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## Language vitality and language attitude of Mon ethnic group in the western region of Thailand: Preliminary Report

This paper presents preliminary findings of the research project entitled “Ethnicity Language Culture and Ethnic Tourism Development.” The initial attempt is to locate Mon ethnic groups residing in the western region of Thailand. A questionnaire is devised for a data collection on Mon inhabited areas. Based on the collected data, a linguistic map of areas inhabited by Mon, overlapped with multiple layers of linguistic and cultural information of Mon, is presented. The linguistic map shows that Mon ethnic groups reside in eight provinces of the western region, namely, Kanchanaburi, Ratchaburi, Nakornpathom, Phetchaburi, Prachuapkhirkhan, Suphanburi, Sumutsakhon and Samutsongkhram. A preliminary survey of the language attitudes and language use of Mon people in these eight provinces was carried out using a qualitative approach. Two kinds of guided questionnaires were constructed for data collection, i.e., community and personal questionnaires. Key persons living in each Mon community were interviewed using the guided questionnaires. The interviewed subjects include local administrators and community leaders.

The interviews yield preliminary findings on the language use and attitudes of Mon people in eight provinces. The Mons, who came to Thailand during mid Ayudhya and early Rattanakosin period are Thai citizens and are found in Ratchaburi, Nakornpathom, Phetchaburi, Suphanburi, Sumutsakhon and Samutsongkhram. Mons in Ratchaburi and Nakornpathom show strong vitality in using the Mon language in everyday life while those in the other four provinces show the least language vitality. Advanced age Mon people in all six provinces still speak Mon; 50% of the adults can speak Mon but don't use it in daily life because of their working environment. Children and teenagers can understand Mon but don't use it anymore. Language attitudes among adults and advanced age people are positive - they wish their children could speak Mon.

Those who came after 1948 C.E. (2491 B.E.), are mostly non Thai citizens. They are found in Ban Wang Ka village in Kanchanaburi and in Ban Huaykriap village in Prachuapkhirkhan. All the Mons found in these two villages use Mon in their daily lives, so the language vitality is at a maximum. Their language attitudes are very positive, while those at Ban Wang Ka have already introduced the Mon language and wisdom into schools, those at Ban Huaykriap would like to have schools that teach Mon. Mons at Wang Ka believe that ethnic tourism will be good for their community; tourism can bring some bad things but strong community will save their ethnic identity and their language.

Based on these preliminary findings, a quantitative method, combined with participant observations, will be applied to the Mon language use and attitude data. Finally, the data analysis will be followed by a participatory action research (PAR).