

Abstract

The study of herbal medicine peddlers : lived experience and process of body construction has 3 purposes which are 1) to examine the occurrence of herbal medicine peddling and to examine the construction of meaning of herbal medicine in capital society 2) to study the peddlers' lived experience 3) to study the "Bodies" as physical capital of peddlers.

The 2 perspectives are used in this study : Cultural Commodity and Commoditization, and the perspective of Body as physical capital. The methodology of this study is ethnomethodology and participatory observation so as to interpret and understand the peddlers' social world. In this study, I have studied 2 fields as the follow : 1) the peddling route which I have joined with the caravan of peddlers 2) the peddlers' original communities.

In the process of commoditization of herbal medicine, local knowledge of herbal medicine has been restudied and transformed by local people. This process of knowledge reconstruction is supported by 3 trends : the health conscious, localness, and nostalgic view of local life . In addition, the herbal medicine businesses are applied with the suitable marketing strategies. Then, it paves the way in capital society for local wisdoms towards herbal medicine in Thailand. The herbal medicine is the commodity which is embodied cultural meanings originality and authenticity, natural and safety medicine, and the value of local wisdom.

According to the peddlers' lived experience, they have to travel through the country. The route is planned by the owner of herbal medicine business. Each day, the peddlers have their 3 main activities : preparing the herbal medicine in the morning ; peddling herbal medicine in the late morning until evening ; and taking a rest.

Due to studying the "Bodies" as physical capital of peddlers, the study found that they have the several procedures to construct and present their bodies in many forms : the patience - working bodies ,countryman bodies, elderly bodies, and practicing English speaking bodies. The procedures of bodies construction are dynamic; the construction of the several bodies derived from learning and perceiving the life experiences. However, it does not mean that the Bodies used in herbal medicine peddling can be utilized in every situation ; the Bodies are limited by conditions of time and space. These limitations lead to the incompatibilities between some "Bodies" and some situations. The incompatibilities come from the factors of class, gender, and age. Some of incompatibilities can be handled whereas some of them cannot.

Moreover, this study found that the Bodies as physical capital of peddlers can be transformed to be other capitals: to be the economic capital as money and job ; to be the cultural capital such as their experience of journeys, or education investment for their children; and to be social capital such as network of customers and network of herbal medicine peddlers themselves.