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The Socio-Economic and Cultural Changes in Communities of Lottery Sellers Isan, Thailand

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Abstract

The qualitative research was carried out in three villages of lottery seller in three Isan provinces of Thailand Amphoe Wang Saphung, Loei Province; Amphoe Kranuan, Khon Kaen Province; and Amphoe Kaedam, Maha Sarakham Province. The study assessed using a survey, observations, interviews, focus group discussions, and workshop. The analysis was based on the research objectives using a triangulation technique and done descriptively. The results show that the people who lived at Amphoe Wang Saphung began to sell lotteries in 1984. Twelve years later, such part-time job spread to Amphoe Kranuan, Khon Kaen Province and Amphoe Kaedam, Maha Sarakham Province. Currently, the lottery sellers at the three villages chose to sell lotteries in Bangkok, tourist areas, such as Rayong and Nakhon Ratchasima Provinces. Some decided to sell theirs in their own Province. Each month, they left their homes thrice: the second and the fourth weeks. They often went in groups using pickup trucks, vans or buses. If they worked in their own Province, they often used motorcycles. The problems encountered included car accidents, cheats, arrests due to selling lotteries overprice, and school children skipping classes or drug-addicted. The socio-economic and cultural changes, the lottery sellers had improved their lives materially due to their income earning from selling lotteries. They could afford what they needed, such as land, home appliances, and building jobs in their villages. They had new friends and established social network. Young people chose to marry with outsiders. The people set up lottery selling groups of volunteers. They took health care to political representatives, and village leadership.

Key words: Socio-economic changes, Cultural changes, Communities, lottery sellers, Isan

1. Introduction

Most Thai people, directly or indirectly, draw some income from their jobs. Government and non-government jobs need qualified employees having education and training backgrounds, such as teachers, doctors, nurses, traders, and lawyers. Private business owners had to invest and manage on their own marketing their products. Latterly, marketing competition was strong. The business owners had to run their business carefully⁵.

Lotteries had been with Thai society for a very long time. The Thai people, regardless of status and income, liked to gamble by buying lotteries.

Lotteries were first introduced to Thai people during King Rama the Third and were called Khor kho or A.B. Lotteries. The Chinese people who lived in Thailand during that time were authorized to set up a lottery house and collected taxes for the government. The lotteries were sold and drawn for winners twice daily morning and evening¹¹.

Sua Pha Larna Baht Lotteries were authorized to be sold for fund collection supporting Sua Pha Asasamak (Wild Tigers Volunteers). One million lotteries were made for each simple drawing method for winners. The lottery committee decided the prices of the winning numbers. The lotteries were sold every three months; each ballot was sold for 1 baht. In 1934 the government issued the lotteries to be sold to support municipalities. For each season, 500,000 lottery ballots were sold, 1 baht each.

The government lotteries took an active role in Thailand in 1997 when the country faced a serious economic downturn; millions of people in agricultural sector experiencing the falling of crop price. The villagers, mostly farmers could merely make their ends meet and were suffering economically⁷. Hundreds of them turned to lottery selling from which they could accumulate extra income to support their families. Such amount of income could make a difference for them. They could improve their lives and their communities⁶. Many of them could make between 10,000-20,000 baht per month. In Amphor Wang Saphung Loei Province alone, there were 9,481 persons engaging in the lottery selling. Their annual average income was 23,111 baht⁹. The money circulated in Loei Province alone was about 30 million baht per month. The money helped was used for improvement of the

economy, infrastructure, education, housing, and other necessary facilities for daily living. Some villagers became lottery dealers themselves reducing the role of the middlemen completely.

Many lottery sellers in the rural areas where the research was carried out agreed that they changed from traditional farming to lottery selling. Many had their homes built using modern construction materials and equipped with electric appliance, such as television, washing machines, rice cookers, and more. Many owned cars.

As rural lottery selling villages became urbanized, market economy there was strong. Many families rented their rice fields to other people. For them money, not rice, came first. As the market economy replaced folk tradition, the tradition of neighbors helping neighbors almost disappeared. Such was replaced by wage labor and profit making. As the lottery sellers were away from homes, the elderly people and children were left to live by themselves. The traditional way of life was not being kept properly and/or transmitted to young generations. People found that they had less time for public participation and cooperation. They had to adjust their time so that they could do more for their own community economically and culturally.

2. Methodology

This research has three primary aims:

- To study the historical background of the communities of the lottery sellers in Isan, Thailand.
- To study the current circumstances and socio-economic and cultural problems of the communities of lottery sellers in Isan, Thailand.
- To study the socio-economic and cultural change of the communities of lottery sellers in Isan, Thailand.
- This is a qualitative research and the researchers used a purposive sampling technique to identify three research areas: Loei, Khon Kaen, and Maha Sarakham.

The research population was composed of:

- The communities of lottery seller Ban Phone Ngam Amphoe Wang Saphung, Loei Province.
- The communities of lottery seller Ban Nong Kung Yai Amphoe Kranuan, Khon Kaen Province.
- The communities of lottery seller Ban Kok Noi Amphoe Kaedam, Maha Sarakham Province.

Tools used for data collection were survey, participant and non-participant observation, structured and unstructured interview, focus group discussion and workshop.

The data collected during field study and document research was organized according to the two aims of the investigation. Data was validated by triangulation, using the methods outlined by Songkoon Chantachon. The research data was analyzed using analytic induction and typological analysis the data were rechecked for reliability using a triangulation technique. The analysis was based on the research objectives and presented descriptively.

3. Results

- Upon the historical background of communities of lottery sellers in Isan, Thailand, the study found that members, of the villages chosen for the study had left their formed village to settle where they could live near or have fertile land for crop planting and they could stay away from floods. [Figure 1]

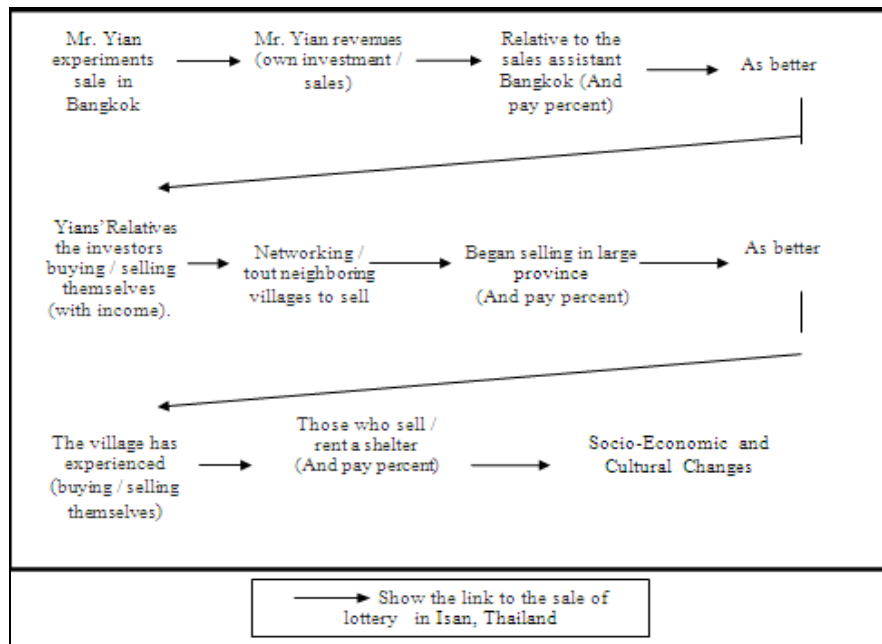


Figure 1: The networking lottery sellers in Isan of Thailand

The people living at Ban Phon Ngam, Amphor Wang Saphung, Loei Province began to sell lotteries in 984. A village named Yian received some advice about selling lotteries as a profession. He tried doing it himself and could make some income from it. He then told his relatives how to go about doing it and made a reasonable income. It wasn't long before they all agreed that selling lotteries was a decent job and their lives could be improved significantly. Other people from the same village and worked in Bangkok had returned home to begin selling lotteries. From then on the job of selling lotteries spread from village to village, Tambon (Sub-District) to Tambon, and to nearby Provinces. Motorcycles, pickup trucks or buses were used as appropriate transportation. The numbers of people who took up lottery selling job at the beginning in Loei, Khon Kaen and Maha Sarakham Provinces were 143, 158, and 82 respectively. [Table 1] Within each Province, some lottery sellers became lottery dealers themselves. Most lottery sellers sold lotteries in cash; some did it in installments.

Province	People in Household	sex		The place of sale lottery
		male	female	
Loei	143	43	100	Bagkok, Rayong, Nakorn Rachasrima, Loei, and Khon Kaen
Khon Kaen	158	68	90	
Maharakham	82	37	45	
Total	383	148	235	

Table 1: Basic survey of people in the household of the three communities of lottery seller

Source: Statistics 3 Isan villages' of provinces in 2012

- For current circumstances of the lottery selling communities in Isan region, Thailand, the study found that the lottery selling was based on daily basis carried out within their village, Tambon, and Amphor. For selling theirs in faraway places, such as Bangkok and other tourist-based areas, they spent 2-week long periods monthly (the second and the fourth weeks) from home. . [Figure 2- Figure 3]



Figure 2: Lottery seller by motorcycle



Figure 3: Lottery seller bicycle

For social, economic, and cultural problems, these were what the study found.

- About half of all lottery sellers spent about 2 weeks working from home monthly
- Some of the lottery sellers gave up rice farming by renting their land to fellow villagers. Some hired wage-labors to doing their rice planting for them.
- If both parents went selling lotteries together, they often left their children to care for themselves. Many school children did not do well in school and were not well disciplined. Many skipped classes and some used drugs.
- Some of the lottery sellers, who were married, broke up due to gambling, adulteries, quarrels over money spending, and family responsibility.
- Debt and over-spending due borrowing money for buying lotteries for customers twice a month. Some could not pay back their loans with 1-2% interest rate.
- The people living in the communities lacked social participation. In the past, they took part in community activities regularly, such as Bang Fai and Songkran festivals. The communities held their activities with limited funding. Currently, the lottery sellers had brought new ideas concerning how their communities could be integratedly improved. Many of them provided adequate funding to support community activities.
- Due to the accumulation of wealth, directly or indirectly, people still were running after money making of lottery selling regardless of family structure, warm-hearted and well-disciplined family members. Due to leaving their village often, some lottery sellers could not play an important role in their village despite their ability and experiences.

- For the socio-economic and cultural change of the communities of lottery sellers in Isan, Thailand, the study found the followings: For social change, it was observed that the people in the given villages did not help one another as much as they did in the past due to money making, money lending, and time spent outside their community. However, assistance among relatives was still in fact. One thing that was clear among the lottery sellers was a large donation for public and cultural events. As a result, the given communities had enough money for various social and cultural events, such as Khathin, New Year's Celebration, Songkran, and sports. They also set up Community Fund with a turnover of approximately 40 million baht. The Savings Bank provided assistance and guidance needed. The lottery sellers built social and economic network linking the small communities to the larger ones. [Figure 4- Figure 5]

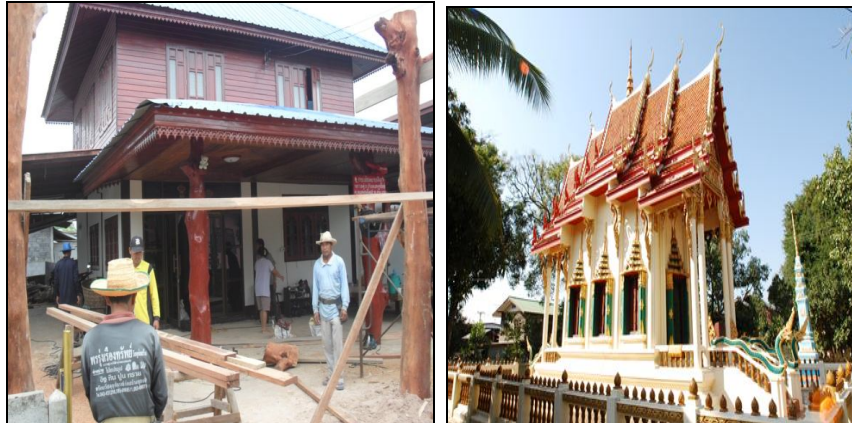


Figure 4: Home built from the money Saving from the sale of lottery

Figure 5: Church in the community was the sale of lottery

The economic change taken place in the community of lottery sellers could be observed in several areas. The families involved in the lottery sellers in Maha Sarakham, Loei, and Khon Kaen were 82, 143, and 158 respectively. Each family earned a monthly income of about 5,000-20,000 baht. The families of the lottery sellers had enough money to spend in everyday life, such as paying debt, sending children to schools in towns, buying household electric appliances, cars, houses, pieces of land, and establishing new businesses. Some families invested in rubber and Eucalyptus plantations. One thing stood out clearly was that people knew how to make money from decent job and used such money wisely and profitably. They could make their own decision whether to use wage labor or own labor for growing rice or invest in other businesses, such as money lending and car rent. The selling lotteries were used as an economic development starting point. They also learned how to create new careers within their own social and cultural context.

On the cultural change of the communities, the study found that the lottery sellers had more voice in holding traditional and cultural events. As a group, they often offered a large sum of money for annual traditions held in their communities, such as, New Year's Day, Songkran, Makha Bucha and Vesak Days. They also supported schools; village temples. The group puts a great emphasis on education and culture. They supported schools and temples in every way they could so that their children could be educated and they had a temple where they could pray and carry on their Buddhist traditions all year round.

4. Discussion

The discussion covered the historical background, current circumstances and problems, and socio-economic and cultural change of the communities as a result of lottery selling

4.1. Historical Background of the Communities of the Lottery sellers in Isan, Thailand

Historically, the three communities under study were traditional farming villagers. The criteria used for village settlement were high ground surrounded by water resources and fertile plains suitable for rice cultivation. Besides rice, the farmers grew sugar cane and cassava. They also raised cows for extra income. As Buddhist communities, the villagers held Buddhist traditions and lived happily. They always tried to solve their problems and looked for ways to improve quality of life. They also moved along and adapted to outside influences continuously. Such was in agreement with³ that society always changed due to internal and external influences.

4.2. The Current Circumstances and Socio-Economic and Cultural Problems of the Communities of the Lottery Sellers in Isan, Thailand

The study found that family members, mostly women, actively took part in the lottery selling. Some did that as their regular jobs. With their group leaders, the lottery sellers often left their village twice a month: 9-11 and 23-25. Each period took about 7-8 days. For those villagers who stayed at home, they often found things to do around their homes or in the fields planting crops, such as rice, beans, and vegetables. The income generated from lottery selling was higher than the amount they made at home and from the rice field.

The problems found in the communities selling lotteries were various, such as drug problems among youth, broken home due to marital separation and divorces, loan fraud, labor shortage for rice planting and home building construction, and being arrested for selling lotteries over set prices. Overall, the people tried to solve their problems. Such was in agreement with⁴ and¹⁰ that as communities encountered internal and external problems, they often looked for ways to solve them. A project called, "self-help" was put forward mainly to overcome economic problems or scarcity of natural resources. Directly or indirectly, the people wanted to achieve and maintain economic stability having a family car, household electric appliances, modern-styled home, and decent income.

4.3. *The Socio-Economic and Cultural Changes of the Communities of Lottery Sellers in Isan, Thailand*

The lottery selling people chose their new job of selling lotteries rather than keeping their traditional rice planting¹². Although some villagers rented their land to other fellow villagers in order to take up a new job of selling lotteries, they all stayed and kept their own homes and earned decent incomes. Many could pay back their loans. Some families invested in rubber and sugar plantation. They could build jobs within their communities. Such was in agreement with¹ and⁸ that as the people improved their social and economic value, belief, traditions, occupations, their communities were also strengthened, and finally become self-reliant. Such was in agreement with² that the economic structure, to some extent, was shaped by social structure and because of economic stability, people could acquire basic necessity and social and mental improvement.

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