

Abstract

Thesis Title : Dynamic of Ethnic Lawa Communities in the Mekong and the Salween River - Basins

Author : Mr.Udorn Wongtubtim

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Thesis Advisors :

Associate Professor Dr.Cherdla Suntornvipat

Major Advisor

Assistant Professor Dr.Thosaphol Arreenich

Co - Advisor

Dr.Lelar Treeaekanukul

Co - Advisor

The research on Dynamic of Ethnic Lawa Communities in the Mekong and the Salween River - Basin is a qualitative research which uses holistic integrated research technique (HIR). The objective of this research were :

1. To study the development of ethnic Lawa communities in the Mekong and the Salween River - basins.
2. To study learning process and self - adaptation to globalization society of ethnic Lawa in the Mekong and the Salween River - basins.
3. To present the guideline of ethnic Lawa way of life development in the Mekong and the Salween River - basins.

This study had merged various thoughts and theories as a holistic integrated approach such as historical approach, learning approach, Buddhist thought and system theory, theory of cultural ecology, communities economy approach and social change approach. The area of study consisted of 3 communities :

1. Ban Ri, Chiang Lo (Ta Lo) Sub - District, Muang Hai District, Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Province in the Upper Mekong River – basin.
2. Ban Houynamkhun, Mae Fah Luang Sub - District, Mae Fah Luang District, Chiang Rai Province in Lower Mekong River - basin.

3. Ban La - oob, Houyhom Sub - District, Maelanoi District, Maehongson Province in the Salween River - basin.

The researcher had interviewed 70 key informants by using open - ended in - depth informal interview, focus group discussion, participative observation and also documentary research.

The study found that ethnic Lawa communities in these two river - basins have long history as recorded in old Chinese historical books, lanna chronicles and in their “Lasomlae” or traditional folk song which informed their oral history and usually sing in funeral ceremony. The ethnic Lawa in these two river - basins have no written alphabet, some are illiteracy, but well conserve on their language and cultural identity. They are richest both social capital and intelligent asset, especially ethnic body of knowledge and ethnic wisdom which transferred from their ancestors.

Ethnic Lawa in Ban Ri community had changed their way of life after moved from Bulang mountain to fertile valley. They had adjusted themselves to new physical ecology and new environment. Instead of growing upland rice in rotational swiddening farm, they grow irrigated rice and terraced rice cultivation. And also have totally access to education, public health service and other infrastructures.

The changing of the People Republic of China economic structure to “One Country, Two Systems” which merges socialist economy with free market - oriented economy and runs the pragmatism campaigning “It doesn’t matter whether the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice”. According to these, policy implementation such as the economic cooperation in the Greater Mekong Sub - region, the development of communication and transportation routes, and the implementation of China - Thai Free Trade Agreement [FTA] and China - Asean Free Trade Agreement have both positive and negative effects to ethnic Lawa communities. Some ethnic Lawa had adjusted themselves, their attitude and their way of life to new world order in globalization society.

Some ethnic Lawa in Ban Houynamkun in lower Mekong river - basin ever grown poppy on Bulang mountain in Xishuangbanna and moved to Doitung after Red Army totally occupied mainland China in October 1949. The Red Army prohibited to grow poppy and opium trading, anyone who break the law will face execution. Some Houynamkun villagers had adjusted

themselves to borderless world in globalization society as Ulong tea grower on Doi Tung mountain. All of their product exported to Taiwan as a source of main income which leads to household economic security. Good governance was practiced by local community people, they are always participate in various activities such as community reforestation project, etc. However, some villagers work as migrated orchid farm workers in Bangkok and its outskirts.

The modern agricultural technology has persuaded some local farmers in Ban La - oob to practice mono cropping which production cost gradually more higher. They have to spend large sum of money for chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Some faces high risk of using chemicals that have direct and indirect effect to their health. Some cabbage farmers faced status of bankrupt. Some practice organic Arabica coffee in their sustainable orchard farm as practicing of sufficiency Buddhist economy.

The ethnic Lawa in the Mekong and the Salween river - basins gave prioritized in human resources development through the process of life - long learning. They transferred body of knowledge and ethnic wisdom, beliefs, custom, rite and ritual, ways of life through the process of ethnic socialization, especially practicing of agro forestry, multiple cropping in shifting cultivation or "taungya", sloping agricultural land technology [SALT], terraced rice cultivation, and low - external - input and sustainable agriculture [LEISA] which were cultural reproduction that suitable with its geo - cultural ecology and helped them conserving their natural resources sustainability.

Life - long learning, including of formal, in - formal and non formal plays an important role in human resources development. Enable them having perception, value and motivation to changed their communities in the Mekong and the Salween river basin to be learning communities. Each household learned the changing situation and change their attitudes to borderless world in globalization society.

Moreover, the guideline of ethnic Lawa way of life development in the Mekong and the Salween River - basins are practicing of community - based development which specific on self - sufficiency as Buddhist economy that will promote their strength economy, social security, maintaining of community culture and having better quality of life. Accordingly, they should live peacefully and harmoniously with their ecological balance and synchronize with its geo - cultural ecology.

Suggestion of this research were :

1. Community participation in life - long education management and support people from all walk of life to have education access which leading to human resources development.
2. Focusing on “parallel knowledge” , integrating body of knowledge and ethnic wisdom with “universal knowledge” or modern knowledge. This outcome will change Lawa community to be learning community.
3. Brainstorming in writing local curriculum which covers ethnic history, local history, geography, community economy, sustainable agriculture, folktales, nursery rhymes, ballad, belief, ritual, custom, language, cultural identity, body of knowledge and ethnic wisdom, community order and enforcement and sustainable natural resources management.