

The Development of Traditional Tourism to Inherit Cultures and Local Wisdom of Ethnicity Groups in Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand

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The Asian Conference on Cultural Studies 2018
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

This research aimed to study the identities of the ethnicity groups in Kanchanaburi province in order to define the recommendations for inheriting cultures and local wisdom. Moreover, to guideline for the development of traditional tourism to support the quality of life of the local community. Sangkhlaburi district and Thong Pha Phum district were defined to be the study area. Data collection of this qualitative research were observation and semi-structured interviewing from 40 key informants who were chosen by snowball sampling. The key informants consisted of the headman of two villages, local people who lived within the area more than 10 years, tour agencies and entrepreneurs, tourists and visitors. The result found that there are two tribes of ethnicities, which effected to cultural tourism and community-based tourism, are the Mon and the Karen (Sgaw Karen). Nowadays, two districts in Kanchanaburi province are known as one of tourist attractions. Both Thong Pha Phum district and Sangkhlaaburi district, people made their living naturally from surrounding and natural resources which benefited the local communities such as agriculture, fishery, and forest utilization. The culture of Mon's food was similar to the Karen that their living always relied on the biodiversity of nature. It was a crucial factor which benefited the communities for inheriting their culture and local wisdom from their ancestors. However, some feature identities of two tribes were also be the important factors to support traditional tourism or community-based tourism as well. The development of traditional tourism was also the important process that can encourage both local community and visitors to increase their awareness through tourist activitie.

Keywords: Traditional tourism, Ethnicity, Kachanaburi (Thailand)

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Introduction

Thailand is a land of multicultural societies especial the boundary area between the neighbor country. Kanchanaburi province is one of the important area locating in the western part of Thailand nearby the boundary between Thai and Burma, where has a plenty of cultural and natural resources. Kanchanaburi province consisted of five districts (Amphoe) nearby the boundary between Burma as Sangkhalburi, Dan Makhamtia, Thong Pha Phum, Sai Yok, and Muang. With the surrounding of the area, there are numerous mountainous landscape, greenery forest and also there is the river to be the borderline between Thai and the southern part of Burma. When the summer came, the river was waterless, therefore, people could walk across the river between two countries. For these reasons, The cultural influences of populations in Kanchanaburi province was affected by the diversity of ethnicities for example traditional clothes, folks, traditional food and local wisdom, vernacular houses, and ways of life (Deepadung,et. al., 1998).

Nowadays, the original cultures of local people are faded by many factors. Some young generations want to immigrate to the city such as Bangkok or civilized city. Meanwhile, the growth of tourism is widely spreading and Kanchanaburi is also the primary destination of tourists. One of the kind of favorite tourism is traditional tourism or ethnic tourism in Sangkhalburi district where is the Mon community and Thong Pha Phum district where is the Karen community especially Ban E-Tong. Therefore, the study of the identities of the authentic cultures and local wisdom of ethnicity groups in Kanchanaburi is so crucial to encourage an awareness of local people and push the uniqueness of cultures and local wisdom of the minorities to become the feature tourism resources for developing the route of cultural and traditional tourism.

Terms of Definition

- Traditional tourism: One of types of tourism which attracts visitors to come a tourism destination by putting the feature tradition and unique cultures or events in marketing plan (Gurniwan et.al., 2016).

- Mon: The ethnicity group existed in Southern Burma and Thailand. The Mon settled in many regions of Thailand such as Bangkok, Samut Sakorn, Lopburi. Uthaitani, Ratchburi provinces including smaller groups are found in Samut Songkhram, Petchburi, Chachoengsao, Kanchanaburi et. al. Today, Mon in Sangkhalburi district at Kanchanaburi province attract visitors to visit their community and Sangkhalburi is known as one landmark of tourist places of Kanchanaburi's destinations.

- Karen (Pwo Karen):Pwo Karen are the Karen people who live in Burma and Thailand. They mainly live on both sides of the Thai-Burmese borderline along the Tanen Range (a.k.a Daen Lao or Loi Lar) and the Dawna Range. This includes several Northern and Western provinces of Thailand especially Kanchanaburi province.

The Study Area

The study area of this research are Sangkhlaburi and Thong Pha Phum (two districts of Kanchanaburi where is located in the western part of Thailand and nearby the boundary between Thai and Burma).

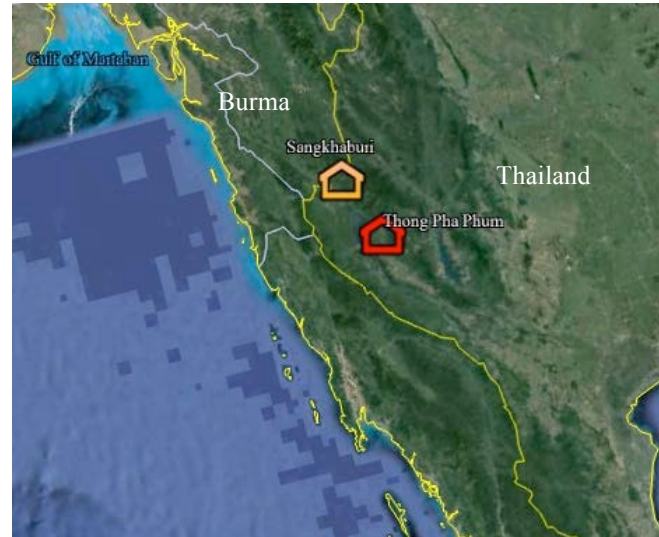


Figure 1: Locations of the study area

The sample populations

The researcher defines the populations of key informants from the ethnicity groups within the study area (Burusphat, et.al., 2011 & NSO, 2017). They consist of Thais (the most population - approximately 90% of all), Karen, Mon, Lao Krang and Lao Viang. This research focuses on two main groups of ethnicities as Mon and Karen because they play an important role in tourist resources to attract visitors. The snowball sampling is used for the sampling technique. Therefore, 40 key informants consist of the ethnicity groups such as Karen and Mon who live in the study area for more 10 years, the headman of two sites, local entrepreneurs, and visitors

Methodology

The ethnographic methodology is the main method of this study. There are three modes of data collection in ethnography: observation, interviewing and archival research (Angrosino, 2007):

- Observation: Participant observation is unique in that it combines the researcher's participation in the lives of the people under study while also maintaining a professional distance (Fetterman, 2010). According to Angrosino (2007), observation is the act of perceiving the activities and interrelationships of people in the field setting.
- Interviewing: Interviewing is the process of directing a conversation to collect information (Angrosino, 2007) by using semi-structured interviewing forms. For in-depth interviewing, informants were selected from Mon and Karen people within the communities such as the headman of the villages, local sages, stakeholder groups,

including Karen population within the villages by using mixed sampling techniques as a snowball sampling and a homogenous sampling. A total of 40 qualitative interviews were conducted. On the same time, the observation also undertaken as always both participatory and non – participatory observation. All data collection will involve the older and newer generation. The main topic of interviewing is about the identities of tribes both the Mon and the Sgaw Karen within Kanchanaburi province. Furthermore, the information about the development of traditional tourism, cultural tourism, and community-based tourism are also mentioned in the process. The period of observed time is in July, 2017.

For the data analysis, after gathering all data, the main analysis technique is a content analysis. The output of this analysis primarily took the form of verbal descriptions and explanations.

Results

The results of this study can summarize into three main topics as 1) the surrounding of the study area 2) the identities between the ethnicities within the study area, and 3) recommendations for the development of traditional tourism. For each issue will display as below:

1. The context of the ethnicities within the study area

- Sangkhlaburi district

The area is the land where comprises multicultural races such as Thai, Mon, Lao, and Karen (Sgaw Karen). The Mon in Kanchanaburi province especially Wangka village, which visitors perceive as Burmese Mon', differ from other regions in Thailand for example language, a way of life, and traditional clothes. Wangka village is a semi-permanent Mon settlement located in the Thai borderlands. Members of this community migrated into Thailand after World War II because of political conflicts among various ethnic insurgents (Dhienpanya et. al, 2004). Most villagers in Wangka are engaged in small tourism business, labor, trading or fishing. With the difference of cultural geography, the Mon within Sangkhlaburi district also live in harmony with the river living (e.g. floating houses and fishery in the river) and make their living with natural resources. The main occupations of local community in Sangkhlaburi district are agriculture, fishery, and forest utilization. However, a number of young generations of the Mon are hired as migrant work men in the industrial provinces located on the periphery of Bangkok (Wongpolganon, 2007). Although there are many ethnicities in Sangkhlaburi district, the Mon have become the most unique group and the dominant segment of the population in the village which effect to the development and generating incomes for the area because people perceive that the Mon community in Sangkhlaburi is the stunning tourist attraction. From the statistic information about the quantity of tourists visiting Sangkhlaburi, there are many tourists for each year. Many tourists are interested in Mon's living and want to take their leisure time with the river and mountainous scenery.

Moreover, Wat Wangka Wiwaikaram, which was founded by venerable Abbot Luang Pho Uttama, a Mon monk who has many influences for the Mon populations. Because of Luang Pho Uttama, his religious followers in Thailand Both Thais and Mons

donated and supported his attention to build a bridge for connecting the relationship between Mons in Kanchaburi and Mons in Wangka villages known as 'Mon Bridge or Sapan Mon in Thai'. Nowadays, the Mon Bridge is one of the most attractive landmarks of Sangkhlaburi which visitors define it is the main destination to visit there.



Figure 2: Mon Bridge

-Thong Pha Phum district

Thong Pha Phum district covers an area of 3,655 km². It is located in the Tanao Sri mountain range and bounded on the north by Sangkhlaburi district of Kanchanaburi province. Within the area, there are a plenty of natural resources because it covers one of the parts of the western complex forest of Thailand. The important water resource is the Khwae Noi River. Moreover, there are also Thong Pha Phum, Lam Khlong Ngu, Khuean Srinagarindra, and Khao Laem National Parks found in the area. Therefore, the dominant surrounding of Thong Pha Phum district is the village in the midst of greenery complex forest.

Karen (Pwo Karen) is the most population within the area. By traditional, the Karen are subsistence farmers, so Karen in Kanchanaburi learn to adapt their way of life for tourism.

2) The identities between the ethnicities within the study area

Table 1: The differences between the ethnic identities

The identities	Sangkhlaburi	Thong Pha Phum
1. Tribe	Thai, Mon, Lao Viang, and Lao Krang	Thai and Karen
2. Surrounding	There are three rivers flowing through the village which are the Chongkaria, Bikli, and Runtee river.	Mountainous landscape and evergreen forest
3. Attraction	Mon bridge and Mon cultures	Foggy village of Karen and local community enclosed with the evergreen forest
4. Occupation	Fishery, tourism entrepreneur, and selling souvenirs	Tourism entrepreneur, selling souvenirs, agriculture, and laborer
5. Religious	Buddhist or Christian	Buddhist, Christian, or Animism
6. The uniqueness of costume	Mon: using Tanaka for face cosmetics	Traditional clothes (color and adornments)
7. Vernacular house	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Floated bamboo house - Wooden house - Modern mortar houses and homestay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wooden house - Mortar house and homestay
8. Food and local products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curry noodle in Mon style - White water fish products - Desserts which are made from peanut and sesame - Tanaka powder - Traditional clothes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agricultural products such as peanut, sesame, and upland rice - Forest products such as bamboo shoots, mushroom, and herbs
9. Ways of life	Related to the river living	Related to forest utilization
10. Tradition	SongKran Mon (New Year Ceremony) at Wat Wangka Wiwekkkaram on April	Karen New Year on April



Figure 3: The difference between Mon (left) and Karen (right)'s clothes and dressing



Figure 4: The surrounding of Sangkhlaburi (left) and Thong Pha Phum (right) districts

3) Recommendations for the development of traditional tourism

Traditions or festivals become an important role in attracting visitors to come a tourism destination, as many destinations put the uniqueness of traditions and festivals on the marketing plan in forms of promotion and advertising. There are many benefits of the identity for the local community such as economic, infrastructure, and cultural development (Getz, 2008). Cultural tradition and events are usually taken place in a landscape or natural setting of the local community. The cultural landscape includes the tangibles value and intangible value associated with natural places (Zeppel, 2010). Inheriting the culture and local wisdom could be motivated by developing and participating in cultural events or local way of life.

As for inheriting cultures and local wisdom for the next generation should have conducted in the family first. Based on the interviews, young generation are quite not concerned their cultures and want to make more money from other occupations more than making a living within the area. Therefore, it is so important to start at the local young generation.

How to develop traditional tourism in the study area

- encourage the awareness of local people through training about the values of their cultural heritage- create an tourism activity to increase the participation between local people and tourists
- develop tourism products to get the qualification and international standard
- offer supported budgets to improve the ethnicity accommodation and environment
- promote the valuable culture and the feature tradition as the annual activities
- develop human resources of tourism industry by supporting local community to be the interpreter their cultures and local wisdom by themselves
- should put traditional tourism activities such as Songkran of Mon festival or Karen New Year ceremony in a marketing plan of the national tourism policy or local government

Conclusion

The identities of cultures is one of the attractive tourism resources. Generally, tourism management plan put them in terms of tourism resource management, however, tradition, local festivals, and events could be used as the source of tourism potential because they have many abilities to attract visitors. Cultural inheritance is not a duty of local people or community only but includes visitors, government, entrepreneurs, and all related stakeholders.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Srinakharinwirot University for funding this project as a part of the supported funds in 2016 and I also want to thank all key informants for giving all their cooperation.

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