

# A Study of Social and Cultural Context for Tourism Management by Community Kamchanoad District, Amphoe Ban Dung, Udon Thani Province

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**Abstract**—This research was to study on background and social and cultural context of Kamchanoad community for sustainable tourism management. All data was collected through in-depth interview with village headmen, community committees, teacher, monks, Kamchanoad forest field officers and respected senior citizen above 60 years old in the community who have lived there for more than 40 years. Altogether there were 30 participants for this research. After analyzing the data, content from interview and discussion, Kamchanoad has both high land and low land in the region as well as swamps that are very capable of freshwater animals' conservation. Kamchanoad is also good for agriculture and animal farming. 80% of Kamchanoad's land are forest, freshwater and rice farms. Kamchanoad was officially set up as community in 1994 as "Baan Nonmuang". Inhabitants in Kamchanoad make a living by farming based on sufficiency economy. They have rice farm, eucalyptus farm, cassava farm and rubber tree farm. Local people in Kamchanoad still believe in the myth of Srisutto Naga. They are still religious and love to preserve their traditional way of life. In order to understand how to create successful tourism business in Kamchanoad, we have to study closely on local culture and traditions. Outstanding event in Kamchanoad is the worship of Grand Srisutto, which is on the full-moon day of 6th month or Visakhabucha Day. Other big events are also celebration at the end of Buddhist lent, Naga firework, New Year celebration, Boon Mahachart, Songkran, Buddhist Lent, Boon Katin and Loy Kratong. Buddhism is the main religion in Kamchanoad. The promotion of tourism in Kamchanoad is expected to help spreading more income for this region. More infrastructures will be provided for local people as well as funding for youth support and people activities.

**Keywords**—Social and Culture Area, Tourism Management, Kamchanoad Community.

## I. INTRODUCTION

KAMCHANOAD, Udon Thani, is believed as a sacred place that people respect highly as they believe it is the location of ancient Naga and supernatural beings. People perform several religious activities related to it, especially the worship of Naga. Kamchanoad is covered by Chanoad trees. The shrine of Grand Srisutto is the No. 1 attraction in the region. Since Kamchanoad is a very interesting area, people try to introduce it to tourists. However, before promoting it

commercially, a close study about culture and social content in the region should be performed first. The ideal tourism management is that it should 1) be owned by the community 2) local people participate and share their ideas and make decision 3) develop self-esteem 4) improve quality of life 5) preserve environment 6) maintain local tradition and culture 7) create internal and external learning between local and tourists 8) respect different beliefs, cultures and dignity 9) provide income for local people 10) spread income into infrastructures [1]. Kamchanoad community is now led by Mr. Vichian Sansuk as the village headman. Kamchanoad is divided into 4 sub villages: Kum Nakin, Kum Bokaew, Kum Nonsaad and Kum Tawanyosang. Each sub has sub leader. Kamchanoad has many urban legends. The most famous one is about ghosts hiring Film Company to play movies for the villages. Kamchanoad's ritual tradition is based on the belief of Naga, so there are many activities set up related to it: Naga statue, Naga shrine, marigold farming for Naga worship, woven fabric in Naga print, etc. [2]. Considering the traditional and social context in Kamchanoad's potentials to tourism, the research team would like to study more on finding the identity of this community and promote it to sustainable tourism with the expectation of providing more income to people and preserving their exotic traditional way of life which is rare to find in the modern world.

## II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The object is to study social context, tradition and background of Kamchanoad for sustainable tourism management.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Target group of study were village headmen, community committees, teacher, monks, Kamchanoad forest field officers and respected senior citizen above 60 years old in the community who have lived there for more than 40 years. Altogether there were 30 participants for this research, which were 1 village leader, 5 community committees, 1 teacher, 3 monks and 20 seniors. The interview was semi-structure interview covering questions in this categories: 1) tourism should be owned by the community 2) local people participate and share their ideas and make decision 3) tourism should develop self-esteem 4) tourism should improve quality of life 5) tourism should preserve environment 6) tourism should maintain local tradition and culture 7) tourism should create

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internal and external learning between local and tourists 8) tourism should respect different beliefs, cultures and dignity 9) tourism should provide income for local people 10) tourism should spread income into infrastructures. Besides interviews, research team went down to do field research. All data were analyzed and discussed by descriptive report.

#### IV. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Kamchanoad has grown so much since 1940. It has transformed from small village with few households into big villages which is rich with culture. Kamchanoad has both highland and lowland, so it is good for agriculture. There are also swamps spreading around the area, [3] which is good for fresh-water animal preservation. Not only plant farming, Kamchanoad is also good for animal farming. Kamchanoad was officially set up in 1994 as “Ban Nonmuang”. The current leader is Mr. Vichien Sansuk. There are 189 households in this community, 354 male and 314 female. The majority people in this area are farmers. They grow sugarcane, Eucalyptus, cassava and rubber tree. Average income is 10,000 Baht annually. There are many centers in Kamchanoad, including learning center and local innovation development department run by Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The common way of life here is similar to ordinary north-eastern style of Thailand. People live on sufficiency economy.

For social context, Kamchanoad is full of “Chanoad” (*Livistona Saribus*) which are the plants similar to palm trees or coconut trees. Chanoad is part of people’s tradition. They believe that Chanoad is sacred tree and won’t be grown anywhere except here. There is a forest called “Kam Chanoad Forest Island” a big group of Chanoad spreading throughout 20 Rais land, located on the edge of 3 villages. It is believed that this forest is the resident of Srisutto Naga. Not only Chanoad, there are many interesting plants growing inside the forest island. [4]



Fig. 1 Kamchanoad Forest Island



Fig. 2 Chanoad Tree



Fig. 3 Grand Srisutto Shrine



Fig. 4 The Sacred Well

Kamchanoad is the land of Naga. The island forest of Chanoad is believed as the resident of Srisutto Nag, one of the biggest Naga goddess in the mythology. Story from the myth said that Kamchanoad is not only the resident of Srisutto, it is also the entrance to the underworld. Srisutto was the creator of Mae Khong River, the big river in north-east of Thailand. From the myth, Srisutto Naga and his friend, Suwannak Naga was fighting against each other for 7 years. Their conflict affected all three worlds, so Indra stopped them, separated them to live at another end of Dong Payafai land, and let them compete by building. Who finish first will win the prize of Pangasianodon gigas. Finally, Srisutto won the competition by creating Mae Khong River while Suwannak built Nan River. The myth explained why Pangasianodon gigas can only be found in Mae Khong River. Srisutto also asked Indra to build

3 entrances on earth to the underworld: in Vientien, Nongkantae and in Kamchanoad. But Kamchanoad is special because it was covered by magic dust which transforms angels to be mortals. Those mortals became the first inhabitants of Kamchanoad [5]. As a result, all important events here in Kamchanoad are based on the myth of Srisutto Naga. The main event ceremony Srisutto worship ceremony in the full-moon of 6th month every year. Special activities such as Naki Pageant Contest, boat race and traditional games are part of this celebration. Apart from this celebration, Kamchanoad people also celebrate regular events, such as New Year, Buddhist Lent, Loykrathong.

Tourism management is the common awareness of people in Kamchanoad. They have experienced the boom of tourism in their region and earned a lot of income during special events where domestic and international tourists come to visit the town. Below are pictures displaying the lively activities during Songkran Festival in Kamchanoad.



Fig. 5 People celebrating Songkran in Kamchanoad



Fig. 6 People went to The Grand Srisutto Shrine for Blessing

From the study, it reflects that the tourism businesses here are owned by local people. 95% of sellers during special seasons are local people. They designed the business style and

voted for committees to run the management for them. This has created community pride among them. Tourism has brought better quality of life for the local. Each household has all equipments and tools for family convenience. People here are very aware of environment, too, since they have effective garbage management during tourism seasons. They promote their culture through tourism successfully without losing their identity. Profit from each event will be spared to support local infrastructures, too.

#### V.CONCLUSION/ DISCUSSION

Tourism in Kamchanoad is very unique as the attractive main events are based on the belief of sacred goddess and supernatural events. In order to create sustainable tourism management, we must study closer to social and traditional context to provide the right support for tourists. Tourism management here needs participations from every section. The key is to promote tourism while preserving nature, culture and traditions.[6] However, what can destroy this beautiful way of life is people's greed. Many people are still not aware of destroying the nature and culture unintentionally. Some tainted Chanoad trees in the forest, many sellers built their kiosks untidily, garbage is everywhere during high season, etc. [7] The growth of tourism has pros and cons, therefore, we should find out the best way to preserve the old things and welcome the new things beautifully. The social and traditional content should be taken care of firstly. Local people should be immune first so they won't spoil their own way of life. Tourism should enrich the community, not destroying. Social capital is very essential for preserving way of life. As in the research of Bangkontee community where people try to manage tourism in their region, people's participation is very important to protect their culture while promoting tourism. Although globalization has impacted and brought quick change in everywhere in Thailand, many local people still want to keep their land as the green zone where capitalism can't harm them. [8]

#### VI. SUGGESTIONS

- 1) The report of this research is expected to be used and adapted in developing surroundings to support tourism.
- 2) Leader or representatives from local administrations of each region should participate in the study of how to develop the tourism attractions in their regions.

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