

Case Study Report: Thailand
“Cultural Knowledge Management on “Taktham Tradition”
at Wat Soongmen, Phrae Province”

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Background of the project area

“**Taktham Tradition**” does not appear frequently in Thai society and seldom appears in other regions except for the northern part of Thailand. And, the one and only place that it might be seen is at Wat (Temple) Soongmen, Phrae Province, by Khru Ba Kanjana Aranyawasi.

It is thought that Wat Soongmen was built around the end of the Thonburi period and the beginning of the Ratanagosin period (year 1767 - now), according to the evidence which appears in the biography of Khru Ba Kanjana Aranyawasi who, was the abbot between the years 1789 – 1866.

Wat Soongmen was originally known as “Wat Sungmen”. The site where Soongmen sub-district now stands was bamboo forest, grassland and mixed forest. It was inhabited by a large number of hedgehogs, which are wild animals. Moreover, this area was fertile with plenty of grass and a water supply, so traders and travelers always took a rest here during their journey. Consequently, the area became known as “Pang Sung Men”, which implies a concentration of hedgehogs or “Sung” in local dialect.

Wat Soongmen is considered to be one of the oldest temples in Phrae Province. It is over 200 years old and has been well-known among the local inhabitants since the days of Khru Ba Kanjana Aranyawasi Maha Thera, a monk who was respected by a vast number of Buddhists ranging from the ruler to ordinary citizens. He was an able monk, and philosopher on Lanna (Northern) literature with impressive behaviour.

Introduction of the target ICH

The concept of cultural heritage is not only limited to cultural heritage in terms of places, material and objects but also includes ideas, beliefs, knowledge, way of life, values, tradition and pattern of interaction. Thus, the use of existing knowledge on cultural resources for maximum benefit in the development of humanity, environment and the process for the accumulation of knowledge and the virtue of people in the society, should be based upon the following significant principles:

1. The importance of a learning process which emerges from the mind and through experience.
2. Adherence to knowledge that leads to the generation of constructive virtues of mankind in response to the process of developing virtuous humans which would become a force for the society to use such knowledge as a mechanism for moving and developing itself.
3. The principle of continuous learning in order to develop knowledgeable individuals who would guide the society towards mutual learning.

Objectives of the Project

- To study the evolution and the cultural knowledge management of “Taktham Tradition” at Wat Soongmen, Phrae Province.
- To study, analyse and exchange the knowledge and local wisdom which appears in Lanna (Northern) literature at Wat Soongmen.
- To study the guidelines for the learning and local cultural resources management through public participation.

Methods of Project Implementation

This is an operational research which focuses on the participation of inhabitants in the community to manage their cultural resources. The five methods of the research are:

1. To study and analyse documents, literature and relevant historical evidence
2. To revive the “Taktham Tradition” festival such as the translation and analysis of important scriptures of Wat Soongmen which will be used by monks for preaching during the “Taktham Tradition” festival;
3. To implement local learning and local cultural resources management through public participation while using “Taktham Tradition” as a factor to motivate people to participate and to appreciate the significance of the values and scriptures of Wat Soongmen and to make use of this for community development activities;
4. To survey the historical trails and to study transnational cultural relationship in terms of a retrospect knowledge, evolution and the building of relationship between Khru Ba Kanjana Aranyawasi Maha Thera and Luang Phrabang, Laos; and
5. To analyse data and all relevant studies in order to make a presentation present in term of historical significance, cultural relations networking and learning and cultural resources management.

Outcomes of the Project

The interesting findings of the study are;

1. **Learning:** it was found that all those who participated in the activities of community resource management in “Taktham Tradition” or the research project which include children, youth and the general public have learnt about the changes which derive from faith and believe in Buddhism through the integration of all six of their senses which are linked with both internal and external dimensions based on their enthusiasm and love of cultural heritage;
2. **Learning management:** as well as being discourse and innovation that is significant for the improvement of the ability of individuals, organizations and community, the process which has taken place has enabled the community to learn and to make use of the hidden force of the individuals and community in a way that is beneficial for the development and preservation of “Taktham Tradition”. It also makes possible the expansion, repetition, dismantling and perpetual creation of community life;
3. **Knowledge gain:** the knowledge that is gradually gained from the translation and publication of the ancient scripture results in an increase in the number of young

stars in the learning process and turns such knowledge from ancient story into interesting local history; and

4. **Cultural heritage:** once the monks and the working group revealed to the local inhabitants that the Office of the National Culture Commission (ONCC) has given both interest and funds, the lack of interest and the refusal to acknowledge the existence of a vast number of scriptures has changed. They come to visit the temple whenever they are free. The reading and translating of the northern scripture becomes fun. They feel rewarded by the visit to the temple by their children who are eager to learn more about the place. Above all they could say that their village has an impressive cultural heritage which could become national cultural heritage.

Conclusion

The study of learning and local cultural resources management through public participation found that people in the community have revealed that local inhabitants possess the knowledge and ability to implement community resource management, which is beneficial for community learning process and other aspects of social development. However, there is a need to coordinate with all relevant agencies especially the local administrative agencies whose roles and mechanism are important for the developing process of the local community.

The result of the study enables the local inhabitants to become aware and recognise the significance of cultural heritage which leads to the expansion of the result and the local learning process. This process cannot be accomplished without public participation.