ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE PROTECTION THROUGH COMMUNITY OUTREACH IN THAILAND

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“\textit{The Fight against illicit trafficking of cultural heritage in SEA}”
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Outline

- **Current situations** on heritage management/protection in **multi-ethnic minorities** in Mae Hong Son province, NW Thailand, a borderland between Thailand & Myanmar—*Not main stream culture*

- **How to preserve/safeguard** the archaeological heritage of “nobody” in the borderland area?

- **To discuss the practice of communication** between archaeologists and tribal communities through different ways of management

- **How to break through the boundaries** of cultural and ethnic diversities?
Current situations
Majority of ethnic groups in Thailand is the “Thai ethnic group”

The government perpetuates the nationalist views of “Thai cultural heritage”

Thailand composes of various ethnic minorities groups who has “no sense of “Thai cultural heritage”

The promotion of archaeological sites tend to be used for the heritage tourism boosting the national and local economies → impact on the destruction of cultural heritages
Reflexive views

- Self-awareness on the role of archaeologist as a looter (from tribal perspectives)

- The need for crossed-cultural sensitivity, compromise and collaboration with the other interested groups
Types of looting

- **Local level**
  - intentional vs. unintentional purposes

- **National level**
  - Belief & religious purposes
  - Decorative purposes

- **International level**
  - Commodities
Cases:
1. Represented rare collections and specimens
2. Products of archaeological excavations
Research Area
Whose heritages?

- “Thai”?
- Karen?
- Lisu?
- Lahu?
- Lua?
Years ago

Pang Mapha

Villages

Pam  Ban Rai1  Mae Lana  Jabo  Bor Krai  Ban Rai 2  Ban Rai 3
How to safeguard the heritages
Research

- Cave Exploration (2000-2002)
- Highland Archaeology Project (2002-2006)
- Archaeological Heritage Management at Ban Rai and Tham Lod (2006-2007)
- Arts and Archaeology (2007)
- Archaeological Exploration and Heritage Management (2007-2011)
- The Relationships between Prehistoric People and Their Environments (2012-16)
- Total of 16 years
The practice of communication: communities outreach
Working together

Local /tribal communities

Outsiders (Researchers)
Communities outreach

- Community involvement in the heritage managements through different kinds of management
- Engaging the public education for promoting an understanding of the past and contemporary heritages
- Dissimilate knowledge to the public by speaking or writing in simple language
- Linking the past to present through arts
Case studies

- Ban Rai: 15 activities
- Tham Lod: 13 activities
Tham Lod

Ban Rai
Consultation
Formal meeting
Ban Rai village

- Ban Rai village composes of 6 ethnic groups including Hmong, Shan, Northern Thai, Central Thai, Southern Thai, Lisu, and Chinese from Yunnan

- Village settlement: 44 years old

- Ban Rai rockshelter: Late Pleistocene to Late Holocene periods.
Local culture
Projects in Ban Rai village, Pang Mapha: sustainable tourism

- Survey and excavation at Ban Rai rockshelter
- Collect local history and ethnographic data
- Visit other villages
- Developed the Educational Center
- Children workshops
- Adult workshops
- Teacher workshops
- Cultural tour
- Archaeology, Arts and Communities
Oldest Wooden Craft Specialization
(Ban Rai ca. 2,000–1,000 BP)
Archaeological Heritage Management
Visual anthropology workshop
Museum workshop
Arts and archaeology
Community photography
Show time in Pang Mapha
Tham Lod village

- Tham Lod village composes of mainly Shan and Northern Thai ethnic groups.
- Village settlement: 35 years old.
- Tham Lod rockshelter: Late Pleistocene to Late Holocene periods.
Tham Lod
The Oldest Modern Humans Found in Northern Thailand

Tham Lod (13,000 BP)
The Late Pleistocene Lithic Workshop
Tham Lod (32,000-12,000 BP)
First meeting for new project
Food offering to cave spirits
Archaeology in wildlife sanctuary
Homestay workshop
Museum Workshop for Children
## Cross-cultural analysis

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<tr>
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<th>Ban Rai</th>
<th>Tham Lod</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archaeological research</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities involvement</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflict: conservation vs. development</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (Spiritual belief, communities conflicts)</td>
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<td>The needs for Archaeological Tourism</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senses of belonging</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Low</td>
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Contributions
Discussion and conclusion

- Demonstrated the complexities of heritage management in the tribal/ethnic minorities along the borderland which can be applied to other parts of SEA or the world.

- Long-term research, community involvement processes and public education are the necessary implements for sustainable heritage conservation and prevent the illicit trafficking of cultural heritages.
The communities in different villages have different historical trajectories relating to archaeological sites and their sense of belonging.

Communities should involve in every step of research.

We must accept the different sets of knowledge and understandings of the past (multiple interpretations) as well as conservation.

Sharing information through various activities.
Thank you