

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter comprises two parts: a synopsis of *Phu Yai Lee Kab Nang Ma* and a review of relevant research.

2.1 Synopsis

After the death of her grandmother, Yaai Wan, Malinee (who also goes by Khun Ma) receives a letter informing her that she has inherited a hundred-rai plot of paddy fields in Suphan Buri. Yaai Wan wanted her to take over the farm and continue to cultivate the land; as a condition of the inheritance, Khun Ma is prohibited from renting out the paddy fields. Selling the fields to Leenawat or Phu Yai Lee is the only way around the condition. She is troubled by this bind.

Khun Ma did not have a close relationship with her grandmother because her mother moved to Bangkok before she was born. Khun Ma has lived in Bangkok her entire life, earning a living by modeling. She has a modern lifestyle, wearing fashionable clothes, driving an expensive car and using brand-name products. She realizes that she could not fulfill her grandmother's wishes. Farming and working in the rice fields would not be possible for her. She is frustrated with Yaai Wan's conditions so she consults her boyfriend Pradit. Discovering that he has carried on a relationship with another woman, Khun Ma decides to leave the city and move to Suphan Buri.

Phu Yai Lee was encouraged and supported by Yaai Wan to earn a university degree in agriculture. He is also working towards his Master's degree in the same field. He is beloved by the villagers, eventually being selected as a village chief, like his father once had been. Phu Yai Lee, implements the knowledge he has gained at university, promoting new techniques and theories concerning low harvests, pests, and their farming challenges. He is trying to create a sustainable village economy, while also improving the villagers' quality of life. Phu Yai Lee values the traditions of the village and pays respect to elders like Yaai Wan. When Khun Ma arrives, she discovers that her grandmother had actually wished her to marry Phu Yai Lee.

Phu Yai Lee's and Khun Ma's first encounter is slightly unpleasant. She wrongly assumes he is a long-tail boat driver, which leads to some awkwardness between them. While living in the village, she learns a lot about farming, traditional practices, local culture and the lifestyle of people in the country. She is very happy with her life, and she gradually changes from a city lady to a village woman. Phu Yai Lee and Pueed, an orphaned boy whom Phu Yai Lee took under his care, assist Khun Ma in tending the rice farm and in all aspects of the farming life. Since Khun Ma and Phu Yai Lee have to perform many activities together, help each other to solve problems, and spend a good deal of time together learning about each other, they become closer. Both finally fall in love with each other and get engaged before Phu Yai Lee is ordained as a monk. After he leaves the monkhood, Khun Ma and Phu Yai Lee get married, live together in the village and continue to further develop their community as a couple.

2.2 Previous Studies

Researchers from various fields have conducted and published works of scholarship using both PROUT and SEP methodology. Among them are books that explain how to apply SEP and PROUT approaches in Thailand and in other countries. Some researchers have conducted investigations concerned with a small group of selected communities because they believe that results from a focused study of a select group participating in the SEP approach can be applied at the national level later.

In “Participatory Communication and Sufficiency Economy in Thailand”, Boonlert Supadhiloke examined a participatory communication process inherent in the application of His Majesty the King’s Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, in two local communities, Ban Khao Din and Ban Trok Faimai, in Rayong, Thailand. In his study, three qualitative methods of data gathering were used: documentary analysis, personal observations in the field and interviews with key persons. Supadhiloke concluded that participatory communication had been a method of the learning process in the different local learning centers within “the context of folk cultures or in Thai ‘Pumpunya’ (109). The most influential leaders of the community were the monks and local leaders, including elders and the village chief. In the first community, Ban Khao Din, they formed local groups to participate in development projects. As a result, these groups expanded the project network to other communities (109). The local youth group under study believed that natural resources were the most important asset for the development of society. Thus, they tried to sustain the existing natural resources to comply with a sustainable development model (110). In the Ban Trok Fai Mai community, interpersonal communication channels were very important. The community leader

applied his own experience, using natural resources and traditional techniques in farming, and explained these ideas to other members of the community. He found that being self-reliant and using local assets with a small amount of investment were the keys that would prevent any villager from falling into debt (113). The level of participation in interpersonal communication was inadequate and should be further improved so that all members would be able to communicate more effectively in other relevant respects (115). To achieve this goal, Supadhiloke proposes creating a participatory communication model for Thai people in other communities. The participatory communication concept ought to be integrated into SEP projects in other communities. As a consequence, Thais would be able to utilize this model with local wisdom and ethics, which corresponds with their rights to communicate as members of a democratic community (116).

While some researchers are focusing on encouraging people to use SEP approach, others have keyed on the social concept of identity. They are concerned whether people are adapting to a modern society and whether they are discarding their traditional identities. Thus, these researchers are attempting to study whether the SEP concept would be able to assist all Thais in preserving their heritage.

In the article “The Sustainability of Local Community under the Globalization: The Case of Kao Yi Sarn, Samutsongkram, Thailand”, Kundoldibya Panitchpakdi observed how people were able to maintain their Thai identity in the modern era of globalization. A small village, Kao Yee Sarn, in Samutsongkram Province was chosen as a case study. In the article, Panitchpakdi applied the Environment, Behavior and Society theory (EBS), surveyed the environment and interviewed people to analyze and

evaluate the overall sense of community identity. From his investigation, he discovered that in Kao Yee Sarn, people were able to sustain their community identity by relying on the principle of SEP. The traditional Thai house, which is lifted off the ground and has an open terrace to aerate the home without using air conditioning, is still most common. People earn their living by burning mangrove trees, which is a major natural resource, into charcoal. The members of the community still utilize natural resources in tandem with local wisdom to earn sufficient income for their families (366-369). In the end, he suggested that because charcoal is a staple resource, which connects people in the community with other communities, Thai villagers could be able to apply elements of their “cultural economy” to maintain their identity (369). Thus, Kao Yee Sarn possibly can maintain “sustainability through a charcoal-based cultural economy” (369). Therefore, sustainability should be continuously applied within the community especially a community that is concerned with natural resources and the environment.

Similar to Panitchpakdi’s study, another study examined the relationship between natural resources and economic development. Sathirathai and Piboolsravut referred to a case study by Khao Hin Sorn, the Royal Development Study Center, in “Sufficiency Economy and a Healthy Community”. The researchers looked at how SEP could reduce poverty and creates a healthy community. They stated that rapid economic growth had caused an accelerated deterioration of natural resources. Consequently, problems could be seen in terms of various aspects, including the environment, community, the economy, living standards, and society. To alleviate these concerns, Khao Hin Sorn was established as a place where Thais could learn how to use appropriate technology to implement sustainable agricultural techniques and maintain environmental balance. Also, people in the area, mostly farmers, applied SEP in their

integrated community development activities (2). A range of training programs were provided. They gained advanced training and were able to create various projects and activities, such as soil development and water management systems. A farmer, who applied the New Theory Agriculture system, learned how to improve the soil and implemented these new techniques on her farm. As a result, she earned more annual income which bettered her financial status. Also, the study revealed that people in Khao Hin Sorn became healthier. People used fewer chemicals in the farming process so that their costs were reduced while the earnings stayed the same or went up. Moreover, this resulted in a cleaner environment which led to fewer health problems and decreasing medical expenses. More money and savings were generated (16-17). All in all, people in the community became healthier and more prosperous without destroying the natural resources and were released from economic hardships that are associated with debt. Moreover, in terms of the economy, the SEP framework provides a sense of possibility and indicates this concept could be a viable alternative.

In *NIDA Development Journal*, Navarat Sachayansrisakul's study entitled, "Sufficiency Economy: A Reasonable Approach for Thailand's Future," SEP was proposed as a long-term solution to the country's economy. To find out whether the SEP is applicable for both the agricultural sector and the non-agricultural sector, at an individual level and a national level, she collected data through the documentary method. She pointed out that Thailand has been facing a problem with economic inequality since Thailand has been focusing narrowly on development, embracing capitalist principles, and overlooking economy restructuring which is necessary during any period of economic growth. The study suggested that SEP concepts could be used as a method to relieve this problem. Thais were encouraged to practice this method,

earning more than they one spend, saving more to be able to invest, and meeting basic needs, instead of indulging in greed. From this practice, economic inequality was lessened. If Thais practice this approach, inequality in the community, organizations, and the nation as a whole would gradually lessen. Finally, Sachayansrisakul suggested that not only should people in the agricultural sector utilize this approach, but also those in the non-agricultural sector. These positive results must be promoted to other organizations as a model. Thailand should apply SEP in different organizations, at various levels, to begin solving the problems of economic instability (19).

Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, not only in the agricultural sector, but also in the business sector, the SEP has proven to be a practical approach. However, among the business sector, SEP is still underdeveloped.

Sooksan Kantabutra conducted a study, “Development of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in the Thai business Sector: Evidence, Future Research & Policy Implications,” to find out the extent to which SEP has been applied and how effective it is in the business sector, particularly in Thailand. In his study, he compared SEP to the Rhineland business model, another approach applied in the West, to point out similarities between the two approaches, which led to business success. He investigated various business enterprises affected by the economic crisis and in which situations the entrepreneurs applied the SEP approach to their business practice. Three businesses in three fields were selected: cement, jewelry, and Sa paper. He found that the Sa paper business was able to get through the crisis by adapting its methods of technology concerning color creation, water systems, recycling methods, and local wisdom. It managed to effectively restructure production so that production could meet

demand (10). The jewelry and cement businesses applied the moderation principle not expecting a higher profit but in anticipation of consistent profits over the long term.

Also, they considered making loans to develop business (11). The principles of the SEP approach enabled these businesses to survive harsh circumstances along with 296 other sustainable businesses that eventually became successful (13).

Many countries around the world have faced crises similar to Thailand's economic dilemma. Various studies and approaches have been conducted regarding the solutions initiated to address these economic problems. A study by Raveendra Batra of the Indian economy, which applied the PROUT theory as a model, is a representative example.

Prout and Economic Reform in India, by Raveendra Batra, explains PROUT's conceptual framework, which the Indian government implements for its socio-economic reforms. India has been facing poverty for decades, especially with wage inequality between people living in rural and urban areas. PROUT proposes an economic system that would satisfy human wants and needs based on its fundamental principles. After the government utilized development processes based on PROUT, the wage gap shrank. The distribution of income was enough to enable people to meet their basic needs with their earned wages (23-24). This propelled the entire economy forward. In addition, even though India has abundant natural resources, most Indians have not been made aware of the necessity of natural resources preservation. They do not realize the dangers of exploiting natural resources incautiously. To address this problem, PROUT promotes an efficient utilization of natural resources maintaining balance between natural preservation and economic growth. No single resource should be consumed for

short-term profits. Widespread social benefits are prioritized for the economy as a whole. The book reveals that after PROUT was implemented, people had a raised awareness of resource distribution and effective utilization (83-85). Batra concluded that the minimum wage of impoverished Indians would possibly be increased to 200 rupees per month, which is the minimum wage if the government establishes the PROUT concept in long-term development plan (89).

Previous studies have mainly looked at the SEP and PROUT concepts as a means to relieve harsh economic situations and to preserve their traditional identities. However, studies and published works which examine the results of the SEP and PROUT approaches, especially within media such as television drama, have not been extensively produced. Therefore, this research aims to exclusively investigate how the SEP and PROUT approaches are reflected in the television drama *Phu Yai Lee Kab Nang Ma* and to assess the practicality and benefits of both approaches for people in such a community.