

**The Development of a Database for Tai Yai Cultural Tourism  
in the Border Area at Lak Taeng Checkpoint,  
Piang Luang Sub-District, Wiang Haeng District,  
Chiang Mai Province**

การพัฒนาฐานข้อมูลการท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรมไทใหญ่ในพื้นที่ชายแดน  
บริเวณจุดผ่อนปรนช่องทางหลักต่าง ตำบลเปียงหลวง  
อำเภอเวียงแหง จังหวัดเชียงใหม่

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**Abstract**

The objective of this research was to gather information and knowledge pertaining to the beliefs, history, legends, and other relevant aspects of tourist attractions in the border area at Lak Taeng Checkpoint, Piang Luang Sub-district, Wiang Haeng District, Chiang Mai Province. The target group in this study consisted of nine community leaders and 46 local individuals. Data collection involved a questionnaire survey, unstructured interviews, and a focus group interview. The collected data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics, namely frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The content validity of the results were determined using the index of objective congruence (IOC). The findings of this research revealed that Tai Yai cultural tourist attractions, including architectures, fine arts, paintings or sculptures, reflect Tai Yai history, beliefs, roots, local wisdoms, and ways of life. Furthermore, this study unveiled the profound influence of Buddhism on local culture and traditions, as well as the community's unique identity, potentials, and strengths. The IOC results suggested that all the items evaluated, including content, language, and appropriateness, achieved scores greater than 0.50, and therefore, deemed appropriate for dissemination. The findings were shared with Tai Yai cultural tourism authorities, and Piang Luang Sub-district Administrative Organization to inform their tourism strategies. This information has also been made available through [thaitourstudy.com](http://thaitourstudy.com). The main finding implication is that a comprehensive database can be used to attract a broader audience. Moreover, community members should continuously share and develop the information to increase the visitors and create more jobs and careers in the community.

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หน่วยงาน: คณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเชียงใหม่ ประเทศไทย

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### บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อรวบรวมองค์ความรู้ ประวัติศาสตร์ ตำนาน ความเชื่อ และข้อมูลที่เกี่ยวข้องกับแหล่งท่องเที่ยวพื้นที่ชายแดนบริเวณจุดผ่อนปรนช่องทางหลักแต่่ง ตำบลเปียงหลวง อำเภอเวียงแหง จังหวัดเชียงใหม่ กลุ่มเป้าหมายประกอบด้วย ผู้นำชุมชนจำนวน 9 คน และประชาชนในพื้นที่จำนวน 46 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยประกอบด้วยแบบสอบถาม การสัมภาษณ์แบบไร้โครงสร้าง และการสนทนากลุ่มวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยวิธีประมวลผลทางสถิติเชิงพรรณนา ประกอบด้วย การแจกแจงความถี่ ร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และใช้ค่าดัชนีความสอดคล้องในการตรวจสอบความเที่ยงตรงของเนื้อหาเกี่ยวกับการท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรมไทใหญ่ ผลการวิจัยพบว่า แหล่งท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรมไทใหญ่ในพื้นที่ตำบลเปียงหลวงมีสถาปัตยกรรม ศิลปกรรม จิตรกรรม หรือประติมากรรม ที่สะท้อนประวัติศาสตร์ ความเชื่อ และวิถีชีวิตของชาวไทใหญ่ในประเทศไทย นอกจากนี้ ข้อมูลประเพณี และข้อมูลวัฒนธรรม มีความเกี่ยวข้องกับความเชื่อ ความศรัทธาในพุทธศาสนาอย่างแรงกล้าของชาวไทใหญ่ สะท้อนเอกลักษณ์ ศักยภาพ รากเหง้า ภูมิปัญญา และความเข้มแข็งของชุมชน ข้อมูลที่ได้ผ่านการตรวจสอบความเที่ยงตรงของเนื้อหาโดยการหาค่าดัชนีความสอดคล้อง พบว่ามีค่ามากกว่า 0.50 ทั้งในประเด็นด้านเนื้อหาที่มีความน่าสนใจ ภาษาที่ใช้มีความถูกต้อง และภาษาที่ใช้มีความเหมาะสมในการประชาสัมพันธ์การท่องเที่ยว จึงมีความเหมาะสมที่จะนำข้อมูลไปเผยแพร่ ดังนั้น ข้อมูลการท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรมไทใหญ่จึงได้ถูกส่งคืนแก่องค์การบริหารส่วนตำบลเปียงหลวงเพื่อพัฒนาการท่องเที่ยวของตำบล และมีการเผยแพร่ผ่าน [thaitourstudy.com](http://thaitourstudy.com) ผลจากการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่าฐานข้อมูลสามารถนำมาใช้ดึงดูดความสนใจของนักท่องเที่ยวได้อย่างกว้างขวาง นอกจากนี้ ชุมชนควรได้มีการเผยแพร่และพัฒนาข้อมูลอย่างต่อเนื่องเพื่อเพิ่มจำนวนนักท่องเที่ยวและการสร้างงานสร้างอาชีพในชุมชน

**คำสำคัญ:** ไทใหญ่ จุดผ่อนปรนช่องทางหลักแต่่ง ฐานข้อมูลการท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรม

### Introduction

The ‘Lak Taeng Checkpoint’, in Piang Luang Sub-district, Wiang Haeng district, Chiang Mai province, serves as a connection point to Myanmar and neighboring areas such as Muang Tuan, Muang Sad, Muang Hang, and Muang Taunggyi, the capital of Shan State. This checkpoint is situated approximately 10 km away from Wiang Haeng district. Historically, a ‘moral trading system’ existed in the area, where groups trusted each other and conducted business in civil and methodical manners. Local residents shared the responsibility of overseeing trade operations and reporting observations to their counterparts. As a symbol of mutual trust, some groups even placed gold as collateral while waiting for their ‘goods’ to arrive. Since the opening of the checkpoint, there has been no evidence of conflicts or major issues related to cross-border activities. This indicates that the area is safe for development, trade, and tourism. Additionally, on October 10, 2014, Chiang Mai representatives signed the “Chiang Mai-Kingtung” agreement at Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. This agreement aimed to enhance transportation routes to facilitate trade, (Chiangmainews, 2018), marking another incremental step toward promoting tourism expansion in both countries.

The area across the checkpoint belongs to the ‘Shan people’, a community with existing transportation facilities that can be further developed as a trading hub and for tourism purposes. The region’s fertile geography, featuring forests, waterfalls, caves, as well as communities with unique histories, provides a rich foundation for these purposes. Residents of the area continue to maintain their traditional ways of life and culture. According to Buhalis

(2000) and Steven (2008) (as cited in Duangsri and Wisetprapa, 2021), successful tourism development in an area requires four types of attractions, namely natural, cultural, ethical, and entertainment. These factors ought to be present for tourism to flourish.

If tourist attractions in border areas are integrated with trade, the demand for such areas would be stimulated (Sukdanont, 2018). Furthermore, if the community, as the owner of tourist resources, is involved in the thinking process, planning, and acts jointly as both beneficiary and a responsible party for tourism-related affairs (co-creation), the community would gain maximum benefits from tourism (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2013, The Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2020).

Saran Boonprasert (2020) proposes that information on community tourism is a critical tool for community development. When a community owns and participates in setting its direction and making decisions, tourism can play an important role in preserving local identity and culture. It can also foster pride in one's cultural heritage, promote awareness of diverse cultures, and encourage respect for human dignity. Therefore, tourism can contribute to improve the quality of life for local people while enhancing learning and cultural exchange.

As a result, each community has the potential to develop into a cultural tourism hub. Piang Luang Sub-district, with its rich cultural wisdom, traditional ways of life, and unique local traditions, is well-positioned to become a 'tourism community'. To raise awareness about tourism in the region, a comprehensive database is essential for promoting accurate perceptions, accessibility, and management (Wongpattanasiri, 2019). However, there are currently no official records on tourism in Piang Luang Sub-district that could be used for the purposes of tourism management. Thus, this research attempts to address this gap by creating such a resource to help in promoting tourism and supporting sustainable development of community-based tourism in the area.

## **Objective**

The main objective of this research was to gather relevant information and data points through community participation. It focuses on the history, legends, beliefs, and other pertinent knowledge related to tourism in the border area surrounding Lak Taeng Checkpoint in Piang Luang Sub-district, Wiang Haeng district, Chiang Mai province.

## **Research Methodology**

The study employed a mixed-methods research approach, using questionnaires and interviews to collect information on tourist attractions and other relevant information from the target group. Furthermore, tourist attractions were surveyed to assess their potentials for quantitative analysis before this information was examined qualitatively.

### **1. Quantitative Research Session:**

1.1 Target Group: It consisted of nine community leaders and 46 villagers in Piang Luang Sub-district, Wiang Haeng district, Chiang Mai province.

1.2 Research Instruments: This research employed both online and offline questionnaires.

1.3 Research Procedures and Data Collections: The study was conducted as follows:

1.3.1 A meeting was held with community leaders to create an understanding of the research itself and relevant procedures as they pertained the community.

1.3.2 A framework was then established with input from the community leaders to guide the planning and determine the scope of content, including attractions, resources, potentials, limitations, and/or hindrances.

1.3.3 A questionnaire and a draft for unstructured interviews were then developed. These tools were reviewed and approved by one community leader and two academic experts using the index of objective congruence (IOC). Ethical compliance for the research was also confirmed.

1.3.4 As a next step, data were gathered through the questionnaire completed by the target group. The outcomes were subsequently presented to relevant parties.

1.4 Data Analysis: The analysis of the data was conducted using descriptive statistical processing methods by measuring frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

## **2. Qualitative Research Session:**

2.1 Target Group: It consisted of nine community leaders and 46 villagers from Piang Luang Sub-district, Wiang Haeng district, in Chiang Mai province - the same participants as previously mentioned.

2.2 Research Instruments: This part of the research included a focus group and unstructured interviews.

2.3 Research Procedures and Data Collections: This study proceeded as follows:

2.3.1 Knowledgeable local individuals, such as community leaders and abbots, were interviewed using unstructured interviews.

2.3.2 The outcomes of both the questionnaire and interviews were then grouped and compiled.

2.3.3 The focus group reviewed, modified, and improved the collected information.

2.3.4 The revised information was then reexamined by one community leader and two academic experts using the index of objective congruence (IOC). This information was also assessed for appropriateness, completeness, and suitability for future dissemination.

2.4 Data Analysis: In this section, descriptive and summary methods were used.

Subsequently, the collected information was used to create a database, which was also incorporated in other innovative social media presentations to raise awareness regarding tourism in Piang Luang Sub-district. The community's public relations officers were provided with both the database and the social media presentations and were instructed on how to independently alter, revise, and improve these sources. Moreover, the outcomes and relevant information about tourism in the area were shared with young local individuals to support their future tourism-related efforts.

## Findings

While visiting the area to collect information about Shan cultural tourism in the border area, at Lak Taeng Checkpoint, it was found that the entire population, residing in an area of approximately 94,375 rai (Piang Luang Administrative Organization, 2023), consisted of migrants from Shan State, Myanmar. In 1928, ten families of Shan and Thai Lanna merchants were the first group to settle in Piang Luang Sub-district. Later, around 1958, Chao Noi Saw Yan Ta, the leader of Noom Suek Han group (also known as the Brave Youths), established a coordination center for the Shan National Rescue Army Forces. The village population thus consisted of Shan soldiers and their families. Subsequently, the Shan formed an alliance with the Chinese National Military Forces and fled the Shan State to Thailand. The Chinese soldiers then built houses with the help of original villagers, settled in the area, and engaged in border trade.

In the past, Piang Luang Sub-district was considered a precarious area in terms of national security due to its challenging accessibility and transportation, and access to different parts were possible only on foot or horseback. As a relatively “closed” area, Piang Luang Sub-district became a hub for illegal activities and items, including weapons, drugs, gambling, and a refuge for those evading prosecution. It’s the area’s unsettling nature made it difficult to suppress these illegal activities. However, the Lak Taeng Checkpoint, a temporary checkpoint at the time, facilitated local border trade. This continued until 2002, when Myanmar ordered and announced the closure of the border (Komarakul Na Nakorn, 2012, Foreign Affairs Division, Office of the Permanent Secretary for Interior, 2023). The border crossing has remained closed since then, as of 2024.

The areas surrounding the Lak Taeng Check point offer various Shan cultural tourist attractions, including the following:

**1. Wat Fa Wiang In** was once under the influence of the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) led by Khun Sa in a previous era. After Khun Sa laid down arms against the Burmese military government, the temple area was divided into two parts: a golden-yellow pagoda in Thailand and a Tai Yai temple with red roofs in Myanmar. This is the reason why the temple is known as Wat Song Phaen Din, or ‘the temple of two nations’ (Tourism Authority of Thailand, n.d.).

Wat Fa Wiang In was built around 1968, along with the restoration of *Marachina Chedi* (or *Kong Mu Lan Leun* in Tai Yai) which translates to ‘the pagoda of winning devils’. Beneath the base of *Phra That Marachina Chedi*, an inscription in the Shan language narrates the history of the temple’s construction (Tourism Authority of Thailand, n.d.).

In addition, Wat Fa Wiang In houses the tomb of Chao Koncheng Chanasuek and a photo gallery of Tai Yai leaders. The temple is also located near Chao Koncheng Chanasuek's Meditation Hall. Chao Koncheng, an important Shan leader, joined the anti-Japanese forces that occupied the Shan State during World War II. During his service with Chao Noi Seo Yan Ta in 1959, he lost his left arm in a battle against Burmese soldiers in the *Ban Huai Or* area of Mueang Ton district near Mueang Hang, the site of the historic King Naresuan Stupa. This earned him the moniker “one-armed general”, and he was greatly feared by the Burmese military. The Shan United Front (SNUF) was formed under his leadership in 1961. He also co-founded the Shan State Liberation Army (SSIA) in 1964, which eventually evolved into the

Shan State Army (SSA). In 1968, Chao Koncheng sought refuge under the patronage of His Majesty the King of Thailand and oversaw the renovation of *Marachina Chedi* in Piang Luang Sub-district. This act created trust between Thai and Shan people, encouraging their devotion and contributions to Wat Fah Wiang In, which subsequently flourished. On July 11, 1991, at the age of 65, Chao Koncheng passed away in his private meditation hall after battling cancer.

**2. Chao Noi Saw Yan Ta Memorial** commemorates one of the founders of the Noom Suek Han group, also known as the “Brave Youths” or “Young Warriors”. Chao Noi Saw Yan Ta was praised as a hero of the Shan people. He was a key figure in the establishment of the National Salvation Army, the first organized group to resist the Burmese army in the struggle for Shan State’s independence. The National Salvation Army consisted of 31 young men, including Chao Noi Saw Yan Ta and his companions from Phan City, located next to Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son provinces of Thailand. On May 21, 1958, armed with only seven long guns, the group gathered, shared water as a symbolic oath, and vowed to fight until Burma forces were expelled from Shan State territory. This act of bravery inspired the Shan people and allied groups to stand against the Burmese army, using knives, sticks, and machetes as their weapons. Over time, they were also able to unite into many other national recovery forces. This lays the foundation for what would later become the Shan State Army (SSA).

Chao Noi Saw Yan Ta passed away on November 14, 1996, in Chiang Mai Province at the age of 69. His son, Jaisaengmuang Mangkorn, was entrusted with his ashes. Later, on February 26, 2023, Jaisaengmuang placed the ashes of his father at the memorial near the entrance to Ban Kung Cho in Piang Luang Sub-district.

**3. Wat Piang Luang Luang**, established in 1687, is now 337 years old (as of 2024). The temple underwent renovation and expansion in 1979 (Phra Maha Kraisoron Kalyanatharo, personal communication, March 23, 2023). This restoration was led by Phra Athikan Panchum Gino (later known as Phrakhru Anuraksathanakit), the abbot of Wat Piang Luang and the head abbot of Piang Luang Sub-district, who served as the ecclesiastical president. General Chao Konjeng Chanasuek, a leader of the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA), played a crucial role as the main host of the renovation project, alongside Piang Luang villagers. During the renovation, the old monastery was demolished and replaced with a new structure.

**4. Wat Nhong Kok Kham** was originally an abandoned temple. According to Mr. Khaeng Wankham, a former village headman, and Phra Kowit Khunthammo, the temple’s current abbot (personal communication, April 21, 2023), some information regarding the approximate age of the pagoda, a nearby old rice barn, and an old pond in the area. However, there is no information pertaining to the exact period when the temple was first built. Later, a survey was carried out, and official documentation was issued to dedicate the area to the temple. It is believed that the temple was first existed as a bamboo temple in 1994 before being rebuilt in 1998. Wat Nhong Kok Kham stands out as an outstanding temple in Shan style, designed by Phra Kowit Khunthammo, the abbot. Inside, the temple features Shan-style paintings that narrate the story of the Buddha. Behind the temple, there is a chapel in the middle of a pond.

**5. Wat Pa Tung**, also known as Pa Tung Dhamma Practice Center, is under the administration of Nhong Kok Kham Temple and overseen by Phra Kowit Khunthammo, the abbot of Nhong Kok Kham Temple (personal communication, April 21, 2023). According to Phra Kowit Khunthammo, the site was originally an abandoned temple, with visible ruins including wall remnants, an ancient chapel, and old sacred round stones. The temple was later rebuilt between 2014 and 2015 and celebrated from 2017 to 2018. Phra Kowit Khunthammo designed the meditation center, pagoda, and Naga stairs in Shan style. An octagonal pagoda was constructed, with Buddha images of each of the seven days of the week enshrined on its sides.

**6. Wat Huai Krai** was built in 1929, making it 95 years old as of 2024. The temple's buildings consist of monks' quarters in Shan style, a sermon hall, and a chapel. Phra Khru Theerakijkoson (Sri Thon), Phra Khru Chao Khana Tambol, first class, and an abbot of Wat Huai Krai (personal communication, April 29, 2023), shared details about the chapel. Inside, there is a principal Buddha image in Shan style, in the attitude of subduing Mara, known as *Phra Muni Sri Siam Lanna*. Moreover, relics of the Lord Buddha are enshrined on a movable throne.

The temple compound feature has an octagonal pagoda called *Phra Borommathat Thongmu Su Tong Pae*, which means 'success' in Shan language. Each side of the pagoda displays Buddha images representing the seven days of the week. Villagers believe praying at this temple brings success. In addition, villagers pile sand around the small pagoda next to the octagonal one. When performing a 'long life' ceremony of the village, monks are invited to chant. The villagers believe that if a family has sick children, they should scoop sand from the pagoda and keep it in their home. Similarly, if someone is in danger, they are encouraged to do the same, as the sand surrounding this pagoda is considered auspicious.

**7. Kung Jor Monastery**, also known as the Temple of Immigration Center, was built by Shan people who settled in the immigration center. Approximately 300 Shan families migrated to Piang Luang Sub-district in 2002 when the checkpoint was about to be closed. The United Nations (UN) supported their settlement by providing a budget for housing and food during the warfare period. The immigrants initially built a bamboo temple, which later renovated in 2006. During school breaks, children gather at the temple to study the Shan language in the morning and learn *tom-tom* lessons (a tall narrow drum lessons) and other folk musical instruments.

Due to the large number of Shan Buddhists residing in Piang Luang Sub-district, various traditional practices have been preserved and continue to thrive. Phra Maha Kallayanataro (personal communication, March 23, 2023) provided the following information into these traditions:

**1. Para Long Mueng, Poy Lern Sib-ed, Ok Wah, Lu Chong Kheng Tang Pud or Chong Para** is a significant part of the Buddhist Lent festival. As part of the worship of *Chong Para* (which means "monk's castle" in the Shan language), a monk's castle is constructed to welcome the Lord Buddha, as he descends from the second heaven, where God Indra resides.

Chong Para, a temporary castle constructed with a bamboo frame, is decorated with mulberry paper, colorful paper, banana shoots, sugar canes, and lanterns. It is decorated to symbolize a grand welcome for the Lord Buddha as he descends from heaven. Once completed, the castle is placed outside residential areas or in the courtyards of temples. Piang Luang villagers would gather at the temples to make merit on the 15th day of the waxing moon, which marks the end of the Buddhist Lent.

It is customary to offer alms to monks, or *Tak Bat Devo*, in the morning. In the evening, people offer flowers, incense, candles, and glutinous rice steamed in banana leaves as a way of seeking forgiveness from their parents and elder relatives. Before the dawn of the first day of the waning month, a ritual known as *Som Tor* is performed. As part of the ceremony, a small container holding lighted incense is placed in public spaces. The *Som Tor* ritual is observed at Chong Para starting at 4 a.m. in viharas, chedis, and spiritual houses, where alms are offered to monks. Afterwards, the Lord Buddha is offered a large *Som Tor* and *Chong Para*. Villagers then attend the sermons at the temples and make offerings.

Villagers are encouraged to seek forgiveness and blessings from the elderly and respected members of the village (*Kantor*). It is expected that young members of the community, even those living far away, will attend the ritual. During the evening, people perform *Gingara* and *Toh* dances, as well as offer *Lutontenpek* (candle holders made from pine trees), *Tenkab* (lanterns made from lotus leaves), and float lanterns (*Phra Maha Kraisor* *Kanlayataro*) (personal communication, March 23, 2023).

According to Shan belief, when the Buddha descends from heaven, *Himmapan* creatures, such as mystical birds (*Kinnon* and *Kinnaree*), and *Toh* (Yak), sing and perform for the Buddha. This performance has been continued to this day. During the Buddha's era, there was no artificial light, so the disciples lit fires to illuminate the darkness. The Shan people created *Tontenpak* as an offering to the Buddha. As the deities accompanied the Buddha from heaven, the lanterns illuminated the night sky. It is therefore believed that the lantern light symbolizes the radiance of the deities (Phra Maha Kraisor *Kanlayataro*, 2021).

**2. Poy Sang Long** reflects the religious beliefs and cultural identity of the Tai people, emphasizing the establishment of Tai traditions. Over time, the festival was compared to a young boy who was of the age to attend ordination (Ratchanon Nuamna, 2023). The term *Poy* refers to the ordination ceremony of novices, *Sang* signifies a novice, and *Long* denotes the deity's descent. Therefore, *Sang Long* refers to a novice who is the descendant of a deity and considered by the Shan people to be a guardian angel. It is believed that the more *Sang Long* are there, the happier one would be (Poramin Narata, 2016, Fine Arts Department, 2019).

The performance of *Poy Sang Long* is based on Buddhist beliefs surrounding novice ordination. According to the Buddha's historical background, Prince Siddhartha was a king. Ratchanon Nuamna (2023) noted that the actions performed during the *Poy Sang Long* festival are reminiscent of how people treated the Buddha. In some areas, *Sang Long* are regarded as princes or royalty, and their feet are not allowed to touch the ground. Accordingly, *Sang Long* dressed as a Burmese king, wearing loincloths, pointed sleeves with sequins, jewelry, diamonds, necklaces, bangles, rings, and a headband adorned with flowers, or pointed crown, depending on the region. *Phra Maha Kraisor Kanlayataro* (personal communication, March 23, 2023)

explained that *Poy Sang Long* is a novice ordination festival which entails *Kumsang* (ordination), where novices are dressed as angels and are carried to prevent their feet from touching the ground. Novices may ride on elephants, horses, or on someone's shoulders. *Poy San Long* lasts for three to seven days, and the *Sang Long* parade takes place every day. As part of the evening rituals, *Sang Long* are paraded three times around the *vihara*. Additionally, Shan plays are performed during the daytime and at night until the ordination ceremony.

**3. Poy Hang Nam** is celebrated after Songkran and continues until the full moon of the sixth lunar month. During this festival, water is splashed for the final time. When people visit the temple throughout the year, they may unintentionally mess up the monastery area. As an act of merit, they bring water to clean the area. This practice of cleaning the temple is believed to redeem it from its sinful past (Phra Maha Kraisorn Kanlayataro, personal communication, March 23, 2023).

**4. Poy Lern Hok** is held on Visakha Bucha Day, which commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Lord Buddha. Morning activities typically include offering *Som Tor* (rice) and other food at temples around 4 a.m. This is followed by additional offerings at the temples. It is also a common practice to water the sacred Sri Maha Bodhi trees. In the evening, people participate in candlelit processions and offer flowers, candles, and incense (Phra Maha Kraisorn Kanlayataro, personal communication, March 23, 2023).

**5. Poy Khao Wa** festival occurs in July and begins with almsgiving early in the morning. In order to facilitate their stay at the temple, children bring mattresses of their parents and elders. Morning offerings include *Som Tor Luang*, which is a porridge made of boiled rice, sugar, and honey (Khaomatupayaj). Traditionally, villagers also offer flowers, candles, incense, and food to monks in a ritual locally known as *Keun Chong*. The monks receive *Khaowa* flowers, lent candles, and monk robes in the afternoon. Buddhists observe religious precepts throughout the day, culminating in an evening candlelit procession. Food is prepared by the host or the villagers for the next day's almsgiving. In cases where there is no host, villagers collaborate to prepare alms at the temple.

**6. Poy Ja Ka** normally takes place during the three-month Buddhist lent period. On Buddhist Sabbaths, hosts provide alms to monks and Buddhists observe religious precepts at temples. In addition to offering *Som Tor Luang* at the temple, hosts also provide breakfast for monks, Buddhists, and guests. Those who observe religious precepts at temples are provided with essential supplies such as umbrellas, shoes, and mosquito nets. It is customary for hosts and guests to make merits by listening to the percept and making offerings to the monks (Phra Maha Kraisorn Kanlayataro, personal communication, March 23, 2023).

**7. Poy Sa Lak**, or *Salak Kapat*, involves donations where the recipient monk is determined by a draw. In Piang Luang District, this festival is celebrated on the 8th day of the 8th moon of the waning moon, one month after the end of Buddhist Lent. The festival includes *Poy Salak* and *Poy Ten*. It is a religious festival during which candles are offered to worship

the Buddha, who is believed to descend from heaven (Phra Maha Kraisorn Kanlayataro, personal communication, March 23, 2023).

As part of the festivities in Piang Luang District, dances from other villages are invited to perform, including *Toh* dances, *Ginggara* dances, and other traditional dances. The Salakapat is held during the day, while the Poy Ten is held in the evening (Phra Maha Kraisorn Kanlayataro, personal communication, March 23, 2023).

**8. Poy Lu Sang Kan Lern Sib Song** usually takes place in November. It focuses on providing monk robes to all monks in the temple where the Shan people worship. Moreover, the robes are elaborately decorated for the occasion. On the day of the event, Shan people march to the temple and occasionally offer *Kathin* cloth, which, according to Viyana, can only be offered between the first day of the 11th moon of the waning moon and the 12th lunar month or within a month (Phra Maha Kraisorn Kanlayataro, personal communication, March 23, 2023).

**9. Poy Pee Mai Tai** is traditionally served on the eve of Shan New Year. New Year's Eve according to Shan is celebrated on the 15th day of the 12th moon of the waning moon on the last day of the 12th month of the year. The first day of the first lunar month is considered to be the official start of the new year. Shan people celebrate this holiday in December as a part of their new year celebrations. During the same period of time, *Poy Yok Yong Kru Mor* (commemorating teachers) is also held. Shan people gather at temples for various educational and cultural activities, such as essay writing competitions, poem recitations, and percept reading (*Horlukluang*), as well as honoring those who contribute to educational and culture. Traditional plays, games, and sports are also part of the festivities, aiming to foster cultural awareness and preserve the Shan identity. Since 2001, Wianghang District has celebrated the Shan New Year at Piang Luang Temple (Phra Maha Kraisorn Kanlayataro, personal communication, March 23, 2023).

Additionally, the Tai Yai people showcase their cultural identity through various performances, two of which are *Fon Toh* and *Ginggara Lanna Bird Dance*.

**1. Traditional Fon Toh** is a Tai Yai performance featuring *Toh*, a mythical creature. While the Thai dictionaries describe *Toh* as a lion, the *Toh* in these performances resembles a deer. According to the Tai Yai people, the creature was formed by combining features from nine different animals, likely inspired by the mythical Himmaman creatures. This blending created a unique and special appearance. The shaped animals used as symbols by both Burma and Arakan (Tibeto-Berman) are similar. This reflects that Tai Yai and Burma have a connection to Buddhism. While *Toh* may have been influenced by Burmese traditions, it can be concluded that *Toh* is a mythical creature from the Himmaman forest and shows the character of the Tai Yai people (Department of Cultural Promotion, 2019, Dailynews, 2024).

The Tai Yai people believe that the Buddha preached to his mother in the Himmaman forest. On the full moon day of the 11th lunar month, known as 'Devorohana', marking the end of Buddhist Lent, the Buddha descended back to the human world after a three-month absence. According to tradition, beasts, gods, and humans awaited his return on this day. All animals who have faith will come to pay homage to the Buddha. At the same time, *Toh* (Yak) and

*Ginggara* (Kinnorn) sang and danced to honor the Lord Buddha. It is for this reason that the Tai Yai people take such events seriously. The tradition has been passed down for generations (Phra Maha Kraisorn Kalayanatharo, personal communication, March 23, 2023).

Chiang Mai University (2022) highlights the role of *Fon Toh* or *Toh* performances, involving animals attributed to another creature in Himmapan forest called *Ginggara Bird*.

**2. Gingara Lanna Bird Dance, or Fon Gingara,** is another iconic Tai Yai performance (Sanan Thammathi, n.d.). The word *Ginggara* is derived from Kinnon, a term for non-human beings in the novel. According to The Royal Institute Dictionary (1999, p. 128), there are two types of *Ginggara*. The first type is half-man and half-bird, with the upper body of a person and the lower body of a bird. The second type is fully human in shape but capable of attaching wings and tails to fly. The *Ginggara Lanna Bird Dance*, or *Fon Gingara*, is an imitation of these mythical beings.

The Center for the Promotion of Art, Culture, and Creative Lanna, Chiang Mai University (2022) published information about the *Ginggara Lanna Bird Dance*, or *Fon Gingara*. This performance reflects the identity and beliefs of Tai Yai culture and tradition. The Tai Yai people have strong faith in Buddhism, especially at the end of the Buddhist Lent, known as *Og Wah*. This day is believed to mark the Lord Buddha's descent from Tavatimsa heaven. Overjoyed by this event, all beings gathered to dance beautifully as an offering to the Buddha.

The information gathered from various sources in this study highlights the people's strong beliefs in Buddhism. These beliefs also reflect the community's uniqueness, potentials, and strengths. As mentioned earlier, the collected information in the study was examined and verified by a focus group comprising nine community leaders and 46 villagers. Subsequently, this information was further reaffirmed by one community leader and two academic experts using the Index of Objective Congruence (IOC) to assess its completeness and appropriateness. The results of the IOC suggested that all items, including content, language, and overall appropriateness, scored greater than 0.50, and thus confirming their suitability for dissemination.

Finally, all findings and information related to cultural tourism in the area have been shared with Piang Luang Sub-district Administrative Organization to support the development and enhancement of their tourism efforts. The outcomes of the study are also publicly available on the following website: <https://thaitourstudy.com/routepiangluang/index.php>

## **Conclusion**

The objective of this research was to gather information and knowledge pertaining to the beliefs, history, legends, and other relevant data points related to tourist attractions at Lak Taeng Checkpoint in Piang Luang Sub-district, Wiang Haeng District, Chiang Mai Province. The area contained different tourist attractions with Tai Yai cultural uniqueness where the knowledge gained from this study can be used in tourism management strategies to increase awareness of local attractions and, ultimately, the number of tourists visiting the area. Dickman (1996, cited in Klangrahad et al., 2017; Chomphoothong, et al., 2022) highlighted the importance of the five elements of tourism (5As): Attractions, Activities, Accessibilities, Amenities, and Accommodations. 1) Attractions include natural attractions and man-made attractions, as well as man-organized activities that draws tourists, such as theme parks and convention-related activities (Meeting, Incentive, Exhibition, Convention (MICE)). Other

types of attractions include cultural landmarks and community-based attractions that foster social connections. 2) Activities should be provided in the tourist destinations to increase the interest and provide opportunities for relaxation. These activities should be diverse and tailored to meet the needs of different tourists. For example, the tourists can do activities such as shopping, marine activities, hiking, bird watching, wildlife viewing, and light-and-sound shows. 3) Accessibility, which refers to the transportation conditions to tourist attractions, should be convenient. This includes options such as flights, public buses, and good road infrastructure. In addition, accessibility at tourist destinations also involves features that can make tourists aware of them, such as a website. 4) Amenities or facilities refer to various basic services and public utility systems available at tourist attractions. 5) Accommodation in tourist destinations should be sufficient and safe for tourists. There should be a variety of options with prices and services appropriate to the location. Besides, accommodations should not be too far from the tourist attractions.

The research outcomes concerning the border area around Lak Taeng Checkpoint in Piang Luang Sub-district suggest local uniqueness, cultural attractions, and traditions that showcase the identity of the Tai Yai people. In addition, there are still a few knowledgeable local individuals who can provide pertinent information about the beliefs, culture, history, traditions, and wisdom of local people, which are important components for community-based tourism management. According to Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA), a provider of information on the vision of community-based tourism, it is critical to provide high standards of service, cleanliness, and safety in fostering successful community-based tourism (2017, cited in Wongpattanasiri, 2019). Furthermore, tourism management is guided by the concept of preserving and managing community resources to ensure their sustainability for future generations. This approach aims to reduce environmental costs and mitigate adverse impacts on local cultures and societal dynamics. This is a development that relies on the exchange of knowledge, and it requires local participation.

In addition, Thipawan Niyomwong and Sasikarn Plaiklang (2017) conducted a study on developing information about tourist attractions in Chanthaburi Province for the elderly through a map-based information service system. It was found that the database they created facilitated travel planning and helped elderly travelers identify routes that are suitable and safe. Similarly, Wanasanan Phopphet (2019), in a study on factors influencing Thai visitors' decision to travel to historical attractions, a case study of Phra Nakhon Sri Ayutthaya Historical Park, found that visitors often relied on the internet for travel information. This is consistent with Wachana Phupanee (2012, cited in Phopphet, 2019), who stated that tourists' purchasing decision were influenced by stimuli, such as information obtained online. Furthermore, Tanongsak et al., (2022), in their research on a database management platform for creative tourism - a case study of Pak Bara community - found that a comprehensive database is necessary not only for public relations but also for action plans and organizational policy support. Therefore, gathering knowledge, history, legends, beliefs, and related information to create a tourism database raises awareness, enhances tourism management and public relations, and increases the number of tourists in the future.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendations and critiques for the application of research results;**

Upon visiting the area and following this research study on Piang Luang Sub-district, the researcher offers the following recommendations:

1. Piang Luang Sub-district offers a rich cultural heritage and a diverse mix of ethnic groups. The community's distinct identity is evident in its Shan-style arts, culture, architecture, and paintings, which are a source of pride for the locals. Additionally, the area is home to individuals with valuable local wisdom and knowledge who can help to develop the local tourism industry.

2. The sub-district also faces several challenges in its tourism sector. This includes insufficient facilities such as gas stations, clean bathrooms, well-maintained roads, directional signage, and strong digital reception for communication. From the researcher's interviews, it was found that the community lacks a systematic tourism management plan. There is no organized collection of knowledge, no designated individual responsible for tourism development, no organized tour programs, and no calendar of traveling activities for visitors. Therefore, the community needs to develop its human resources and build skills for systematic tourism management.

3. Piang Luang Sub-district has a significant potential to develop its tourism due to the strength of its community's identity. If the community learns how to exploit this strength to the benefit of tourism, it will be able to create jobs, generate income, and support a better economy.

4. The sub-district may have obstacles related to cross border activities and potential regional instabilities. Therefore, the community needs to brainstorm and develop strategic plans to address these obstacles. Furthermore, these plans should be proposed as part of government policies to ensure continuous, stable, and efficient solutions.

### **Recommendations for stakeholders:**

#### **1. Government Organizations**

1.1 Piang Luang Sub-district should design both short and long-term initiatives and plans for tourism development in the area. Collaboration between public and private sectors is crucial to ensure continuous improvement in tourism management strategies.

1.2 The sub-district should establish committees and assign leadership roles to systematically promote community-based tourism. Villagers should be actively participated in respective operations in order to develop sustainable tourism in the community.

1.3 Piang Luang Sub-district should additionally educate the community members and youth regarding local tourism so that it can empower community members to share information about attractions and activities in the area with visitors. This will further strengthen the sense of ownership in their community.

1.4 A comprehensive database developed from this study, featuring Tai Yai culture, tourist attractions, and local traditions can be used to attract a broader audience. The database should be made available in multiple languages, including Chinese and Burmese, to

cater to international visitors. This would help raise awareness about the community and attract more tourists, and create new income-generating jobs for the local community.

## **2. Business sectors, private sectors, and entrepreneurs**

Business, private sectors, and entrepreneurs should support community leaders and tourism committees to provide essential knowledge and training in tourism management. Topics such as online public relations and digital marketing should be emphasized to enhance the community's ability to promote its attractions.

## **3. Community**

3.1 Piang Luang community should encourage their youth and villagers to develop diverse competencies related to tourism and community product development, including foreign language skills, service skills, and technology skills.

3.2 The community should cultivate a new generation of tourism experts by reaching out to young people who have conventionally chosen to study in urban areas so that they foster a sense of pride and ownership in their hometown. This will encourage them to return after completing their education to contribute to the development of tourism and preservation of Piang Luang's cultural identity.

## **4. Educational Institutions**

4.1 Universities should provide their knowledgeable and skilled personnel to support the community in order to enhance local knowledge and expertise in tourism management.

4.2 Schools should focus on improving students' foreign language skills, service skills, technology skills to prepare them for the tourism industry. By doing so, they can encourage youth to be part of the future local tourist industry.

## **Recommendations for Parallel and Additional Studies**

These are a number of recommendations for potential future research:

1. Guidelines for developing tourism management strategies, such as marketing and public relations, product development, and the application of creative tourism management techniques for tourist attractions should be further examined.

2. Other types of tourism, such as spiritual tourism and wellness tourism, should be researched and expanded upon. Research on how foreign languages are used to disseminate tourism information could help increase global awareness.

3. The potentials of youth and villagers should be further examined, especially their skills and competencies. Exploring how their foreign language, service, and technology skills can be enhanced will contribute to the broader community's ability to serve as a tourist destination effectively.

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