

CHAPTER 3

Development Trajectory and the Role of Mieng

This chapter looks at the development of Mae kampong village from formation of the community to its involvement into the village tourism. This chapter will also discuss how the traditional practice of Mieng production, as an essential element of the village in terms of economic, cultural, and social aspects, has helped the villagers adapt to various changes that were coupled with the development. In this chapter, an emphasis will be made on the importance of Mieng and its value as capital of a great significance to the people in the village. The significance of Mieng will be illustrated in terms of its symbolic meaning, economic, social, cultural capital, and also indigenous knowledge of Mae Kampong villagers. Also, the changing meaning of Mieng to the villagers will be discussed in this chapter.

3.1 Development of Mae Kampong

Mae Kampong, in the past, was not significantly different from the traditional agrarian Northern Thai communities, but today, it is notably different from the “traditional” in that they are shifting their economy from a primary industry to a service industry as a recent change in the village’s mode of economy. The community known as Mae Kampong today was formed by migrants from nearby areas more than 100 years ago. The settlement of the founders of Mae Kampong was for an agricultural purpose of tea leaves cultivation. More than 100 years ago, the village was founded by a few families from Doi Saket district in Chiang Mai province who found their homelands scarce for Mieng farming and therefore searched lands for the forest tea orchard cultivation (Baicha 2003; Nuttanee 2003; Somsak 2001; Mae Kampong.com 2010). The settlement, which was a prevalent phenomenon in some parts of Northern Thailand at that time, was initiated by adventurous peasants who were searching the betterment of income and the position in peasant society. In fact, settlement to a new land in search of Mieng orchard provided the peasants with a new opportunity for prosperity and status in the

peasant community, and this inducement to Mieng production is one of the reasons why Mieng has become an industry in Northern Thailand (Van Roy 1971: 87). After the first settlement of those from Doi Saket, the *Khamu* people also came to settle in this area mostly for the purpose of wage labor for Mieng farming and later became assimilated in the northern Thai culture.

Mae Kampong has been well known for production of a fermented tea food, *Mieng*. Most villagers have been traditionally engaged in the production of it as a predominant source of income. In fact, today, about 97 per cent of the villagers are engaged in Mieng production (Mae Kampong.com 2010). However, as a recent phenomenon, more and more villagers are shifting their focus on production of Mieng as a predominant economic activity to other economic activities such as coffee production, homestay business, pillows stuffed with tea leaves making as a souvenir product, and Thai massage service largely because of the declining demand of Mieng from lowland consumers (Mattijs 2014; Baicha 2003; Nuttanee 2003; Somsak 2001).

According to an explanation given by the former village headman, the construction of the paved road that connects to the city of Chiang Mai in 1970s and the implementation of two micro-hydro power generators in 1982 were the turning points of the village. Before 1970s, people's occupation was predominantly Mieng cultivation, and there was no advanced infrastructure such as roads and electricity. However, after the construction of the road and implementation of micro-hydro power plants, development was brought to the village, and people started to benefit from it. Specifically, because of the installment of the paved roads, the village became able to accept more tourists from other parts of Thailand, especially from the city of Chiang Mai and tourists from other countries as well. This way, the construction of the paved road became the cornerstone of today's economic growth of Mae Kampong.

The micro hydro power plant was established in the village in 1982. The establishment of the plant was originally intended to produce electricity, making use of the river that runs through the village, and supply it to industrialized cities such as the city of Chiang Mai. Before 1982, people in Mae Kampong had essentially no means of power. Individuals would utilize diesel and gas lights to give light at night, for the most part to steam and bundle Mieng. The activity originated from the Teen Tok Royal Project

office and the cash was given by USAID. Technical support and consultation came from the Department of Elective Energy Development and Efficiency (DEDE). This department additionally helped in the formation of a village cooperative to maintain the plant, gather the money, and manage distribution of the incomes from the hydropower system. The villagers themselves were also vigorously involved in the construction of the pipe (about 50 meters), powerhouse, distribution lines, and so on (Mattijs 2014: 5). Electricity generated from the micro hydro power generators were sold not only within the village but also outside the village including a neighboring village and the sub-district. After the installment of the power plant, people began to buy TVs, fridges, and other electric appliances. In this sense, the introduction of the micro hydropower plant and the cooperative system laid the foundation for the village's development.

Along with the installment of the micro hydro power generators, the village, with assistance from the DEDE, introduced a village welfare fund called hydropower cooperative. The cooperative redistributes wealth made by the village-owned micro hydro power generators to all the village members, securing them to have benefits from electricity sales through a financial support to education (e.g., grant of 1,000 baht, 2,000 baht, and 3,000 baht for young people who go on to high schools, BA, and MA respectively.) and a medical care financial support (e.g., 150 baht per night for those who stay and get treatment in hospitals, 1,000 baht for a newborn baby, and 2,000 baht for households whose family member passed away). Since it is thought that the micro hydro power generators are owned by all villagers, they are all entitled to get benefits from it when they are in need. This system is hailed by the villagers because they think that the government's national welfare system is not sufficient since it only compensates patients with serious diseases and does not care for people with less severe but nagging physical pain or disorders.

Mae Kampong's CBT was initiated, with help from external agents such as the government and NGOs for planning and consultation, mainly by the former village headman. In 2000, he persuaded three households to open their houses for homestay, and now there are 27 homestay-serving households in the entire village, most of which are concentrated in Pang Nai No.1 and Pang Nai No.2. Homestay-serving households get 520 Baht per one visitor for one night accommodation and two meals a day services. Out of 520 Baht, 350 Baht goes directly into the household's revenue, and the rest, 170

Baht, goes to the village cooperative. Some of the village cooperative's fund is used to reinvest into the homestay-serving households to install apparatus such as western-styled bathrooms, hot shower, etc.

Introduction of the village tourism enabled the villagers to get more opportunities, making various economic activities possible including homestay, souvenir business, community shops, pillows stuffed with tea leaves making, cafes, Thai massage service, entertainment service such as music and dance show, drinking water business, honey production, and coffee production. In fact, in a high tourist season, more than 200 people visit Mae Kampong. Also, the village record says the total revenue in 2012 reached over 2.6 million Baht (Kontogeorgopoulos et al 2014: 113). Now, one can find a number of publications that focus on Mae Kampong as a nature-rich and self-sustaining tourist destination village, and the village nowadays has been known by people all over the country.

In addition, today, there is a construction boom in Mae Kampong. In fact, during my two-month-long field work in the village, as many as nine new buildings, most of which are for homestay, and one of which is for a new restaurant mainly catered to tourists in Pang Nai No.2, were under construction throughout the village. Construction workers include not only Mae Kampong villagers but also people from the nearby villages such as Huay Kaew village. The boom has positive effects on the village's economy, creating job opportunities for the locals and generating more demand from the tourists. Nevertheless, it might also indicate that the competition among villagers for getting more tourists at their places is getting fierce.

A system of cooperation among villagers in Mae Kampong is well established, and people are expected to work hand in hand in any situation for effective village management. The heart of the village management is its village committee, which comprise a village headman and 9 other (mostly elderly) members. The village committee has a power in decision-making for any matters happening in the village and is hugely responsible for the village development programs. Before the village committee makes a decision, common villagers have opportunities to discuss the matters and (supposedly) give their voices. In addition to a monthly village meeting which is compulsory to any villages in Thailand under the law, they hold village

meetings upon the needs of the villagers in order to discuss any matters such as things about water resource usage and community forest management. Now, the village has various kinds of groups such as temple group, fund group, homestay group, and some other occupational groups. They are all given some extent of leeway in decision-making for their actions. Despite the fact that the contemporary development in Mae Kampong made possible various economic activities, the tradition of village-wide Mieng production laid the basis of today's prosperity. Therefore, it is essential to examine what Mieng is to Mae kampong.

3.2 Mieng

In this chapter, the main focus is on the culture of Mieng production in Mae Kampong. It discusses how Mieng as community symbol, economic capital, social capital, cultural capital, and indigenous knowledge has been playing a role in the contemporary development of Mae Kampong.

3.2.1 Symbolic Meaning of Mieng for Mae Kampong

"I want to produce Mieng in the future because Mieng is the symbol of Mae Kampong" (a 12-year-old girl. Personal Interview: April 2016).

Mieng, for which the ancestors of the current villagers migrated in search of the appropriate farm land more than 100 years ago, is not something they can easily leave away just because the demand from a market is declining. Importantly, for a community to be recognized as one entity that can be distinctive from others, the people need to share the symbol; and community is just such a boundary-expressing symbol (Cohen 1985: 15). In Mae Kampong's case, in spite of the presence of the relatively newly built micro hydro-power plants and the newly emerging tourism industry, Mieng is still the "symbol" of the community. In fact, the village's official website clearly says, "Ban (Village) Mae Kampong is a fermented tea- producing community. About 97 per cent of villagers are currently engaged in fermented tea production, locally called "miang (mieng)." (Mae Kampong.com 2010). In addition, most interviewees in my field research said that the identity of Mae Kampong is Mieng. Therefore, it still functions

as a community symbol of Mae Kampong. For this, reconsidering and reevaluating Mieng is essential in exploring the development trajectory of Mae Kampong.

Mieng has a particular symbolic meaning for the people in Mae Kampong. Cohen (1985) says, “A society masks the differentiation within itself by using or imposing a common set of symbols... but modern ethnography has to discriminate between the common mask and the complex variations which it conceal” (Cohen 1985: 73). In other words, while a community uses a shared symbol which signifies a simplified image of the community identity to make the boundary with other communities, the meaning for the members of the communities varies depending on the individuals’ perception and experiences. In Anderson’s term, community is “imagined” (Anderson 2003: 6). This perspective is quite different from traditional writers who predominantly focused on communities’ social structures to disclose the traits of them. It would be useful to look at Cohen’s theory of community of meaning in order to examine the significance of Mieng and the currently changing circumstance. In this sense, it would be essential to explore the meaning of Mieng that can be perceived differently depending on the village members’ status, occupations, and perhaps most significantly ages. The examination of the villagers’ different perception towards Mieng will be of great help to discuss the change in Mae Kampong.

Mieng production- planting seedlings, clearing bushes and weed, picking up the tea leaves, steaming, and fermentation- is all done within the village. In the past, in any process of Mieng production, almost all the villagers, regardless of their ages or gender, were the producers; when the production level of Mieng was much higher than now, even children who are over 10 years old were to help their families pick up tea leaves and process them into Mieng. For this, Mieng constituted a large part of childhood memories for the villagers. Throughout the production of Mieng, children work with their parents, watching how the parents cultivate it, having lectures as to harvest and process it efficiently, and talking about any everyday topics with each other. Therefore, for the villagers of Mae Kampong, Mieng

played an important role in creating the children's personality through the intense contact with their parents and the family bond within the households. For this, it can be said that the culture of Mieng production in Mae Kampong created family solidarity and social cohesion, which is maintained by the village-wide reciprocal labor for Mieng production. In addition to its symbolic meaning, the culture of Mieng production has significance in terms of its economic, social, and cultural capital.

3.2.2 Mieng as Economic Capital

Mieng is a fermented tea product which can be seen in Northern Thailand, Myanmar, and some parts of Laos. Traditionally, Mieng has been recognized as a very luxurious and prestigious food which is enjoyed along with betel and cigarette. Until the recent past, serving Mieng had played an important role in formal and informal occasions in which a family welcomes their visitors in Northern Thailand. Traditionally, Mieng has been served when visitors come to the host or when the family is sitting together for the pastime to savor the flavor (Reichart and Philipsen 1996: 123). A record says that as late as 1923, Mieng was the third most traded crop after rice and timber in the internal trade of Northern Siam (Anchalee 1982: 154). Mieng has quite a strong taste of sourness and bitterness and is often served with salt sprinkled on top with sweet syrup, peanuts, coconuts, or other kinds of seasonings to enhance the savor. The leaves are rolled up into a small size and put into mouth and can be chewed all day. Mieng was popular among those who work for physical labor because the stimulus of it gives the workers a sense of energy and enables them to work for a long time without taking any other food.

Mieng is thought to derive from the ancient China. The earliest mention of Mieng can be seen in a Chinese historic record written in 500 B.C. In that paper, an article mentioning some food called *ming ts'ai* (evidently shows phonetic similarity to Mieng) which is translated as "tea vegetable"; and a number of reference mentioning that Mieng is enjoyed in Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos has been found by Western researchers and consular

officers in the 1800s and after (Van Roy 1971: 84-86). This fact shows that Mieng production, distribution and consumption were well established and that it has been an essential part of the peoples' lives in those countries at least since before 19th century.

Mieng fields in Mae Kampong are scattered in many parts of the forests in the village. At first glance, Mieng shrubs seem not to be in neat formation; they are among clumps of weeds and shady trees; they do not look like farmed vegetation but look like a part of jungles; and there is no clear demarcation between one's Mieng field and other's except fringes of weeds. However, to Mieng growers, difference between one's own Mieng shrubs and that of others is clear because each shrub has its distinctiveness with varying degree of leaf-bearing capacity and characteristics such as growing speed, size of leaves, and difficulty or easiness of climbing for harvesting. For productivity, Mieng fields are well managed by cutting weeds that otherwise would overwhelm the field and by putting some organic fertilizers. The best Mieng field is on a slope facing shaded sunlight in upland pockets for this condition is the best in terms of moisture retention.

Mieng is to be harvested four times a year: first picking time is in April and May (*Mieng Hua Pi*); second is in June and July (*Mieng Klang*); third is in August and September (*Mieng Choi*); and fourth is in October and November (*Mieng Mei*). Approximately, the seasonal distribution of annual production is as follows: *Mieng Hua Pi*, 25 per cent; *Mieng Klang*, 35 per cent; *Mieng Choi*, 30 per cent; and *Mieng Mei*, 10 per cent (Van Roy 1971: 97). Among them, *Mieng Mei* has the least yielding proportion, but it is recognized as the best quality and can sell for the highest price. Taste of Mieng defers depending on the varying duration of fermentation. Basically, the more fermented, the sourer, the mellower, and the juicier, and importantly the more valuable it becomes in the market. According to an interview with a villager of Mae Kampong, in general, an adult Mieng farmer can take about 50 bundles of Mieng per day while novice and a child can take only 30 bundles per day, and averagely in Mae Kampong, each household yields 7,000 bundles of Mieng per year.

On the day of harvesting, the villagers go to their own tea fields in early morning. They put finger sacks attached with small razor blades on their fingers and tear each mature leaf using them; leaving one fourth of it remained for regeneration. After tearing apart some part of a leaf, the cut leaf comes into their free hands until it gathers full in the hands, and this will be tied into a bundle (*kam*). Harvesting Mieng leaves is the most enjoyable time for the Mieng farmers; however, this can be sometimes quite dangerous. Sometimes, if the Mieng shrub is too high to reach, they have to use ladders to climb up to pick up the leaves. One slip on the ladder could result in a serious accident such as broken arm or leg. In addition, because Mieng field is often located in a high-steep hill, it is very difficult and arduous for elderly villagers and those who have difficulty in physical conditions. Thus, harvesting tea leaves is not an easy job, and in Mae Kampong, more and more people, also coupled with the village's problem of the aging population, find it difficult to keep cultivating tea leaves.

The next process after picking up the leaves from shrubs is steaming. After having brought back home, Mieng is put into a log with a bottom of bamboo slats and placed over a cauldron filled with water on a brazier. Steaming usually takes one or two hours, and after that, Mieng is bound into small bundles and goes to the fermentation process. For fermentation, the bundled Mieng is put into a big cement container which almost all households in Mae Kampong have. Time of fermentation decides which type of Mieng it will be, bitter type or sour type. For it to become sour type, fermentation time is one month or more while for the bitter type it is only one week. Basically, the longer Mieng is fermented, the tastier it will be and the more the consumers like it and pay for it. Nowadays, according to an interview with a Mieng producer in Mae Kampong, one package (approximately 500 g) of Mieng, the sour type, sells for 12 Baht.

My participatory observation of a Mieng farmer in Mae Kampong revealed that Mieng farming is quite arduous but still provides the villagers with stable incomes. At 8 in the morning, a 53-year-old female Mieng farmer went to her Mieng field, which is located deep in the forest, some 4 km

away from her home. According to her, some people have to walk up the mountain for 10 km to reach their Mieng lands. When she arrived at her Mieng fields, on which hundreds of tea shrubs grow, she started to cut the Mieng leaves very skillfully, and the leaves in her hands had congregated until they made one *kam*. It took around 20 minutes to make one *kam* (around 500g), and the day's yielding was 34 *kams* (When I did my participatory observation, Mieng was not growing as well as usual because of the water shortage in the year). Upon finishing cultivating the tea leaves, she went home at around 6 pm and started to steam it at her house. Steaming lasts for a couple of hours. After steaming the tea leaves, she did not proceed to fermentation process, but she sold the steamed leaves to another household for nine Baht per one *kam* (thus, the day's income of hers was 306 Baht on that day). This method of hers is common these days because the steamed Mieng sellers do not have to wait for Mieng to be fermented, which usually takes two or three months. This business model is also good for the buyers because they get one *kam* of Mieng for nine Baht and can sell it, without arduous labor for Mieng cultivation, which they can sell one *kam* for 12 Baht after its fermentation process.

In Mae kampong, Mieng trees grow on virtually everywhere in the nearby forests. After planting the seedlings of Mieng, not so much care is needed to grow them. In addition, even if leaves and shrubs are cut apart, they can regenerate by themselves. Therefore, Mieng has been serving the villagers a great economic stability with its abundant yield capacity. The farmer whom I accompanied said she had 10 *rais* (1 rai: 1,600 square meters, or 0.3954 acre) of the tea fields, and most people have the same level as hers or more-some have as much as 20 or 30 *rais*. According to her, there is now a huge area of Mieng fields that have not been cultivated in the village, and the level of production today is much less than that in the past. In the past, there are many people working in her field including her own family members, other village members, and wage laborers from nearby villages. However, now, she is the only one working in her own fields because her two sons do

not see Mieng as necessary and work for a private hotel in the village to get the same level of salary as that of Chiang Mai city's ordinary jobs.

Interviews with a number of villagers reveal their complex sentiment towards Mieng. As was mentioned, making one package requires at least 500g of the tea leaves and one package of Mieng is now sold for only 12 Baht. In the past, it was sold for much better price than that of now because of the higher demand from lowland consumers. Despite the fact that there are still some merchants, mainly from Chiang Rai province and Lamphun province, who come to Mae Kampong to buy Mieng, the sales quantity of Mieng is significantly declining. Although the exact data pertaining to the quantity of Mieng sales was not available, all the interviewees said that Mieng cannot sell as much as they did in the past anymore and many of them are worried about the future of Mieng and the village itself. In fact, one survey conducted by a Thai scholar Sopon (2004), shows that as of 2004, the level of Mieng production had dropped about 10 per cent since that of 10 years before (Sopon 2004: 34). Along with the declining production level of Mieng, the people's practice of Mieng production is changing. In the past, people would have a collective form of Mieng production, helping each other through reciprocal labor. Today, however, the reciprocal labor is rarely seen in the village. Mieng production today in Mae Kampong is now basically done on the household basis. In this sense, contemporary development has obviously changed the meaning of Mieng for the villagers. Next, Mieng will be examined in terms of its element as social capital.



Figure3.1 A tea shrub



Figure 3.2 Tea leaves



Figure 3.3 1 Kam of tea leaves



Figure 3.4 Steaming Mieng



Figure 3.5 Bundling Mieng 1



Figure 3.6 Bundling Mieng 2



Figure 3.7 Fermenting Mieng



Figure 3.8 Final products of Mieng

3.2.3 Mieng as Social Capital

Generally speaking, the sense of cooperation and mutual aid in Thai local communities is still quite strongly held. People in Thailand share the homogenous value system under the powerful kingship and the religious beliefs. For Thai people, being loyal to the King is the primary virtue as a citizen, and since all the Thai people are supposed to be subjects of the King, being nice to and cooperating with others in every corner of life constitutes the loyalty to him. It is propagated, through education, national publication, or mass media that being a good citizen makes a good nation state, and to be a good citizen, one has to be obedient and to live in harmony with others in their communities. Buddhism temples also play a role in connecting people together. For Thailand, Buddhism is mobilized by the state as an apparatus to legitimize itself to rule the subjects, putting them in the religious hierarchy under the religious and royal authority with tens of thousands of temples throughout the country. People often gather at temples to perform merit-making (*tambun*) in a regular basis, and in most villages, village meetings are held in their local temples. In this way, the kingship and the religion function as a catalyst to make people work together in their communities and the sense of cooperation and cooperative actions are regarded as the most virtuous deeds as Thai subjects.

In addition to the kingship and the religion, the traditional mode of economy of agrarian communities, mostly production of rice, fostered social capital in Thai local communities. Since the pre-historic time, cultivating rice has been the most important economic activity for Thai people. In the traditional rice-growing, and other crops as well, peasant communities have a custom of reciprocal labor (*ao raeng*) in which peasants within communities help other members work for their fields in returns of free meal and labor when the contributors' turns come. This traditional way of reciprocal work enhanced the sense of cooperation and social capital in the communities. It seems that since in Thai communities, the people are usually bound with the same value system under the kingship, Buddhism, and the reciprocal system of farming, they have a great deal of social capital among the community.

In the context of Mae Kampong, except it is located in a high land, which makes it difficult for villagers to grow rice, the village is not different from the ordinary Thai communities in that villagers believe in Buddhism and worship the king and the royal family. In Mae Kampong's case, the people's traditional cooperative attitude and bond came not only from the fact that they are geographically bound but also from the labor intensive characteristic of Mieng production. Although one's farm land and tea shrubs are clearly demarcated from that of others based on the individual ownership of lands and trees, in the past when the level of Mieng production was much higher than now, they used to work together with other villagers as well as waged laborer from the nearby villages since it was too hard for one household to cover all of their Mieng fields alone. In addition, after the tea leaves are harvested, they need to collectively process the tea leaves in groups. This work often involved cross-household work in the village, and it was a common form of Mieng production in the past (but nowadays it can be rarely seen because of the declining level of Mieng production). Importantly, the groups were not formally formed, but people often informally gathered and initiated the processing of tea leaves. This is the traditional way of Mieng production in Mae Kampong, and it fostered the sense of cooperation in economic activities and psychological closeness among villagers. Thus, it can be said that for the villagers of Mae Kampong, Mieng means not only economic capital but also, importantly, an agent to foster social capital among the people. In addition to economic capital and social capital, the notion of cultural capital is also essential in examining the significance of Mieng .

3.2.4 Mieng as Cultural Capital

“My grandfather migrated to this village in order to cultivate Mieng. And my parents also grew Mieng. That is why Mieng is important for me” (Personal Interview: April 2016). *“We cannot cultivate rice because of the high altitude here, and we had traditionally bartered Mieng with rice. So, Mieng is the source of life for us just like rice is for the lowlanders. That is*

why Mieng has been the most important for us, and it has been true even after we started tourism” (Personal Interview: April 2016).

For villagers, the community symbol of Mae Kampong is Mieng. When I asked a question as to what the symbol of Mae Kampong is, almost all the villagers answered: it is Mieng. Therefore, one of the most valuable findings through the field research was that Mieng was something far more than a mere cash crop and it is unconceivable for the villagers to abandon the production of Mieng just because its demand is decreasing. As well illustrated in the testimonies above, Mieng is essential for the villagers’ sense of identity and bears a great deal of memories and experience as a Mae Kampong’s village member.

Culture of a community signifies its peculiar and distinctive way of life, and any such elements of the community as beliefs, values, customs, and social relations are determined by and the embodiment of it; and culture functions as “maps of meaning”, which signifies something intelligible only for its members (Hall et al 2005: 4). Therefore, since Mieng is an important element of Northern Thai culture, signifying the sense of pleasure, sociality, etc., it would have been functioning as reinforcement of the identity of the people, and it is true more significantly for the people of Mae Kampong as they are one of the major producers of Mieng in the region.

For the people in Mae Kampong, Mieng production, in which almost all the villagers have been engaged in, has a special meaning in terms of both economic and cultural perspectives. Since more than 100 years ago, when the ancestors of the current generation came to settle in a place where it is called Mae Kampong today, almost all the villagers across the generations have been participating in Mieng production. Thus, it is natural to think that Mieng was ingrained in the villagers’ cultural identity and came to bear an important symbolic meaning for them. As was mentioned in chapter 2, since cultural capital is a community’s asset that is passed down by the previous generation and that connect the members together, Mieng, for Mae Kampong, is definitely the most important form of cultural capital.

In addition, Bourdieu stresses the importance of cultural capital as an important source of class struggle in social hierarchy. In light of cultural capital, it is possible that the ordinary village members of Mae Kampong are able to convey their voices in order to determine their direction in the development trajectory, mobilizing their cultural symbol of Mieng in the power struggle with the superior authority such as the government. The notion of Mieng as cultural capital in this perspective will be further discussed in Chapter 5. In addition to 3 types of capital, indigenous knowledge is also an important viewpoint to examine the significance of Mieng to Mae kampong.

3.2.5 Mieng as Indigenous Knowledge

According to UNESCO, “Indigenous knowledge is the local knowledge that is unique to a culture or society...This knowledge is passed from generation to generation, usually by word of mouth and cultural rituals, and it has been the basis for agriculture, food preparation, health care, education, conservation and the wide range of other activities that sustain societies in many parts of the world” (UNESCO 2010). Importantly, indigenous knowledge is an accumulation of knowledge, know-how, practices, and representations that have been incubated and developed through a long-time history of interactions with their surrounding natural environment (Torri and Herrmann 2011: 45). For community members, decision-making and any community activities should be carried out based on their indigenous knowledge; and utilizing and integrating it into manageable practices is essential. For this, the accumulated knowledge of Mieng farming and processing and practices of community forest management are the most important indigenous knowledge for Mae Kampong.

For local communities, indigenous knowledge plays the most important role in community-based natural resource conservation. Effective natural resource conservation is often one of the most crucial concerns for the most local communities since local people often heavily rely on natural resources such as forests, rivers, and aquatic resource for their consumption and

agricultural and fishing activities. For this, community-based conservation based on employment of indigenous ecological knowledge is now recognized as an innovative form of environmental conservation in order to achieve local community's poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation simultaneously. This is because indigenous ecological knowledge determines local community members' managerial practices to maintain such natural resources. Today, indigenous ecological knowledge is getting recognized as an effective tool for natural resource conservation, and indigenous people in a particular locality are also getting recognized as important actors and holders of the knowledge who have the rights to protect and manage the natural resources as a guardian of it. For this, there is a growing recognition of indigenous rights by which indigenous people are secured to have their own indigenous knowledge as intellectual property.

Since indigenous knowledge is determined by a community's unique culture and tradition, employing it for community development programs can reflect a lot of the community's characteristics in them. Indigenous knowledge can be a basis for local decision-making and utilized in many aspects of community such as agriculture, medicines, education, and natural resource management. Because local communities often have rich resources of indigenous knowledge that have been accumulated through generations, it should be integrated into business activity, preferably in the form of community-based projects for self-sufficiency of local communities, and the knowledge should be protected as an intellectual property for the local people as a legitimate holder of it.

In Mae Kampong, indigenous knowledge is hugely related to Mieng production. Mieng as indigenous knowledge made a rule and practice of its community-based natural resource management. Because tea shrubs grow in forests, it is important for the villagers to manage well the forests to enhance the efficiency of the yielding of the tea leaves. In addition, some people in the village used to cut trees in the forests to supplement their incomes, leading to degradation of the forests. For example, rapid forest clearance by the villagers caused a serious drought that affected performance of the micro

hydro power generators. For this, the village started to set a rule of the community-based forest management. The rule says, for example, that the villagers are banned from cutting trees in the community forest for sale to outsiders and new residents of the village. This rule for the community-based forest management is based on the accumulated indigenous knowledge based on the village's long tradition of Mieng production.

Another example that shows the villagers' indigenous knowledge protected the forest and the people's everyday life can be seen in a case that happened 15 years ago. In the very early time of Mae Kampong's tourism, a Thai giant corporation, *CP*, came to the village to buy the forest land in order to build a resort in the village, offering a huge amount of money to acquire the land. However, the village refused the offer in order to conserve the forest and to maintain the local control on the village's natural resources. This case indicates that indigenous knowledge that is most clearly materialized in the custom of natural resource management can resist even the giant corporation, and conserving natural resources is far more important for the villagers of Mae kampong than the short-term economic incentives. Like this example, as well as the indigenous knowledge, Mieng as cultural capital and social capital played a very important role in Mae Kampong's contemporary development.

3.3 Role of Cultural Capital and Social Capital in Changes in Mae Kampong

In Mae Kampong, smooth involvement into the village tourism was made possible by the practical custom of cooperation in the village. As was explained in the previous chapter, cultural capital, which is the long lasting tradition of Mieng production in Mae kampong's case, built up social capital among the villagers. The social capital in turn became the basis of the management of the micro hydro power program to work smoothly for the benefit of the village members. Micro hydro power programs were one of the government-led development schemes prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s in order to supply power to the increasing demand from industrialized cities. Nevertheless, nowadays, only a few villages in Thailand, including Mae Kampong, keeps the hydro power generators in work. One of the reasons why Mae Kampong still keeps the

generators working while other villages got them inactivated is that they have the tradition of cooperation and coordination that derive from the village-wide Mieng production. Mieng production requires the village-wide collective work. Therefore, people had to work hand in hand in order to enhance the efficacy of the village's Mieng production. For this, the collective management of the micro hydro power generators and subsequent redistribution of the wealth from them came relatively natural to Mae Kampong. This experience of the village-wide micro hydro power generators became the asset of the village, which enabled the village to manage smoothly its CBT programs that started in 2000.

The micro hydro power program brought about a drastic change to the village in terms of social meanings and practices of the community. Before the micro hydro power, Mieng production was virtually the sole economic activity in the village, and it is basically based on an individual ownership of the lands and trees despite the fact that processing Mieng creates a social space where people interact with each other when they work together. Since the micro hydro power plants started to work and serve some electricity in the village, the maintenance and management of the micro hydro power generators and the related activities such as water flow management of the river became the mission. More importantly, a certain amount of electricity used to be sold to a governmental organization. Therefore, the distribution of the profit made by sales to the government became a big challenge for all the villagers because the micro hydro power generators are deemed the village's common property and came to subsume a symbol of overt cooperation for the villagers.

For productivity of the micro hydro power generators, the villagers are sometimes summoned by the village committee and required to work in the plant and the nearby forest and river. For example, as branches or leaves fallen from the trees in the nearby forest can impede smooth flow of the stream, some of the villagers are gathered in a regular basis to cut and collect some branches of the trees. Similarly, in one day of my field research, I witnessed all the villagers except young children and the elderly gathered at the plant and cleaning up garbage littered in the river to maintain productivity of the micro hydro power generators. This work is mandatory for all the villagers, and so all of them cannot shun this duty without sufficient reasons. Interestingly, in case of not showing up in this work, they are charged fines of 150 Baht.

From this, it can be said that this system of collective management of the micro hydro power plant is quite coercive and is set well in the village rules. In this way, over time, in Mae Kampong, the sense of cooperation shifted from informal way that was seen in the tradition of the collective Mieng production to a formal way of the micro hydro power plant management.

In addition, the construction of the plant and installment of the micro hydro power generators are not solely done by the government, but it was a joint work of the government and the villagers. In fact, according to a village elder, 40 per cent of the construction was carried out by their hands (Personal Interview: April 2016). Therefore, people do not feel that the micro hydro power project was something pushed by the government from a paternal position but a product made out of their own effort. This is one of the reasons why Mae Kampong still maintains the micro hydro power generators and many of the villagers are proud of it. For this, micro hydro power plant that distributes electricity throughout the village brought about the sense of overt cooperation, binding all the villagers together in Mae Kampong.

Thus, one can say that the micro hydropower project brought about a formal form of collective labor and overt notion of cooperation, which came to set into the form of the village rule, as opposed to the covert cooperation that was seen in the traditional way of collective Mieng production. This was a turning point to the village where people were predominantly dependent on an individual economic activity, namely Mieng production. Therefore, the micro hydropower project became a starting point of the village bounding for a more formally cooperative entity. At the moment, as the revenue from the homestay program has been increasing, most finance of the hydropower cooperative comes from profit made by homestay service. Now, unlike when they had only Mieng production and electricity sales by the micro hydro power plant, the villagers have a various ways of economic activities that secure sources of income, and they are protected in the safety net of the village welfare system that is based on the micro hydropower cooperative.

Nowadays, the dividend from the proceeds of each homestay-serving household is the biggest contributor to the financial source of the micro hydro power cooperative. In fact, according to the explanation given by the former village headman, 60 Baht per

homestay guest goes to the cooperative. Therefore, today, redistribution of wealth made by homestay service is the backbone of the village cooperative system, and it provides the villagers with the social safety net. On top of that, some percentages of the proceedings of the homestay service are distributed to the services purported for village development, advertisement, social welfare, and village administration. It seems that today, the role of the micro hydro power program and the cooperative system as the sense of cooperation and mutual aid is replaced by CBT programs. My argument is that the development of cooperation and practices of mutual aid derive from the tradition of Mieng production in the village, and the culture of Mieng production still remains important and the meaning of it is changing according to today's tourism development.

3.4 Cultural Intersection: Mieng and Tourism

These days, it seems that the situation of Mieng as an important element of Northern Thai culture is significantly changing. With this change, the meaning of Mieng production in Mae Kampong is also changing. People in Northern Thailand, especially younger people, do not enjoy Mieng as those in the past did. Thus, the market of Mieng is shrinking. In fact, Yaowapa and Chuangchote (2009) say "Until quite recently, the main occupation of the villagers is still picking and gathering Mieng leaves; however, today chewing Mieng has lost its popularity, forcing the people of Mae Kampong to find an alternative source of income" (Yaowapa and Chuangchote 2009: 7).

With regard to the matter of culture in Thailand, a Thai political scientist, Chai-Anan Samudavanija, believes that although Thailand has a little economic capital, low savings, and low economic production, it has a large stock of cultural capital; and the stock of the cultural capital needs to be maintained by constant reinvestment (Pasuk and Baker 2000: 207). Similarly, in a broad context of Thai society, another Thai scholar, Prawase Wasi, one of the most influential figures in the community culture movement, states that "If Thailand focuses only on developing business, Thai culture will disappear...it's equal to losing nation" (Prawase 1998 cited in Pasuk and Baker 2000: 209).

However, in reality, community cultures are not as naive to external influences as it has been thought. In fact, Cohen (1985) argues that cultures, ways of thinking, and attachments to community are much more resilient than a number of social scientists have supposed; and that communities often respond to changes by rebuilding their

boundaries on symbolic foundations (Cohen 1985: 75-77). For example, Leopold Senghor, a Senegalese poet and the president, utilized the French language, the colonizer's language, to state an African consciousness in his verses, exploiting the imported forms to express ardently Africanist content as a way of bolstering the boundary against its subversion by the encroaching culture (Worsely 1964, cited in Cohen 1985: 81). In other words, the African consciousness was conveyed by the structural form, the French language, which had subverted the old boundary of Senegalese identity, and in turn, by being utilized by the poet in statement of the Senegalese cultural distinctiveness, it reasserted the new boundary (Cohen 1985: 81). The structural form- for Senegalese, it is French language, and for Mae Kampong, it is tourism- is not merely importation of someone's ideas but is a way of bolstering and reinforcing the symbolic statement of the boundary.

Some studies about socio-cultural impacts brought about by community tourism also mention that traditional culture of a local community is to be reconstituted even if it is highly involved in tourism. Similar to Cohen, Handler and Linnekin (1984) states that tradition is a product of symbolic construction that occurs in the present, not something handed down from the past; there is no fixed tradition, but it is always in the process of on-going reconstruction (Handler and Linnekin 1984, cited in Wood 1993: 58). Similarly, Giddens (1999) says that traditions evolve over time, and they are often in the dynamic process of invention, reinvention, and transformation (Giddens 1999: 40). Therefore, traditional local identity or community symbol is always renewed, remade, and modified in each generation. In other words, there is no fixed and objective thing that identifies as traditional culture; and what is defined as traditional culture is constantly being reformulated both in the past and the present (Wood 1993: 58).

This view of tradition or culture as a symbolically constructed product which is always in the process of the on-going reconstruction casted a doubt to the classic perception of tourism as a menace to traditional local culture. In fact, many literatures point out that tourism gives an opportunity to communities to reconstruct their community identities and symbols. For example, Picard (1993) states that sociological narratives about tourism formerly revolved around the accusation of it as a cause of "cultural pollution", nevertheless, now quite a few literatures hails it as an agent of the "cultural renaissance" (Picard 1993: 89).

For this, Mae Kampong's increasing level of involvement into tourism activity does not necessarily lead to destruction of the culture of Mieng. In fact, apart from the positive economic effects that tourism industry and international institutions such as World Tourism Organization often talk about, despite the various negative impacts as mentioned so far, there are also some positive socio-cultural impacts on destination community. As opposed to the usual criticism to tourism in terms of socio-culturally negative impacts, some argue that tourism sometimes becomes a catalyst to redefine or recreate a community identity, especially among those who are categorized as minorities such as ethnic minorities. Since uniqueness of indigenous culture plays an important role in attracting tourists in host communities, the locals often need to reconsider and redefine their own culture through commoditization of the culture and traditions in the tourism business. This allows them to maintain their local values, traditions, and heritages and leads to the protection and enhancement of the local culture (Hashimoto 2002: 215). Although tourism industry brings about modernization or Westernization to host communities, they are not always passive or inert since culture and identity construction is always a dynamic process, being subject to encounters with any outside forces. In other words, no culture is impervious to changes and what is defined as traditional culture is constantly being reformulated (Wood 1993: 58). For example, sacred dances in Bali took some forms of western theatrical conventions and assimilated it to entertain Western tourists, and Balinese themselves today regard that kind of modified traditions as the authentic Balinese culture (Wood 1993: 67). Tourism is not a concern for Balinese culture any more, rather, it has become a part of their cultural landscape; and therefore, supporting the Balinese cultural tourism will contribute to the conservation of it and even to its revitalization. Similar stories can be found in many tourist destination communities, e.g. the creation of new traditions of Canadian Inuit soapstone carvings (Hashimoto 2002: 216).

In fact, in Mae Kampong, although opportunity for the tourists to face the community's traditional culture of Mieng is still limited, there are some chances for them to experience it. For example, the private zip line company located in the village, *Flight of the Gibbon*, when there is request, shows their foreign customers around the village and show them the people's way of life in the village. Also, many tourism agencies today serve packages of the village tourism in Mae Kampong that include some activities for

the tourists to know about Mieng production. In addition, some Thai and Western homestay guests who are filled with curiosity go voluntarily to tea orchards to cultivate or sit with the family members when processing the tea leaves into Mieng. For this, it can be said that the meaning of Mieng production to the villagers today is changing. In fact, Mieng and tea leaves are now a part of the tourist attractions of Mae kampong and are being incorporated in the tourism practices such as pillows stuffed with tea leaves as a souvenir and demonstration of Mieng production. As was mentioned earlier, the significance of Mieng lies not only in an economic sense but also in cultural and social senses. Therefore, although the economic importance of Mieng is declining because of the declining market demand, today, those elements of cultural capital and social capital of Mieng are expected to play an important role in CBT. Particularly, the element of Mieng in terms of its cultural capital will generate a new economic capital, namely proceeds from the village tourism program.

As was mentioned earlier, the villagers would like to show their culture of Mieng production to the visitors, and they feel happy when they teach the visitors how to cultivate and produce Mieng. In fact, one of the interviewees said that when she cultivates or processes Mieng together with tourists, she feels a sense of pleasure and proud of herself (Personal Interview: April 2016). Thus, it can be assumed that the culture of Mieng is the thing the villagers truly hope the tourists to see, not a private zip line service, the waterfall, or the scenery from a coffee shop in the mountain. These are some examples of the fusion of Mieng and tourism in Mae kampong. Mieng and tourism are not separated elements of the village's economy, rather they are overlapping with each other. In this way, it can be said that, as Cohen argues, the process of symbolism reinforcing the cultural boundaries of the community by reconstituting its tradition can also be seen in the contemporary tourism development of Mae Kampong.

Summary

This chapter examined the development pathway Mae Kampong has taken since the formation of the village. Since the 1970s, particularly, Mae Kampong has been going through various changes that were brought about by the contemporary development projects. The construction of the paved road, micro hydropower system, and the village tourism project turned the traditional Mieng-producing community into a multi-

dimensional rural space where the people have various opportunities and interests. This chapter also explored the significance of the culture of Mieng production in Mae Kampong. Even though the village is well known as a vigorous tourist destination today, the culture of Mieng production remains important. Mieng has various meanings to the villagers of Mae Kampong. It signifies economic capital, social capital, cultural capital, indigenous knowledge, and a community symbol of the village. Since it is the most important legacy that is inherited from the older generations, it is, without doubt, economically, culturally, and socially the most important part of Mae Kampong. Importantly, the capitals that were fostered by the tradition of Mieng production have been laying the foundation of the today's prosperity of Mae Kampong. This viewpoint provides a new insight to examine the village's socio-cultural meanings of Mieng production and the implications of the declining level of Mieng production, to which some scholars such as Yaowapa and Chuangchote and Kontogeorgopoulos et al did not pay attention. Those scholars seem to have too much faith in the tourism development of Mae Kampong to examine the role of the culture of Mieng production in the village. Therefore, this chapter attempted to fill the hitherto gap, paying particular attention to the role of Mieng in the village's development in terms of its economic, cultural, and social capital.

This chapter ended with an implication of future development of Mae Kampong. Because of the declining demand and production level of Mieng, coupled with newly emerging tourism activities in the village, the traditional significance of Mieng seems to be also declining. This is one of the most important points that the existing scholars who have studied about Mae Kampong have not yet sufficiently discussed. Many of them seem to have a faith in the village's tourism development and to support the replacement of the Mieng production by tourism without considering the socio-cultural significance of the culture of Mieng production. However, considering the symbolic and socio-cultural aspects of Mieng, the drastic shift from Mieng production to tourism might cause the loss of identity and various capitals that are discussed in the previous chapter. For this, integrating Mieng into the village tourism is a good way for conservation of the significance of Mieng. As Anthony Cohen, who proposes the theory of community of meaning, states, a community boundary that demarcates one from another is set up by its community symbol, and they are always in dynamics of

reformulation. Therefore, communities have capacity to transform themselves in order to deal with external changes and far more resilient than one tends to think. For this, symbiosis of culture and tourism has been proved possible by many tourist destination communities, such as Bali, in which traditional culture was integrated into the modern tourism and the cultural elements draw more tourists, leading to the enhanced pride of the community members. Perhaps, this is the most important matter for Mae Kampong today in order to keep the traditional values and importance of Mieng as cultural and social capital even in the current time of the village tourism.

The next chapter will examine various impacts brought about by tourism development and the individual perception of the development and changes, paying attention to the voices of individual informants.

The seal of Chiang Mai University is a circular emblem. In the center is a stylized elephant facing left, with a flame-like symbol above its head. The elephant is surrounded by a circular border containing the text "CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY 1964". Above the elephant, there is a larger circular border containing Thai script. Below the seal, the text "ลิขสิทธิ์มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่" is written in Thai script, followed by "Copyright© by Chiang Mai University" and "All rights reserved" in English.

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