ABSTRACT

Cultural Heritage is often expressed as either intangible or tangible cultural heritage. This study attempts to reveal how Shanni (Taileng) exert for the perpetuation of their cultural heritage and to explore the initial settlement and to present the distribution of the culture of Shanni people in Northern Myanmar. And then, this study tries to describe the religious activities, literature and language, naming system, music and dance and wearing style of the Shanni national, one of the officially recognized nationals, living in Northern of (upper) Myanmar (Kachin state, Sagaing and some part of northern Shan state). The study areas are six villages in Wine Maw Township, in the northern most part of Myanmar (Kachin State). This study was conducted by using ethnographic qualitative study method, including the followings: review of records and documents, Key Informant Interviews (KII) with Shanni elders and leaders who know well about the present and past condition of the village and individual interviews (II) with Shanni elders and leaders staying in Kachin State, Sagaing Region and Mandalay Region and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with knowledgeable Shanni of youths’ generation. FGDs with elders and local leaders at Wine Maw Township on issues relating to settlement, distribution and the survival of Shanni culture. Moreover, non-participant observation and participation observation were also done for data collection, viewing records, writing field notes, taking photographs, and maps. According to the findings, Shanni nationals settled in Myanmar since over (2000) years ago and especially in the Northern (Upper) Myanmar. Northern (Upper) Myanmar is the original region where most Shanni (Taileng) nationals have settled and spread widely. Their settlement brought about their culture, traditions and customs which are adapted to its geographical setting and they have practiced their age-old culture and tradition for a very long time. According to the findings, it affirms that Northern (Upper) Myanmar is the settlement of Shanni nationals. They have long endeavoured to uphold their cultural traditions painstakingly. Unfortunately, there are some prospects that may disintegrate in the region some aspects of Shanni cultural heritage such as language, literature, etc., and are thus in need to nurture and uplift to the utmost for the survival of Shanni cultural heritage. This study provides informative data for further study not only for the issue of the cultural heritage almost being destroyed by the armed groups, the oppressive measures of the successive eras, natural disasters, and other situations, but also for more researches on maintenance and progress of Shanni culture which should be submitted from other disciplines’ points of view.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, Shanni (Taileng), settlement, distribution, culture, tradition, national spirit, national activities, value, custom, belief, practice