

Title: The Impacts of Local Wisdom Transfer in Business Aspect on Natural Resource Management in the Upper-northern Thailand : A Case Study of the Imitated Antique Reproduction.

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Abstract

Background

Before 1997, the rapid economic growth in Thailand became an important factor driving the northern people to increase their production with new designs and quantity for the foreign markets. Many communities in the upper-northern region increased their arts and craft works related to their imitated antique reproduction of which the knowledge and skill have been transferred as a local wisdom from their old generations. Such local wisdom transfer took place both outside and in their communities, and became a huge income generation activity among the villagers in various communities from their exporting markets, including Europe, North America, Africa, Japan, and the Middle East.

However, the imitated antique reproduction, which requires a great quantity of wood and other kinds of natural resources, has been neglecting creating a sense of awareness of the common relationships between the ecosystem and natural resource management. As a consequence, lacking of

wood and other resources as raw materials for such reproduction became a push factor for the upper-northern communities to expand their deforestation and “monkey-pod tree” cutting areas to other regions of the country. That matter caused related events such as drought, weather and climate changes, and conflicts between human and ecological systems. The less equilibrium between those two systems relating to marketing needs and increasing production without an awareness of the natural resource conservation could cause some impacts on each system inevitably.

The main purposes of this research were to study the impacts of the local wisdom transfer on the natural resource management in the upper-northern Thailand, and to find out the appropriate means to in such matter. This qualitative research was conducted in three specific villages: (1) Ban Luk, Na-Krua Sub-district, Mae-Ta District, Lampang Province; (2) Ban Muang Leuk, Ta-toungluang Sub-district, Mae-Tha District, Lamphun Province, and (3) Ban Tawai, Khunkong Sub-district, Hangdong District, Chiang Mai Province. Two groups of population in each village were used as the key informants of this research. They were the residents living in the communities and the outsiders in the forms of merchants, customers, and other related packing companies' personnel. Three more groups of post-graduate students in the university of Mae Jo, Nareseun University, and Chaing Mai University were involved in a series of focus-group discussions. Data collection by the use of participant observation, informal interviews, informal discussions and conversations were conducted during 1995-1998. Data analysis was mostly conducted on-site, and synthesized later on for its completion.

Research Results

The results of this research were as follows:

1. Basic Data: Each of the three communities, as the case studies of this research, shared common pattern in local wisdom transfer on an informal educational basis. The contents of that transfer included wood selecting and crafting, imitated antique reproduction relating to the domestic and foreign marketing needs, and product quality control. Such knowledge and skill transfers were passed from the old to new generations, from family members to the community members, and also across the communities. The contents were changed according to new knowledge of craftsmen, and also marketing demands. Both females and males were involved in such knowledge and skill transfer.

2. The impacts of local wisdom transfer on the natural resource management: The people in three communities had a different degree of potentiality in production and marketing skills varying on various sub-factors. Those were the products, administration, personnel or craftsmen's ability, communication channel between the raw material sources, demanding agencies, and buyers, and also the production techniques and marketing. Other sub-factors were the visions toward community as a tourism centre with the government offices' promotion in the cultural aspect.

The inter-relationships among the three communities and between those communities and other villages in other provinces such as Chiang Rai, Mae-Hongsorn, Tak, and Sukhothai Provinces were regarded within a business networking pattern. The relationships among those three communities relied basically on the rural Thai social structure and kinship system, including teacher and student pattern. The teaching and learning

contents were normally planned by both learners and providers within the situational context and suitable learning period. The contents could be collaborated into a simple series of sequences, and taught from basic to more sophisticated steps. However, such local wisdom transfers were found by this study as neglecting creating a sense of awareness in integrating the learning contents within the contextual framework of ecological and human systems' relationships.

3. The appropriate means for natural resource management: The study found that as a result of such local wisdom transfer, people began to be aware of its impacts on natural resource management. It should be managed in both physical and intellectual ways, but need more inter-agency and personnel cooperation, community participation, and a broaden view of the relationships between human and ecosystems, and creating more specific sense of awareness toward the different dimensions of marketing demands and raw material supply.