

Transforming Villages into “Wisdom” Villages: A Descriptive Analysis

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Abstract

The study investigated the real pictures of rural communities in Thailand and identified the factors that transform common villages into wisdom villages. The study applied the qualitative method through three main research methods comprised of document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. The semi-structured interviews were conducted from three settings comprised of Baan Pa-ngun (Chumphon Province), Baan Fang-klong (Nakonpathom Province) and Baan Khao-din Baan(Sakaeo Province), communities from Southern, Central and Eastern of Thailand respectively. The researcher has been through rural villages in Thailand, which has helped to dispel some myths about rural society and rural development concepts which listed as self-reliance and fallacies of the idealized rural Thai society. The researcher found that the most important factors to transform common villages into wisdom villages was not the soil, water, money, nor resources but it was virtue, knowledge and wisdom, coupled with the courage that the leader in communities had, greater than other people. Finally, it is recommended that there already were wise men in the area who were turning inspiration into reality. Rural development plan should be the knowledge that will help to build up the leaders who work hard, who never give up in order to have a better life.

Keywords: Leader, virtue, knowledge, wisdom

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การวิเคราะห์เชิงพรรณนา: การก้าวสู่หมู่บ้านภูมิปัญญา

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้นำเสนอภาพแท้จริงของชนบทไทยและแสดงให้เห็นถึงปัจจัยที่ทำให้หมู่บ้านธรรมดาก้าวสู่การเป็นหมู่บ้านภูมิปัญญา งานวิจัยนี้เป็นงานวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ ใช้เทคนิควิธีการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล 3 วิธี ประกอบด้วยจากการใช้ข้อมูลเดิมที่มีอยู่แล้ว การสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง และการสังเกตแบบมีส่วนร่วม การสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างเป็นการเก็บข้อมูลจากกลุ่มที่ทำการศึกษ (settings) จำนวน 3 กลุ่ม ประกอบด้วย ชุมชนบ้านพะงัน จังหวัดชุมพร ชุมชนบ้านฝางคลอง จังหวัดนครปฐม และชุมชนบ้านเขาหิน จังหวัดสระแก้ว ซึ่งเป็นชุมชนจากภาคใต้ ภาคกลาง และภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือ ผู้วิจัยได้เข้าไปฝังตัวในชุมชนเพื่อตีแผ่ความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับสังคมชนบทและแนวคิดการพัฒนาชนบทโดยการพึ่งพาตนเอง ตลอดจนตรรกะวิถีในการสร้างภาพมายาให้กับสังคมชนบทไทย ผู้วิจัยพบว่าปัจจัยสำคัญที่ทำให้หมู่บ้านธรรมดาก้าวสู่การเป็นหมู่บ้านภูมิปัญญา ไม่ใช่ปัจจัยเรื่องดิน น้ำ เงินทุน หรือทรัพยากรอื่น ๆ แต่เป็นปัจจัยด้านคุณธรรม ความรู้ ภูมิปัญญา ผนวกกับความกล้าหาญของผู้นำที่ลุกขึ้นมาสู้เพื่อความเป็นอยู่ที่ดีขึ้น ข้อเสนอแนะปัจจุบันมีผู้นำชุมชนในพื้นที่ที่ลุกขึ้นมาเปลี่ยนจากแรงบันดาลใจให้เป็นความจริง แผนการพัฒนาชุมชนควรเน้นการให้ความรู้และสนับสนุนผู้นำชุมชนที่ทำงานหนักและไม่เคยยอมแพ้ที่จะพัฒนาตนเองและชุมชนของตน เพื่อคุณภาพชีวิตและความเป็นอยู่ที่ดีขึ้น

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Introduction

For over 60 years since Thailand adopted a Western-style country development plan, with priority to economic growth, wealth, industrial development and material prosperity with less emphasis on quality of life and various aspects of true happiness. This gradually transforms rural communities as interdependent, self-sufficient agricultural communities and effectively marginalizes which brought about its decline. As these communities are unable to keep up with the inevitable changes, inequality widens. Careless adaptation also turns agricultural society into something like “the harder you do, the harder you suffer” The harder they seek wealth, the more debt they have, which trapped most rural villagers in poverty. I, therefore, am determined to find out for myself what is the real “picture” of rural society in Thailand. As a true understanding of “Thai rural society” is urgently needed for social and economic development. I embarked on a journey to the rural villages in Thailand which can provide valuable knowledge, especially understanding about life in rural society. The big two questions are “Why and How”; Why did many of government’s Village Fund scheme fail? and How do Thai villagers adapt to the changing contexts? I desire to take a specific look at the deep characteristics, beliefs and their actual behavior. Although it cannot answer the question of how the rural society has been changed completely, at least, the fractions of knowledge and the consideration of the location of that knowledge could be patched together to form an answer or to get a very close image as much as possible. The contextual reality will give me a broader and clearer image of rural society in Thailand.

Research Questions

1. Given the complexities that exist on various narratives, what is the “real picture” of Thai rural society?
2. Does wisdom villages exist in Thai society at all?
3. What are the key factors that transform common villages into wisdom villages, if at all?

Literature Review

Wisdom

Holiday & Chandler (1986) concluded that wisdom is not technical expertise, but rather involves pragmatics and values. Like the ancient wisdom tradition, wisdom is “the art of living well, and is represented in qualities of the mind together with practical virtues that lead one to a well-adapted life”. Wisdom has strong practical and emancipatory appeal that potentially grows with age. They consciously attempted to represent in their construct of wisdom all the knowledge categories that Habermas proposed. They concluded that “wise persons are well informed about technical matters, focused upon the practical affairs of mutual human understanding, and self-reflective in ways that allow them to determine good ends and approximate the ideal of living a satisfying life”. Integrated

theories, like Holliday's and Chandler's, were a new development in wisdom studies. Several other integrated theories appeared in the book *Wisdom: Its Nature, Origins, and Development*. These theories moved beyond the knowledge construct of wisdom and attempted to understand wisdom in its emotional, spiritual, social, and behavioral complexities (Pascual-Leone, 1990)

Orwoll & Perlmutter (1990) incorporated personality prerequisites in their theory of wisdom: "Wisdom depends on an unusually integrated personality structure that enables people to transcend personalistic perspectives and embrace collective and universal concerns." Using Jung's and Erikson's personality theory, the authors suggested that self-knowledge and self-transcendence are necessary for wisdom, along with cognitive skills. Therefore, wisdom is a multidimensional balance or integration of cognition with affect, affiliation, and social concerns. Whereas Achenbaum & Orwoll (1991) proposed a synthetic model of wisdom. In the synthetic model, wisdom occurs in personality, cognition, and conation processes that transform intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal experience. The interaction of personality, cognition, and conation at various personal levels is evidenced by nine characteristics: self-development, self-knowledge, integrity, empathy, understanding, maturity in relationships, self-transcendence, recognition of limits, and philosophical and spiritual commitments. Using the Biblical character of Job, they demonstrated the complex and dynamic, yet integrative, nature of wisdom. Growing wise depends on time and a personal maturation process: "Since the search for wisdom evolves synergistically and cumulatively in a highly contextualized, individualized pattern, there is no formula for growing wise" (Kyung, 2000)

Another model of wisdom that synthesized affect, cognition, and conation is Kramer's organismic framework. An organismic framework is one that is dynamic, always moving: "In an organismic framework, psychological adaptation cannot be seen as separate from the functional contexts in which it occurs." (Kramer, 1990) In her model, affective development and cognitive development interact to create wisdom-related processes. She listed five wisdom-related processes: (1) recognition of individuality, (2) recognition of context, (3) ability to interact effectively, (4) understanding of change and growth, and (5) attention to affect and cognition. These wisdom-related processes lead to interrelated functions of wisdom. The result is resolution of tasks. Wisdom is effective only if it serves to foster resolution of life's tasks. Kramer lists tasks such as choosing a career, developing an intimate relationship, adjusting to adult stressors, parenting, assuming complex social roles, dealing with conflicts, coping with illness and death, and several others.

Table 1. Summary of the integrative theorists and their wisdom definitions

Integrative Theorists	Definitions of Wisdom
Holliday & Chandler (1986)	Wisdom is the art of living well, and is represented in qualities of the mind together with practical virtues that lead one to a well-adapted life
Birren & Fisher (1985)	Wisdom is an integration of affect, conation, and cognitive aspects of human abilities in response to life’s developmental tasks and problems
Krammer (1990)	Wisdom is an organismic integration of relativistic and dialectic modes of thinking, affect, and reflection
Pascual-Leone (1990)	Wisdom is developed through the resolution of contradiction among self schema’s during adulthood. Wisdom is achieved through a dialectic integration of all aspects of an individual’s personality (i.e., affect, will, cognition, and life experience)
Orwoll & Perlmutter (1991)	They propose two personality makers of wisdom: self-development and self-transcendence. The attainment of these markers is dependent on concomitant cognitive maturation.
Achenbaum & Orwoll (1991)	Wisdom is a developmental characteristic that occurs in personality, cognition, and conation that transforms intrapersonal, interpersonal and transpersonal experience

Knowledge

Knowledge creation is the genesis of knowledge innovation, and communities that are able to create knowledge tend also to be adaptive and progressive. The creation of knowledge is the process by which answers to a community’s questions and struggles materialize. In order for knowledge to be created, there must be an initial idea and a subsequent attempt to communicate that idea to others in the community. Accordingly, knowledge does not exist within the individual minds of a community’s students, but rather in the communication that unfolds between community members. From an instructional design standpoint, it is important to devise activities that encourage students to (a) generate ideas and (b) communicate their thoughts. Providing forums for the open-ended discussion of topics and problems in an asynchronous online environment that allows room for reflection is an excellent way to promote knowledge creation. Once knowledge is created, its utility to a community is fleeting unless it is preserved.

Leadership

Wilkinson (1986) defines leadership as an action enacted by individuals who make specific and distinctive contributions to community action. Bonjean (1963) equated reputation with leadership

and defined leaders as the most powerful and influential members of the community. Angell (1951) illustrated leadership structure by identifying six different components of the interaction within community leadership: characteristics of leaders at the time of induction into leadership, representation of groups in the population, degree to which the leadership group is in-grown, relation to the general population, relations among leaders, and the technique of leadership. One of the most current definitions of community leadership comes from Goeppinger (2002) who views it as an interactive process between individuals within a common locale.

Leadership as a change agent; a leadership theory built on the premise of a leader as a change agent is the transformational leader model. Rosenbach and Taylor (2012) wrote: “We are now convinced that the research and literature confirm the transformational leadership paradigm as most meaningful in today’s diverse and complex world.” Transformational leadership makes a important, positive impact on a community’s culture, decision-making processes at all levels, member’s behavior, and communal effectiveness. Burns (2003) also wrote, “Ultimately, the effectiveness of leaders as leaders will be tested by the achievement of purpose in the form of real and intended social change.”

Leadership as a moral agent; a moral base is necessary for a transformational leader, making it vital that the leader characterizes a higher level of moral maturity which in turn promotes a higher level of moral maturity in followers. Bass denotes moral in leadership as “a shared commitment to a cause that goes beyond (the followers’) own self-interest” Commitment is attained from: (1) raising follower awareness and consciousness concerning goals of an organization and (2) bonding between the leader and followers that was formed during the process of sharing values and goals of the organization. Basically, “In a matter of moral principles, the objective is to do the right thing, to do what fits principles of morality, responsibility, sense of discipline, and/or respect for authority, customs, rules and traditions of a society. There is belief in the social responsibility of the leader and the organization.”

In order to define leadership for relevance to this study, it is not important to look at the term from either a psychologist or sociologist viewpoint, but as a function of both. Community leadership is not so much a situation or style of leadership, as it is a context under which leadership operates. Consequently, this context does not lend itself to just one leadership tradition. As Gibb (1948) remarks, any personality traits prevalent in leaders may exist within individuals who never achieve leadership status, due in part to a lack of interactional situation. By combining both the aforementioned psychological and sociological definitions of leadership, a more holistic definition of leadership can be devised.

Table 2. Summary of the integrative theorists and their leadership definitions

Integrative Theorists	Definitions of Leadership
Wilkinson (1986)	Leadership is an action enacted by individuals who make specific and distinctive contributions to community action.
Bonjean (1963)	Leaders (Leadership) is the most powerful and influential members of the community
Angell (1951)	Leadership is identified by six different components of the interaction within community leadership: characteristics of leaders at the time of induction into leadership, representation of groups in the population, degree to which the leadership group is in-grown, relation to the general population, relations among leaders, and the technique of leadership.
Goeppinger (2002)	Leadership is an interactive process between individuals within a common locale.
Rosenbach and Taylor (2012)	Leadership is a change agent; a leadership theory built on the premise of a leader as a change agent is the transformational leader model.
Burns (2003)	The effectiveness of leaders as leaders will be tested by the achievement of purpose in the form of real and intended social change.
Gibb (1948)	Any personality traits prevalent in leaders may exist within individuals who never achieve leadership status, due in part to a lack of interactional situation.

Factors Affecting the Strength of Rural Communities in Thailand

Kanjanaphan (2010) gave the discussed about the contents in “ Linking Thai Anthropology in Globalizing Asia: A View from Rural Southeast Asia “ that influenced the direction of the study about rural change and the need to develop new perspectives in understanding the Thai contemporary rural society and the study of production relationships is an important tool to understand the complexity of the change of rural society. It also pointed out that in the situation that the role of rural as the rice production area is declining and while the farmers have non-agricultural occupations as well as have increasingly moved out of agricultural sector, the analysis of rural society and the classification of rural society by using a conceptual framework that emphasizes productive relationships, land and labor control or the relationship between the state and the locals involved in controlling the production elements as in the earlier times may not be possible to understand the new phenomena that radically changed the meaning of rural area.

Rural village is also one of the key issues that many questions have been raised about within national and international academic sectors in this deconstructionism period started since the late 1980s as a concept heritage from colonial period to modern times. The issue of “rural” (country, countryside, rural) and the creation of polarization between rural and urban (Country-city divide) is questioned by cultural critics. Williams (1970). Rural as a simple traditional community without conflict is placed opposite to the city as an area of production, labor oppression and the symbol of modernity under capitalism. While the countryside is often portrayed as an ever peaceful society since in the past, the city is always moving forward. Thai sociologists and anthropologists well aware of the political construction of rural image and has questioned the methodology of the study of what is called. “Rural Village” since 1990s. The Village in Perspective: Community and Locality in Rural Thailand (Hirsch, 1993) is the re-study about rural and has risen the question of the methodology in the study about rural society in Thailand as well as creating a rural image as a closed unit. or a socialization without change or internal conflict. (Luangaramsri, 2015)

From reviewing the literature on the studies of Wisdom villages in Thailand, there are not many studies directly on the topic. Much of the literature reveals factors contributing to the operation of the strength of rural communities or sufficiency-economy villages as follows:

The first extended discussion of strength community is the study of Patcharavadee Treechai (2009) reviewing factors that led to the revitalization of Community strength at Nongklangdong Community, Silaloi Sub district, Samroi yod District, Prachuap khirikhan Province. The study identifies four major factors that lead to the success of the revitalization for a society with various problems to become a strong and self-reliant society were : (1) The leadership of the village headman who initiated confidence, trust, and perception of values and power for community development and encouraged people to be self-reliant instead of depending on out-sources; (2) People assets – it was found that this community focused on people participation; the building of good, intellectual and capable teamwork; and the community leaders who led the revitalization process; (3) Social assets – such as the closed relationship within the community; the acceptance of seniority system; the implementation of local wisdom – led to the success of the revitalization; (4) Economic assets – it was found that the people in the community were self – reliant and classified themselves into groups according to their occupation; they also utilized local wisdom to add value to their services and products. Besides, they tried to reduce the unemployment rate and increased their income. Moreover, people in the community set their goal to establish a happy society.

Preeya Sopana, Chatri Siriswat, Sitisak Khampa and Suwakit Sripathar (2010) in their thesis point out the major factors affected the strength of rural communities in the lower part of Northeastern Thailand were villagers, families, community funds, organization in community and community network.

In the thesis on the Agricultural Reformed Area: A Case Study of Tambon Nikom Krasiew, Danchang District, Supanburi Province. Bhuripanya Kerdsri (2010) consider non-factor and factors affecting the success in application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy as (1) Personal properties have no influence to the success of the Modification of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. (2) Leadership of local leaders is the great influence to the success of the Modification of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. (3) Factors that are enable to create a high significant success of the Modification of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy are knowledge perception of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, leadership, cooperation in activities conducting, experiences exchange among farmers, collaboration and supporting from governmental sectors.

In term of studying the success of a sufficiency-economy village. Jumrus Khotayun and Wilaiwan Somsopon (2011) identifies some important factors affecting success are model community leaders in the area of practicing a sufficiency lifestyle, serving as advisors and as a coordination link with government officials, having a sense of communal sacrifice, formation of occupation support groups so that villagers can help each other, a local determination toward self-reliance, and family self-sufficiency. There were problems and obstacles in creating a sufficiency-economy village in the area of reducing net household expenses since some households did not have sufficient capital to pursue income-generating alternative occupations. Also, there were a lack of markets for the agricultural products produced by the community. There was only a limited amount of savings. The new generation was not particularly interested in culture and customs of the past. There was not enough reforestation or participation in local aid activities. The factors contributing to the success of the sufficiency-economy village included internal factors such as the strong role of the community leader, convening public forums, and an enabling agricultural environment. External factors include support from government offices and other communities.

Pimainok & Lunsomrong (2015) found that enable factors in community development achievement based on the sufficiency economy philosophy of Ban Namsab Community are outside community factors such as government subsidizing and participation of inside community factors such as participation in capital funding to run the activities for community development, experience exchange, network creating between people in the community in activity participation and career development. These two factors are related to success. In addition, Ban Namsab Community succeed in using the sufficiency economy philosophy for the development community and the public at a high level. By individual/family level, they live sufficiently without encroachment the others. Family members are happy and satisfied with the current living conditions, etc. The community established the savings group to be used as working capital to the members, also saving supporting for the goods production of Ban Namsab Community, and so on. From their research, people's knowledge and understanding about the sufficiency economy philosophy in Ban Namsab

Community, Wangnamkheo Sub-district, Wangnamkheo District, Nakhonratchasima Province was mostly found at the high level. However, the problems and obstacles of Ban Namsab Community, Wangnamkheo Sub-district, Wangnamkheo District, Nakhonratchasima Province were found that family level still missed knowledge and understanding about income and expense account preparing, debt problem, missing being enthusiastic for acquiring knowledge or innovations to apply for their way of life and community development according to sufficiency economy philosophy. For the community level, it found that government subsidizing about community development according to sufficiency economy philosophy was still without continuation, without market providing for community products, without variety of community products and without product development in stylish appearance and good-looking, and also missing the budget to run the activities for community development according to sufficiency economy philosophy.

Nissara Jaisue (2014) found factors relating to the successful of being sufficiency economy village of Moobansalasuk as well as that of Moobabankhok included the same eight aspects, i.e., technological, economic, natural resources, psychological, social-cultural, participation, village leader, and government support. She claims that developing any sufficiency economy village for its betterment should require not only the participation among the government agencies and the village itself but also the participation among the village leaders as the village members to live themselves in accordance with the principles of sufficiency economy; and, the member of any sufficiency economy village should take part in studying and researching problems of the village, analyzing and prioritizing the problems of their village, planning the village development schemes, running village development tasks, and following-up and evaluating the outputs of such village development continuously, Thus the village members had functioned as the important mechanism for pushing and encouraging the sufficiency economy village to achieve a desired success; and, the participation of all sections concerned had functioned as the important team effort for developing an ordinary village to be a sustainable sufficiency economy village.

Sunitda Choosawat (2012) found that the management in Ban Lo Han was traditional, the leader was the main support, people learned to maintaining the culture, identity, and agriculture through kindness and sharing. In term of economic, there were mixes economic between traditional and modern as a result that the community was alive. Then, there used the environment fold wisdom in order to keep, cure and conserve the natural resources as they knew that were them life. Besides, the relationships within community could help to control everyone to be stick in rule and custom as they used love, participation, unity and relationship within family.

The folk wisdom in term of welfare management and community business, the result found that this community was success because they had welfare management in order to create benefit

from community business due to they had sharing mind and unity heart. Moreover, they sold agriculture products and used the folk wisdom in term of cure and protect was the way to cure by local doctor.

The process of using folk wisdom in order to create strength of community, the study found the most interesting was group creation, said the people could help themselves and other with cooperation mind. As these result, it occurred the cooperation culture as same as family, love, and unity. These were main power that helps community to be a sustainable development community. As participation in every meeting, people will have opportunity to sharing their own idea in order to developing village. This is an important thing to promote the democracy.

The process of cultural, the study found that lifestyle of case study was simply as family, having a custom and relationship. The senior who respected will be a main leader in term of cooperates cultural. The process of economic, Sunitda Choosawat (2012) found that, the economic was produced for own consumes, when everything changed such as high competition, moving labor, economics system, communication, transportation and so on. That made effect to community to be aware and adapt to new environment. The communities has been changed from produce for support life to product for sale. The communities need to have system management and a good administration management in order to be sustainable development. So, they need cooperate from member within community and relate office joint together in order to help the community in term of travelling to be a strong community.

Sawinee Rodsin (2011) found key community strength for Pangjampee Village through her qualitative method which collected data by in-depth interviews, small group discussions and participant observation. The result showed that the community strength of Pangjampee Village started from participated field study with Maejo University, observed activities and attended the knowledge management course of community's committees. They also got a supporting budget from research projects and community. The development activities that use to maintain community strength were rank in good level. People in community had participation in community management, self-reliance. They love and realize of community's problems are their own problem as we committees realize that they have to work for community and have a feeling of being common owner together with Pangjampee people. Pangjampee people had a participation in solving problem and giving direction for community's management.

In conclusion, literature review in the context of Thailand showed factor affecting the strength of rural communities related to leadership, people participation (relationship within community) and community fund.

Scope and limitations

This research aims to study the nature and characteristics of rural society in Thailand by identifying the real picture of rural villages and main drives of rural development. The units of analysis are rural villages in Thailand comprise of Baan Pa-ngun (Chumporn), Baan Fang-klong (Nakonpathom) and Baan Khao-din (Sakaeo) which are representative from Southern, Central and Eastern of Thailand. The overall criterion for selecting the village was focused on the villages that that has potential to transform to wisdom villages. The selection of the case studies (3 settings) was based on the direction from groups of people who painted to those with wisdom and self-reliance, as representatives, both men and women, toward the leaders of change. The establishment judged from the number of establishment year. Even though I wanted to study extensively throughout the country, a limitation of resources has required to focus on the 3 settings that represent the local and urban community, including a semi-local community with specific characteristics.

Table 3. Characteristics of three case studies

Villages	Locations	Major initiatives	Type of villages
Baan Pa-ngun	Southern (Chumporn)	Local	Long-term establishment
Baan Fang-klong	Central (Nakonpathom)	Local	Middle-term establishment
Baan Khao-din	Eastern (Sakaeo)	Local	Short-term establishment

Specific key informants

The specific key informants under study consisted of three communities leader whose jobs were directly related to the organic agriculture, which were described as below.

Table 4. List of key informants

Villages	Locations	Key informant	Characteristics	Gender
Baan Pa-ngun	Southern (Chumporn)	Mrs. Sangwal Pimonrat	Informal leader	Female
Baan Fang-klong	Central (Nakonpathom)	Mrs. Jampee Lekmabkae	Formal leader	Female
Baan Khao-din	Eastern (Sakaeo)	Mr. Prasit Sopee	Formal leader	Male

Expected benefits of the study

This study based on real up-to-date phenomena will try to build a body of knowledge grounded from wisdom villages. Although the purpose of study is not meant to involve with the policy assessment. However, the expected benefits of the study could support policy formulation on issues to strengthen the quality of life in rural areas.

Research Methodology

This research utilizes qualitative approach. Through this approach, the study attempts to demonstrate complexities and interweaving nature of Wisdom Village in three selected villages, in addition to bringing to understanding the process of change and adjustment occurred in these case studies. The most commonly used approach to this dissertation is a qualitative-interpretive method. Qualitative assessment of documentary materials and the usage of qualitative data analysis software appear to be considered more appropriate and more often reported in evaluation literature than quantitative methods (Constantino & Greene, 2003; Leeuw, 2003; also see Mathison, 2005). In this dissertation, four main research methods were employed to gather data for this study: documentation analysis; semi-structured interviews and participant observation. This research has been carried out through induction method. Conclusions were drawn by seeking insights, connecting the related variables, interpreting contextual meaning, and reconstructing the knowledge. The empirical information has been obtained from the case studies

The analysis of the interview transcripts and field notes was based on the inductive approach and content analysis, leading to the formation of patterns, themes, and categories in the data based on three steps in the qualitative data analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. For improving the credibility and confirmability of this paper, triangulation methods were used. (Rothbauer, 2008)

Research results

There remains a significant gap between knowledge and superstition in rural communities in Thailand. The lottery is undeniably a way of rural life in Thailand, embedded with superstitious beliefs and bizarre ways of predicting numbers. Rubbing the bark of a sacred tree, interpreting the pattern of a snake trail or decoding a deformed animal. Anything and everything can be translated into lucky numbers. Thais play the lottery perhaps not aiming for the ultimate first prize of 6 million baht, but for a two-or three-digit win, for the feel-good effect and a little juice in the dry life provided by the comfort that luck is on their side.

The lack of real awareness and understanding of the use of chemical pesticides and the use of chemical protection equipment resulted in exposure to or inhalation of chemicals for the farmers and caused abnormalities in the body after the use of chemicals or the accumulation of toxins in the body which resulted in long-term, serious diseases, such as cancer, etc. The use of high volumes of chemicals for agriculture, both chemical fertilizers and pesticides, also resulted in the presence of toxic residues for the consumers and toxic exposure from spraying for the farmers. This can be caused by a lack of understanding in the use of chemical fertilizers and chemical pesticides, or they may

already know but do not care to take precautions. There was also the misconception that the more they used the better crops they will get; the more chemical fertilizers the better the plants grew, or the more insecticides the better the production.

The use of enormous quantities of chemicals in agriculture caused the destruction of natural ecosystems by affecting the life cycle of some insects, destroying the food chain, accumulation of toxins in agricultural areas, resistance to insecticides of the pests, contamination in public water resources and the problem of waste disposal from agricultural activities. Chemical farming also requires high investments to buy chemicals and fertilizers and this results in higher production costs. All of these resulted from the lack of knowledge regarding fertilizer application from most of the farmers, so inappropriate quantities of fertilizer were used without consideration to the nutrient levels needed by the plants. Therefore, they often used too much fertilizer. In addition, farmers were also faced with investment problems related to obtaining quality seeds. As a result, the effectiveness of farming was not as expected. In addition, the problem of low agricultural product prices is also resulted from exploitation by middlemen. This was a major cause of the suffering of losses and the increasing debt of the farmers.

“Milk powder”, is another problem one finds in rural society. It is used as metaphor in this research as a common product in the community which has not surprised a Thai health specialist as a fact about young mothers and is well acknowledged by this researcher who visited a village to study about it. The researcher visited Baan Pa-ngun, there was a full time young single mother living with old parents and grandparents. The family had a main income from a reasonably sized rice field, so they did not have any serious problems to take care of the babies. As she was living with a big family with a number of relatives living around her, she had never felt that her life had been short of anything, including the father of her baby. When she expressed it like that, so there was no use for the researcher to question her about her past life. It was also impolite for the “new face” to be curious and ask about it. The conversation then was about her baby with shared stories and showing photographs of her children. It was a warm relationship at first and then the story about feeding her baby with milk powder was related. It started from the beginning, becoming pregnant which occurred recklessly, out of the blue, while the maternal instinct was aroused. She went to the sub-district health center to be checked and tested as the people in the village generally did and went to see the doctor or nurse according to the appointments. She also attended all the training to prepare for motherhood and duly got free branded milk powder which was recognizable from the advertisement on TV. In addition, the product officer called her to give more recommendations and follow up about her impression of the product. She felt like she was a privileged person. Everything went well on her delivery day. The nurse came to give advice about giving the baby breast milk. She said that mother’s breast is the best for baby, especially for the first six months. Unfortunately, she did not

have enough breast milk to feed her baby so milk powder was necessary for additional nutrition. What should have been the simplest method of feeding her baby as a full time mother, breast-feeding, she seemed incapable of doing. But the harder method, powdered milk formula, made her think that it was healthier than her own breast milk.

Conclusion

After the incredible journey through rural villages in Thailand, it has helped to dispel some myths about rural society and fallacies of the idealized rural Thai society. To answer research question one, the present circumstances of the rural area reflects the depletion of its upstanding capabilities on two main foundations; knowledge and morals. The old karma reveals the story of lives as “the victims of mysterious success”. The desire to have what other people have and to be what other people are, has turned people into “the victims of a superstition-based hope. A living based on luck and amulet finding, with powerful cultural protection statements such as, “If you don’t believe, don’t disrespect it.” together with the condition of “victims of repeated advertisements” and have been present for a long time and some have been favored with an economic turnover. However, as a “zero sum game”, the game of life comprises the hunter and the victim. The victim is misled to be trapped in the depletion of knowledge. The hunters use their knowledge to exploit commerce by misleading the victims with communication and psychological schemes. Repeated advertisements overpower the victims and trap them so they can not escape. In this part, therefore, the summarized fallacies of idealized rural Thai society as Amulet, Superstition and Influence of the media.

To answer research question two, the researcher could not find the wisdom villages as a whole villages but found the group of people who work hard to have a better life. The leaders of the villages the researcher met for this research study were not the people who were “genius”. They were not brought up with all privileges. On the contrary, they grew up with a scarcity of many things. They were just the people at the middle level who were brave enough to change themselves first; brave enough to resist the opposition. They were first judged as “crazy” people, while they realized the “meaning of life” and were smart enough to change the old form of their life style. They persisted and committed to their duties; the duties of low-level leaders who needed to work hard to prove themselves to the villagers. Consequently, they were accepted by those people and could change their minds. They were not forced by a system or any regulations. It was very hard as those people all had the same thought, “it is possible”. “Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.” (Aristotle). The idea based village of wisdom is concrete and tangible by the way the village existed, while the abstract ideology allowed it to flow and broadly extend, better than the area based, which is subject to the limitation of territory and created rules. In this sense, the

idea-based village of wisdom is not just a concept or a working plan, but was transformed by a group of people with the same ideology. At the same time, it has the potential to develop or disappear, the potential caused by reason. In this way the idea-based village of wisdom was like a “living thing”. In fact, it was alive, as it was made up by people’s lives, not a single person or only the “leaders”. It was the combination of all spirits, even the leaders would play a key role and have a strong influence, but the ability to grow or die out did not depend on any one person. It depended on the strength of the ideology and the hidden power in people and the added wisdom that empowered their ability to escape from ignorance and overcame the myth of the “deficiency trap”. Furthermore, who will win, who will need to go, or to stay together. The answer is still in the village.

To answer research question three, the most important factors to transfer common villages to wisdom villages was not the soil, water, money, nor resources but it was virtue, knowledge and wisdom, coupled with the courage that the leader in communities had, greater than other people. Sometimes it was just the intelligence, the wisdom and the brave of a few people who played a leading role in the idea and faith, and of course it did not happen overnight. Knowledge was gained from learning and practicing; from both positive and negative experiences, including successes and failures. The crystallization of wisdom, the summary of the lessons and the courage in fighting with overwhelming obstacles in their lives, made the dream of those people came true. The dream of living like, being in “the village of the fairy tale” and giving their children, including those of their neighbors, a good quality of life with sincerity and generosity towards each other. That would be an ideal place. Even the Golden Land has a “boundary”, but now the “Wisdom Village” is boundless and spread out in the form of transferring thoughts from” life to life”; to the people who are interested in changing their lives.

Recommendation

Understanding “Thai rural society” more deeply than current academic is necessary in order to find ways for development. Under the context of the economic and social changes that have occurred, many people, for instance most people in present day rural areas, are becoming conscious that their lives are changing enormously. There already were wise men in the area who were turning inspiration into reality. Rural development plan should be the knowledge that will help to build up the leaders who work hard, who never give up in order to have a better life. It is still early to say in which direction it will go or at what point it will settle. What is certain is that the ongoing construction of knowledge and to create energy from inside communities will become an important foundation for the future of Thai rural society.

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