THE INTEGRATION OF THE MON ETHNIC KNOWLEDGE AND THE PARTICIPATION OF THAI-MON PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING: A CASE STUDY OF MON COMMUNITIES IN PHRA PRADAENG AND BANG KADI

VILASINEE JINTALIKHITDEE

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok Thailand
E-mail: vilasinee.ji@ssru.ac.th

Abstract— This research aims to study the integration of the Mon ethnic knowledge and the participation of Thai-Mon people in community strengthening. This research is a qualitative research which involves data collected from primary and secondary documents, in-depth interviews, and participatory observation and non-participatory observation in the Mon communities in Phra Pradaeng District, Samut Prakan Province, and in Bang Kradi in Bangkhuntien District, Bangkok. The findings revealed that the integration of the Mon ethnic knowledge and the participation of Thai-Mon people in terms of cultural heritage conservation to strengthen the community of the two communities are different. The Mon Community in Bang Kradi relied on informal relationships between people in the community and the institutions who managed the community's cultural heritage conservation. The Mon people in Bang Kradi established a museum to pass on the Mon ethnic knowledge in the community; the museum is highly glorified by the community members. Moreover, they had managed the museum casually. On the other hand, the Mon Community in Phra Pradaeng had passed on the Mon ethnic knowledge based academically. They established a museum as a learning center for academic references. In terms of the public participation for conserving cultural heritage, people in Mon Community in Phra Pradaeng's had the bond and cooperative intentions to conserve their cultural heritage in the area. This had strengthened the community regarding the conservation of the cultural heritage through the formal management within the community. Furthermore, they had systemically collected the Mon ethnic knowledge which allowed them to pass on the knowledge effectively.

Index Terms— Mon ethnic knowledge, participation, Mon community in Phra Pradaeng, Mon community in Bang Kadi.

I. INTRODUCTION

Thai society is an ethnically diverse society. There are many ethnic groups immigrating into the country whether they are Mon ethnic group, Vietnamese ethnic group (Yuan), Malay ethnic group (Malayu), or others. Presently, the external dynamics in the globalized era have influenced Thai society tremendously. The role of the culture which used to be the origin of a society has been downplayed and become assimilated into Western culture. Therefore, it is difficult to maintain the local and ethnical cultural identities.

As the role of the community culture has been minimized unlike in the past, the way of life of people in the community has changed to increasingly rely on modern technology. If this situation continues, the good community culture will be replaced by the Western culture. Therefore, to integrate the community cultural knowledge by using the concept of establishing a community museum to be a tool to conserve and restore a community culture is highly necessary. This also includes the development of people in the community by involving them in establishing their own community museum. This can bring about the distribution of community museums in different communities that can be used as an instrument to develop people in the communities in the same direction. [1] Moreover, this can also conserve the community culture sustainably by systemically collecting the cultural knowledge in a community museum. The learning center management in a community has to rely on the participation in "FTS" model that consists of family, temple, and school. This can lead to the true cultural conservation. [2]

This research will explore the Mon ethnic group, which was an ethnic group that had a prosperous ancient civilization in Southeast Asia. Since the Mon kingdom was peaceful, they didn't prepare their military force. Therefore, they were invaded by Burmese empire. These two ethnic groups continuously had a conflict until mid-18th century; the Mon lost its sovereignty to Burma. This forced more and more Mon people to immigrate to Thailand and established many Mon communities, for example, Mon communities in Pak Kret, Bang Kradi, Phra Pradaeng, and so on.

This research will study the Mon communities in Phra Pradaeng and Bang Kradi due to the fact that Mon community in Bang Kradi is one of the communities that have a very strong culture in Thailand. They established a local museum and the Mon art & culture center in Bang Kradi which collected linguistics, cultural, and the way of life of Mon people documents and artifacts which were their cultural heritages in the area for promoting the study of the way of life of Mon

people in Bang Kradi. Furthermore, the Mon community in Phra Pradaeng is also the one of Mon ethnic groups that has an outstanding Mon cultural conservation. They also established the Wat Khan Lat Mon museum which is one of the famous learning museums for Mon people.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To study the integration of the Mon ethnic knowledge and the participation of Thai-Mon people with regards to community strengthening.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative research. The data collection processes consist of:
1) Study historical documents which are related to the history and relationships of the Mon ethnic group and Mon settlements in Thailand, the history of the Mon communities in Phra Pradaeng and Bang Kradi, and also the establishment of Mon local museums.
2) Collect demographic data of the Mon communities in Phra Pradaeng and Bang Kradi to analyze the sociocultural context, and also spread the cultural knowledge of Mon people.
3) Conduct in-depth interviews with key informants from these two case areas; interview 10 samples from each community.
4) Discuss with the samples from temples, the communities, and educational institutions in these 2 case areas; there are 10 representatives from each community.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

The prominent points of the integration of the Mon ethnic knowledge and the participation of Thai-Mon people in community building in Phra Pradaeng and Bang Kradi are comparatively analzyed as follows:

1) The Mon community in Phra Pradaeng

Mon people in Phra Pradaeng had the bond and cooperative intention to conserve their cultural heritage in the area. The strength of community encouraged the community members to establish Wat Khan Lat Mon local museum which is the center of cultural data collection presenting the history and belief of the Mon tradition. This is the cultural conservation of the community by relying on the cooperation between families, temples, and schools. In addition, the museum also provided the Mon ethnic knowledge in every academic dimension. The museum is separated into 2 building as follows:
The first building is a one-floor building. This museum exhibits the pictures of an old building and the architecture of Mon people in the past, including political participation of Mon people and Mon ancestors who had contributed to Thailand. Moreover, it exhibits the pictures of artifacts from the religious ceremonies and rituals that promote better understanding about Mon people.
The second building is the museum that is attractively decorated by the cultural heritage artifacts. There are Buddha statues, crockeries, and utensils of Mon people donated from the believers. Furthermore, it also exhibits the costumes of Mon adolescents which are mostly the embroidered costumes.



Fig.1 Wat Khan Lat Mon local museum [3]



Fig.2 Wat Khan Lat Mon local museum [4]

Additionally, in terms of collecting academic knowledge of Mon people in Phra Pradaeng, they had researched and collected academic documents by publishing them. This can lead to the better understanding and cultural conservation of Mon people in Phra Pradaeng.

2) The Mon community in Bang Kradi

The local museum was established in the Mon community in Bang Kradi in order to collect the knowledge about the Mon language, music, and Mon breast embroider sewing. Moreover, the experts in the community also volunteered to pass on the knowledge to the youth at an educational institution. Wat Bang

Kradi School had a curriculum which consists of local education, Thai traditional music, and introduction to career education. It can be said that the participation of people did promote the Mon community in Bang Kradi bonds based on "FTS" model which consists of families, temples, and schools. This benefited the community administration in terms of cultural conservation. Moreover, using cultural heritage also generated money to the community members.



Fig.3 The local museum in the Mon community in Bang Kradi [5]



Fig.4 The local museum in the Mon community in Bang Kradi [6].

CONCLUSION AND DISSCUSSION

The findings revealed that these two Mon communities had integrated the Mon ethnic knowledge by establishing the community museums. The Mon community in Bang Kradi had managed the museum casually, while the Mon Community in Phra Pradaeng had managed the museum based academically. The integrations of the Mon ethnic knowledge to bring about cultural conservation of these two communities are implemented by establishing the museums. These museums are the cultural data collection center for studying, researching, and passing on the histories and beliefs of Mon tradition. They had the data in form of documents and books collected by the experts or philosophers in the local areas. Moreover, they also relied on the involvement of families, temples, and schools, to integrate the Mon ethnic knowledge in order to conserve their culture which conforms to the structural functional theory of Ngampis Satsanguan; [7] this theory shows the social institution mechanisms that are used for the public benefit. It also conforms to the research of Supapon Makjang; [8] the research on the way of life of the Mon people in Bang Kradi showed that local wisdom should be conserved, systematically developed, and passed on to the next generation. Families, temples, and schools should also participate in cultural conservation. Moreover, it also conforms to the research of Attapinya Sritup [9] which revealed that the cultural conservation method of the Mon ethnic group in Song Khanong, Phra Pradaeng District, Samut Prakan Province could establish a museum as a learning and data collection center as well as promote the participation in cultural and traditional conservation among the communities, temples, and educational institutions. Furthermore, the experts in the communities also passed on the knowledge that focused on the awareness of the value of community culture.

SUGGESTION

1) They should attentively study the Mon cultural heritage in order to create passion and dignity in their cultural heritage. This can bring about the power of community in order to promote cultural heritage conservation continuously.

2) People in the Mon community should be the key player in cultural conservation who passes on the knowledge about the Mon culture to others in the community and outsiders. Therefore, people in the Mon community should study and clearly understand about culture, tradition, and the way of life of Mon people.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand (http://www.ssru.ac.th) to provide funding support to attend the dissemination of research on this and thank family, friends, colleagues and students in the field of Public Administation for cooperation in research, all of you.

REFERENCES

[1] S. Praicharnjit. 2004. The Rehabilitation of the Community Power with Archaeological Resources and Museum Management: Concepts, Methods and Experiences from Nan Province. Bangkok: Learning and Empowerment for Healthy

Community Project, Rural Studies and Development, Puey Ungphakorn School of Development Studies.
[2] P. Phukamchanoad. 2015. The Community-based Development and Capital Management of Folk Plays for Cultural Tourism in Wat Dhusiththaram Community. Bangkok: Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.
[3] Wat Khan Lat Mon local museum. [Online] available at: https.//www.facebook.com/Wat Khan Lat Mon local museum, 4 February 2017.
[4] Wat Khan Lat Mon local museum. [Online] available at: https.//www.facebook.com/Wat Khan Lat Mon local museum, 4 February 2017.
[5] The local museum in the Mon community in Bang Kradi. [Online] available at: https.//www.facebook.com/The local museum in the Mon community in Bang Kradi, 4 February 2017.
[6] The local museum in the Mon community in Bang Kradi. [Online] available at: http://www.manager.co.th/Travel, 4 February 2017.
[7] N. Satsanguan. 2000. The Principle of Cultural Anthropology. 4th ed. Bangkok: Rama Printing.
[8] S. Makjang. 1997. A Study of the Way of Life of "Mon Bang-kra-dee", the Mon in Bangkhuntien. Bachelor of Art Program in Thai, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dhonburi Rajabhat University.
[9] A. Sritup. "The guidelines for conservation and inheritance of the Swan Parade and Centipede Flag Traditions of the Mon Ethnicity, Songkanong Sub-District, Prapradang District, Samutprakarn". Journal of Fine Arts Research and Applied Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi. Vol. 3, No.1 (Jan.-Jun. 2016), 128-148.

★★★