture with Innovation: OTOP ang Thai Kitchen to the World, 2013)

One of the goals of this program is to increase the number of Thai restaurants globally, by providing loan capital money, overseeing the establishment of the restaurant, creating a business relationship between a Thai restaurant and food industries of Thailand and helped establish a Thai cooking school to train and supply the chefs of Thailand. this program can be said to succeed because after launching the program the restaurant becomes increasing every year.

The restaurant is obliged to provide and promote Thai cuisine on their menu like pad Thai and Thai green curry. In addition, each restaurant is expected to give the impression of Thai culture through the staff dress, and the decor and atmosphere they provide, including paintings, sculptures, and music. The idea is to create interesting images of Thai geography and culture.

Government officials hope that the program will generate foreign revenues not only from food sales, and services abroad, but also add value to agriculture and food products that have been exported abroad.

In promoting Thai cuisine internationally, the government prioritizes Standardization and quality. One of the government procedures for controlling Thai restaurant standards abroad is the labeling of "Thai Select" to a quality restaurant. Thai Airways International and Tourism Authority of Thailand became the government agency responsible for selecting Thai restaurants abroad. Thai Airways International will transport food items from Thailand to Thai restaurants in the destination country to ensure freshness of food products (Sunanta, *The Globalization of Thai Cuisine*, 2005). Thai Airways International is a national airline in Thailand, where the government is its principal shareholder

D. The Role of Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Thailand THB 20 million (US \$ 1 million) budget for campaign and promoting Thailand cuisine and agricultural products overseas. Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has an important role to play in important role of the campaigns and programs of the Thai government. They actually need a lot of money for this campaign, so Ministry Foreign Affairs invites Thailand Tourism Authority to work together to organize Thai Food Exhibitions overseas. this event is usually done in five-star hotels. The show runs a cooking demo by Thailand chef, and a local chef is invited to try cooking Thailand food. To be more interesting, the event was held with various dances from Thai dancer, in addition this was done to promote the culture of Thailand (Sunanta, *The Globalization of Thai Cuisine*, 2005).