

The Social Capital of the Silver Ornaments in Northeastern, Thailand

¹Warit Witsrutwait, ¹Songkhon Chantachon, ²Penchan Kriengkrisuk,
²Prasopsuk Rittidet and ³Budsakorn Saenyabud

¹The Research Institute of Northeastern Art and Culture, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

²Faculty of Education, Rajabhat Mahasarakham University, Thailand

³Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Rajabhat Mahasarakham University, Thailand

Abstract: Problem statement: The silver ornaments is the well known handicraft for Chum Chon Ban Choke, Tambon Khawao Sinrin, Amphoe Khawao Sinrin and Surin province. The study of social capital concerning silver ornaments at Ban Choke community, the Khmer ethnic focused on the low quality of the making the silver ornaments. The silver craftsmen earned less income because the capital productions were higher. Some craftsmen stopped making the silver ornaments to find new jobs for getting more income. That was the problem for the remaining of a silver ornaments handicraft. The purpose of the study was to study the management of social capital of silver ornament making at Chum Chon Ban Choke. **Approach:** It was qualitative and carried out using documentary studies, surveys, observations, and interviews and focused group discussions, 47 research informants were community and silver market leaders, silver craftsmen, shop owners, buyers, government and private personnel over looking promotion and development of silver ornaments in Surin Province. The analysis of data was done descriptively. **Results:** The social capital was divided into 2 categories internal and external. The internal social capital included the traditional skills of making silver ornaments and social and cultural coherence of the people. The second one came from capitalism and economic development, such as, roads, vehicles, electricity, mass media and markets. To some extent, Chum Chon Ban Choke changed. People picked up a new habit of buying goods from outside, Spending more with limited income made people go into debt. What made things even worse were low prices of their farm produce and severe droughts. The people who were in the business of silver ornaments came up with a plan bringing government and private entrepreneurs to revitalize social capital by running workshop trainings and using appropriate technology, such as, setting up a village fund, farm machinery and establish community learning and marketing networks. By such practices, group as well as family members gain reasonable income. In return, they donated some for community activities revitalizing and renovating old and new social capital of silver ornament making in their community. They built sufficient base economy from multi-social wisdom of applied silver handicraft making at Chum Chon Ban Choke. **Conclusion/Recommendations:** They attempted to mix their knowledge to the adjustment for the new knowledge by seminar and adopting the tools. That was the social capital and concerned on the social inter reaction and the culture as individual, group and institute. The people realized to the problems to fight the market system.

Key words: The social capital, silver ornaments, the communities in northeastern Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Once a society experienced change, the social capital which was based on sufficient economy shifted to economic competition and status building for individuals as well as families. The new economic system, which emphasized materialism and relying on outside influences, affected the strength and security of the society. Social capital of silver ornaments Choke,

Tambon Khawao Sinrin and Surin province began as economic community self-help, people help people, people trusted each other and people built own capacity using their community wisdom. When the capital system was introduced to the community in 1964, the economic development was more important than economic self-help. At family level, the family leaders strived for higher income. The people, therefore, did not pay much attention to harnessing their community

Corresponding Author: Prasopsuk Rittidet, Faculty of Education, Rajabhat Mahasarakham University, Thailand
Tel: +66-43-754316 Fax: +66-43-754316

wisdom of helping or trusting one another or building own community capacity^[1].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Area of the study: The study of social capital concerning silver ornaments at Chum Chon Ban Choke, Tambon Khawao Sinrin, Amphoe Khawao Sinrin, Surin Province was qualitative and carried out using documentary studies, surveys, observations, interviews and focused group discussions, the 47 research informants were community and silver market leaders, silver craftsmen, shop owners, buyers, government and private personnel over looking promotion and development of silver ornaments in Surin province. The analysis of data was done descriptively.

RESULTS

The history of chum chon ban choke: The people at Chum Chon Ban Choke migrated from Ban Khawao Sinrin. The people were ethnic Khmers and were rice growers. They had to clear the forests in order to make their own plots of land. Their way of life was closely related with nature. They collected part of their daily necessities from the forests near by^[3]. With economic self-help, the people led simple life, helped each other when needed. They treated each other like their own Kins or relatives and they strongly believed in Brahmanism, Buddhism and spirits. They practiced Sandoneta tradition, the tradition of worshipping their ancestral spirits every middle of the tenth lunar month. On the same period the people at Surin arranged for tourism and “ Thank You “ceremony for their silver ornament making teachers, known as, Ben Thome. On that day the student-silver craftsmen would go to their teachers and thank them for knowledge and skills in silver ornament making. Because of their profound and practical skills, the people at Chon Ban Choke could maintain their community economically. By keeping their economic self-help.

The management of social capital of silver ornament making at chum chon ban choke: The way of life of the people at Chum Chon Ban Choke later became uncertain due to depletion of natural surroundings, poor soil condition, drought, and low prices of agricultural produce and outside influences. The situation became worst when the people spent more money than the amount they actually earned. Families were indebt; many of them sent their sons and/or daughters to work in cities for better incomes. By their own awareness, however, the people began to realize that they should

use their local wisdom of silver ornament making for the benefit of their community. Mr. Din Suththiklab or Khun Sinrin, who was a learned man then, discussed at length with silver craftsmen how to revise and conserve their cultural heritage made known by their Khmers ancestors who migrated from Cambodia 289 years ago. He then formed a group of 1/30 the silver craftsmen to make silver ornaments. In return, they passed on their knowledge and skills to other ethnic Khmers so that they could have silver ornaments every time they performed rituals or paid a visit to their respected folks or parents. Such a beginning brought social capitals back to Chum Chon Ban Choke again-craftsmanship of silver ornament making, helping one another, respect for one another, or building own community capacity were among them. Some famous silver craftsmen, such as, Mr. Puan Jiawthong and Mr. Puang Phachonkla and Mr. Siri Muanprasarn set up a group of silver handicraft making so that the silver craftsmanship could be continually Conserved.

An integration of old and new knowledge, skills and tools for silver ornament making at chum chon ban choke: The problems encountered by members of Ban Choke silver ornament making were low quality and types or shapes of their products. The stone and clay-molds were replaced by charcoal molds. The charcoal molds not only can resist fire but also last from 5-10 years. The manual silver-light sheet makers were replaced by electric ones. The oil-lamps were replaced by electric chisels. The single scales were replaced by double-scales. As for the types or shapes of silver ornaments, the silver craftsmen began with basic forms known as “Prakuams”. The Prakuams had many shapes and designs. The old shapes were circular and cylindrical with designs of water-lilies, both up and upside down positions. The new shapes and designs were natural-based integration. They were the shapes of star apples, pumpkins, water bottles, horseshoe crabs and shells. The designs were star gooseberry gems, grasshopper teeth and ear of rice. New shapes and designs were drawn from daily used tools, such as, pouches, water jars and two-faced drums. Some shapes and designs were made to satisfy needs of customers and markets. They were the shapes of rectangles and triangles and the designs of ‘s’ and ‘will’. All shapes and designs were made to emphasize beauty and variation of the silver ornaments of Chum Chon Ban Choke^[2].

The network of social capital (internal-external) and the silver ornament making of chum chon ban choke: The social Capitals of silver ornament making

led by Mr. Din Suththiklab and the silver handicraft making led by Mr. Puan Jiwathong, Mr. Puang Phachonkla and Mr. Siri Muanprasarn built network of the silver ornament making within Tambon Khawao Sinrin. They worked with the housewife Group, the Applied Silver and Ban Nathang Silver and Brass Group. The members of all those groups had opportunities to share experiences with one another, participate training workshops or field studies. Social capitals, delivered by various government and non-government offices or personnel, played a strong role in assisting group members with training workshops concerning actual making skills, management, exhibitions and sale promotions in and outside Thailand. The offices were Tambom Khawao Sinrin Administrative Organization, Amphoe Khawao Sinrin Development, Surin provincial development, Surin provincial commerce, Surin administrative organization, credit union co-operatives and the center of Southern Isan occupation promotion. They all assisted, one way or another, the group members in using internal and external social capitals enhancing as well as conserving and passing on their knowledge and skills of silver ornament making. The family and community members gained steady incomes.

DISCUSSION

Making a silver ornaments was valuable and worth, that was the internal social capital, which the local wise man leaders trained for their families and villagers. The making a silver ornaments knowledge as the social capital remained in the community. They integrated the old and new knowledge to develop the silver ornaments^[3].

Suggestion: In the process of a silver ornaments making, the concerned leaders should consider both the worth economic and social/cultural values. They should set up a learning center where learning about and history of silver ornament making were possible and fully displayed respectively. Customers should be well advised of how the silver ornament products should be selected and purchased. The silver craftsmen should have service mind and think of how the craftsmanship should be promoted and supported, such as, training marketing, cultural tourism and provincial silver ornament exhibitions. By such activities, the silver ornament craftsmanship could be continually maintained, developed and people and community gained benefit economically^[4].

CONCLUSION

The dynamic of Ban Chok community, the silver ornaments was the identity of the Thai-Khmer ethnic. The silver ornaments was the part of spirit of the people in the community. That indicated that Thailand had the beautiful identity, belief, visual and reasonable. The silver craftsmen was the human capital. They attempted to mix their knowledge to the adjustment for the new knowledge by seminar and adopting the tools. That was the social capital and concerned on the social inter reaction and the culture as individual, group and institute. The people realized to the problems to fight the market system. By such practices, group as well as family members gain reasonable income, sold the silver ornaments to the marketing networks. The business organization in Northeast of Thailand was the community business based on the jobs cooperation such as handicraft networks, agricultural networks and livestock networks. The family and the organization had more incomes in the daily life. They sold the silver ornaments in the fairs. That was the dynamic of the silver ornaments of Thai-Khmer ethnic in value and worth.

There were two types of social capitals at Chum Chon Ban Choke. The internal social capitals included the knowledge of making silver ornaments. The skills required training and learning of the craftsmen involved. The community relations led to helping and trusting one another and finally built their own community capacity intellectually. As for the external social, the people had problems coming with capitalism and globalization. They were forced, directly or indirectly, to spend more money than the amount they earned many ran into debt. They were Fortunate, however, that they later realized how to solve the problems. Various government and non - government offices and personnel provided them with practical advices bringing old and new knowledge and skills of making silver ornaments. They set up various groups of people and built network of multi-society of handicraft making and applying of silver ornament making.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researchers express their sincere appreciation for all of support provided.

REFERENCES

1. Suthep Soonthornpasuch, 2005. Esan Village During the Cold War Sociology on the Northeast. 4th Edn., Bangkok: Matichon, Thailand, ISBN: 974-323-457-8, pp: 20-21.

2. Worawuth Romrattanapan, 2005. The Social Capital. The Learning Development for the Well Being Community, Bangkok, Thailand, ISBN: 974-93140-5-0, p: 218.
3. Chattip Nartsupha, 2003. The Thai village economy in the past. *J. Econ. History*, 63: 265-266. DOI: 10.1017/S0022050703331808
4. Prasopsuk Rithidej, Preecha Piampongsan, Preecha Prathepha and Boonsom Yodmalee, 2005. The development of community economic system of thung kula ronghai farmers at Ban Ta Yuak, Northeastern Thailand. *J. Soc. Sci.*, 1: 240-242. <http://nsdl.org/resource/2200/20070209225604903T>