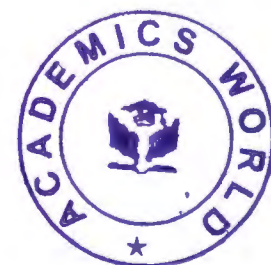




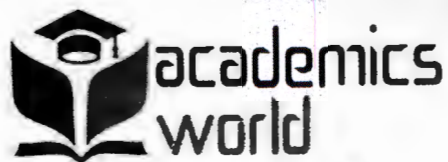
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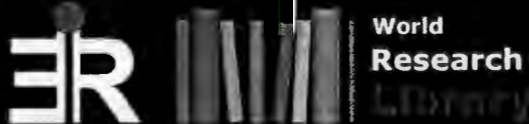


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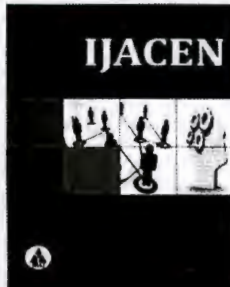

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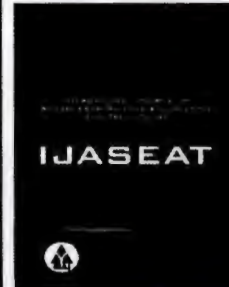



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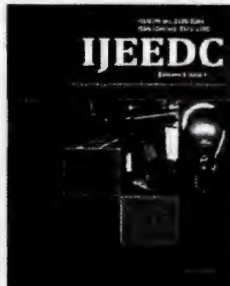

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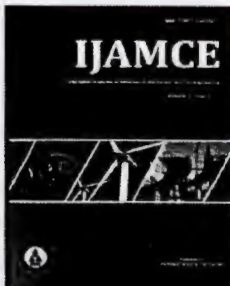

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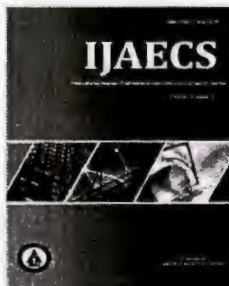

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THE RETURNING BACK "HOME" AND THE SEARCHING FOR IDENTITY OF DISPLACED PEOPLE IN GOOD MORNING LUANG PRABANG FILM

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Abstract— The returning back to hometown for displaced people allows them to see and learn various things such as different people, societies, and cultures through various paths. These acquisitions of knowledge does not provide only cognition, but it can be linked with thought, feeling, emotion, identity, and the feeling to become part of the area as well. This travel provides an opportunity to trace and learn the history of ancestors, families, and communities that we do not understand or we have never recognized it. This research is focused on the travel of a half Laotian-Australian actor who is living in Bangkok, and he has his trip to Laos, his dad's hometown, from the film named Good Morning Luang Prabang. From this study, it was found that the travel had provided a chance for the main actor to learn Laos's identity and it helped him to recreate relationship between himself and "home" in Laos. Such identity could be created through the revival of history of family and ancestor, the study on relationship of Laos's community, and the reading and understanding of customs, tradition, and culture through while he was on his journey in Laos. The understanding of identity helps the main actor to belong to family, community and Laoness. Moreover, it leads him to become aware of "home," and it helps him to go back to live in the urban society like Bangkok without feeling lonely and desolately.

Keywords— Identity, Home, Displaced People.

I. INTRODUCTION

Good Morning Luang Prabang, [1] is a film that presents society and culture of Laos through the romantic storyline of half Laotian-Australian actor named Son who is a professional photographer, and a Laotian actress named Noi, a tour guide. This was a phenomenon of the film industry in Laos. The film is a joint venture between Thailand and Laos, and directors for this film were from both Thailand and Laos as well [2]. The filmmaker is permitted from the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism of Lao Government to make film officially in Lao PDR., and it is counted as the first private film of Laos in 33 years. It was on air in Thai on 5th June, 2008. This film was shot in Vientiane, Luang Prabang, and Champasak. The main actor is Ananda Everingham, a well-known half Laotian-Australian actor living in Thailand, performing as Sorn, and Laotian actress named Alee Khamlee Philavong who is performing as Noi.

The story is telling about the main character named Sorn, a half Laotian-Australian who is a professional photographer. Sorn is assigned from his boss to travel to take photos in Laos. After he arrived there, Sorn hired Noi, Laotian tour guide, to take him to take photographs in various locations. This trip to Laos for Sorn doesn't only provide a chance for Sorn to take photos to send to his boss, but it also provides knowledge for Sorn to learn history, society, and culture of Laos where it is a hometown of his father who was a Laotian diaspora during war in Australia and had Australian wife. After 6 days of photo shooting, Sorn began to absorb the beautiful nature of Laos and learn culture of his dad's hometown. He was

so impressed about this and Sorn fall in love with Noi, Laotian tour guide after all.

The story of the film on one side is seen as social and cultural presentations through Laos's pure romantic storyline. It is said that the film is presented clearly about Laos's culture [2]. Somchart Pongkapanakrai, the filmmaker, also provided interview that he would like to "convey the traditions, culture and way of life as well as in neighboring country, and Thai youth is recommended to watch this movie to observe the precept." [3] In this case, this film is seen as the movie which is focused primarily on a society and culture of Laos. For Sanoh Charoenporn, academic literature of Thailand, analyzed this film by analyzing power and love of Sorn and Noi which are embedded under the relationship. This presented different views on Laos's society and culture presentation alone [4] Even though the analysis of Sanoh is interesting, it can be seen in the other side that the issue on identity of a half-blood diaspora which is the main context of the main character is another issue which is also interesting and it is overlooked. It can be seen that this film has major storyline about identity and relationship with family, community, and travelling for the whole story. In this case, the issue of identity shall be the main issue to analyze. It can be noted that the context of the half Laotian-Australian diaspora who has never been to his dad's hometown and Laoness before make Sorn to feel like he has not settlement and homeless, and he feels lonely like he is lifeless when living alone in the big city like Bangkok without his parents. Traveling to Laos is important to define the identity and search for location of appropriate culture and society for himself to live in Laos and Bangkok without the feeling of being

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nowhere. This movie pointed out that family and community has a major context towards the definition of identity as it is mentioned in the research of Saowapa Phaitayawat, presented that family, activities of people in the community, and relationship as kinship of people in the community is the main human capital and it helps to determine the identity of the community [5]

This piece of research will study on the search of identity and the pursuit of "home" in the context of a half Laotian-Australian, who does not live in Laos or Australia, and he is living in Bangkok alone. This film reflects the problems of this group of people who feel isolated in the urban society and it reflects the roots and identity in the diaspora context.

II. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

This research aims to study on the process of searching identity and pursuing "home" of the diaspora half Laotian-Australian actor from the film named Good morning Luang Prabang.

III. RESEARCH OF METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORK

This research is a qualitative research which focuses on the process of searching identity and searching for "home" of the main actor in the Good Morning Luang Prabang Film by using the concept of "identity" and "home" in the context of the diaspora. The researcher believes that the identity is fluid, and it can be changed or newly created according to the surrounding context, so the diaspora can create new identity as same as the idea of "home" which is usually defined as something attached with a physical space. However, the researcher has seen "home" as an abstract, and it can be newly created as the definition of "home" doesn't tie with the area, but it also ties with mental, emotion, feeling, history, relatives, or interaction between family members as well. For the diaspora, "home" can be defined as both concrete and abstract. These 2 frames of concepts will be applied to analyze the film named Good Morning Luang Prabang, the story of the a diaspora main character who feels like he has no settlement and confused about his identity Traveling to Laos reflects the process of identity creation and it ties the relationship between himself and "home" in Laos with interesting information. While traveling in Laos, the main character also learns to read historic, social, and cultural areas of Laos which lead him to the understanding of Laoness in himself.

This research has the stages of research as follows:

3.1 Study on the script of Good Morning Luang Prabang in both background such as concept, inspiration, response, and the story such as characters, scenes, and social and cultural context related to the story to be a part of the analysis.

3.2 Explore and study on the concept, theory, research, and related researches.

3.3 Study and analyze the film by linking with the theoretical concept and social and cultural contexts on both history, society, culture, status, class, or the lifestyle of living in urban society that appear in the film.

3.4 Write the analysis in the form of descriptive essay without using statistical analysis.

IV. RESULT OF STUDY

Good Morning Luang Prabang presented that the search of identity of the main character is caused by a specific context, which means that being a diaspora who does not live in hometown of his parents, has national identity as a half Laotian-Australian, and has to live in urban society such as Bangkok Metropolis with people from different nations will lead him to the feeling of being nowhere, and it makes he feels that he is not a part of both Laos, the hometown of his father, and Bangkok, the city that he lives at the present. Such feeling causes problems on identity.

4.1 Problems on Identity for a trip to Laos

The reason to travel of Laos of Sorn reflects the relation with circumstances of people without settlement and the feeling of alienation to be in his living society. Such issue reflects from the conversation between Sorn and his boss who told him to take photograph in Laos since the opening scene. The boss of Sorn criticized his taken pictures that it has good element and lighting, but it lacks of depth, emotion or tie with society and local. The photo criticizing this way can be interpreted the feeling of isolation and alienation from society and culture that Sorn lives as he is from different nationality and he lives in a big city. Only thing that Sorn aware of his existence is to define his identity through the tie of family because Sorn often makes phone call to his dad as calling his dad is the only way to confirm the



Fig. 1 Sorn speaks to his boss about traveling to Laos. identity of his existence between relationship of Sorn and his dad and Laoness through race.

The film reflects the problem of defining the identity of Sorn that comes from many causes. One important reason is that Sorn's identity is defined through views

and sounds of others through the ethnic and geographic divisions. The identity definition through the frame of race can be seen from the conversation between boss and Sorn about the assignment to take photos in Laos. This conversation scene reflects that Sorn's identity is defined through different frame of race through the reason that Thai boss assigned him a work to take photos in Laos as because Sorn has Lao race, but he has no knowledge about Laos and has never been to Laos before. The definition of the racial identity is an extremely controversial within Sorn's mind as he may know only that he has his Laotian race, but he has no knowledge about Laos, and he doesn't know any geographic or any places in Laos. He has to call to his dad in Sydney, Australia to ask for information frequently. This is another confirmation sign that he has a great distance from Laos. However, the film doesn't present that he denied Laos. On the other hand, it reflects the distance between Sorn and Laos as he has never been to Laos, so he cannot refer his identity through the race clearly. This is different from the eyes of others who look at Sorn through his race, so he is a suitable person to go to work in Laos. This film reflects the problems of defining identity through the race without recognizing other factors, so it contributes to the reduction of Sorn's identity.

At the same time, Laotians didn't see Sorn as Laotian, but he is like foreigner as one of Noi's friends told about Sorn that Laotian who was raised abroad is not a Laotian, and her friend also warned Noi not to fall in love with this man because this might be incompatible. The action that a friend of Noi warned her like that reflected the view of Laotians towards Laotian diaspora that he is "stranger" through the definition of identity through the geographical frame, growth frame, and culture which is differ from Laos's culture. Being seen as a stranger reflected the problem of identity definition from the eyes of others, and it is the same as the boss who defined Sorn through his race. Being defined through other frames from sounds and views of others make Sorn tries to find his identity through experience and understanding by traveling to Laos. Therefore, a trip to Laos is the same as the action to go back to search and understand identity in order to define himself through his own sound and view, so that he can live in the society outside his hometown, and he also can go back to be a part of his ancestor's hometown as well.

4.2 The search of identity and the pursuit of "home" in Laos

The search of the identity as Laos which reflected from the film has various characteristics. One of the most important characteristics is to learn Laos's history through traveling and the "reading" of the meaning of each place as it can be seen that the film presented Laos history when Sorn first entered Laos. The picked up history was when foreigners came to

Laos, and the period of World War II. These situations were presented through many tourism attractions in form of nature, building, and monument. The presentation of history through natural area is presented through the narrative of history at the Kon Pha Peng Waterfall and See Pan Don. These locations provided knowledge about the entry of foreigners who want to take the bomb to destroy the waterfall filled with small islands to sail their ships a hundred years ago. Sorn visited the old railway bridge and head of locomotive train, which remain from the world war. It is noteworthy that the history revived and world war history is a period that Sorn can understand easily because it is not such a long history, and it is not more than the ability to recognize and understand as same as others who can learn about such world war period. The reviving of history helps to teach Sorn to search for his settlement and see history of Laos and aware of the bad times of Laos until being Laos today. It helps to teach Sorn to feel proud and feel of being a part of Laoness. Traveling to various places make Sorn learns about Laoness in the dimension and lifestyle as well as culture of Laotian as it can be seen that Sorn learned the lifestyle of Laotian while traveling to many places for food, lifestyle and life of people there. Sorn has learnt kindness, generosity, and trustworthy of Laotians, so it makes him tie with Laos more and more.

A person who teaches Sorn to learn more about Laos is Noi, a tour guide who is a girl, and she is a Laotian. She is like a linkage for gap between Sorn and Laos. Sorn has learnt about Laos in the sense of idea, emotion, and mental from Noi. The movie presented picture of Noi as purity, honesty, courtesy as the representative picture of Laos. Sorn has learnt more about Laos from action, words, eyes contact, and action of Noi towards Sorn and others.

The film was also presented the acceptance and the participation to be a part of Laoness from Sorn through the presentations of relationship between Sorn and Noi and experiences while traveling together which lead to the tie between Sorn and Noi until both of them fall in love with each other later on. It is noted that love can be interpreted that it is the acceptance of Laoness from Sorn through his learning about Laos for both concrete such as historic areas, and abstract such as lifestyle, concept, and mental of Laotian, not only though nationality. For the feeling that Noi has towards Sorn, it is like the acceptance as the diaspora Laotian, and it is like the acceptance to let him back as a part of Laos. The acceptance of Noi is not towards Lao nationality of Sorn, but it occurs from the acceptance from Sorn's heart and his learning on Laos's culture as well.

For Sorn's acceptance and become a part of Laoness, it is also from the discovering of the meaning and origin of the name of Sorn in Laos. Noi told Sorn that his name is a woman's name, not a man's name. By learning through his name, he is interested to learn

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about his history. After that Sorn discovered that his name is the same name of the woman that his dad loved before his dad went to study in Italy and never came back to Laos again. Sorn's name is the linkage of relationship between Sorn and his dad's hometown as well as history of his ancestors which are carried out with him without his conscious, and he has just discovered it. The discovery of the meaning and origin of the name makes Sorn recognizes Laoness that embedded in him and it helps him to be able to link himself to the family in Laos through invisible bond.

Relatives and grandfather's house is the one thing that Sorn used to learn about Laos identity. In the film, Sorn travelled to his grandfather's home, and he had hot a warmly welcomed by relatives even though he had never met them before. Sorn has found that he has both many adults and children as his relatives. Visiting his grandfather's home this time helps Sorn to gain knowledge about his ancestors and his dad's family. Sorn studied his origin by walking to see details in this house, and he observed people in this house as well as looking at photos, talking with his grandfather and listening to story about his dad and ancestors. It helps Sorn to aware of relationship between himself and his dad's family as well as Laoness, so he has a feeling that he is not alone in Laos. Home of his grandfather makes Sorn realized that he also has his "home" in Laos. This home doesn't not only define the geographical details, but also defined by a sense of being part of a family and Laoness. Before Sorn traveling to Laos, he has never known that Laos is his home or he is a part of Laos. Sorn knows only Laos is the hometown of his dad. Relationship between Sorn and the country is in type of "the stranger" for each other. However, this trip to Laos teaches Sorn to learn that in fact, he is a part of



Fig. 2 Sorn is in grandfather's house.

Laos, and he has his "home" in Laos through relationship of family as same as his father. Being a part of Laos and the awareness of "home" can be reflected by Baisrisukwan Ceremony. To enter in to such ceremony will be informed about the acceptance of being different between each other through culture. Sorn accepted of being Laotian by joining this ceremony, and the family in Laos accepted a half-blood diaspora by performing the ceremony for Sorn and they tie Sorn's wrist to invite the protecting spirit to return to his body. By entering

to such ceremony also allow Sorn to change attitudes toward Laotian and try to accept Laotian in new meaning for both physical and mental. He sees that Laos is a beautiful place by nature and people are living in peace unlike his home in Bangkok, the place which is filled with chaos and the place where people look at him through the frame of his race, and it makes him feel alienated. Sorn opened his mind to accept of being Laotian and accepted the awareness of "home" more than before. His grandfather invited



Fig 3. Sorn is in Baisrisukwan Ceremony.

him to live in Laos, and it reflected the acceptance to receive him as a part of the family and Laos, so it makes Sorn's identity becomes clearer. A trip to Laos provided opportunity to Sorn to search for his identity and search for "home," and he has invoked the history of Laos and community as well as family which allow Sorn to be a part of the community and family.

V. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Good Morning Luang Prabang pointed out that the definition of the Identity of diaspora should be defined through the combination of multi-dimensional meanings from both ethnic dimension on nation, geographic, mind, family, and specific contexts as it can be seen that this film ended with the mystery for the audience to think whether Sorn and Noi will end up together or not. In this case, Noi left a letter to Sorn to, let him decide whether he will come back to Laos to meet her after they both have to be far away or not. The story ended without making Sorn decide whether he will be in Laos or Thai as it might be telling you about the definition of the Identity of diaspora that it is not necessary to attach only to the geographical frame or ethnicity, but he should take the context of self-specific context as well. The definition of the Identity of diaspora from the perspective of the diaspora will help the groups of Diasporas not to feel alienated or faceless. The definition of the identity can be made through the revive of family ties, ancestral history, and through the community and Lao cultural learning as Sorn had found identity of Laos by not only having Laos race, but he has found his another "home" here, and it is the "home" which is created by the spiritual relationship through ties of family, and he can feel as a part of history, ancestors, and the feeling of being Laotian as well.

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