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The Identity of Tai-Yai Ethnic to Promote Community Tourism in Mae Hong Son Province. Thailand

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Abstract--- This study of the identity of Tai-Yai ethnic to promote community tourism in Mae Hong Son province is participatory action research that aimed to find a format for building a learning center for Tai-Yai identity and to establish a network of Tai-Yai identity conservation groups that is linked to community tourism in Mae Hong Son Province. This study focused on the way of life and identity of Tai-Yai people in five districts in Mae Hong Son province include Pai, Pang Mapha, Muang, Khun Yuam, and Mae La Noi. The results of the research were as follows: the Tai-Yai communities maintain their way of life, the concept of belief in the supernatural, and Buddhism beliefs, pass on their identity to the younger generation, and transfer their identity to the general public. The Tai-Yai community of Pambok village has the potential to build a learning center for the Tai-Yai identity at the community level by linking with the Tai-Yai Education Center, Mae Hong Son province which is a "FICES" model (Sustainable Education Community Identity of Tai-Yai Faith).

Keywords---Buddhism beliefs, community tourism, identity, Tai-Yai ethnic.

Introduction

Thailand has Shan immigrants to settle in Mae Hong Son, Chiang Rai, and Chiang Mai provinces for about 150 years. But in India, in Assam state, there are Shan people who migrated from Burma to settle in the area for over 600 years. Laos in the north is home to the Shan people who call themselves the North Shan for many generations. It can be seen that the Shan people now live in a wide area from the Indian state of Assam, northern Burma, south of China, northern Thailand, and Laos. It has been more than 150 years since the Tai Yai people came to live in the area of Mae Hong Son Province. From the telling evidence of "Jaray" or the learner from the old Shan people in Mae Hong Son Province and from studying the history of Mae Hong Son, it is said that the Tai Yai people who

came to live in Mae Hong Son migrated from northeastern Burma, Shan State in the area of Mok-Kai city, Muang Nai city, Lan Khe city, and other cities including crossing through the Salween River basin to live in Mae Hong Son Province around 1831, which corresponds to the reign of King Rama III of Rattanakosin.

The Shan people in the past used to cultivate seasonal crops and once they had harvested their produce, they returned to the Shan State. They did this until 1950 then migrated to settle at Pang Mu village, Pang Mu Sub-district, Mueang District, Mae Hong Son Province. The first generation of Shan people made a living by planting crops and farming. In the year 1850, Chiang Mai sends Chao Kaew Muang Ma to catch wild elephants to train for use. Chao Kaew Muang Ma gathered scattered Shan people to live together in the present area of Mae Hong Son City. Around 1874, the Chiang Mai governor saw that Mae Hong Son and Pang Moo village were already inhabited by many people and should be upgraded to a city. Therefore, it was established as a city of Mae Hong Son and set the Shan people named "Chan Kalay" to be the first governor with the title of Phaya Singhanatracha and there were 3 more governors until the state administration system was changed to Mae Hong Son Province (Tantinipankul et al., 2017).

The Shan people in Mae Hong Son live on the basis of culture, tradition, religion, belief, and traditional way of life which has always been a distinctive identity for their own group The Shan people have a strict adherence to Buddhism in which the belief in Buddhism makes the identity of the Shan people stable and has a continuous cultural tradition according to Buddhist beliefs. The researcher believes that the searching and gathering wisdom and unique identity of the Shan people, transmitting through the younger generation, establishing a learning center for local wisdom and identity of the Shan people, creating a network of conservation groups, and carry on the wisdom and identity of at least 5 communities in order to connect to community tourism will encourage people to exchange and learn more about the way of life of the Shan ethnic group and will benefit community tourism, create jobs opportunity, generate income, and resulting in communities being able to maintain the sustainability (Mowforth & Munt, 2015; Nzama et al., 2005; Ishii, 2012).

This study will respond to strategy 1 of Mae Hong Son Province which is to promote and develop eco-quality tourism, lifestyle, and health in accordance with the first objective, to develop eco-quality tourism, lifestyle, health and increase tourism income and the third objective is to improve the quality of life of people to have a better quality of life. Mae Hong Son Province has the main income from tourism, especially ecotourism, cultural tourism, and historical tourism. In the past, government agencies in the province have tried to help develop eco-tourism and cultural tourism by using the power of civil society to drive community tourism by focusing on cultural tourism that reflects the charm, beauty, simplicity and has a distinctive identity of the Shan group and various ethnic groups in the province in order to create a strong society and a strong economic base (Oakley & Marsden, 1984; Silapacharanan & Mongkolpradit, 2012).

Research Objectives

- To find a model for establishing a learning center on the identity of the Shan people in Mae Hong Son province.
- To establish a network of preserving and inheriting the Tai Yai identity to link to community tourism in Mae Hong Son province.

Reviews of Literatures

Identity is the unique qualitative distinction that appears in a person, community, or society. Each individual has unique characteristics that appear in the form of concepts, way of thinking, or way of acting that is expressed (Sasong, 2021). Identity is, therefore, a matter of understanding and perception of who we are and the others. It is how we form, exist, perceive ourselves, and how others perceive us with a social process to create and inherit identity. This also depends on the context of social relationships with other people or groups of people (Binprathan, 2019). The identity of the Tai Yai ethnic group in Mae Hong Son Province is unique and able to attract tourists to learn and practice in many dimensions such as beliefs, way of life and attire, etc. The Shan identity can therefore be upgraded and developed into sustainable community-based tourism. Community-based tourism is a form of tourism that can sustainably develop tourist attractions (Nathalang, 2012). There are various levels of sustainable tourism from local to international. However, community-based tourism is small-scale tourism management. The principle of community tourism is that community participation plays a key role in decision-making in tourism-related activities for the development of community-based tourism (Pornprasit, 2020). In conclusion, community-based tourism is the management of tourism within the community and surrounding tourist attraction areas resulting from joint thinking, co-driving, and jointly managed by the community in all dimensions in order to become successful (Jermsittiparsert, 2017). The main components of community-based tourism management are 1) civil society and 2) participation. Civil society means that a certain number of people have a common purpose, ideals, or beliefs in certain matters. There is communication within the community or there may be group formation to create generosity within the community (Wasee, 1998). Civil society is a concept that aims to support the social or people's sector, strengthening and improving social equilibrium, which is known as a harmonious society that must be developed to strengthen the community. Participation is the way to create opportunities for all members of the community to jointly help and influence the process of development activities and equitably benefit from such development (Patton, 1990). In conclusion, the goals of public participation are in terms of values, beliefs, cultural traditions, engagement, reinforcement, opportunity, capacity, supports, and anticipation of the collective needs of community members or that society.

Research Framework

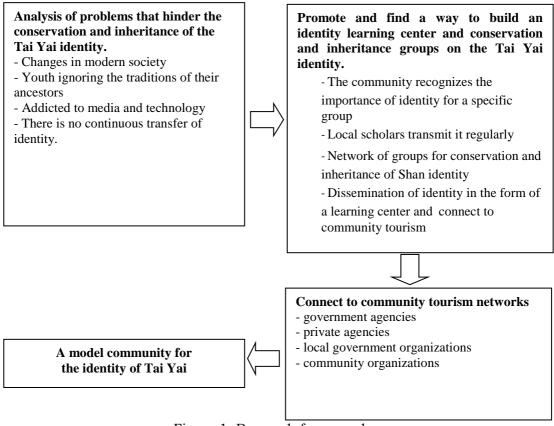


Figure 1. Research framework

Research Methodology

This is participatory action research by researching 5 phases as follows:

- Phase 1: Visit the research area to meet with community leaders to study
 the community context by discussing with villagers to find issues and
 design a data collection method by using in-depth interviews and small
 group discussions.
- Phase 2: The data were gathered and analyzed by focusing on the main target areas of the 5 Shan communities in Pai, Pang Mapha, Mueang, Khun Yuam, and Mae La Noi Districts, Mae Hong Son Province.
- Phase 3: Conduct interviews and group discussions to analyze the potential of the community in the conservation and inheritance of the Shan identity. Form a networking group, exchange ideas, opinions, brainstorm to find a model to build a learning center on the Shan identity, establish a network of groups to preserve and carry on the Shan identity, and link to effective community tourism that will lead to a model community of Shan identity.
- Phase 4: All data were analyzed to create an action plan on conservation and inheritance of the Shan identity, guidelines for building a learning

- center on the identity of Tai Yai, connecting ethnic community tourism, and write a complete research report.
- Phase 5: Transfer research results to the community and present academic articles in academic forums or publish in national or international journals.

Research instrument

The researcher designed an interview form to collect information about the potential of the community to preserve, transmit, carry on the concepts, beliefs, religions, cultures, traditions, and lifestyles of the Shan people which is the distinctive identity (Sethabouppha & Kane, 2005; Masel et al., 2012; Xue et al., 2017). The research method was conducted by organizing group discussions and in-depth interviews with the target audience. The results of the analysis were divided into 3 parts. The first part is an analysis of the internal environment using variables such as management, readiness, potential, opportunity, and identity of the community. The second part is about the external environment which includes the following external factors analysis variables: economy, technology, law, politics, infrastructure, social, cultural, and physical. The third part is the external operating environment which uses the stakeholder's variables such as local government agencies, private sectors, local NGOs, and competitors (Trupp & Sunanta, 2017; Van den Berghe et al., 1984).

Data analysis

- Secondary data analysis uses content analysis methods of concepts, theories, and related research papers to formulate a research conceptual framework and interview questions.
- The analysis of primary data was the conducting of an interview form and small group discussion together with the observation of activities to paraphrase, analyze and synthesize descriptively, write a descriptive analysis and write a complete research report

Findings

From the research data collection in 5 Shan communities covering 5 districts in Mae Hong Son province, the results of the research according to the objectives are summarized as follows:

A model for establishing a learning center on the identity of the Shan people

The Shan community has concepts and principles for building a community with a distinctive identity by preserving and transmitting patterns of cultural inheritance, traditions, rituals, ways of life, identity, and ethnicity with the management process of community leaders, village sage, and village committees. It is conveyed through youth groups to create love, awareness, and cherish in their own identity (Khlaikaew, 2015; Wood, 1984; Yang & Wall, 2009; Lefebure, 2019). From the results of the research, it was found that the Shan community can create a learning center on the identity of the Shan people at the community level by connecting to the Tai Yai Education Center in Muang district, Mae Hong Son Province. Moreover, the Shan community of Pam Bok village has all the

qualifications and potential to establish a learning center on the identity of the Shan people and "Model community for Shan identity" according to the "FICES" (Sustainable Education Community Identity of Tai-Yai Faith) model.

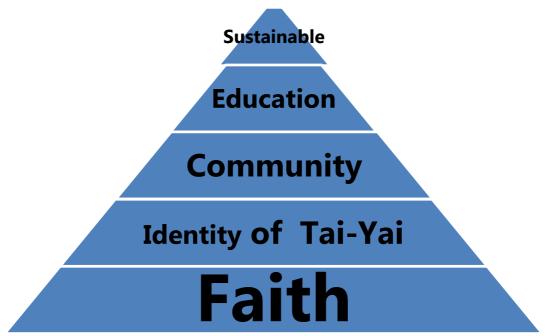


Figure 2. FICES model: Sustainable education community identity of Tai-Yai Faith

Source: Sasong (2021).

From the analysis of the people's potential in the research area, it was found that the Shan community members were enthusiastic and participate in the creation and promotion of conservation, promotion, the transmission of the Tai Yai culture, and community-based tourism for sustainability. Government agencies and the private sector have worked together to develop the potential of people in the community to be ready for community-based tourism management, maintenance of tourist attractions including welcoming and taking care of tourists. However, support and development still lack integration and linkage for efficiency in all sectors and lack of clear networking for tourism management between communities (Fedorchenko et al., 2021; Srinok et al., 2021; Wesnawa, 2017).

Establishment of a network of groups to preserve and inherit the Tai Yai identity to connect to community tourism in Mae Hong Son province

Researcher, Shan community in the research area, both government and private agencies have jointly established a network committee of the Tai Yai conservation and inheritance group to connect to community tourism in Mae Hong Son province which consists of representatives of community leaders who have been selected as the committee by consensus as follows: Miss Sukira Suwattanamet

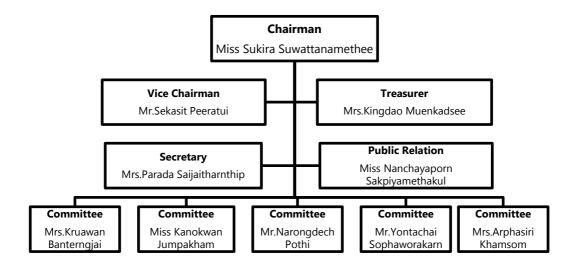


Figure 3. Community network committee of Shan ethnic groups to promote community-based tourism

Source: Sasong (2021).

Conclusion

The Shan people settled in Asia, especially Myanmar and have migrated to settle in the northern region of Thailand in Mae Hong Son Province. The Shan people have continually preserved and inherited traditional beliefs which become a distinctive identity. The Shan people worship the spirits of ancestors and the village spirits which are worshiped annually (Amerta et al., 2018; Gede Budasi & Wayan Suryasa, 2021). They also believe in sacred things, superstitions, witchcraft, and have firm faith in Buddhism as we can see from the activities like attending temples, making merit, keeping precepts, continuing cultural traditions and rituals according to Buddhist beliefs continuously and transfer the culture, traditions, and Buddhist rituals to the younger generation. In addition, the Shan people have a simple lifestyle. There is generosity in both housing and livelihood that depend on nature. Simple "Shan House" houses were built using bamboo or other wood found in the forest nearby. The roof is thatched with leaves or grass. They collect vegetables, herbs, and fruits in the forest as the ingredients that emphasize harmony with nature. The dress is also unique from the Tai Yai clothing which will be visible in various important festivals and rituals. All of these are consistent with the research by Sasong (2021), who conducted research on sustainable tourism management model to build community strength in Mae Hong Son Province. It was found that the community still maintains the distinctive identity of the Shan ethnic group in terms of 1) way of life that has been preserved and has been passed on through generations. 2) Beliefs and cultures that pay respect to the village guardian spirit, Shan dress, and inheriting Shan ordination traditions, etc., and 3) tourist attractions such as Kho Gusoh Bamboo bridge, Lod Cave, and agro-tourism like organic garlic of Naplajaad village, etc. There was an establishment of a community-based tourism management network for further information and knowledge sharing.

Suggestions

- Policy recommendation
 Community networks, government,
 - Community networks, government, and private sectors should be integrated to jointly drive and develop the Shan community in all dimensions and be continually formulated as an annual strategic plan of Mae Hong Son Province.
- Recommendation for further study
 - Some communities still lack to inherit and pass on the unique cultural way of the Shan people to younger generations. Therefore, research should be done on the issue of the transition of Shan ethnic identity in the modern technological era.
 - There should be research on ethnographic issues for building relationships and security in Mae Hong Son Province.

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