

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Chonburi is a province on the eastern coast of Thailand of which the culture is recognized as diverse as a mixed salad bowl. From the history, the communities in this area were seen as marginal communities comprised of various migrants from many nationalities; Chinese, Thai, Lao, Mon and so on. Consequently, the culture was neither smoothly blended nor totally separated. Mostly cultural activities evolved from adaptation and developed as their own (ศรีศักดิ์ วัลลิโภดม, 2545).

‘Chonburi Joke Riddle’ is a form of local traditional entertainment inherited from the ancestors who adapted the Chinese riddle game called ‘*Pah-Mee*’ (พะหมี่) since the late nineteenth century and developed it into a unique style of local game (สมดุทธิ์ ทำเนาว์, 2546). The word ‘Joke’ was believed to be derived from a person who assisted the riddle master to facilitate the game and entertain the audience. He dressed colorfully and acted clumsily like a ‘Joker’ in the circus. Besides the fun of the game that drew people in, watching the ‘Joker’ was also so amusing that many people went to the game just for him. The word ‘Joker’ was then shortened in spoken language into ‘Joke’ the same way people normally did with saying foreign words. That was why Chonburi Riddle is different from those of other provinces’ and called ‘Joke’ (ร. ฐิติวงศ์, 2551). Even though nowadays no such jokers appear in the game anymore, the word ‘Joke’ had become a brand-name of the game in this province already.

Now in the age of globalization, western cultural influence may interfere with the survival of traditional local culture. One way to resist the fluctuation of new global culture is to promote the understanding of local people especially the younger generation to actively participate in this traditional activity as well as to promote their sense of belonging to the local community. Even though Joke Riddle clubs in Chonburi are working on this issue, there are two main different ideas with different strategies to deal with the situation: one aims at conservation and another aims at adaptation and/or innovation.

According to Dr.Chetana Nagavajara (2007, pp. 89-93), oral and written culture should not be totally separated as they sometimes overlap. However, modern Thai society tends to rely on modern media and neglect the aesthetic of language. It's not surprising that nowadays learning poetry by heart and composing verse are seen as old-fashioned teaching methods. Consequently, people have less poetic fluency compared to the old days. This directly effects traditional linguistic entertainment like the Chonburi Joke Riddle because poetic ability seems to be its basic requirement for any role in participation, especially for the riddle master.

The study of secondary school students' expectation will lead to an insight about the current cultural situation through the young generation's perspectives and hopefully the findings will assure a practical plan to deal with this issue efficiently.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This research endeavors to answer the following research questions:

Main problem:

1.2.1 Do the secondary school students in Chonburi support the idea of conserving Chonburi Joke Riddle?

Sub problems:

1.2.2 What level of understanding about the value of the Joke Riddle in terms of local cultural activity do the respondents have?

1.2.3 What are the expectations of the respondents about Chonburi Joke Riddle conservation?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims at the following missions:

Main objective:

1.3.1 To evaluate the current situation of the Chonburi Joke Riddle in respect of secondary school students' perspectives

Sub objectives:

1.3.2 To check students' understanding about the value of the game

1.3.3 To identify the overall expectations of secondary school students towards the unique Chonburi Joke Riddle

1.4 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Expectation

refers to the anticipation about the probability of the occurrence in the Chonburi Joke Riddle focusing on the following areas:

- 1) the implementation,
- 2) the organizer,
- 3) the participant and,
- 4) the riddle

Chonburi Joke Riddle or ‘การละเล่นทายโจ๊กปริศนาเมืองชล’

refers to a unique style of riddle game played in Chonburi province. The game is a local entertainment source generally seen in cultural events such as in a Buffalo Racing Festival, Loy Kratong Festival, cremation ceremony, and so forth. The riddles are written in rhymes with puzzles. Players who can figure out the answer will be given a reward (see photos and more details in Appendix E,F, and G).

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study is limited to assessing the expectations of students at all level from two selected high schools in Chonburi province.

- 1.5.1 Phanat Pitayakarn School, Phanat Nikhom, Chonburi
- 1.5.2 Sukkabot School, Muang, Chonburi

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

With a passion for culture, the researcher hopes that the findings of this study will be useful information which can be applied to any suggestions for future development of the Chonburi Joke Riddle in a sustainable and practical way.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of student expectations towards the Chonburi Joke Riddle is divided into five chapters. The first chapter gives an overview of a background to the study. The second chapter covers the review of literature. The third chapter explains the

methodology used in this study. The fourth chapter illustrates the results. And finally, the fifth chapter consists of conclusions, discussions and recommendations.