Sustainable Cultural Heritage Conservation: Sangkhlaburi District, Kanchanaburi Province

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาสืบค้น (1) ประวัติศาสตร์อำเภอสังขละบุรี จังหวัดกาญจนบุรี (2) คุณค่าที่หลากหลายทั้งสัมผัสได้และสัมผัสไม่ได้ของสถานที่ตั้งทางประวัติศาสตร์ (3) ทรัพยากรทางวัฒนธรรมที่สำคัญ (4) วิวัฒนาการของการท่องเที่ยว (5) คำแนะนำสำหรับวิธีการในการอนุรักษ์สถาปัตยกรรมทางวัฒนธรรม นักวิจัยใช้วิธีการศึกษาชาติพันธุ์วรรณาผ่านการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก และลงภาคสนามเพื่อรวบรวมข้อมูล การเก็บข้อมูลปฐมภูมิมุ่งเน้นที่ชุมชนมอญ หมู่ 2 อำเภอสังขละบุรี เพื่อวิเคราะห์วัฒนธรรมและประเพณีมอญ ข้อมูลทุติยภูมิคือส่วนใหญ่มาจากหนังสือ วารสารที่เกี่ยวข้องและแหล่งข้อมูลทางอิเล็กทรอนิกส์

การศึกษาพบว่า (1) ประวัติศาสตร์อำเภอสังขละบุรีเป็นเมืองชายแดนในจังหวัดกาญจนบุรี กองทัพพม่าใช้เป็นเส้นทางข้ามระหว่างไทยกับเมียนมาร์ที่ด่านเจดีย์สามองค์เพื่อเคลื่อนย้ายกองทัพตั้งแต่สมัยอยุธยาจนถึงสมัยรัตนโกสินทร์ เมียนมาร์มีประวัติศาสตร์ยาวนานในเรื่องความขัดแย้งทางชาติพันธุ์ ตลอดจนกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์พยายามเพื่อจะได้รับอิสรภาพเป็นของกลุ่มตนเอง ส่งผลให้ครอบครัวมอญหนีและอพยพสู่ประเทศไทยตั้งแต่ปี พ.ศ. 2491 หลวงพ่ออุตตะมะเป็นผู้นำทางศาสนาได้ช่วยคนมอญอพยพมาสู่ประเทศไทย หลวงพ่อได้เจรจากับรัฐบาลไทยเพื่อยกที่ดินเป็นที่พักอาศัยสำหรับมอญพลัดถิ่น

(2) คุณค่าสถาปัตยกรรมทางวัฒนธรรมถูกนำเสนอผ่านทางสถาปัตยกรรมและการตกแต่งสิ่งก่อสร้างของมอญตลอดจนงานศิลปะที่เกี่ยวข้อง ส่วนใหญ่เป็นการสร้างบ้าน วัด และสะพานไม้ เป็นหลักฐานว่ามีวัฒนธรรมเจริญรุ่งเรืองของสถาปัตยกรรมและศิลปะมอญ ซึ่งเตือนใจให้นึกถึงอดีตที่ผ่านมา ถึงแม้ว่ารัฐมอญจะเป็นเพียงการถูกจินตนาการ อิทธิพลทางพุทธศาสนากลายเป็นคุณค่าที่สำคัญของคนมอญและมีบทบาทต่อเนื่องไม่สามารถมีสิ่งอื่นใดแทรกแซงได้ รัฐมอญเปลี่ยนความเชื่อมานับถือพุทธศานานิกายเถรวาทเป็นจุดยืนที่แสดงอย่างชัดเจนใน

ประวัติศาสตร์

(3) คนมอญมีทรัพยากรทางวัฒนธรรมเป็นของตนเอง ได้แก่ ภาษามอญ การแต่งกาย อาหาร ดนตรี การเต้นรำ และประเพณี คนมอญสื่อสารระหว่างกันจะใช้ภาษามอญในชีวิตประจำวัน คนมอญแต่งกายด้วยเสื้อเชิ้ตสีขาวและโสร่งสีแดงเปรียบเป็นชุดประจำชาติของมอญ การแสดงเต้นรำแบบมอญถูกแสดงขึ้นอยู่เสมอโดยเฉพาะในเทศกาลลอยกระทง และวันเกิดหลวงพ่ออุตตะมะ

(4) หลังจากที่ปฏิบัติการตามแผนงาน “Unseen Thailand” โดยมุ่งให้ความสำคัญกับวัดวังวิเวการามเก่าที่จมน้ำในชุมชน กลุ่มทัวร์หลายต่อหลายกลุ่มได้มาเยี่ยมชมสถานที่ แต่อย่างไรก็ตามการท่องเที่ยวทำให้เกิดผลกระทบมากมายทั้งในแง่บวกและแง่ลบให้แก่ชุมชน ตลอดจนวัฒนธรรมพื้นถิ่น ระบบเศรษฐกิจและสังคม ผลกระทบในแง่บวก ส่วนใหญ่มากจากธุรกิจใหม่เกิดขึ้นและการจ้างงานที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการท่องเที่ยวในชุมชนและบริเวณโดยรอบ ในแง่ลบคือส่วนใหญ่มาจากการพัฒนาที่มากเกินไปในชุมชนเพื่อเป็นการสนับสนุนอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวโดยปราศจากการวางแผนและการควบคุมที่เหมาะสมที่จะให้เกิดความยั่งยืนในอนาคต ความสามารถในการรองรับส่วนใหญ่ในช่วงฤดูการท่องเที่ยวเป็นประเด็นสำคัญสำหรับสถานที่ ยิ่งไปกว่านั้นอัตราค่าครองชีพที่สูงขึ้นโดยผ่านการท่องเที่ยวเป็นการเพิ่มต้นทุนของสินค้าและบริการทุกอย่างในชุมชน ผู้ประกอบการและผู้ค้าบางรายในภาคส่วนการท่องเที่ยวผู้ซึ่งเป็นบุคคลภายนอกชุมชนเป็นผู้ทำให้สินค้าและบริการได้ราคาขายมากขึ้น ถูกขายให้แก่นักท่องเที่ยวโดยปราศจากความจำเป็น ความแท้จริงของชุมชนกำลังเกิดความเสี่ยงโดยการท่องเที่ยว

(5) เนื่องจากสังเกตชุมชนต้นแบบจากบ้านหล่อชา จังหวัดเชียงราย และบ้านจำรุง จังหวัดระยอง แนวคิดการท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชน และแนวคิดเศรษฐกิจพอเพียงช่วยสร้างภูมิคุ้มกันได้ในระดับหนึ่งในการต่อต้านกับอิทธิพลภายนอก และส่งผลระยะยาวให้กับชุมชนเกิดความยั่งยืนและอยู่รอดได้ ชุมชนมอญมีศักยภาพสูงในการพัฒนาให้เป็นแหล่งท่องเที่ยวสำหรับการท่องเที่ยวทางวัฒนธรรม เพื่อที่

ว่าสมาชิกในชุมชนมอญสามารถลงทุนเวลาในการวางแผนกลยุทธ์การท่องเที่ยวทางวัฒนธรรม และสร้างความตระหนักในการใช้ทรัพยากรที่มีอยู่ให้เกิดคุณค่า ผลประโยชน์ของสิ่งเหล่านี้สามารถสร้างรายได้ที่แน่นอนและชุมชนสามารถพึ่งตนเองได้มากขึ้น

Abstract

The study investigates: (1) the history of Sangkhlaburi district in Kanchanaburi province, (2) the various values both tangible and intangible relating to the historic settings, (3) important cultural resources and (4) the evolution of tourism; it concludes with (5) recommendations for a cultural heritage conservation approach. The researcher used an ethnographic methodology through in-depth interview and related fieldwork for collecting data. Primary data collection focused on the Mon community, Moo 2 in Sangkhlaburi district, in order to analyze the Mon culture and tradition. The secondary data is mostly derived from relevant books, journals and electronic resources.

The study found that (1) Sangkhlaburi district's history is that of a border town in Kanchanaburi province. The Burmese army used the Thai-Burma border at the Three Pagodas Pass to move their army, from the Ayutthaya period to the Rattanagosin period. Burma has a long history of ethnic conflicts as ethnic groups have tried to gain their own independence. As a result, Mon families escaped and have evacuated to Thailand since 1948. Luang Phor Uttama who was an old religious leader helped Mon people to migrate into Thailand. He negotiated with the Thai government to provide residential land for the diaspora Mon.

(2) The value of cultural heritage is presented through the architecture and decoration of the Mon buildings as well as their

relevant artworks mostly in housing, the temple, and a wooden bridge as evidence of a civil flourish of Mon architecture and art reminiscent of the previous, albeit imagined, Mon state. The Buddhist influence became a core value of the Mon villagers and has continued its role uninterrupted. The Mon nation converted to Theravada Buddhism at a very early point in their history.

(3) Mon villagers have their own cultural resources such as Mon language, dressing, cuisine, music, dance, and traditions. Mon villagers communicate to each other with their Mon language on a daily basis. They also use white shirts and red sarongs as their national clothes. The Mon dance drama is always played here especially at the Loy Krathong festival and the birthday of Luang Phor Uttama.

(4) After a launch of the Unseen Thailand Program with a focus on the community's unusual sunken temple, more and more group tours have been visiting the place. However, tourism created many impacts, both positive and negative, on the locals as well as on their indigenous culture, economic system, and society. The positive impact is mainly from the emergence of new businesses and their generated employment relevant to the tourism in the community and its surroundings. In contrast, the negative impact is mostly from an overdevelopment in the community to support the tourism industry without appropriate planning and control for a sustainable future. Carrying capacity mostly in the high season is the main issue for the site. Moreover, the higher living standard achieved through tourism has been raising the costs of all products and services in the

community. Some entrepreneurs and traders in the tourism sector who are external people from outside the community have been maximizing the markup of their products and services being sold to the tourists without necessity. Authenticity of the community is thereby being threatened by tourism.

(5) According to best practice observed in Ban Lorcha, Chiengrai province and Ban Jum Rung, Rayong province, the community-based tourism concept and the sufficient economy concept could help create a degree of immunity against outside influences, resulting in long-term survival and more sustainable communities. The Mon community has high potential to be developed as a tourist destination for cultural tourism so that the members of the Mon community should invest their time into planning cultural tourism strategies and utilizing their existing resources consciously, the benefits of which could be stable incomes and more a self-reliant community.

Statement and Significant of the Problem

Sangkhlaburi is one of the eight districts in the province of Kanchanaburi. It is in the far north-west corner of Kanchanaburi province, approximately 220 kilometers from Kanchanaburi city. It has played an important role in the history of relations between Thailand and Burma for it houses a diversity of ethnic groups such as Karen and Mon, who are refugee communities from Myanmar. The Mon is an ethnic group from Myanmar. They have been fighting for years with the Burmese government for an independent state (MUL, 1997,

p. 4). They migrated to Thailand because of their fear for their own lives. The Thai government granted them permission to stay legally in Sangkhlaburi, in a place especially provided to them. The Mon village of Sangkhlaburi is the biggest refugee community in Thailand, the so called "Diaspora Mon Village" (accommodating a minority ethnic group of migrant origin which maintains sentimental or material links with its land of origin). For over two decades the Mon ethnic group in Sangkhlaburi has been one of the many tourist destinations in the region (Cholthira, et al. 2001, p. 280). Many tourists have come to visit this place just to have a view of the Mon way of life. Because of this emerging opportunity to become a tourist destination, many sectors of the economy have encouraged investment for the development and sustaining of this cultural tourism.

Despite the positive impact on tourism brought about by the Mon ethnic group of Sangkhlaburi, there has been a deep concern regarding the conservation and sustaining of the cultural heritage in what is a representative community of this great culture. The higher living standard, which has benefited from tourism, has been making costs of all products and services in the community soar to higher levels. Some entrepreneurs and traders in the tourist sector, who are external people from outside the community, have been maximizing the markup of their products and services being marketed to the tourists. A domino effect caused by the high markup from the external people is now spreading into the community and its surrounding areas. The local people as well as the tourists are required to pay for

those high-priced products and services at the same prices. With little effect on the tourists who mostly gain higher incomes in comparison with Mon villagers, the local consumers who are low-paid earners undoubtedly become victims of this inappropriate system, while those external entrepreneurs and traders are the only group who gain from these gaps. It is hoped that this study will provide answers and ideas on how different sectors of the economy can help, save and sustain this cultural tourism. It is also hoped that the study will be beneficial to the Mon ethnic group themselves, to improve their welfare and well-being in the preservation of their own culture.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To explore the history and general condition of Sangkhlaburi district, Kanchanaburi province, in order to assess its cultural heritage significance and values and to understand better the Sangkhlaburi community's traditional way of life.

2. To examine various values both tangible and intangible relating to the historic settings in Sangkhlaburi district, Kanchanaburi province.

3. To explore important cultural resources such as tradition, activity, or way of life that are disappearing from the Sangkhlaburi community.

4. To study the evolution of tourism in Sangkhlaburi district, Kanchanaburi province.

5. To recommend a cultural heritage conservation approach as a key component of a strategy that has the best likelihood of achieving sustainable tourism development of Sangkhlaburi district, Kanchanaburi province.

Scope of Study

This research focuses on the study of Moo 2, Nongloo Tambon, Sangkhlaburi District, Kanchanaburi Province.

Research Methodology

This study uses an ethnographic approach for seeking a detailed, comprehensive description of Mon people and the culture of the Mon community. The researcher paid careful attention to observations of lived behavior of the Mon people in the community under study. The ethnographic method involved the collection of information about social relationships, beliefs, and values of a Mon community. A variety of data collection techniques associated with ethnographic research were employed; especially, this involved participant observation in the field (Michael A. 2007, pp.14-15). The ethnographic fieldworker becomes a participant observer who is maintaining an ongoing association with the Mon people. The researcher came to be a participating member of the Mon group for one year as a participant observer. The research was also conducted through a qualitative method using in-depth interviewing as the most appropriate instrument to gather information and collect data from

the Mon people in the Sangkhlaburi community who are themselves involved in the area.

Interviews are designed for the primary purpose of describing real culture and traditions in sequence to an understanding of the significance of factors in the conservation of the Sangkhlaburi district. The researcher used in-depth interviews to provide information about problems of the site, the evolution of tourism, the important cultural resources, cultural heritage significance and values of the Sangkhlaburi community's traditional way of life. This method variously covered in-depth interviews of the owners of the areas both private and government, the Sangkhlaburi Administration, local government organizations in Sangkhlaburi district, visitors and the Sangkhlaburi community. The organizing of the community meeting and the interview questions were designed in an open-ended format to encourage interviewees to freely offer comments and perspectives about suitable management processes for the conservation of the Sangkhlaburi district. The open-ended interviewing is typical of ethnographic research. There were, however, planned questions posed that served as a guide for the main points of the conversation.

Therefore, there are two types of data collection, relating to primary data and secondary data. Collecting primary data was from organizing the community meeting, survey, observations, taking photographs, recording videos and the interviews. Secondary data related to various kinds of documents, such as articles, related researches, ideas and concepts of community-based tourism,

sustainable tourism, tourism planning, sufficiency economy theory and the concept of cultural tourism.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Significance

The Mon village of Sangkhlaburi is the largest diaspora Mon community in Thailand, with unique architectural and artistic works as well as social practices and culture surviving from the previous Mon State, standing to represent its spiritual independence. According to a diagrammatic model of the Burra Charter Process (Australia ICOMOS 2000, pp. 10-13), the values of this heritage place are listed as follows.

Historic Value

The architecture and decoration of the Mon buildings as well as their relevant artworks, mostly represented in the housing, temple and wooden bridge, are vital evidence to present a flourishing Mon architecture and art surviving from the previous Mon state. The forms of the current buildings and works support and represent the Mon nation and their cultural independence wherever they might be. Ethnically, the Mon are primarily associated with the historical kingdoms of Dvaravati. Up until the 9th century, outposts of Mon culture continued to spread very far east, including into modern Thailand and the Isan Plateau such as Lampang and Khon Kaen (current provinces in Thailand). They were one of the earliest distinct groups to occupy Myanmar, moving into the area as early as the 10th century. Their cultural influence still exists throughout Thailand and Myanmar these days.

The architecture and decoration also present a connection to the historical relationships between the artistic works of various periods. The application of wood materials to construct the housing in the vernacular style together with the adaptation of the 'ginger bread' and stained glass, deriving from old European styles, are visually identified to explain how a unique art of the Mon nation was gradually established and how it has blended, developed, and continued its values to this day.

The religious culture expressed in the Mon village lead by Luang Phor Uttama is a main driver to encourage the Mon people in valuing and adapting their Buddhist practices into their daily life coherently and peacefully, ever since the village was settled. Factually, the Mon nation converted to Theravada Buddhism at a very early point in their history. They have been practicing Theravada Buddhism continuously for a longer period than any other religious communities in South East Asia. The Buddhist influence became a core value of Mon village life and continued its role unbroken.

Aesthetic Value

Mon villagers still value and conserve their artistic traditions, particularly for the works relevant to their beliefs. The shrine of the Buddha image separately built as the sacred area with full decoration outside the house is an interesting example. The majority of main pictures on the Mon's shrine would consist of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Luang Phor Uttama and the image of Lord Buddha. All

old and new houses must follow this tradition strictly. The work is becoming another masterpiece of the Mon art presenting to the visitors nowadays.

Influence of Mon, Burmese, Thai, and Indian arts over the religious buildings and works at the Wat Wang Temple is visually attracting many domestic and international visitors to visit the place. The replica of the Buddha Gaya Pagoda fully followed the Indian traditions while its surrounding settings followed a mixture of Burmese and Thai arts. The preaching hall, ordination hall, vihara, and monk's quarters were skillfully built and decorated with a mixture of Mon and Thai arts. There are Buddhist images and statues of the deity creatively built in a Burmese style. The Buddha image made of white marble housed inside the vihara reflects immaculateness and peacefulness, creating a pleasing atmosphere for the visitors. One of the new vihara was built to house this huge Buddha image made of marble. The Buddha image inside the ordination hall is cast in the style similar to Chinnarat Buddha, one of the most beautiful Buddha images recently housed at Wat Phra Sri in Phitsanulok province. The image is in a pattern of Mara Wichai (*conquering the demon*).

Spiritual Value

Wat Wang Wiwekaram symbolizes the central spirit of Buddhism in the community. In addition, Mon villagers consider Luang Phor Uttama as their spiritual center and cultural hero, expressing the unity and unification of the Mon people in the village. Even after his

death, he is still highly revered and valued as an international hero among Mon, Thai, and Burmese. The temple and his body inside the urn encourage religious sentiments among Buddhists and national pride among all Mon people in the community.

The sunken temple of the old Wat Wang Wiwekaram is another spiritual area in the view of the local community as well as that of visitors. The locals can experience a sense of nostalgia for their religious activities during the old days here, while the visitors can experience the spiritual values of these old remnants situated underwater, accompanied by memories of their previous functions and stories behind them.

Social Value

There are many traditions and ethnic customs constituting the living culture of the Mon village and its settings on a daily, monthly, or yearly basis, for example relating to the daily life of the villagers and Buddhist monks, Songkran and Loy Krathong festivals, and other occasional religious ceremonies. These are parts of the original setting of the Mon village that have been traditionally created, developed, and kept from the past to the present, as intangible heritage. Socially, their traditional culture always requires full and regular participation from all members of the community. So far, conservation has been successfully achieved under the robust support of Luang Phor Uttama, as the community leader. But for these present days without him, Wat Wang Wiwekaram, the last dwelling place of his body, his

thoughts, and his spirit, is becoming the only one focal point of the Mon village, conveying the community's cultural, religious, social, and spiritual beliefs in concert with the relationships between the temple and the community.

The comprehensive significance of the Mon village of Sangkhlaburi and its settings naturally attract both domestic and international visitors if they have opportunities to visit there. During the visit, they would perceive not only the tangible heritage from the place, but also the intangible heritage from the traditional living culture around the place. This tourism area also displays various unique features conveying special experiences to the visitors historically, artistically, spiritually and socially. It is attractive places to spread the tourist load from Kanchanaburi city as well as other overcrowded waterfalls surrounding the city. If the visitors were in Kanchanaburi and wanted to spend their leisure differently, this is the best place to be visited.

However, without the presence of Luang Phor Uttama as the cultural leadership of the Mon village, who had always guided the local community to preserve their cultural heritage wherever they were, all locals would be in difficulty to maintain their ethnic identities against the outside environment from now on. The uncertainty of change in society and culture of the Mon village is being discussed by the locals. Such ever-changing transformations of the society and culture tend to affect a new generation in particular, at a fast, intensified pace.

Except for the old generation who were born in Myanmar before they migrated to Sangkhlaburi, a tendency to maintain the cultural identities in the middle-level generation is gradually diminishing. Perhaps strong cooperation between the locals of all generations in the community would be the only solution for their sustainable future (Jongmeewasin, S. 2006, pp. 15-20).

Conclusion from the Findings

Almost two years of living with villagers to conduct the field research not only made this researcher deeply understand the Mon ideology in Sangkhlaburi district, but also had her gain much useful information from villagers resulting from the establishment of mutual trust. The observations and findings from the field research were to lead to the discovery of how different the identity of Mon is from that of the Thai or other ethnic groups. The Mon's sense of belongingness and quality of self-esteem were formed by themselves within Mon society. However, their identity and customs might be only temporally sustained, changed overtime and finally transformed into a new, different tradition, especially in terms of customs, clothes, language, food and way of life. These cultural heritages were always developed through the sharing and similarities among group members. However, today Mon people have inadvertently accepted Thai culture, and inevitably applied it in their lifestyle. It can be stated that a cultural heritage is always changing in accordance with its ever changing social context. Therefore, ethnicity, together with its defining differences, is

the most significant social resource that should be preserved.

Previously, because of their lack of Thai citizenship, Mon people in Sangkhlaburi district were labeled as marginal people, as they had migrated to Thailand since 1948. The identity of Mon people can be established through language, music, cuisines, traditions, cultures, ways of life, and performances. These cultural heritages should be preserved, or they would constantly change overtime and be lost definitely. According to the collected data, religion, educational systems and the tourism industry were commonly seen as a solution to preserve the Mon's cultural heritage.

Mon people were the first group to introduce Buddhism to Thailand (Fredholm, 1993: 19), and religion plays a significant role to raise human's awareness of the truth about the world and life, and to explain certain phenomenon, thus defining the way of life. With the same beliefs, Mon people see that the religion is an important part of their society. When the people are joined in rites or rituals, solidarity will be established, and thereby a means for their survival. Therefore, it seems that religion is responsible for mobilizing disciplinary and preparatory functions.

Symbol worship is a way that a human tries to link him or herself to something that he cannot explain. Faiths and beliefs were reflected through symbols, customs and legends. These could be in books, expressions or performances that reflect the way of living and believing. Rites are long established ceremonies prescribed by their traditions. The objectives of some rites are to let them express

cohesive feelings and collective emotions, and to encourage the members to respect the customs. In the other word, rites can help promote the unity of members within the society and, at the same time, improve spiritual health.

Consequently, religious practices and beliefs could lead to the Mon people's gatherings to worship and to show their faith together. In addition, their Buddhism activities are usually by themselves in their own unique Mon style. For example, Mon people believe in house and guardian spirits; therefore, each family normally pays homage to their house spirit twice a year, one after the end of Buddhist Lent and the other one during the Songkran festival. Then, the villagers pay respect to the guardian spirit of the village once a year after the Songkran festival. They believe that if they fail to do so, bad fortune would occur to them or to other family members.

The rate of marriage between Thai and Mon people is relatively high. However, the majority of Thai-Mon cannot speak in the Mon language, and among those who can speak in it, only few can read and write Mon (Wilai, 2006). Thus, it is increasingly more difficult to preserve their mother language. Consequently, the Thai government has included the teaching of the Mon language and their literature in the Thai state schools in the areas where Mon people live (Kin, in IMNA, 2006). It is a positive indication of a revival of Mon language in Thailand.

One reason to revitalize ancient traditions is to promote tourism. Tourism has generated incomes to their families; therefore,

some of them have not wanted to move out of their communities. When the Tourism Authority of Thailand promoted the sunken temple to be an unseen place in Thailand, it became a popular tourist destination. However, the lack of proper preparations and a tourism plan in the community caused overcrowding and pollutions in the air and from sound, damaging the cultural heritages, especially during Songkran festival, Luang Phor Uttama's Birthday and Loy Krathong festival. Furthermore, the Mon younger generations unintentionally imitated the tourists' behavior, a result of their assimilation into the Thai mainstream.

Recommendations

There were some communities in Thailand whose context was in some ways the same as that of the Mon in Sangkhlaburi, and which had similarly encountered a number of problems caused by the social, cultural and environmental deterioration in their tourism sites. In the past, Ban Lorcha and Ban Jum Rung communities were promoted to become tourist destinations. As a result, tourism became an agent of change because a range of resources were altered to satisfy tourism needs. Thus, community-based cultural concepts were mobilized in an attempt to solve those problems. This, to a certain extent, achieved the goal of development for sustainable tourism.

Learning from successful examples is a key to crack those sorts of problems. Ban Lorcha Village was one of those that had a good practice in development and management of sustainable community-

based tourism. Its people were empowered to control the impact of tourism, thus reducing environment deterioration and contributing to a stronger community power. Therefore, the successful project implemented by Ban Lorcha Village, Chiang Rai, could serve as a model for the Mon community. (http://www.pda.or.th/chiangrai/ban_lorcha.htm)

Additionally, having received the title of the best practice community for following the philosophy of sufficiency economy in 2006, Ban Jum Rung community was recognized as a good model for rural community development and became a learning center at the same time. Its concept is a way to deal with the increasingly negative impact from globalization and mono-agriculture. This community is located in the eastern region of Thailand, in Rayong province. (http://sites.google.com/site/banjumrung/Home/menu_03/banjumrung_eng).

Because of previously improper management of Rayong province, the community faced debt problems caused by undervalued market prices of their agricultural products controlled by middlemen. Nowadays, following the philosophy of sufficiency economy, villagers have started saving their money and contribute some of this to the community fund. By launching community shops and operating their own businesses, they have more stable incomes from agricultural products and can satisfy their debts. However, establishing the community learning center also caused some problems and led to controversial ideas among the residents and outsiders, also leading

to disagreements on future proposals and plans for new community activities. Sharing essential knowledge could well enhance community relationships and result in a community network at a regional scale.

The earnings from tourism do not constitute a guaranteed income; therefore, other opportunities should be presented to support them. Thus, the community could be self-reliant only when using the existing resources responsibly and seeing the other ones as priceless assets. The effective management of the cultural resources should also be achieved for maximum benefit, where the result could lead to steady incomes to support family members. The following improved atmosphere and better life could, at least, convince and reassure Mon younger generations to come back and to live with elder people who have still insisted to stay in their Mon community.

The researcher studied the successful practices of Ban Lorcha and Ban Jum Rung, and saw some useful information that could be drawn upon, to be supplemented by further studies of other community-based cultural tourism management strategies that can respond to the province's eco-tourism policy.

The result of the present study suggests that community-based cultural tourism should be a key strategy, to include the management of cultural tourism, the involvement of the villagers, and the execution of tourist activities. Since the concept of community-based cultural tourism (CBCT) is a key to success, it is seen as a promising solution

to many problems, and could reduce existing negative impacts from tourism. The committee should develop cultural tourism at a small scale and at not too fast a pace but as a steady process, and they should focus on their ethnic identity. CBCT has been also recognized as a tool to help preserve biodiversity, and to alleviate poverty in rural areas. Thus, the following recommendation consists of five processes as follows.

Establish a Central Committee

Priority should be given to forming a cultural heritage committee who will work with the community members to create recognition and realization of the importance of cultural heritage, culture and the identity of the Mon community. They should work with the local people to protect the tangible and intangible cultural heritage. At the present time, there are several committees who hold special positions, such as temple committees, villager committees and marketing committees. Thus, forming the cultural heritage management committees, who will undertake both planning and create programs, is highly recommended. The committee panel should include representatives of Mon local historical groups, local monks, academics, and professionals from local schools, the local administration, temple officers and other stakeholders.

The committees should discuss the problems that could occur in the Mon community and find solutions to each problem. Besides, they would help forecast the unseen situations and problems that

might happen in the future, and provide prevention plans. The concept of CBCT is based on the assumption that the involvement of the whole community is an essential foundation. From this point, it is important to provide the communities with opportunities to take part in discussions and consultations on tourism planning issues, which in turn would ensure that the future of their tourism industry and community would be in their own hands. Thus, they must truly understand the present situation and the status of their own identity, environment and cultural heritage. In order to enhance the development of an appropriate tourism model, they should consider other options and good examples achieved by various strong cultural tourism strategies. All the options for tourism development should serve roles to improve the quality of life of the local people, and to create socio-cultural enrichment for each destination. Only if the local people understand what are the benefits that they would get from managing sustainable tourism, could the participation from those local people help achieve communal aims effectively. Furthermore, all the villagers should set rules for their cultural tourism business and settle agreements among themselves.

Solve Existing Community Conflicts

From the interviews regarding the restoration of the cultural heritage, there were reports of a conflict between the abbot and some villagers because of disagreed architectural issues. This is because all decision making only came from the abbot of Wat Wang Wiwekaram.

Meanwhile, Mon residents did not have any chance to discuss and to share their opinions about how to restore the cultural heritage. There was inadequate participation from the involved parties, especially in the planning stage. For instance, some of the villagers donated some money for restoring the temple, but the money was only spent on new construction sites in this area. Therefore, those people felt unhappy and dissatisfied with the change. There was no exchange of ideas and opinions nor cooperation among the academics, conservationists, and public parties in the meetings established to discuss this project. However, the outcome of the conflict was not definitely emphasized, thus resulting in an unresolved disparity. On the other hand, there were contradicting opinions from those who preferred to restore and to maintain the traditional style. Thus, there was a gap in the ideas, and hence blockages to achieve the goals of the conservation plan.

Manage Fund and Budget Effectively

The cultural heritage management committees and the villagers should manage a Mon community fund for cultural tourism by themselves through co-operation among the shareholders of the Mon community. The committees could seek the resource of funding by the following alternatives.

1.1 Research: the committees could possibly receive funds by conducting a necessary research and submitting appropriate proposals.

1.2 The participations of the local and national government:

the committee could submit the report or the project proposal to local or national government, such as via the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, or Department of Tourism, to show their determination in developing cultural tourism.

1.3 Donations from the temple and Wangka Municipality: the committee should present the importance of cultural tourism development to the temple committee and to the head of the Municipality, the attempt to show how important cultural tourism preservation and development are and that they would, it is hoped, support the ideas.

The committees would need to publish the accounts of the community on a notice board every month for transparency.

Prepare sites

The proposal for developing sites and their activities is divided into three parts as follows:

1. To improve knowledge and learning

Realizing the importance of human resource management, the cultural heritage management committee should cooperate with all stakeholders to educate the people about their roles and responsibilities before undertaking activities and implementing all necessary solutions. The local people should learn how to work in a team and to make decisions together. The initiative underlying development of cultural tourism would require support from the

experts or higher authorities, leading to the success of all projects, and should not be overlooked. Furthermore, local people should have opportunities to go to study good examples of best sustainable tourism cases, for example in Ban Jum Rung and Ban Lorcha referred to above, which could help them gain insights into those strategies and feel more confident before starting themselves.

After the case-study trips, they could possibly start their own pilot activities that could give some benefits to the community. At the beginning stage of the project, they should participate in a decision-making session and apply the acquired knowledge. Following that should be the stage of forming activity groups based on their specializations such as cooking, fishing, articulating, performing, singing, folk dancing, playing music, farming, crafting and tour guiding. The members should vote for a leader of each activity who would take care of all group benefits achieved by tourism programs. The leaders must direct and monitor the activity and its progress and co-ordinate with the involved persons.

The cultural heritage management committee and local communities should eagerly come to monitor the developing activities to ensure preferred results while the managers from private sector groups should help promote the cultural activities and execute needed actions to encourage the local people to be aware of their traditional value. For example, their traditional dances, music and festivals should be seen as invaluable heritage for them

and a uniqueness that should be proudly preserved. Therefore, the communities should participate in those events set to happen in the tourism areas and which would result not only in shared benefits but also the awareness of traditional values. Cultural tourism could finally be a vehicle to bridge the understanding between tourists and Mon people.

The committee should encourage local communities to be proud of their traditional food and lifestyle by including traditional foods in the restaurants' menus and reserving some areas for only local residents in order to ensure that the tourists' influence will not disturb their livelihood. Meanwhile, the earnings from cultural tourism should be promoted to be an incentive to convince the people to join in the projects of the preservation of the cultural and historical traditions and that this is a contribution that often leads to long-term conservation and sustainable management of natural resources and cultural heritage. While servicing and engaging in those activities, the local people would gain more necessary knowledge and needed skills for cultural tourism. Furthermore, they would learn what the expected standard of service is and how to create a network of collaboration.

2. To develop interpretation techniques

The interpretation skills developed in publicity should be used as a vital tool in communications and in raising the people's consciousness of the importance of the cultural heritage. One of most significant aspects of the interpretation technique is how to develop

and thereby interpret a sense of place. Today, a few Mon people have perceived the values of their cultural heritage. If local people are not able see what the significance of cultural heritages is, they would not be able to appreciate it, and could not understand why they should do so. In addition, the interpretation through innovations, creative festivals or events could help enhance the sense of conservation and maintenance of traditional sites.

The cultural heritage management committee should additionally encourage stakeholders' participation in planning and developing the project. A brainstorming process would be a key to proper solutions for an existing problem. They should pool their resources, support each other, and set a common goal. According to Hall and McArthur (1998), publicity interpretation is a co-ordination technique and inspiration for learning, as it provides a way of discovering different aspects of the display. It leaves people moved, their assumptions challenged and their interests in learning stimulated.

The purpose of interpretation is to stimulate consciousness of the conservation among the public, especially the community in Sangkhlaburi and its surroundings, together with awareness of the value of cultural heritage, and the attempt to conserve the components of that heritage for the next generations. Thus, they should study the types of interpretation and identify suitable ones. Aplin (2002, p. 32) has also supported this idea, stating that differences in gender, age, and geographical context could still affect perceptions of heritage.

3. To establish various activities

Activities should be set up based on the fundamental aspects of life and they must be environmentally responsible, such as green homestay, garbage bank activity, and organic vegetables plantings.

Analyzing and Evaluating Activities

After implementation, each activity should be analyzed and evaluated to search for potential problems. The Mon community should emphasize basic activities necessary for local life such as agricultural, fishing, farming, and cooking activities, all of which undertakings are key factors in local resource management. The community would have the ability to produce a rich variety of local products, and to sell at low prices. Furthermore, the local people would gain new experiences and share those among their members. The committee should set a meeting every week to update information and solve problems. Lastly, another important service that should be created would be an information network from which more services and innovative touring experiences would be developed.

Hence, the members of the Mon community should invest their time into planning cultural tourism strategies and utilizing the existing resources consciously, the benefits of which could be stable incomes and a more self-reliant community.

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