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**Livelihood Strategies and Environmental
Management Practices in Northern Thailand
National Park Communities**

A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Natural Resource Management

at

Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand



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2016

Abstract

In Northern Thailand, the establishment of national parks is at the forefront of efforts to achieve biodiversity conservation and environmental management while providing socio-economic benefits to society. However, national parks regulations and development interventions have created both opportunities and constraints for the Indigenous hill tribe communities living within the national parks. These communities have, out of necessity, adapted and developed their livelihood strategies and environmental management practices to maintain their socio-economic welfare and ecological sustainability.

This study employed Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) as a mixed qualitative research strategy to investigate the livelihood strategies and environmental management practices in Doi Suthep-Pui, Doi Inthanon, and Ob Luang National Parks in Northern Thailand. The main research methods used were interviews, observation, and document analysis to support data that gained from the PRA methods. The aim of this study is to gain insight into the livelihood strategies and environmental management practices of six Indigenous hill tribe communities living in the parks. Interviews were conducted with villagers, national park officials, academics, and representatives from non-government organisations and tourism agencies. The interview data was also analysed to investigate how co-management initiatives and livelihood development projects by national parks officials and external organisations influence Indigenous communities' livelihood strategies.

It was found that the livelihood strategies of the Indigenous hill tribe communities encompass a diverse combination of activities related to their social and ecological relationships in order to ensure sustained socio-economic well-being. Communities engage in sustainable agricultural practices, community-based natural resource management activities and community-based ecotourism enterprises as their significant livelihood strategies. However, while there has been some consultation, co-management, and collaborative policy-making between government and local communities, further improvement of transparency, consistency and accountability is needed. It is argued that greater community empowerment and participation in natural resource management decisions is crucial to enhance both sustainable livelihoods and environmental conservation efforts within Northern Thailand's national parks.

Statement of Originality

I declare that:

- This is an original thesis and is entirely my own work.
- Where I have made use of the ideas of other writers, I have acknowledged the source in every instance.
- Where I have used diagrams or photographs by other people I have acknowledged the source in every instance.
- This thesis will not be submitted as assessed work in any other academic course.

Aurathai Phongchiewboon

26 February 2016

Acknowledgements

My journey to complete this thesis has been both exciting and challenging. I am most grateful for the academic guidance from my chief supervisor Dr Trisia Farrelly, and co-supervisors Associate Professor John Holland and Dr Karen Hytten. I am so appreciative of their kindness, understanding, sustained encouragement, tireless efforts, and constructive input. My special thanks to Dr Trisia Farrelly for her Maori quote: “*Kia Kaha*”, which means stay strong, and which lifted my spirits when I felt lost and ready to give up. Lastly, my sincere thanks to Associate Professor Bob Stewart who helped in reviewing my final thesis draft and provided concise and constructive comments. I will always look forward to the opportunity of meeting with you again in the future.

I am also very thankful for the invaluable support of Mrs Sharon Wright from the Ecology Department, Mrs Lois Wilkinson and Dr Julia Rayner from the Teaching and Learning Centre, and Mrs Dianne Reilly and Mrs Sylvia Hooker from the International Student Office. I would also like to thank all my friends in the Institute of Agriculture and Environment: Fleur, Kyleisha, Tessa, Peter, Chau, Jerry, Naomi, Alana, Matt, Panan and Chifuyu for their memorable friendship and support, and all my Thai friends for all their warm support throughout my PhD study.

I am deeply grateful to all the people who gave up their valuable time to participate in this study including the people of Baan Pa Hmoon, Bann Mae Klang Luang, Bann Mae Sa Mai, Baan Hmong Doi Pui, Baan Huay Ka Noon and Baan Pa Kluang villages, and the Thai government representatives, NGO representatives, academics and tourism operators who contributed to this study. I am also very thankful to Dr Wantanee Chawapong, Ms Kamthong Wiyok, Mr Kitti Munla, Ms Soraya Maita, and Mr Chatchawan Laowakul for their support during fieldwork. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the International Doctoral Degree Scholarship from the Faculty of Management Science, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand. Without their support, this research would not have been possible.

Finally, thank you from all of my heart to my beloved parents, Dr Aram and Mrs Duangruthai Phongchiewboon and my beloved brother, Mr Aekkavich Phongchiewboon. They have continually supported me and encouraged me to keep going when times were tough – encouragement was always just a phone call away. Without all these people, this thesis would not have been possible. I wish you all the best for good health and future endeavours.

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List of Acronyms

AIPP	Asia Indigenous People Pact
mASL	(Height in meters) Above Sea Level
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CBE	Community-based Ecotourism
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBNRM	Community-based Natural Resource Management
CEESP	Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	(British) Department for International Development
DNP	(Thai) Department of National Parks, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation
DSLFF	DFID's Sustainable Livelihood Framework
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FPP	Forest Peoples Programme
HDP	Highland Development Projects
ICEM	International Centre for Environmental Management
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IMPECT	Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IWGIA	International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals

MUHEC	Massey University Human Ethics Committee
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board of Thailand
NGO	Non-Government Organisations
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
RFD	Royal Forest Department of Thailand
RPF	Royal Project Foundation
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SLA	Sustainable Livelihood Approach
SLF	Sustainable Livelihood Framework
TRI	Tribal Research Institution
TAO	Tambon Administration Organisation
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WCPA	World Commission on Protected Areas

Glossary of Thai Words

<i>Amphur</i>	District areas in Thailand's administrative system.
<i>Baan</i>	House or living place.
<i>Chum Chon</i>	Communities.
<i>Hmong</i>	An ethnic group of hill tribe communities living in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand, also referred to as <i>Meo</i> . Three Hmong communities residing in Northern Thailand's national parks were selected in this research.
<i>Jungwat</i>	Provincial areas in Thailand's administrative system.
<i>Kariang</i>	An ethnic group of hill tribe communities living in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand, also referred to as <i>Karen</i> in English literature.
<i>Khon Muang</i>	The local people who live in the lowland areas of Chiang Mai province.
<i>Moo Baan</i>	Village.
<i>Pga k'nyau</i>	One of four cultural groups comprising the Kariang people, also referred to as Skaw Karen. Three <i>Pga k'nyau</i> communities residing in Northern Thailand's national parks were selected in this research.
<i>Rai</i>	A unit of land area within the traditional Thai land measurement system. This unit is equal to 0.16 hectares or 2.5 acres.
<i>Tambon</i>	Sub-district areas in Thailand's administrative system.