

The Developmental Periods of Mass Media from Central Region, to Northeast Region, and to

Kok Muang Village of Thai-So Ethnic Group, Thailand

**พัฒนาการสื่อมวลชนจากภาคกลางเข้าสู่ภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือและหมู่บ้านโคกม่วง
ของกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ไทโสในประเทศไทย**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to explore the developmental periods of mass media from the Central Region to the Northeast Region, and to the Kok Muang village of the Thai-So ethnic group, through the lens of timeline. The timeline of media developments could be divided into six periods basing on the historical events of the country. Documentary research and semi-structured interview were conducted in this research. The research findings revealed that the developmental periods of mass media from Central Region, to the Northeast Region, and to the Kok Muang village of the Thai-So ethnic group were significantly different because of the geographical limitation. Nevertheless, at present, the geographical location was not strong predictor influencing the different timeline of mass media since the infrastructures accessed all of area of country. It was also found that media development times in Thailand were likely to shrink resulting from the development of advance communication technology. Interestingly, the findings in Kok Muang village reported that the audience's limitation themselves was more influential on the difference of developmental periods of media development than geographical location.

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาพัฒนาการสื่อมวลชนจากภาคกลางเข้าสู่ภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือและหมู่บ้านโคกม่วงของกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ไทโส โดยศึกษาผ่านช่วงเวลาซึ่งสามารถแบ่งออกเป็นหกช่วง ในแต่ละช่วงเวลานั้นจะเกี่ยวข้องกับประวัติศาสตร์ของบ้านเมือง การวิจัยเชิงเอกสารและการสัมภาษณ์กึ่งโครงสร้างได้ถูกนำมาดำเนินการในการศึกษาครั้งนี้ ผลการศึกษาพบว่า ช่วงเวลาของการพัฒนาสื่อมวลชนจากภาคกลางเข้าสู่ภาคอีสานและหมู่บ้านโคกม่วงของกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ไทโสมีความแตกต่างซึ่งเป็นผลพวงมาจากตัวแปรทางด้านภูมิศาสตร์ อย่างไรก็ตามปัจจุบันนี้ตัวแปรทางด้านภูมิศาสตร์ไม่ได้มีอิทธิพลต่อพัฒนาการสื่อมวลชนจากภาคกลางเข้าสู่ภาคอีสานและหมู่บ้านโคกม่วงของกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ไทโสมากนักเหมือนสมัยก่อน เนื่องจากโครงสร้างพื้นฐานได้เข้าไปทุกพื้นที่ของประเทศ นอกจากนี้ยังพบว่าพัฒนาการสื่อมวลชนมีแนวโน้มที่จะเข้าถึงพื้นที่ห่างไกลได้รวดเร็วเนื่องจากเทคโนโลยีการสื่อสารที่ทันสมัย ผลการศึกษาที่น่าสนใจอยู่ที่หมู่บ้านโคกม่วงพบว่า ข้อจำกัดของผู้รับสารมีอิทธิพลต่อช่วงเวลาของการพัฒนาของสื่อมวลชนมากกว่าข้อจำกัดทางด้านภูมิศาสตร์

Key Words: Developmental Periods of Mass Media, Central Region, Northeast Region,

Kok Muang Village of Thai-So Ethnic Group.

คำสำคัญ: ช่วงระยะเวลาพัฒนาการของสื่อมวลชน ภูมิภาคกลาง ภูมิภาคอีสาน หมู่บ้านโคกม่วงของกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ไทโส

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1. Introduction

In the 21st century, many people around the world have found themselves living in a media-dominated environment where newspaper, radio, television, and internet enveloped them on a daily basis (Phang and Schaefer, 2009). Current levels of media consumption have been described as a raging torrent that has overwhelmed daily life for citizens in Asian countries, especially Thailand. Several Thai scholars revealed that media consumption among Thai people greatly expanded with the rapid diffusion of new technology such as satellites, mobile phone, computers, the Internet, cable services, MP3 technology, DVD media player, Apple's iPhone, iPad, and all forms of digital media (The Public Relations Department, 2011).

According to the topography of Thailand, the northeast region is regarded as the biggest region with the largest number of people of the country. After the end of the Second World War, the northeastern way of life has been rapidly changed along with the launch of First National Development Plan (1961-1966). During that time, the mass media became the index and agent of modernization for national development. The latest survey reported that 96.6 per cent of the northeasterners were mostly expose television while 48.6 per cent, 38.2 per cent, and 7.6 per cent respectively, listen to radio, read newspapers, and use the Internet (Information and Communication Technology, 2011).

Based on the latest survey, it is believed that the northeasterners, nowadays, are likely to access and use a wide variety of media outlets. Nevertheless, Yongvanit's study in Doon Sard sub-district, Khon Kaen (2009) revealed that 62.1 per cent of people, especially those of middle age, did not read

newspapers and over 92.7 per cent had never used the Internet. The implication of this finding hypothesized that the developmental periods of mass media from the Central Region, to the Northeast Region, and to village are likely to differ.

Similarly, numerous empirical documents claimed that the first newspapers, as the first medium in the world, appeared in Germany, France and Belgium in 1600 while Asian counties, especially Thailand, merely emerged in 1844. That is to say that, in the time dimension, the journey of newspaper from the West to Thailand was different. Additionally, the review of the state of knowledge of the media developments in Thailand indicated that no prior studies were conducted to investigate the media developments from the Central Region to the Northeast Region, and to the village of the Thai-So ethnic group through the lens of time dimension. Consequently, it provided a good opportunity for the researcher to investigate the following objective of the study.

2. The Objective of the Study

To explore the developmental periods of Thai mass media from the Central Region, to the Northeast Region, and to the Kok Muang village of the Thai-So ethnic group.

3. Methodology

To test the above objective of the study, the qualitative method is used for exploring the bird's-eye view of the developmental periods of mass media from the Central Region, to the Northeast Region, and to Kok Muang Village of the Thai-So ethnic group.

3.1 Area of Study

Kok Muang village should be chosen for study due to these three following criteria. (1) Kok Muang village was selected by the Cultural Center of Sakhon Nakhon Province in 2012, being the delegation of Thai-So ethnic group in Thailand (2) Ethnicity in this village has been maintained by the Thai-So ethnic group. (3) They have continued to use the So

language for communicating within their communities and families.

3.2 Sample

Key informants selected by the purposive sampling technique could be categorized into two main groups: the well-informed persons in the Northeast Region and the well-informed person in the Kok Muang village of the Thai-So ethnic group.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

Qualitative methodology composes of two methods: documentary research and semi-structured interview.

3.4 Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were conducted among the well-informed persons both in the Northeast Region and in Kok Muang village. The well-informed persons in the Northeast Region were interviewed in November and December 2011. Six months later, the interview occurred again in Kok Muang village, during September and October 2012. Participants were interviewed in person by the primary researcher with a variety of questions. The interview is approximately fifty minutes in length. The location of the interview was determined by each participant. All interviews were audio-taped. The material will be used to generate the interview transcripts.

3.4 Data Analysis

All raw material data obtained by these interviews will be translated into English by using the method of back translation. Subsequently, it was read by means of interpretation, constant comparison, data synthesis and conclusion.

4. Results

Based on the research findings, it was found that the developmental periods of mass media from the Central Region to the Northeast Region and to the

Kok Muang village of the Thai-So ethnic group are significantly different because of the geographical limitation. However, at present, the geographical location might not strong predictor affecting the media developments. Because of this, infrastructures accessed all of area of Thailand. It also revealed that media development times in Thailand were likely to shrink resulting from the advanced communication technology. As for the research finding in particular of Kok Muang village of Thai-So ethnic group, very few villagers have read a newspaper and used the Internet although all types of mass media were diffused into the village. This finding implied that the audiences' limitations themselves, especially the skills of media use and economic status became the main cause influencing the different timeline of media development.

In order to be easily understood the brief findings as mentioned above, five issues – such as media developments in Central Region, media developments in Northeast Region, history of Kok Muang village, media developments in Kok Muang village of Thai-So ethnic group, and comparison between the timelines of media developments – were described item by item.

4.1 The developmental periods of mass media in Central Region

The developmental periods of Thai mass media in Central Region was studied through the lens of timeline involving the historical events of country. It could be classified into six main periods as follows:

Firstly, prior to the Siamese Revolution 1932, it was revealed that Dr. Dan Bradley, an American Medical Missionary, published Thailand's first newspaper known as the Bangkok Recorder, on 4 July 1844, in the reign of King Mongkut (Ekachai,

2000). The bulk of its content related to official news, trade news, miscellaneous stories, documentaries and news from the United States. It was during this time that the 'elite', who had obtained a high level of education from overseas, realized that the content of the print media owned by Westerners was likely to propagandize and dominate its audience's attitude and behavior. As a result, the Royal Gazette or Rajkitchanubeksa was launched in order to announce the court news and to break the Westerners monopoly of news propagation.

In the reign of King Prachadhipok, the trend of the democracy ideology spread into Thailand rapidly. Our King realized that freedom of expression and the indoctrination of democracy for Thai people were important. As a consequence, public radio broadcasts were inaugurated on 25th February 1930, the Coronation Day of the seventh King. Its initial mission was to provide news of commerce, entertainment, and education for tradesmen and commoners. Nevertheless, the Khana Rassadawn coup d'état of June 24, 1932 ended the absolute monarchy and halted press freedom (The Public Relations Department, 2011).

Secondly, after the end of the Siamese Revolution 1932, the administration encountered with the resistance from the royalists and in-fight among members of the People's Party themselves. More than 90 per cent of Thai people had no idea as to what the constitution was. As a result, the Publicity Division set up a lecturing unit in order to disseminate knowledge toward people through various medium such as newspaper, radio, billboard, leaflets, and mobile public relations unit and various pictures of constitution. The Northeast Region was the prototype for the operation due to the Bovorndej Rebellion (Ekachai, 2000; The Public Relations Department, 2011).

Thirdly, the systematic use of broadcast media to publicize politics began in the period of the Second World War led by Field Marshal P. Pibulsonggram. It found that radio broadcast had played the most significant role to distribute the news into general public in the period of wartime. Unfortunately, most of the political media messages propagandized the slogans of nation building and leader cult (The Public Relations Department, 2011). After the end of the Second World War, Television broadcasting, one of the most powerful media, was introduced and affirmed on the national agenda in 1950 by the regime of Field Marshal P. Pibulsonggram. The political situation became the significant factor that made television broadcasting technology become more meaningful for the Thai government. However, his political power was ended when Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat revolted on September 17, 1957.

Fourthly, a gloomy age for Thai Mass Media began when Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat declared martial law, suspended the constitution and imposed press controls. Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat realized that television broadcasts played the significant role in publicizing the government's policies and current affairs to the public. Also, Channel 4 'Bang Kun Phrom' established on 24 June 1955 was attracting more and more interest. Because of this, the Royal Thai Army launched Thailand's second television station, Channel 5, on Thai Army Day, 5th January 1959 and expanded Radio and Television networks to all regions in line with the accelerated development programs for the country (Lewis, 2006).

Fifthly, although mass media once more obtained the Freedom of the Press and Freedom of Expression after the end of the Student Revolution of 14 October 1973, it ended with the Massacre of 6 October

1976. In that period of time, mass media, especially television broadcast, was regarded as the crucial variable of national development. Interestingly, the Internet in Thailand began in mid-1987, when the Prince of Songkla University and the Asian Institute of Technology started the Thai computer Science Network (TCSNet) via an electronic mail connection with the University of Melbourne. The Ministry of Science's National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) initiated the Inter-University Network Project in 1991, which it used with the major Universities in Bangkok such as Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, and Kasetsart. In 1993, Thai Scientific, Academic and Research Network (ThaiSarn) established the country's first World Wide Web server. A year later, the Internet Thailand Service Center, was the first commercial service, beginning by publicizing newspaper articles through the internet and then followed by the music industry, television & film industry (Information & Communication Technology, 2011).

Lastly, the struggle for freedom of the Press and the Right of people to know emerged among the Thai middle classes after the Bloody Crisis of May 17-18, 1992. The voice for media reform from both public and media sectors became louder and louder until it eventually generated the establishment of Independent Television (iTV) in 1996 and the guarantee of Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Press in the Constitution of 1997. Nevertheless, the deterioration of Thai mass media has increased rapidly and drastically from the first election of the Thaksin government. It has been found that the Thaksin government used many methods to control the mass media. These were: open intimidation by using legal and bureaucratic investigation on media owners/editors assets, putting pressure on the newsroom, meddling with editorial independence and filing defamation lawsuits

claiming extremely high amounts of compensation against critical papers. The ultimate economic measure would be buying up shares or taking over media corporations which resisted the government (Heng, 2008).

Even though the Thaksin government was overthrown on 19th September 2006 due to rampant corruption, abuse of power, media interference, and non-government organization interference, Thai mass media has been interfered with continuously and drastically by a further governments in the context of the division of political viewpoint, that is those who supported and those who opposed the Former Prime Minister Thaksin and his government. Under the deterioration of major Thai mass media, the emergence of new forms of media technology – such as communication satellite, the office personal computer, laptop computers, the Internet, MP3 technology, Apple's iPod, DVD media player and all forms of digital media- became the five basic needs of Thai people. Information and Communication Technology (2011) pointed out that there are over 18 million in Thailand that use computers and internet. That is to say that Thai people have entered the digital world.

In conclusion, there are 80 private commercial newspapers, 20 Thai-language dailies, 2 English-language dailies, 2 Chinese-language dailies and 1 Muslim-language daily. In the broadcasting section, Television has 6 free-to-air terrestrial television stations, 8 regional stations, and 1 cable station. As for radio broadcasting, 524 radio frequencies were available in Thailand. The PRD owned 147, followed by the army 127, MCOT 62, the Air Force 36, and the Navy 21 respectively. Meanwhile, the rest of them were owned by state universities and other agencies. Three agencies, the Military, PRD, and MCOT owned approximately 75

percent of the total radio frequencies. More than 460 stations are commercial, entertainment-oriented ones which rely heavily on advertising revenues.

4.2 The developmental periods of mass media in the Northeast Region

The developmental periods of mass media in the Northeast Region were explained by using the same time-line as for the media development in the Central region.

Firstly, the development of modern communication in Central Thailand had begun to emerge in the Northeast Region prior to the Siamese Revolution of 1932. Under the pressure and stimulus of Western Colonization and the Franco-Siamese treaties of 1893 and 1904, King Chulalongkorn, Rama Five of the Chakri Dynasty, reformed the bureaucracy and provincial administrative system to be based on the concepts of the West and new technology, which is the linkage, by transportation networks and modern communications, to the Northeast Region. The construction of the first railway link to Nakhon Ratchasima was completed in 1900. Seven years later, The Post and Telegraph, a new and modern form of communication, was inaugurated officially at Nakhon Ratchasima.

Nevertheless, northeasterners' communication has still been tied with the oral tradition that conveyed their ideology and social value system in the course of proverbs, tales, stories, lullaby songs, festivities, rituals and celebrations. It also embraced teaching through daily life such as weaving cloth, making handicrafts, and so forth. Moreover, scriptural tradition – such as palm leaf and stone inscriptions – played the significant role in conveying local stories and important events in a pattern of a literature (Seri & Kavin, 1990).

Secondly, after the end of the Siamese Revolution in 1932, the government, led by People Party, attempted to disseminate knowledge and understanding about democracy through a wide variety of medium, especially mobile public relations units. Its main task was to reduce the lack of information in the remote areas. Nonetheless, the northeasterners were still exposed to the information that came from opinion leaders such as heads of villages, monks, and chief cattle sellers known as Nai Hoy. Similarly, a Senior Media Specialist said that *“we gain information from monks who study at Bangkok. When those monks come back to hometown, people living in surrounding areas will be going to visit monks in order to talk to and ask what we would like to know about Bangkok.”* He further explained that *“I had never known what mass media are, but I hear that we will, soon, listen to the people's sound from the box. A few years later, it is truth; I see and listen to the radio at the house of the district chief officer.”*

Thirdly, although radio receivers appeared in the period of the Second World War (1940), they were in particular for the use of governor, district chief officer and schools in the province. Radio waves were transmitted from Ayutthaya to Saraburi and from Saraburi to the Northeast Region. The majority of programming was national news aired by the National Broadcasting Service of Thailand. Senior Media Specialists further mentioned that print media, especially national newspapers had still not penetrated in to the Northeast Region, but a local newspaper appeared prior to the revolution on September 7, 1957. The most popular news among the northeasterners was of the government lottery.

Fourthly, the National Development 1958 - 1973 led by the military government was the *turning*

point for media exposure in major Thai mass media.

It was revealed that radio was the most popular in the Northeast Region, followed by newspapers. Daily newspapers were first transported from Bangkok to the Northeast Region by train in 1960. After the Friendship Highway road was finished, the newspapers were transported by ten-wheeled trucks. Thai Rath was the most popular, followed by Daily News, Siam Rath, Dao Siam, and Dali Mirror respectively. The majority of media content consisted of crime, sex, scandal and sport along with summaries of popular news, semi-nude pictures and entertainment news. Political news was hardly reported to the general public (Ekachai, 2000). It was found that government officials, teachers, merchants, Kamnan and Puyaiban were likely to access the newspaper to a greater extent than the general public in the remote areas.

Additionally, the number of radio receivers was increasing continually after the expansion of the television and radio network. It was found that the radio was introduced into the villages together with mobile cinema known as Rot Kai Ya (Seri & Kavin, 1990). The First Voice Actor in the Northeast Region explained that when the villagers knew that Mobile Cinema would come to villages they were very glad. Almost all villagers in the community came to see the movie. While they waited to see the movie, the commercials continued until an amount of product had been sold.

As for radio broadcast, the northeasterners could listen to both national and international radio stations. There were four main radio stations in Thailand being the National Broadcast Service of the Government Public Relations Department (PRD), Radio of the Royal Thai Army, Radio Broadcast

Station 1 Po No of the Post and Telegraph Department, and the KU Radio Network of Kasetsart University. On the other hand, international radio stations – namely Moscow Radio, Peking Radio, Radio Hanoi, VOT, ABC, BBC, FEBC, Free Asia Radio Station, Laos Movement Radio, Radio of Kampuchea Radio and Voice of America – had been popular among the educated elite. This is because the military government presented only one sided messages regarding anti-communism through the national radio, especially the Radio Broadcasting Station 909 at Sakon Nakhon. The information aired by international radio stations actually helped audiences keep-up with the current issues and events in the society and the world. Also, it actually helped them understand the political situation of that time.

In 1962, the television network was expanded to all regions of the country. Black and white television sets came to the Northeast Region through Chinese merchants. Very few people owned a television set because of the very high price, approximately 10,000 baht. In the Northeast Region, there was only TVT Channel 5, Khon Kaen. All of the programming was live and focused on entertainment programming such as Seeking Stars (Kon-Hah-Dow). Television programming would be aired during 18:00-21:00. A few years later, television programming changed from being live to being recorded. It was found that the most popular programming was local serial drama, Mohlam, boxing and movies from the United States, Japan and Hong Kong and also cartoons. After that, television stations increased the period of broadcast time, from 18:00-21:00 to 18:00-24:00.

Fifthly, in the period of the democracy movement, the media coverage in newspapers was

more credible while the broadcast media – such as radio and television – were still a crucial mechanism of the government to publicize government policies. It was found that more than 90 per cent of northeasterners could access the radio, followed by newspapers and television (Director of Radio Thailand Network for Education, interview). Meanwhile, the Mobile Cinema was gradually vanishing in the Northeast Region due to the emergence of television. Radio programs still consisted of entertainment, government lottery, local news, national news, international news, sports news, religious and educational programs and agricultural features (The Public Relations, 2011).

After the end of the Student Revolution of October 14, 1973, television channel 7 was the first channel penetrating into the Northeast Region, followed by channel 5, channel 9 and channel 3 respectively. Since the Massacre of 6 October 1976, television has succeeded, in a relatively short time, to enter every house. Its powers of persuasion and attraction seem to be supernatural. In 1981, color television came to the Northeast Region along with transistor radio. Ten years later, computers emerged, in particular with the centralization of government officials. The Internet came in 1997. The educated people – namely government officials, teachers, students and business men - were the first group using computers and the Internet.

Lastly, after the end of the Bloody Crisis of May 17-18, 1992, the emergence of new forms of media technology allowed the northeasterners to access a wide variety of media content and media outlets. However, Yongvanit's research (2009) indicated that people in Doon Sard sub-district, Khon Kaen province do not use the internet and read

newspapers while they do use television and radio on a typical day. Accordingly, the Director of Radio Thailand Network for Education pointed out that satellite television is, nowadays, the most popular, followed by community radio. As for the new media, some villagers have never used a computer or the Internet. They do not use them because the price is rather expensive and difficult to use while satellite costs approximately 2,000 baht and is easy to use. They can watch various television channels from both national and international television stations. As for radio broadcasts, community radio is rather popular because the media content involves them with local news, agricultural knowledge and I-San culture and tradition, and Mohlam.

In short, the findings are that difference in time-line of media development from the Central to the Northeast Region is likely to shrink resulting in the evolution of the advanced communication technology.

4.3 History of Kok Muang Village of Thai-So Ethnic Group

Kok Muang village has been regarded as an old village of the Thai-So ethnic group which has still preserved traditions and cultures. It also has its own language. More than a century, the ancestors conveyed their storytelling from generation to generation. Sanan YaiBangKaew, as a spirit leader, told that 'long time ago, prior to my village was established. There were two migration periods'. In the first period, Thai-So people in Kok Muang village moved from Kusuman Monthon to an area of dense Tamarind trees. We moved from here because there was a serious disease. Men and animals had died for around five consecutive years. In the second period, a serious disease occurred again. It was found that new-

born babies were dying in every household. Everybody who survived moved to an area of dense mango trees. They established the small village called 'Ve-Ma-Kok-A-Muang'. Later, a government official changed the name from 'Ve-Ma-Kok-A-Muang' to 'Kok Muang village'.

After the history of area of study was described broadly, the developmental periods of mass media in Kok Muang village of Thai-So ethnic group would be described in the next issue.

4.4 The developmental periods of mass media in Kok Muang village, Thai-So ethnic group

According to the developmental periods of mass media both in the Central and the Northeast Region as mentioned above, the historical events of the country were regarded as the periods of timeline in this study. During a two months and ten days stay in the area of study, the researcher found that the journey of mass media from the Northeast Region to Kok Muang village of the Thai-So ethnic group, Napho sub-district, Kusuman district, Sakhon Nakhon province, took place during the period of National Development (1960-1973). It implied that, prior to the transition into the period of the National Development (1960- 1973), the communication of the villagers had still been tied with storytelling through the oral tradition. Consequently, referring to three periods of timeline – that is *(1) before the Siamese Revolution 1932, (2) after the Siamese Revolution 1932, and (3) Second World War 1940* - would be grouped to describe the bird-eyes view of oral tradition in Kok Muang village of the Thai-So ethnic group. Later time-lines – like National Development (1960-1973), Democracy Movement (1973-1992), and Media Reform (1992-2011) - would be explained step by step.

From the first to third periods of timeline basing on the historical events of the country – that is *(1) before the Siamese Revolution 1932, (2) after the Siamese Revolution 1932, and (3) Second World War 1940*, it was found that the transmission of storytelling through the oral tradition had played the significant role almost two centuries although mass media had not arrived in Kok Muang village. In order to be easily understood, the overview of the oral tradition in the Kok Muang village of the Thai-So ethnic group was described through the mixing timeline as follows.

Although new and modern forms of communication – such as the Post and Telegraph – came to the Northeast Region during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the villager's communication had still been tied with oral tradition that conveyed their historically important characters and historically-based events by way of tales, stories, festivities, rituals and celebrations. They believed in Buddhism; however, animism has been a most essential part of their day-to-day way of life. They strongly believed that everywhere in nature there are ghosts (Phii) such as Phii Fa (Then) and Phii of the community (Mahesak). They also embraced a belief in black magic, white magic and magic spells. As a consequence, the Thai-So ethnic group has been widely recognized among other ethnic groups in the Northeast Region for their expertise in occultism.

According to the occultism of the Thai-So people investigated through the dimension of *a historically important person*, during the reign of King Rama III, Thai-So people *led by Pra Aran Ahsah* moved from Tapon and Sepon towns, Thakhek district of Khammuan province to the large inland lake at Nong Han in Sakhon Nakhon province. After

the Thai-So ethnic group settled down in Kusuman district, Pra Aran Ahsah was conferred as a city ruler of Kusuman Monthon in 1844 by King Rama III. He was famous as a magician among the Thai-So ethnic group. They further indicated that Pra Aran Ahsah, as a leader of Thai-So ethnic group, could journey from Kusuman district to Bangkok in approximately 30 minutes by his white horse. Based on logical thinking, this was impossible at that time because the journey from Kusuman district to Bangkok would take at least two-three days. It is fair to say that this story reflected on the beliefs in the dimension of the supernatural power through their leader.

Not only was the spoken tradition conveyed through occultism, but it also included daily life – such as how to find native medicinal herbs in the jungle or how to raise animals. Thai-So men learn how to hunt animals from their father while Thai-So women are shown how to make handicrafts and weave cloth by their mothers after finishing working on transplanting rice seedlings.

Prior to the Second World War, most information related to the ways of life and the historical events in their ethnic group. Nevertheless, the villagers began to receive information from outside through the event of the Second World War. It is fair to say that the period of war time became the significant variable that drew the villagers into participating in the historical events of the world. Seniors in Kusuman district said that the news dealing with WWII was conveyed by the head of the village known as Phu Yai Ban. When Phu Yai Ban received the news about WWII, he would hit a bamboo canteen as the signal to sound the start of a meeting. The signal sound could be heard approximately 7-10 kilometers away. When the villagers heard it, they

knew immediately that there was a meeting at the Phu Yai Ban's house. The meeting would begin after the villagers finished their evening meal. During that time, the Phu Yai Ban announced that the Second World War was coming to the country. He also further said that *'it was necessary that they would have to put out their fires and leave their homes for fear of bombs being dropped, in particular during the evenings.'*

Fourthly, after the end of the Second World War, Thailand, led by a military government, turned itself to the discourse of development (1960-1973). The storytelling from generation to generation by means of oral tradition had still been the significant channel of the transmission of information. The Kok Muang villagers did not know what mass media were but they knew how to find food in the jungle. However, in 1962, their ways of life were likely to change when the soil road from Kusuman district began to expand into Kok Muang village. It is to say that the arrival of the road was the startup of their changing ways of life. Namely, there was migration of Vietnamese merchants. When they came, transactions by cash and new products emerged.

In 1963, the road was the essential variable not only for the migration of people, but also as the path of information flow. Local scholar, *Mr. Sanan YaiBangKaew*, mentioned that the road arrived in his village, followed by the establishment of Kok Muang School along with the arrival of radio in the school. Due to the Act of legislation on primary education on the first of October, 1921, the Thai-So children were compelled to receive education from the school system. Besides, the majority of the Thai-So students had always had the problem of communicating due to the difference of the structural languages between

Thai and So languages. Basically, the teacher taught every subject. Apart from the English class, he learnt the English language through the radio, the 909 Sakhon Nakhon station. It had an educational program aired on Monday to Friday from 9:00 -10:00 o'clock. A local scholar further explained that *"As far as I am concerned, 'it was the first time in my life that I saw the radio.'* As for political media messages, they had always been presented by radio but most of the villagers had hardly paid attention. Conversely, 'Mohlam Song' was the most favorite broadcast for Kok Muang villagers, followed by soap operas, Thai classic music, local news, and national news respectively.

A few years later, the official's mobile cinema came to the village, followed by the Roy Kai Ya's mobile cinema. In the first period, the official films related to King Bhumibol Adulyadej's work. After Roy Kai Ya came to Kok Muang village, the villagers were able to watch Thai Movies. They were very happy watching the favorite actors and actresses in the cinema. At that time, Mr. Mitchai BunCha and Miss Petchara Chaowarad were the most favorite stars in the Kok Muang villages. It is to say that not only did the Roy Kai Ya bring new entertainment, but it also included new products such as modern medicine and the dry battery.

Fifthly, although the villagers were interested in the mobile cinema of Roy Kai Ya, the radio, during the democracy movement (1973-1992), was the most popular throughout the Northeast Region including Kok Muang village. In 1977, the sound of the radio, especially Mohlam, was everywhere in the paddy fields in the season of transplanting rice seedlings. The majority of the Thai-So men, who raised animals in the forest, carried the

radio receiver on their shoulders. While they brought animals to eat grass, they listened to Mohlam songs. Moreover, after the end of the evening meal, the villagers would listen to soap opera. Soap opera began approximately 20:00 – 22:00 o'clock. They paid attention to the conversation between the main actress and actor. They were very happy because it helped them relax after working throughout the day. It was also found that Mohlam song was the favorite program, followed by soap opera and local news. Additionally, they could listen to both National and International broadcast radio stations. There were three main stations that the villagers listened to – that is (1) the National Broadcast Service of the Government Public Relations Department, (2) the Radio Broadcast Station 909 Sakhon Nakhon, and (3) the Radio Broadcast Station of Royal Thai Army.

Meanwhile, the radio had played a significant role in entertainment. In 1975, Mr. Lert YaiBangKaew said *'I was the first person that brought the television using battery into the Kok Muang. During that time, I worked in the Department of Communication of Thai Royal Army, Sakhon Nakhon province. I knew and used the new communication technology before the villagers.'* A few days later, the Kok Muang villagers knew that Mr. Lert YaiBangKaew's house who had a new communication technology called *'television'*. The Kok Muang villagers told that Soap opera – such as Se-Ku-Man-Thong Story (Four Children Gods) - presented on television was more entertaining than that of radio. This was because it was possible to see the picture and hear the sound. If we watched television, we would take illicit liquor for exchanging while watching television. It was fair to say that the illicit liquor was the ticket. The arrival of television

reflected on the gradual change into the system of exchange. In 1986, electricity arrived in the Kok Muang village. A couple years later, the number of television sets, black and white and color were likely to increase more and more in the village.

Lastly, after the end of Black May 17-18, 1992, the continuing expansions of mass media – such as the basic telephone network, the domestic satellite service, a national ISDN system, and fiber-optic lines – had covered every region of Thailand. It was also found that mobile phone, computer and internet had come to the Northeast Region during 1997. On the other hand, the abbot of Sri Ri Mong Kon temple known as Luang Pau Hong Ari Ya Wang So stated that, in 1992, the Kok Muang village was still an agricultural society that produced for local consumption and for barter between relatives in their community. Although the cash crop arrived in 1989, it hardly influenced the changing ways of life of The Thai-So people. Interestingly, the trend of labour migration in 1993 was regarded as the turning point of the economic ways of the Thai-So people. It also embraced the establishment of the Si-Ri-Mong-Kon temple. Luang Pau Hong Ari Ya Wang So was the monk that had always continually developed both mentality and materialism through Buddhist Ways. A large number of people, who have faith in Luang Pau Hong Ari Ya Wang So, came to this temple. Five years later, the computer emerged in the temple's Kok Muang village (Sri Ri Mong Kon temple).

In 2005, it was found that the opinion leaders in the Kok Muang village – such as the head of the village, teacher, government officials and village committees – installed satellite a dish bringing a wide variety of programming contents. Village committee member, Mrs. Surin YaiBangKaew,

mentioned that *'I merely paid only one time to install the Satellite Dish but I can watch a wide variety of programming content including edutainment, local documentaries, musical varieties, public relations channel, lifestyle, home and food, and other entertainment channels –with each channel targeting a specific audience segment. As far as, I am concerned, I like the agricultural program. If I watch agricultural programs through free terrestrial TV, I can watch only 10-15 minutes embracing the agricultural contents and advertising. Conversely, I could watch this program in the whole day through free-to-air satellite television.'* A few years later, the newspaper came to this village under the government policy. Unfortunately, it was reported that more than 99.99 per cent of the Kok Muang village did not read newspaper because of the limitations of literacy and their careers. Namely, 100 per cent of the villagers especially the middle age finished Pra Thom 4 and their career is farming. In 2012, the Internet reached to the Kok Muang School whereas the newer forms of media technology did not emerge in this village. Although the Internet came to this village, the villagers do not know what the Internet is and how to use it.

In brief, the arrivals of mass media in the Kok Muang village were slower than that of mass media in the Northeast Region. It had resulted from the limitation of geographical location. Besides, it was also found that all major Thai mass media - such as newspaper, radio, television, satellite television, cable television and Internet - were diffused in Kok Muang village of the Thai-So ethnic group. However, most of villagers are still mostly exposed to media content through television and radio. Very few people are exposed to media content via newspapers and

satellite television while nobody in the village uses the Internet, resulting from the limitation of audiences in particular of skills of media use and economic status influenced on media use.

4.5 The Comparison between the Timeline of Media Development

The research findings as mentioned above provided the reasons for the developmental periods of mass media in the Central Region, Northeast Region and Kok Muang village of the Thai-So ethnic group, through the lens of six periods of timelines basing on the historical events of the country. That is – the first period (1) ‘Before the Siamese Revolution 1932’, followed by (2) ‘After the Siamese Revolution 1932,’ (3) ‘the Second World War 1940,’ (4) ‘National Development (1960-1973),’ (5) ‘Democracy Movement (1973-1992),’ (6) ‘Media Reform (1992-2011).’ In order to understand the different timelines of media developments, the media development from the Central Region to the Northeast Region would be started firstly through the lens of the comparison between timelines, followed by media development from the Northeast Region to Kok Muang village of the Thai-So ethnic group respectively.

4.5.1 The developmental periods of mass media from the Central to Northeast Region

In the first period, before the Siamese Revolution of 1932 there was the start-up of printing press, especially newspaper. *In the second period*, radio broadcast was developed continuingly after the end of the Siamese Revolution in 1932. During that time, people in the Central Region of country were exposed to information from both newspaper and radio broadcast while the northeasterners hardly obtained any information from outside due to the geographical limitations. *In the third period*, the radio

broadcast was mostly popular among people in the Central Region during the Second World War. On the other hand, radio had just come to the Northeast Region. It was revealed that radio was in particular found at the governor’s house, district chief officer’s house and schools in the province. Because of this, it is believed that a great number of the northeasterners, in the remote areas, did not know what radio was. *In the fourth period*, television had played the significant role and was mostly popular during the National Development. Meanwhile, all sectors of Thailand, especially northeasterners began to own radios. They also merely knew of television broadcasts. *In the fifth period*, it showed that people in the Central region were highly likely to have Satellite Television, Cable Television, Computers and Internet whereas television was mostly popular among the northeasterners. *In the last period*, that is to say, we are in the digital world. Very few people in the Central region do not know of computers and the internet. Although the journey of all forms of digital media from the Central to the Northeast Region is faster, it is found that there are still some northeasterners who do not have access.

The analysis through the lens of time-line provides a bird’s eye view of the media development. Moreover, the period of time that each medium reached the Northeast Region reflects that media development well. That is, in 1844, the first newspaper in Thailand emerged in Bangkok while the northeasterners began to see newspapers in approximately 1960. The radio broadcast was officially inaugurated in 1930; on the other hand, the northeasterners began to listen to the people’s sound from a box during 1940. As for television, the first television, Channel 4 Bang Khun Phrom appeared in

1955 whereas a television station with 6-kilowatt transmitter was set up in Khon Kaen in 1962. In 1993, Thai Scientific, Academic, and Research Network established the country's first World Wide Web server and began to be widespread in the Universities in Bangkok while the northeasterners, especially the educated elite, used the Internet from 1997. In other words, the journey of the newspaper from the central to the Northeast Region took around 116 years, followed by radio broadcast in around 10 years, television in around 7 years and the Internet in around 4 years.

4.5.2 The developmental periods of mass media from the Northeast Region to Kok Muang village of the Thai-So ethnic group

In the first and second periods, 'Before and After the Siamese Revolution 1932,' the mass media had not arrived in the Northeast Region. However, *in the third period*, the northeasterners began to be in touch with the radio broadcast during the Second World War. On the other hand, the storytelling of the Kok Muang villagers had still been transmitted through only oral tradition; they had no scriptural tradition. Most of the stories related to historically important people and historically-based events. It also embraced their ways of life – that is from birth to death. *In the fourth period*, the majority of the northeasterners received television and began to own radios. Conversely, Kok Muang villagers merely knew what radio was. They were also in touch with the new entertainment – that is the mobile cinema known as Roy Kai Ya. *In the fifth period*, the television became the favorite media of the northeasterners whereas the radio was merely popular along with the emergence of one television in Kok Muang village. *In the last period*, the northeasterners

are likely to receive the Internet, but not everyone. It was found that the majority of them using the Internet were in the urban areas while, in Kok Muang village, the villagers do not know what the Internet is. Because of this, using Internet requires skills and depends on economic status. Interestingly, the newspaper just emerged in this village.

According to the analysis timeline of the developmental periods of mass media from the Northeast Region to Kok Muang village, it can be summarized as follows. In 1960, the newspaper came to the Northeast Region whereas the villagers in Kok Muang merely saw it in 2005. In 1940, the northeasterners touched with the modern media – that is radio broadcast. On the other hand, in 1963, the radio just arrived in Kok Muang village. In 1962, television broadcast emerged in the Northeast Region while it came to Kok Muang village in 1975. As for the Internet, it came to the Northeast Region in 1997; on the other hand, the Kok Muang village's school brings the Internet to use in 2012. In short, the diffusion of newspaper from the Northeast Region to Kok Muang village took around 45 years, followed by radio broadcast in around 33 years, television broadcast in around 22 years, and the Internet in around 21 years respectively.

5. Discussions and Suggestions

This article is a part of my dissertation. The study of the media development aims to understand the current situation of mass media both nationally and in the area of study. Additionally, no prior researches in Thailand have studied the media development from Northeast Region to village of Thai-So ethnic group. Consequently, the significance of this research finding is the knowledge base of

study for the area of Communication Arts in Thailand.

Based on the research results of the media development studied through the lens of the comparison between timeline, it revealed that the developmental periods of mass media from Central Region, to Northeast Region, and to Kok Muang village of Thai-So ethnic group are significantly different owing to geographical location. In the past, it was to say that geographical location was the strong predictor influencing the different timeline of media development but, now, vice versa.

Additionally, the findings of the comparison between timeline of media development showed that the newspaper, as the first medium of Thailand, journeyed to Northeast Region and Kok Muang village slower than electronic media – that is radio and television. This was because the world event, the Second World War, was the main cause that made the mass media played the significant role for transmitting the information from the Central Region of country into the Northeast Region. During that time, radio was the most modern communication and had the most potential that enable to remove the barrier of illegibility. Meanwhile, the printing media, such as newspaper, had to the readable skill; hence, it was popular in particular of the educated persons such as teacher, official government, and businessman. Furthermore, the finding reflected the trend of the developmental period of media development. That is, it is likely to shrink resulting from the development of the advance communication technology.

Interestingly, the research finding of media development in particular of Kok Muang village of Thai-So ethnic group indicated that although mass media – such as newspaper, radio, television, and

internet – diffused into village, very few villagers read newspaper and nobody use the Internet. Therefore, it implied that mass media into Kok Muang village journey slowly because of audience's limitation themselves, especially the skills of media use and economic status.

In the future, although the Kok Muang villagers are likely to access and use a wide variety of media outlets, mass media has repeatedly conveyed misleading content (Lewis, 2006; Siriyuvasak, 2006; Heng, 2008). As a result, the proportion of entertainment programming is likely to increase to a greater extent than news, knowledge, and commentary. Consequently, the research in the future should investigate the impact of media use on the changing ways of life of Kok Muang village.

6. References

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