



# Public participation in development of Kamchanoad's rice offerings, Naga trees preservation, and Red Lotus Lake popularization

Phusit Phukamchanoad

Department of Social and Cultural Development Management, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok 10300, Thailand

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## Abstract

The research aims to explore the preservation approach of "Naga Trees" and the local product development process in order to continue expanding the opportunities in Kamchanoad areas towards public participation. The study also investigates the local folklores which can enhance the charm of the Red Lotus lake and increase its economic value. Questionnaires were distributed and filled out by 400 samples. 27 samples were interviewed, and two focus group discussions were conducted. The findings revealed that the overall level of public participation in Kamchanoad's local conservation was rated at the highest level, especially in terms of annual village activities such as Grandfather Sri Suttho and Grandmother Sri Pathumma worshipping rituals. The community leaders participated in the Kamchanoad forest preservation at the highest level. The preservation process of Chanoad trees had been prepared for 2 years and 7 months before the cultivation started. The cultivation of Chanoad trees was conducted in the natural setting. Moreover, a local product integrating Kamchanoad folklores or culture was invented. This local product for Grandfather Sri Suttho and Grandmother Sri Pathumma worshipping rituals was the rice offerings ('Bai Sri' in Thai) called "Beng Tray of Gifts, Local Rice Offerings". At the same time, the key charming point of the Red Lotus lake is the beautiful, boundless lotus field. The local people in the Red Lotus Lake's surrounding areas lived sufficiently in the local way. The local lifestyle was filled with fishing, birdwatching, and living with the priceless natural environment during December–February.

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## Introduction

Discovering the identity of important tourist attractions in Udon Thani Province is crucial for local

tourism's value-creation in the long run. It is necessary to explore the local stories and folklores while increasing the engagement of community leaders and local people in promoting prosperity, well-being, and life security. This is considered as a significant part of the development process. His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej once said on the 7th of May 1970 that "...The term

E-mail address: [phusit.ph@ssru.ac.th](mailto:phusit.ph@ssru.ac.th).

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*'development' refers to the act of securing and advancing the country to prosper. Therefore, the meaning of the development of this country is to make every individual live happily, safely, and prosperously...'* When development emerges, the human resources development process is also required in the local areas. There must be public participation of the local people in decision-making, practice, mutual interest receiving, evaluation, and follow-up (Cohen, & Uphoff, 1977). This indicates that participation is the power mobilizing the administrative process and local decision-making process, which entirely benefits the majority (Kokpol, 2009; Phukamchanoad, 2016). Public participation is also a key to sustainable development mentioned by His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej after the successes of 4,877 royal projects (Office of the Royal Development Projects Board, 2017). It is a solution to cut poverty and hunger by which the poor or grassroot people are allowed to benefit from their local tourist attractions and resources. Consequently, they must preserve the local environment in exchange for sufficient incomes for self-living and their families.

When talking about the local people in the North-eastern Region, society tends to imagine the grassroot people or "poor" people. From a survey conducted by the National Statistical Office of Thailand between 2009–2016, the number of poor people in both urban and suburban areas in the North-eastern Region was double the number of poor people in other regions. This conforms to a report on the quality of life of Thai people in 2017 by which the North-eastern Region had the highest number of households which generated less than 38,000 baht/person per year, followed by the Northern Region, the Central Region, and the Southern Region, respectively. This emphasizes the problems in terms of the access to local development. The 12th development plan also states that Thailand still confronts the qualitative problems in all aspects such as the lack of education, low morality, low skills, self-interests instead of collective interests, and the lack of innovation. (Committee of Public Quality of Life Development, 2017; Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board [NESDB], 2016). Since the quality of life in Thailand is low, the local society and economy are also affected. There is the lack of guidance and knowledge suitable for local development with local wisdom that leads to the destruction of the environment and natural resources. The local wisdom which has been accumulated for generations will be lost. Hence, the local economic development shall rely on the Sufficiency Economy

Philosophy of King Rama IX (Chaipattana Foundation, 2007; Palapin et al., 2015). Public participation is also clearly needed for the local development.

To develop the local economy, sustainable interdependency between all stakeholders in the local communities and the environment is required (Working Group on Fundamental Economic Development and Pracharat, 2016). Public participation can lead to economic growth, happiness, roles and responsibilities, and rights to environmental protection of the local people. It also allows the local people to benefit from the natural resources and biodiversity in a balanced and sustainable manner (Government Gazette, 2007). Ultimately, it can expand the development to greater levels, giving opportunities to the future generations to use local stories for value-added tourism. The indicators of occupational performance in these touristic areas are the local products and services (Community Organization Development Institute, 2017). The local people and their public participation play a huge role in developing the tourist attractions to generate community revenues based on the local resources. In order to preserve the local tourist attractions and resources, there must be public participation in the following processes: mutual acknowledgement, mutual thinking, collective decision-making and consideration, collective operation and investigation, monitoring and evaluation, and cooperation for mutual benefits (Mallikaman, 2002).

In this study, the research settings were Kamchanoad Community and the Red Lotus Lake, which are the natural tourist attractions in Udon Thani Province. "Kamchanoad Community" is the area affected by tourism in Ban Dung District, Udon Thani Province. There are more than 30,000 local people impacted by the industry. The Naga trees (or "Chanoad trees") have been affected by tourism instead of public preservation. Another key tourist attraction is "Bueng Nong Han (the Red Lotus Lake)". The biodiversity of this area consists of fertile soil, water sources, aquatic plants, fish, birds, and the famous red lotus. The red lotus or water lily has existed for such a long time. They have deep roots, long leaf stalks, and round leaves. The flowers are single-standing. The colors range from dark pink, white, to magenta. The local people usually use them to cook food, dye clothes, bake desserts, compound medicine, and brew red lotus tea (Phukamchanoad et al., 2020). Kamchanoad Community and the Red Lotus Lake are the authentic natural resources of Udon Thani Province. They are not only tourist attractions but also ideal locations for folklore studies. It is important

to preserve these areas towards public participation (The National Health Commission Office, 2005).

Therefore, the goal of this research was to explore “public participation” in the touristic areas of Kamchanoad Community and the Red Lotus Lake. The local communities have established networks to manage the preservation of Chanoad trees. The community leaders have the real insights about the local way of living, which can promote the image and self-identity of the locality. Expectedly, the economic values will be added to the communities towards the creation of “Rukkhanaga Rice Offerings”, a local product developed based on the Sacred Naga folktales of the Mekong Region. The local product and its background story will add value to the local tourism and increase incomes of local people and merchants. The product was developed alongside the map showing the pathways between the tourist attractions in Kamchanoad, Udon Thani Province. In the meantime, it is also crucial to examine the charming points of the Red Lotus Lake as a sustainable tourist attraction of Thailand’s North-Eastern Region.

## Literature Review

“Participation” is an act which reflects human behaviour in a collective manner as it emerges from the common goal sharing. It is the process which promotes prosperity and development at individual, household, local, and national levels. It is also a condition or a factor reflecting democracy as well as a mechanism mobilizing a country’s development. The more developed a country, the higher rate of public participation. In this essence, “public participation” has thus become a major instrument to connect people, activities, and processes. This starts from decision-making, practice, mutual interests, mutual investment, and evaluation. This process also involves the accumulation of resources, ideas, and new approaches to survival and problem-solving towards the use of local wisdom and morality. (Cohen & Uphoff, 1977, 1980; Erwin, 1976; Kaewthep, 1995; Patanaponasa, 1990; Phukamchanoad, 2009; Reeder, 1974; Rerkrai, 1981; Saphachokchai, 1995; Wuttimethee, 1993).

Development is the by-product of the development activities emerging among the public. It is expected to enhance happiness and prosperity in Kamchanoad and Red Lotus Lake communities. Thus, the term “development” refers to the shifts from incomplete states to the more complete or better states in accordance with the customs, satisfaction, and demand of the majority.

The beginning point of development is “people”. Once people have developed and obtained better quality of life, their performance and productivity will be also enhanced. Therefore, the development clearly means “the change for better in the right direction” (Chongcharoenyingyong, 2006; Ministry of Education, 2011; Phonsri, 2002; Royal Institute Dictionary 1999, 2003; Srisantisuk, 2009,). It also refers to the change from the deficient, unsatisfactory state to the more complete and more satisfactory state. At all events, the development shall be directed based on the common interests and common goals of the society (Phukamchanoad, 2015). A developed society shall aim to; achieve: (1) happiness; (2) development of people; (3) development of family/community; and (4) environmental friendliness (Sanyawiwat, 2004).

Kamchanoad is a sacred area of the local communities residing in Ban Dung District, Udon Thani Province. There is the worship of the God of NAGA whose name is “Phaya Sri Suttho Nagaraj”. The local people believe that Kamchanoad forest is a rainforest where the God of Naga, the ruler of underworld, lives. The legend of “Grandfather Sri Suttho” can be traced back for more than a century in Thailand. Also, there is the evident symbol of the legend, which is the “Chanoad trees” or “Naga trees”. This set of belief is also portrayed in research entitled “The Design of Sarong Patterns based on Kamchanoad’s Culture of NAGA and Tie-dyed Woven Handicraft” (Phukamchanoad, 2018). The geography of Kamchanoad is divided into the surrounding areas of Kamchanoad Island, consisting of Sirisuttho Temple, the area connecting the island and Sirisuttho Temple, touristic areas, Gud Kham Reservoir, Non Mueng Village, Worship Plaza, and Grandfather-Grandmother Shrine. The key information about Kamchanoad’s geography was first recorded in 1887 (The Committee of Historical Education of Ban Dung Municipality, 2008). Kamchanoad is located in Ban Non Mueng, Udon Thani province. In the past, this area was called ‘Ban Don Non Thoom’ because there was a hill with so many bale fruits. In the nearby areas were Sakae forest, a bamboo forest, a vetiver forest, and an animal farm. When looking beyond the forests, there were three Chanoad trees standing on the edge of the island. There were still no big rubber trees or fig trees. The village was called “Ban Chanoad” (Kamchanoad Administrative Committee, 2019). Chanoad Forest Island is an island with a lot of Chanoad trees. Many scholars call it “Kamchanoad Wetland” which is a peat swamp forest or a flood plain. According to the informal survey on Wednesday 2 April 2002, there were standing trees

aged between 10–1,000 years old (Phukamchanoad, 2018). In 1977, there were about 2,000 Chanoad trees on the island (Niemnapa, 2014).

The Red Lotus Lake is located in the Bueng Nong Han area. It is registered as an internationally significant wetland according to Ramsar convention. The area is 36 km<sup>2</sup>. It is a big pond covering the areas of three districts; Kum Pwapee, Ku Kwaew, and Prajak Silpakom of Udon Thani Province. The biodiversity of this area consists of fertile soil, water sources, aquatic plants, fish, birds, and the famous red lotus. The red lotus or water lily has existed for such a long time. They have deep roots, long leaf stalks, and round leaves. The flowers are single-standing. The colors range from dark pink, white, to magenta. The local people usually use them to cook food, dye clothes, bake desserts, compound medicine, and brew red lotus tea. In Bueng Nong Han, there were hills for agriculture and construction. The area had a high biodiversity (Hasaro, 2004).

The Sufficiency Economy philosophy of King Rama IX is a philosophy bestowed by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej to the people of Thailand. Sufficiency Economy stresses the middle path as an overriding principle for appropriate conduct by Thai people at all levels, “Sufficiency” means moderation, reasonableness, and the need of self-immunity for sufficient protection from impact arising from internal and external changes. To achieve this, the application of knowledge with due consideration and prudence is essential. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the moral fiber of the nation. In particular, a way of life based on patience, perseverance, diligence, wisdom and prudence is indispensable to create balance and be able to cope appropriately with critical challenges (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board [NESDB], 2014).

## Methodology

This study is a mixed methods research, which emphasizes the participatory action research (PAR). Since this is a community-based research, it is necessary to employ both quantitative and qualitative research methods, including the participatory action research which involves the collaboration between researchers and research participants in order to address social problems and take actions leading to social change (Chooprasoot, 2016; Liaotrakoon et al., 2020; Poungngamchuen et al., 2013). The engagement of the community members in the data collection process is crucial because the collected

data shall be used for their community's development (Kaewthep, 2020). In this research, there were two research settings, including 2 tourist attractions from 2 subdistricts of Udon Thani Province, as described below.

The first location was Kamchanoad Community, 288 Ban Non Mueng, Moo 11, Ban Muang Subdistrict, Ban Dung District, Udon Thani Province. The local area administration was mutually conducted by four groups of stakeholders who had interests in the area for more than five consecutive years. These groups of stakeholders included:

- Group 1: 35 members of Kamchanoad Board of Directors, which included the district-chief officer as the president, Ban Muang sub-district headman as the manager of the Kamchanoad Administration Center, and a collector of the Kamchanoad Administration Center; the role of this group of people is to manage and preserve Kamchanoad Island, the Worship Plaza, the Old Shrine areas, courtyards, and all local stores in front of Kamchanoad Island.

- Group 2: Local people in Non Muang Village, including “Ban Non Muang Florist Community Enterprise Group” which produced rice offerings and worshipping flowers for tourists who visited Grandfather Sri Suttho-Grandmother Sri Pathumma Shrine; this group of people took care of all the areas in front of the Naga Gate, the entrance of Kamchanoad Island.

- Group 3: Officers of Sirisuttho Temple, a 35-year-old temple located in front of Kamchanoad Island; the local people also called this temple “Kamchanoad Temple.”

- Group 4: Local people who had owned houses around the Kamchanoad Community for more than 30 years (since 1992), including Grandmother Samorn Kanthikul, a local wisewoman who founded the conservation of Naga trees (Chanoad trees).

The second location was the areas around the Red Lotus Lake, a natural water source in Nong Han, Kum Pwapee District. The high season for visiting the Red Lotus Lake is December–February of every year. There are six ports; the most popular port being Ban Diem Port, Chiang Haew Subdistrict, Kum Pwapee District, Udon Thani Province. There was also the establishment of “Ban Diem Koy Red Lotus Lake Tourist Boat Community Enterprise Group” which protected the interests of the community enterprise members.

Due to the limited research period and budget, this research mainly focused on the aforementioned tourist attractions. The research process was approved by the Institutional Review Board, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat

University (COE: 2-090/2020). In this research, the data collection and evaluation processes consisted of the six following stages:

#### *Stage 1 Geo-Social Field Study*

A geo-social field study was conducted to explore geo-social contexts and the folklores in the areas of the Kamchanoad Community and the Red Lotus Lake. The community leaders, the local people, and other groups of stakeholders were observed. The past local community phenomena were investigated.

#### *Stage 2 Questionnaires on Community Capacity, Public Participation, and Self-Sufficiency*

Questionnaires were distributed to survey the local people in the two research settings. There were 200 respondents from the population of 8,494 people living around Kamchanoad, Ban Dung District and 200 respondents from the population of 8,725 people living around Red Lotus Lake, Kum Pwapee District. There were 400 samples in total (Yamane, 1973). The score interpretation criteria consisted of “Highest Level” (5.20–6.00), “High Level” (4.36–5.19), “Moderate Level” (3.52–4.35), “Low Level” (2.68–3.51), “Lowest Level” (1.84–2.67), and “No Participation” (1.00–1.83) (Silpajaru, 2017). Descriptive statistics such as arithmetic means and standard deviations were used to analyze the data.

#### *Stage 3 Field Study on “Rukkhanaga” Preservation Process and other Local Folklores*

Another field study was carried out to investigate the preservation process of Naga trees (Chanoad trees) as well as the background and history of Kamchanoad Community, local folklores, and stories of the Red Lotus Lake.

#### *Stage 4 Interviews with Tourism Activity Mobilizers*

Interviews with the purposive samples were conducted. These purposive samples were tourism activity mobilizers in the research settings. They included the Ban Muang sub-district headman, the manager of the Kamchanoad Administration Center, leaders of the Red Lotus Lake Tourist Boat Community Enterprise Group, and elders living in the touristic areas of Kamchanoad and the Red Lotus Lake. There were 10 interviewees in total.

#### *Stage 5 Interviews with Local People*

Structured interviews with the local people were conducted to obtain information about local identities and local stories, which could be used as the foundation of storytelling-based local product design. The local stories about Kamchanoad and the Red Lotus Lake were applied to the local product design. There were 17 key informants, including 5 local people living in Kamchanoad, Ban Dung, and 12 local people from 4 districts surrounding the Red Lotus Lake (Ban Dung, Nong Han, Kum Pwapee, and Prajak Silpakom).

#### *Stage 6 Focus Group Discussions*

Focus group discussions were conducted with elderly people in Kamchanoad Community and the Red Lotus Lake areas in order to verify the data on the Chanoad tree preservation approaches, the stories about the God of NAGA, and the authentic rice offerings of Kamchanoad. The most interesting local folklores or stories were discussed and chosen to be applied to the development of sustainable local tourism activities and products. There were 10 participants in the focus group discussions. The first focus group discussion was conducted at Pattapat Kamchanoad Center, Ban Dung District, Udon Thani Province, and the second one was conducted at Ban Diem Bueng Nong Han Por, Kum Pwapee District, Udon Thani Province.

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## **Results and Discussion**

The research findings were divided into four major topics:

#### *The Levels of the Public Participation of Kamchanoad Community*

The local people in 17 communities in Kamchanoad, Muang Subdistrict, Ban Dung District, Udon Thani Province, agreed that public participation in Kamchanoad Forest preservation is also an important issue that must be explored among the local people and local merchants. The findings showed that the local people annually worshipped the Grandfather Sri Suttho and Grandmother Sri Pathumma at the highest level ( $\bar{x} = 5.46$ ). The opinions on public participation in the Kamchanoad Forest preservation are illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1** Level of Public Participation in the Kamchanoad Forest Preservation

| Item  | Public Participation in the Kamchanoad Forest Preservation  | $\bar{x}$ | SD   | Level   |
|-------|---|-----------|------|---------|
| 1     | In your village, the community leader engages in the Kamchanoad forest preservation.  | 5.45      | 0.93 | Highest |
| 2     | You engage in the preservation of the Kamchanoad forest or Chanoad trees.   | 5.33      | 1.01 | Highest |
| 3     | You know that there is the cultivation of the committee's and Sirisuttho Temple's Chanoad trees.  | 5.36      | 1.11 | Highest |
| 4     | You engage in Chanoad tree cultivation activities.  | 5.39      | 1.14 | Highest |
| 5     | You and your family regularly engage in Grandfather Sri Suttho and Grandmother Sri Pathumma annual worshipping rituals.                                     | 5.46      | 0.89 | Highest |
| 6     | You have introduced "Kamchanoad" to outsiders.  | 5.30      | 1.10 | Highest |
| 7     | You and your family make rice offerings to be sold to the occupational guilds in Kamchanoad.  | 5.26      | 1.15 | Highest |
| 8     | You and your family regularly engage in the annual major worshipping ritual of Grandfather Sri Suttho and Grandmother Sri Pathumma of the 14 villages.      | 5.35      | 0.97 | Highest |
| 9     | You have engaged as a volunteer in big cleaning and preservation of Kamchanoad Forest, including the surrounding areas of the island and Sirisuttho Temple. | 5.29      | 1.08 | Highest |
| 10    | You and your family run a store in Kamchanoad's touristic areas.  | 5.36      | 1.05 | Highest |
| Total |   | 5.35      | 0.84 | Highest |

Note: \*SD values are considerably high because the respondents have intergenerational family.

### Chanoad Tree Preservation Procedures

The research findings revealed the three stages of Chanoad tree preservation process as follows:

1. Collection of Chanoad Seeds. The first step is to ceremonially collect Chanoad seeds on the 14th day of the waxing moon on the 12th lunar month. The worship was started by a priest who collected full-grown Chanoad seeds from Chanoad Forest and asked the deities of Chanoad Forest to protect him or her while collecting the full-grown seeds. The priest dressed up in white, greeting the deities both at the gate and inside the forest. The priest needed to carry a tray with the five aggregates, Khan Mak Beng (a handicraft made from banana leaves and fresh flowers for rituals and worshiping), and white flowers, while collecting the seeds.

2. Fertilization of Chanoad Seeds. The planting ceremony was held on the 1st day of the waxing moon on the 12th lunar month. The seeds bred by Mrs. Samorn Kantikul and Phusit Phukamchanoad were planted. The planter prayed to worship Grandfather Sri Suttho and Grandmother Sri Pathumma. The soil mass collected from Kam Chanoad Island was mixed with normal gardening soil. The mixture was then put in the prepared pots. Inside each pot, there were 5 layers of fertilization: layer 1 The base filled with lemongrass or dried grass, layer 2 Loam mixed with gardening soil, layer 3 The mixture of Chanoad Island soil and normal gardening soil, layer 4 The spread of Chanoad seeds, and layer 5 The coverage of gardening soil. The pot shall be put under the shade, under a tree, or in a plant nursery. The pot should be openly placed under the sun, and it should be watered at least twice a day. Sprouts may appear in the third month of gardening, then after the sprouts grow up

and become 3-centimeters-tall, they should be separated to the new pots for further nursery. The Chanoad trees (or the NAGA trees) would need at least 2 years to grow up and reach the height of 50 centimeters, increasing their survival rate when planted in nature where weeds could kill them.

3. Cultivation of Chanoad Trees. The main ritual was the great worship to summon Grandfather Sri Suttho and Grandmother Sri Pathumma as well as all deities in Kamchanoad Forest to attend the ceremony to bless the land and the ritual attendees. The priest chanted to start the ritual while bringing in some Chanoad trees.

It should be noted that Kamchanoad Forest is a freshwater swamp forest emerged from the same water source as Jampa freshwater swamp forest in Lopburi Province. Kamchanoad's soil and water impressively support the growth of Chanoad trees. The temperature is mild, and the soil slightly acidic with considerably low ionic strength. The salinity level of water is also low, making the forest a freshwater swamp. Most of the soil is organic soil, called "saprist" or "muck", mainly made up of highly decomposed organic materials. Approximately, 20-35% of the soil in this forest is organic materials. The peat is around 3 meters thick, and its surface covered by fern and Chanoad trees (Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning [ONEP], 2012). The characteristics of Kamchanoad Forest show that it is a wetland (Matthews, 1993), known as "Sanom" in Isan (language of Thailand's Northeastern Region). "Sanom" refers to a piece of land elevated by water which is composed of elastic soil and thickly piled up organic materials like grass and reeds. Such thick buildup of organic materials is called "Sanoon" in Isan. Therefore, Kamchanoad Forest could be considered as "Sanoon Peat

Swamp Forest”, sometimes called “Dune” or “Dog’s Skin (Nang Mah)” (Gergory, 1918; Niemnapa, 2014; Niyomtham & Pittayakachonwut, 1994; Tidma & Jitsak, 2002).

### Kamchanoad Rice Offerings

“Rice offerings (Bai Sri)” are authentic items reflecting the faith and respect for local sacred beings in the Northeastern Region of Thailand (Isan). They are also cultural symbols showing respect for teachers, parents, and grandparents in this region (Chotivongso, 2010). To illustrate, in Sukhothai Province, Phitsanulok Province, and Phetchabun Province, many local people produce and use Pak Cham rice offerings (Kantabut et al., 2017). In the Isan Region, rice offerings, Beng trays of gifts, modern rice offerings, Naga’s Throne rice offerings are all related to local culture and beliefs (Sakunathawong, 2008). In Kamchanoad, the local original rice offerings were authentically designed for promoting local tourism.

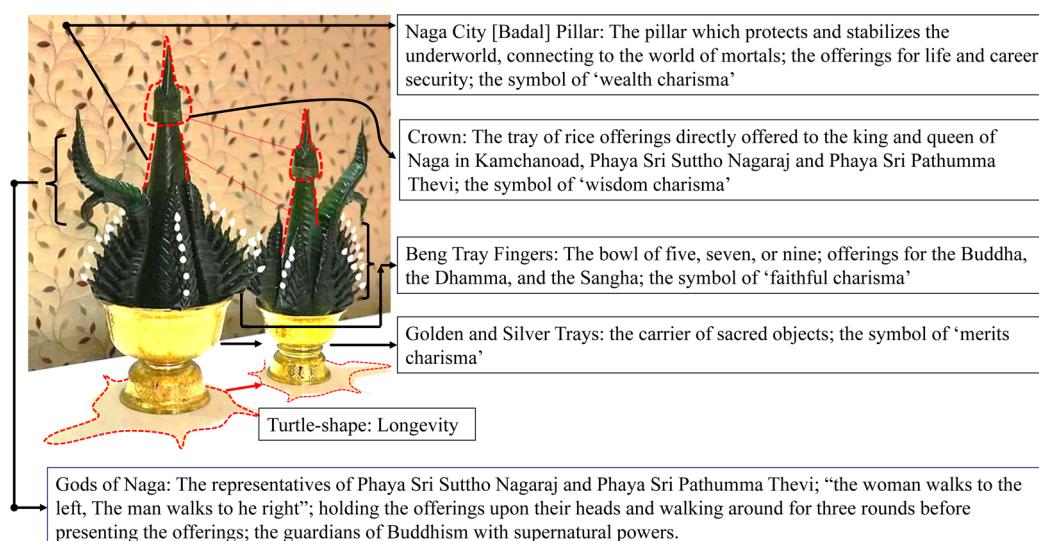
The “authentic products of Kamchanoad” referred to the local products embedded with Kamchanoad folklores or culture. They were the offerings for *Grandfather Sri Suttho* and *Grandmother Sri Pathumma*. There were many kinds of rice offerings in the market which were rapidly and massively produced without details. According to the field study at the Kamchanoad Research and Academic Service Center (or “Pattapat Center”), the rice offerings could be used as offerings instead of lotus. They had been developed through generations.

The ancestors used to make them to worship the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. They had been developed from the “Bowl of Five” to “Beng Tray of Gifts” to “rice offerings” (Figure 1). These three types of offerings could be put together based on the time and occasion of each family.

The worshipping culture in the Isan Region has been commercialized over the recent years. Rice offerings, garlands, and worshipping dance are all marketized for the religious business in the modern capitalist society. Nonetheless, the business is growing due to the genuine faith in the God of Naga, the highest sacred being of Kamchanoad who has great magic and transformation power. The local belief has been preserved towards the production and selling of these local products (Chancome, 2008).

### Way of Life and Charm of the Red Lotus Lake

The charms of the Red Lotus Lake included the beautiful natural environment with the sea of red lotus and the great biodiversity of plants, fish, and birds. The local belief in Naga of the Nong Han Community could be perceived as another charming point as well (Hasaro, 2004). Because of these charms, the Red Lotus Lake became a touristic spot in Udon Thani Province (Sukharom et al., 2020). An interesting phenomenon is a common folklore found in the three districts: Kum Pwapee District, Ku Kaew District, and Prajak Silpakom District. The folklore is the legend of the Red Cliff (“The love story of Ai and Phaya Naga Kamchanoad”)



**Figure 1** Motto of Kamchanoad: “Beng Tray of Gifts, Local Rice Offerings”

in the Northeastern Region. Furthermore, the local people in Nong Han benefited from the natural resources in the area on a daily basis. They were farmers and fishermen who grew plants, weaved carpets, and bred farm animals and fish. The local people believed that Bueng Nong Han had been the source of food since their ancestors' times. It helped them generate both major and minor household incomes. Lastly, the Red Lotus Lake tourism had begun in 2004, when 36 local fishermen gathered in July and set up a tourism committee. The high season is the three-month period between December–February. There was a surprise in 2009, when there were not enough boats for 10,000 tourists. Starting from that year, the Red Lotus Lake has been called "The Red Lotus Sea" due to its large amount of red lotus.

## Conclusion and Recommendation

The objective of this research was to investigate the preservation approach of "Naga Trees" and the local product development process towards public participation in Kamchanoad areas. The study also explored how the local folklores enhanced the charm of the Red Lotus lake, leading to value-added tourist attraction. The research settings, Kamchanoad Community and the Red Lotus Lake, are tourist attractions where people believe in the God of NAGA, called "Phaya Sri Suttho Nagaraj". They also appear in Udon Thani Province's slogan "Naturalness of Red Lotus Lake, faith in Sri Suttho Pathumma Kamchanoad. In the Red Lotus Lake, there are red lotus, while on Kamchanoad Island, there are Chanoad trees". The research results showed that the overall level of public participation in Kamchanoad's local conservation was rated at the highest level, particularly in respect of annual village activities such as Grandfather Sri Suttho and Grandmother Sri Pathumma worshipping rituals. The community leaders also engaged in the Kamchanoad forest preservation at the highest level. Furthermore, all stages in the preservation process of Chanoad trees were related to the faith of the local people. There are three major stages as follows. First, there is the collection of the full-grown Chanoad seeds, which must be dark indigo, round, bead-sized, and undried. Second, the fertilization of the seeds begins with the preparation of the mixture of the soil mass collected from Kam Chanoad Island and normal gardening soil. Finally, the Chanoad tree cultivation ceremony starts with the great worship to summon Grandfather Sri Suttho and Grandmother Sri Pathumma as well as all deities in Kamchanoad Forest to attend the ceremony to bless the land and the ritual

attendees. The priest chants to start the ritual while bringing in some Chanoad trees. A 30-cm-in-diameter and 20-cm- deep hole must be prepared. The Chanoad trees must be naturally cultivated 1 meter away from one another. Watering is not necessary because the ecosystem of Kamchanoad Forest could sufficiently support the growth of the trees. Nevertheless, if the treetop is too dry or rotten, the entire tree could collapse (Khantikul, 2014, interview on 16 December). In addition, "rice offerings (Bai Sri)" were the symbol of faith towards the local deities as well as local tourism. The rice offerings had been designed based on the local folklores introducing Kamchanoad Community and its identities. The new local product only available at the local stores was the "Beng Tray of Gifts, Local Rice Offerings". At the same time, the biggest charm of the Red Lotus Lake is the sea of red lotus, which is a major tourist attraction of Udon Thani Province. The lake and the local way of living will enchant the tourists everlasting. Nonetheless, according to research in the Red Lotus Lake area, many families have changed their occupations from farmers to merchants. Therefore, it is necessary to exchange knowledge between each other more than before.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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