

The Efficient Use of Cultural Resources in Ethnic Tourism: Case study of Southeast Asian Countries

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1. Development of Tourism in Southeast Asia

Since the late 1950s, international tourism has been expanding rapidly mainly in developed countries. Even now this expansion is accelerating all over the world (UNWTO, 2015, p.2). Especially, many international tourists have come to Southeast Asian countries. This area's international tourism growth is twice the rate compared to those of other areas (UNWTO, 2014, p.2), because the area attracts considerable numbers of tourists from European and North American developed countries, owing to its distinctive cultural traits. Indeed, in Southeast Asian countries, the international tourists enjoy trekking in unspoiled tropical rainforest, diving into the sea with beautiful coral reefs, eating local food which they have never savor before, watching traditional dance and so on. Sometimes tourists from the developed countries enjoy exotic sensation of experiencing different customs and even feel some kind of nostalgia for their simple life styles. In other words, the local people always exposed to a curious gaze from the Western tourists, and they are obliged to play the role of native "savage" in front of the tourists. Observing such situations many researchers have emphasized the risk of acculturation or disruption of original cultures in the worst case. While tourism has good effects on local peoples, especially in the economic aspects, researchers and various international organizations have warned about the negative impacts of tourism on their cultures in the near future. To avoid such impacts, the new concepts of "Sustainable tourism", "Responsible tourism", "Eco-tourism", etc. have been born (UNWTO, 1999, pp.2-6). Most of the Southeast Asian countries had expected that tourism is the best way to acquire foreign money and create jobs, meanwhile they have just turned their attention to the highly probable situation where the irreversible cultural problems are getting serious. Tourism has always such a big dilemma.

2. Ethnic Tourism in Southeast Asia

Among the various problems, the most serious problem in Southeast Asian countries is cultural conflict. International tourists bring not only money but also several different values and patterns of consumption. Correspondingly local people's behavior have been influenced and changed by foreigner's behavior. Tourism generally creates a relative hierarchical relationship between *hosts* and *guests*. When tourist come into direct contact with local people, this hierarchical relationship appears more remarkable.

The aim of direct contacts is to see or to participate in the intrinsic cultures and life styles of native local people or minorities, who are differentiated socially and politically from the dominant groups in their home countries. Such a form of tourism is often called ethnic tourism, or other various terms; native tourism, aboriginal tourism, indigenous tourism etc. Essentially, these terms themselves do not imply discrimination or scorn for native minorities, but it is undeniable that such forms of tourism are provoked by the tourists' interest in observing relatively primitive life-styles and consequent poverty of minorities. The root of the interest is a kind of prejudice brought about by or creating the hierarchical relationship between *hosts* and *guests*. Bunten and Graburn describe these terms as artefacts of the colonial encounter (Bunten and Graburn, 2018, p.3), in other words, it can be said that the modern host-and-guest relationship is originated from the former one between the ruler and the ruled.

In this essay, I adopt the word "ethnic tourism" among aforementioned terms: indigenous, aboriginal and native tourism, because "ethnic tourism" seems to be much more suitable dealing with the Southeast Asian situation, compared with other terms easily reminding us of colonial dominated or suppressed condition. Especially

in American and Australian continents, the semi-colonial condition has continued, even now producing conflicts between ruling Whites and ruled indigenous peoples in various scenes, and indigenous, aboriginal tourism and native tourisms are frequently used to appeal for the restoration of social justice for the sake of the oppressed peoples. Mercer who researched indigenous tourism in Australia said that indigenous tourism development and social justice issues concerning aboriginal rights cannot be discussed separately (Mercer, 2005, p.143). Certainly, Southeast Asian countries experienced a colonized history, and the influence of colonial rule still remains in various socio-cultural aspects. But after independence, each country is nationally unified by the indigenous peoples themselves, and there is no such conflict or suppression as seen in Americas and Australia. Moreover Southeast Asian countries' governments generally don't tend to use tourism for the purpose of restoring indigenous rights. Therefore, ethnic tourism appears suitable to describe Southeast Asian tourism as a term of neutral meaning.

According to Weiler and Hall, ethnic tourism entails some form of face-to-face experience with local people by visiting their land to observe or participate in local customs, rituals and other traditional activities (Weiler and Hall, 1992, p.84). In other words, ethnic tourism is always based on tourist desire for exoticism. Ethnic tourism in Southeast Asian countries is fashioned mainly by showcasing of the traditional culture and people's life to tourists. Culture and tourism are never separable from one another, because indigenous life-styles are the tourist resource close to hand and some kinds of spectacle for the foreigners. In such type of tourism, the local people will be exposed to the "tourist gaze" directly. So, we have to consider well how and why have appeared the "tourist gaze" toward to local people.

3. Types of Ethnic Tourism

Ethnic tourism is one of the cultural tourism that focuses on the culture of ethnic minority. Today many countries, especially in Southeast Asia, as a part of national strategy, strive to augment inbound tourism, an easy way of which is the promotion of ethnic tourism. The ethnic tourism in Southeast Asia can be classified into three types as Dramatization type, Separation type and Intact type, according to how to show ethnic culture.

Dramatization type: This type of ethnic tourism artificially dramatizes indigenous ethnic cultures. In other words, local people try to show "ethnicity" that international tourists expect. Quite a number of examples of this type of ethnic tourism can be seen in Southeast Asia. This is because the government has actively promoted ethnic tourism to acquire foreign money for the economic development of the "Nation". For example, in Sarawak, the government of Malaysia began the earnest promotion of Borneo tourism in the early 1990s (Hattori, 2010, p.22). Ethnic tourism is the core of Borneo tourism. Various touristic facilities were established place to place. Especially, Sarawak Cultural Village (abbreviate as S.C.V. in below) established in 1989 is visited by many international tourists (Sarawak Cultural Village HP). Sarawak's population comprises of several local ethnic groups, namely the Iban, the Bidayuh, the Orang Ulu, the Melanau and other minor tribes in addition to the Malays, Chinese and Indians. In S.C.V., tourists can enjoy their traditional cultures in just half a day. On the 17 acre's premises, there are traditional houses which symbolized each ethnic groups and a big hole where a cultural show is held. In each traditional house, symbolic goods are displayed and people donning traditional costume demonstrate traditional cookies, toys, handicrafts and so on, which tourists are able to buy. So, that's why S.C.V. is called as "Living Museum". Cultural show is the most popular attraction in S.C.V. In this show, tourists can see each ethnic group's traditional dances all at once. In Malaysia, there are many similar kinds of cultural village. These cultural villages play some parts in the safeguarding and succession of traditional culture. And we can say it is "gateway" to know their ethnic cultures. But on the other side, to get more and more tourists, local people act more and more exciting and exotic way to show their own cultures. This exaggeration leads foreign tourists to see their dramatized action as their own cultural heritage unconsciously. And for the next step, tourists want to see their cultures in the context of everyday life, so they expect homestay experience. It's not serious as long as the dramatization is realized only

in the touristic facilities, such as S.C.V., but when tourists expect the same dramatization for the local people's real village life, the serious problem occurs. Because the local people are demanded to act ethnic people's role dramatically in accordance with tourists' expectation. Finally, it causes hostilities between hosts and guests, resulting in the decline of the local people's will to receive guests. So this kind of ethnic tourism can threaten the local people's life and their traditional cultures. In most cases that ethnic tourism is carried out in developing countries or region, like the case of Sarawak, the government takes the initiative as a part of national policies. As Richter said that "tourism is a highly political phenomenon" (Richter, 1989, p.2), we must assert that the government's responsibility is very serious. But government's attention is not paid to the cultural continuity and the quality of life (QOL) of ethnic minorities, giving priority to the national economic interests. These economic interests are usually restricted to the immediate short-term profits. Tourism styles with which ethnic minorities at the frontline feel uncomfortable or burdensome cannot be sustainable in the long-term perspective. In fact, a number of ethnic people in Sarawak have stopped hosting international tourists, and lost their motivation.

Separation type: In this type of ethnic tourism, the host people separate two aspects of culture, one for the touristic aim and the other for their own life. It means tourists cannot easily enter into local people's daily life area. The ethnic tourism in Bali, Indonesia is the classical example of this type. Bali is one of the most famous tourist destinations in Southeast Asia. About 4.9 million international tourists visit for a year (Ministry of Tourism Republic of Indonesia, 2017). Bali's tourism culture is created under the Dutch colonial regime. This movement is termed "the Balinization of Bali" (Yamashita, 1999, p.178). For example, the now famous *kecak* dance and *barong* dance were arranged for tourists by a group of Western intellectuals headed by Water Species, the German artist and musician who lived in Bali in the 1930s. The *kecak* dance was originally a male chorus which accompanied a trance ritual. But he recreated it into a spectacular dance drama, adopting the Ramayana (Hindu drama). In consequence, it has become understandable for the Western tourists. The original form of *barong* dance was a part of *Calonarang*, a Balinese traditional ritual dance played for safety and peace of villagers. It takes 4 hours. Species remake it more shortly and mildly, because the original ritual is too long and too shocking for tourists. For Balinese the traditional holy rituals are so important and meaningful that they don't want to show it to tourists as an entertainment. So by creating special cultural contents for the tourists, they succeeded in separating tourists from their daily life. As a result of the cultural invention, Bali has been inviting many foreign tourists without spoiling its proper culture.

Intact type: In this type of ethnic tourism, local people invite tourists to their daily life area to show their cultures without any modification, so that tourists are able to experience their ordinal life. Homestay programs in Brunei Darussalam are one of the examples of this type. Brunei government began the efforts to develop tourism in 1990s. One pillar of this effort is Community-Based Tourism (CBT), in which local communities take the initiative to create optimal plans to promote tourism that make the best use of unique features of the local area and local people's trait and traditional cultures (Okayama, 2017, p.20). Akinyi defines CBT as a form of tourism where the local community has substantial control over, and involvement in, its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remains within the community (Akinyi, 2015, p.71). In other words, CBT consider sustainability of local community. Then the government makes a national project, named Kenali Negara Kitani (KNK: it means "get to know your own country"). This project support Bruneian people to get opportunities to know and rediscover their own cultures. Local people make homestay programs mainly based on the concepts proposed by the government. In Brunei as a multicultural country, some ethnic groups, such as the Iban, have maintained their traditional life styles. Now some groups of the Iban invites tourists to their traditional longhouse. Tourists spend their time communicating with local people, and enjoying different everyday life from their own. In the longhouse homestay, tourists can eat traditional foods, make handicrafts, hear their history, see traditional charm made by shamans and so on. Local people proudly show not only their traditional culture but also

modernized and westernized daily lives reflecting their current life cultural value. Many scholars say that tourists desire to experience “*hi-nichijo*(非日常)” or “extraordinary” life to escape from their “*nichijo*(日常)” or daily life, and that ethnic tourism offers the desired cultural experiences to tourists. But in Brunei, local people show their own cultures as just different pattern of ordinal life, or “*i-nichijo*(異日常)” that is another ordinal life (Motani, 2016, p.24). In other words, local people never want to act the exaggerated ethnic or exotic role. They attract foreign tourists at their natural pace.

4. Cultural Resources in Ethnic Tourism

Southeast Asian countries have obtained some profitable results in the tourism industry, but a number of problems are occurring, so that it is necessary to seek out new ways of tourism. In any type of ethnic tourism, local people's life is the most important cultural resources. So, we have to consider well how it should be shown to tourists and at the same time, we should find the way to protect their own life from tourism. Dramatization type of ethnic tourism has high ability to attract foreign tourists. But this dramatization making “*hi-nichijo*” for tourists has generally eroded local people's everyday life. So this type of ethnic tourism is not recommendable to sustain the local societies. Separation type of ethnic tourism can protect local people's ordinal life and culture by offering special cultural contents that fulfill tourist's desire. In other words, local people keep tourists away from everyday life area. On the contrary, intact type of ethnic tourism willingly invites tourists to local people's life area. And local people show their ordinal life as “*i-nichijo*” for tourists to build a friendly relationship between hosts and guests. This relationship can make local people learn about other cultures and values from tourists, and both hosts and guests respect each other's “*nichijo*” through tourism.

Ethnic people's life and culture is not a show or spectacle, it is just different pattern of everyday life. Ethnic tourism should be carried out protecting the host people's life real. To realize this purpose, not only tourist agencies, but also all local people must actively participate all together and try to see the best way of ethnic tourism for themselves. There is no royal road for sustainable ethnic tourism. But any type of ethnic tourism must make more affluent the lives and cultures of ethnic minorities. Then the tourists will be blessed with good opportunities to understand other people's lifestyle and cultural values.

5. What is “Sustainability” in Ethnic Tourism?

Since the latter half of the 20th century when the tourism industry grew rapidly, many scholars argue about “sustainable tourism”, the applied concept of “sustainable development”. UNEP and UNWTO defined sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”(UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, p.12). This phrase teaches us that tourism is a complex phenomenon embracing environmental, social, cultural, and economic realms. But in the developing countries, because almost all of the governments have been long prioritizing economic growth as their exclusive goal, they seems to have forgot to fix their eyes on other realms of human life. It means they focus only on the sustainability of the economy. Essentially, sustainable tourism is a form of tourism aiming to attain sustainable development, safeguarding the local people's culture and society concurrently with promoting socioeconomic development. According with this subject, we have to consider both economic development and local people's QOL. In addition, ethnic identity is not fixed and bequeathed from the past (Wood, 1997, p.18), so that ethnic tourism should change its form and meaning flexibly responding to the present life styles of ethnic peoples. Intact type of ethnic tourism, which has promoted the continuity of the ethnic cultural resources with incentives of local communities, seen as Brunei's example, should be thought as one of the new appropriate direction of sustainable tourism. Before anything, what is truly necessary is the sustainability of the community. Especially in ethnic tourism in which the main attracting points are ethnic communities and their

cultures, we must pay due attentions to the preservation of local communities' own characteristics.

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WEB site

Sarawak Cultural Village

History from <https://www.scv.com.my/history>.