

ABSTRACT

Tai Studies has been initiated since colonial period and it is being studied till the contemporary period. The emergence of Tai Studies is related to the idea of mono-ethnicity, the state-formation and the sense of revival of Tai-ness. This research focuses on the sense of the revival of 'Tai-ness' and their ethnicity with an ethnographic approach. It studies about Tai Aitons of Banlung Mantai community, Karbi Anglong Dist., Assam, India and Tai Yais of Ban Pangmoo community, Meahongson Province, Thailand. Explanation of the dynamics of Tai culture and society is essential for this study where the root of origin is same (Burma). The researcher uses a comparative ethnographic description to highlight the cultural similarities among Tai Aiton community of Assam, India and Tai Yai community of Maehongson, Thailand by using anthropological methods. The presentation of 'Tai-ness' attempts to reflect on the dynamics of revivalist movement and the maintenance of ethnic-identity among Tai Aiton people as well as Tai Yai people.

In conclusion, the idea of revival of Tai-ness comes along with the idea of nationalism and state-formation. The findings in field research show the similarities between Tai Aion and Tai Yai; started with the location of the village, belief system, Tai language (in speaking and writing language), family and clan system, dress and food and Tai festival or *Poi*. The lives of Tai Aitons and Tai Yais are attached to Buddhism and Buddhist ways of living and Wet-Rice culture. These similarities promoted a sense of togetherness. The similarity in Tai language is the main element to bring a kind of 'togetherness' among the Tais. Moreover, the sense of 'revival of Tai-ness', after the participant observation and interviewing have been found in Ban Lung Mantai of Assam, where Tai Aiton people live simple life, and practice their own traditions and norms in everyday life. And Tai Yai people utilized their culture with the tourism.

Keywords: Tai Aiton, Tai Yai, Tai Studies, Ethnicity, Ethnic Group