

**Sub-Regional Experts Meeting in Asia on Intangible Cultural Heritage:  
Safeguarding and Inventory-Making Methodologies**  
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## **Safeguarding and Inventory-Making Methodology for ICH<sup>1</sup>**

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This paper is to share some experience on the safeguarding and inventory-making methodology for Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). It is an experience of Lanna Studies Group of the Social Research Institute (SRI), Chiang Mai University (CMU), to which I belong. To my own opinion, the safeguarding and inventory-making methodology for ICH of the SRI has not yet been fully and systematically developed because the SRI has many mandates and covered broad areas of studies. Nevertheless, I think it is still worth to share some experiences with other institutes in Thailand and other countries.

First of all, I would like to introduce the SRI. The SRI is one of the three research institutes of Chiang Mai University in Chiang Mai. Another two are the Research Institute of Health Science and the Institute of Science and Technology Research. It was established in 1981 with a mandate to conduct and promote research in social sciences and humanities. Since its inception SRI has been a centre of study of the history and culture of Lanna, the old kingdom which covers the area of the upper northern part of Thailand. Among many research groups of SRI, Lanna Studies and Ethnic Studies Group have more works relevant to the recording, promotion and preservation of the ICH, which are practices by various ethnic groups living in hills and valleys. Those living in valleys are for example Tai Lue, Shan, Tai Yuan while those living in hills are so-called 'hill tribes', including for example, Karen, Hmong, Lisu and others. Lanna Studies Group divides its research activities into four main programs: 1) the study and preservation of the stone inscription 2) the study and preservation of the palm leaf inscripts 3) the study of arts and Lanna architecture and 4) the study of Lanna folklore and local knowledge. Ethnic Studies Group has also conducted many research projects under research themes which can be modified in time<sup>3</sup>. It has just started only a few years ago to develop data bank and media to preserve and promote the ICH of highland ethnic groups.

What I will present here is the brief description and experiences of the Lanna Studies Group only on its study of Lanna folklore and local knowledge. This includes for example, the study

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<sup>3</sup> The four current research themes are 1) the impact of formal education on ethnic culture 2) the rights of indigenous people especially children 3) religious movements among ethnic groups and 4) health issues among ethnic people.

of Lanna literature including folk tales, lullabies and riddles; folk dances and music; ceremonies and rituals; and indigenous knowledge on agriculture, ecology and medical treatment, etc. Data and information of these folklores and local knowledge have been gathered from secondary sources namely from palm scripts, manuscripts and other literatures as well as from primary sources by means of interview, observation and photograph and video recording. It is noted that the SRI is well-known for its largest collection of stone and palm leaf inscription found in various locations of Lanna. Interview on folklores has been continuously done resulting in for example more than 1,200 tape cassettes recording conversation and interview on folktales, lullaby, short stories, children's games, description of ceremonies and belief etc. Some of these are now being digitized and edited. Digital voice record is separated into parts under the same thematic category. Some parts of the record were transliterated and published into books such as Lanna folk tales (5 volumes), folk lullabies, etc. Photograph and video recording has just started to record traditional ceremonies, performances etc.

Lanna Studies Group's main aim for their research activities regarding the ILC is to study, record and promote folklores and indigenous knowledge such as the use of Lanna scripts, knowledge on herbs and traditional medicines, traditional dances etc. This has been done because it is realized that some religious and secular practices will be no longer conducted or seldom conducted and may be disappeared in the future. The promotion of the folklores has been done by providing knowledge to students and general interested people to understand what it is, how it is practiced and, more importantly, what its value is? The knowledge on folklores and indigenous knowledge is disseminated by first, giving data/information in person to students and interested people who come to consult at the SRI. Second, the promotion has been done by publishing books and articles and in other textual and pictorial forms. Third, the on-line technology is used to provide knowledge to students and the public in wider areas and in much more convenient way. The SRI's E-Lanna website provides an example on how many elements of folklores are covered and what information is provided in each element.

As shown in the web page of the E-Lanna, many topics are shown for readers to select which one they are interested in. When a topic is selected, more details is shown. For example, under "Lanna traditional ceremonies", there are details of ceremonies divided into months. Under each month, all ceremonies are listed. Under each ceremony, ritual procedures, ritual offerings, places of ceremony, meaning is described and illustrated by pictures. Besides text under each topic, in the front page, people can also choose to see short movies about Lanna history, to see records of different kinds of traditional dances and to hear different kinds of traditional songs.

With regard to inventory-making, some limitation is observed. Firstly, only a few types of folklores are studied and listed. Mostly the study is on Lanna literature whereas the study on folk performances, ceremonies and rituals, and indigenous knowledge has just started. Secondly, it is found that the inventory list has been made with textual or pictorial records. For example, as shown in Thitinadda and Warapha's book (2004) 145, 60 and 95 legends or tales related to the existence of specific locality were collected in Lampang, Chiang Rai and Tak Province, respectively. In Phanphen (1999) more than a hundred riddles were collected, with list of name and address of more than a hundred informants. However, information for the inventory is not completed. For example, information on who told and where and when it was told is mostly missing. Also, there has no information how much these tales and riddles are used at present. Thirdly, the record of performance and other practices in the forms of video and pictures have also just started. So there is not much collection on this. This is partly

due to budget limitation, so the work to safeguard the ICH and to make inventory is slowly done. Lastly, inventory of the ICH has not yet systematically done and difficult to access. It is still individually designed under the care of each researcher. Computer technology is still used in limited way.

At present, the issue of the intellectual property (IP) has not been seriously considered by researchers in the Lanna Studies and Ethnic Studies research groups of the SRI. The use for commercial purpose which may bring about IP problem has also not yet happened. IP related issues are rather new and have not been understood well by researchers and ethnic communities. For example, will publishing of knowledge on medicinal plants and traditional medicine raise an IP concern? Would the knowledge gained from palm scripts or that no longer used for more than 50 years, and the present knowledge have the same IP protection? How about the modified practices such as dances which have been always developed by borrowing some elements from other traditions? Is in this case IP issue relevant? An issue of how to share the benefit with individuals or communities who and which possess the knowledge is becoming a big concern. Folklore researchers have now experienced more difficulty in gathering data on indigenous knowledge for some informants do not like to reveal their knowledge. Taking video/pictures of activities/ceremonies is also not always permitted. Researchers have to ask for an informed consent and give informants or ceremony hosts records of video/pictures taken or other benefit in exchange. Last but not least, once the fixation of indigenous knowledge and practices is done in textual and audio-visual forms, people tend to stop revealing their knowledge which otherwise would be different. They also tend to adopt the standardized practices not continue their locally or culturally specific ones.

### **Examples of books on folklores published by the SRI**

Chayan Vaddhanaphuti ed. 1988. *kawee niphon lanna* (Lanna Poems). Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University.

Juree Khayan, *et. al.* 1996. *kam ba kao lao wai* (Khon Muang Proverbs). Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University.

Khomnetr Chethaphathanawitch ed. 2001. *khud kho ham nai lanna* (Lanna Taboos). Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University.

Kulab Mookham *et. al.* 1997. *khvam chua phuen ban lanna* (Lanna Local Belief). Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University.

Phanphen Khruathai. 1989. *Pleng klom dek lanna*. (Lanna Lullabies). Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1999. *prisna kham thai lanna* (Lanna Riddles). Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University.

Srilao Ketphrom. 1995. *praphenee chewit khon muang* (Khon Muang Life-Cycle Ceremonies). Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University.

Therasak Wongkhamnaen *et. al.* 1998. *technique withya phuen ban lanna* (Local Crafting Techniques of Lanna). Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University.

Thitinadda Jinajan. 2004. *nithan pracham thin lanna* (Lanna Legends). Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University.