

Current Status of Geoheritage Development in Thailand



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Exploration and information dissemination for geological heritage conservation in Thailand is mainly under the responsibility of the Department of Mineral Resources (DMR); while the development of these geoheritage sites in the country could be operated by various organizations including: government departments, academic institutions, local communities or even private organizations. With its strength in geosciences together with demand of newer product creation of geotourism, DMR had initiated programs to promote and developed geoheritage and Geopark for number of provinces such as Ubon Rachathani, Khon Khen, Kalasin, Tak and Satun Provinces.

In the early stage, DMR had used its technical strength as the main approach to drive the development, with little active involvement from local agencies or communities. There were numbers of obstacles in the area such as the continuity in the development, initiative from local community or lacking of the sense of ownership. The desirable success, as a consequences, seemed to progress slowly.

In response, DMR had attempted number of approaches to remedy the situation. Importantly, with sharing experiences form networking organizations from many countries, DMR had gained more clear

directions and cultivated more effective approaches to cope the situation. In addition, the UNESCO Global Geopark Guideline with which community engagement, visibility, networking and sustainable development being stated, had been adopted as their mainstream to all actions.

In Satun, the province with rich natures, active leaders and communities which majority preferred traditional lifestyles; things started to change their ways. These factors had strengthened and speeded up the development of geoheritage and Geopark in the country substantially. In 2016, Satun had applied for UNESCO Global Geopark title. It was the first time in Thailand and it was the place where certain UNESCO Geopark principles and guidelines had been explored and transformed into implementation. Experiences from networking in Asia-Pacific and around the world were carefully studied, customized and localized. The case also allowed DMR to device appropriate frameworks and mechanisms to promote and sustain each individual geoheritage and Geopark development. Moreover, by learning form Satun experiences, other provinces in Thailand could boost up their better practices and become a faster and more effective Geopark development.