

Identity And Cultural Landscape Of The Community Along The Hueang River, Loei Province

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Abstract

The research entitled Identity and Cultural Landscape of the Community along the Hueang River, Loei Province was aimed at studying the identity and cultural landscape of the community along the Hueang River, Loei Province, using qualitative research to collect the data from relevant documents and research and interviews with the key informants, casual informants, and general informants in the research area. The research results are as follows.

The identity of the community along the Hueang River, Loei Province, consisted of the cultural patterns in 1) local history, 2) beliefs and religion, 3) ceremonies and rituals, 4) language, and 5) arts. These patterns were influenced by the Lao in Luang Prabang through the relationship and surroundings of the community along the Hueang River that formed their culture through accumulations and inheritance. The study of the cultural landscape of the community along the Hueang River, Loei Province, provided two aspects. First, the concrete aspect, which can be divided into 1) components of the beliefs and religious areas, consisting of Sri Khun Mueang Temple, Mahathat Temple, Tha Khok Temple, Chao Por Pak Hueang Shrine, Phra That Si Song Rak, Sri Pho Chai Temple, Pho Chai Temple, and Phra That Manao Diao, 2) components of the housings and constructions, consisting of Chiang Khan Walking Street and Chiang Khan Skywalk, 3) components of the natural environment and community cultural areas, consisting of Phu I Lert, Nam Hueang Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge, Phu Kao Ngom, and Ban Mueang Phrae relief point. Second, the abstract aspect, which includes 1) components of the traditions, consisting of Ban Saeng Pha Flower Parade Tradition, Phra That Din Tan Celebration Tradition, Thai-Lao Songkran tradition, Ban Mueang Phrae Phi Ta Khon Tradition, Phra That Si Song Rak Tradition, Chao Poh Pak Hueang Celebration Tradition, Ban Ahi Flower Tree Procession Tradition, and the Salt Boiling Tradition at Ban Mueang Phrae, and 2) components of the rituals, consisting of Hor Luang Celebration Ritual.

Keywords: Cultural landscape, Identity, Hueang River.

1. Introduction

Loei province is situated in the upper northeastern region. It is a culturally unique natural tourism city surrounded by mountain ranges, providing the area with a beautiful landscape covered with fog on the mountain tops, cool breeze, and unique traditions, culture, and way of life, making Loei a province with high tourism potential (Loei Designated Area Office, 2019). The province's 197 kilometers share its border with the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). The Mekong River, Hueang River, and mountain ridges border the Xayaburi and Vientiane provinces of Lao PDR (Loei Provincial Office, 2020). The

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communities along the Hueang River are riverside communities with the river separating between Thailand and Lao PDR. The river originates from Phu Miang in Lao PDR, flows through Na Haeo District, Dan Sai District, Tha Li District, and some parts of Chiang Khan District, in Loei Province, and merges with the Mekong River at Tha Dee Mi village, Pak Tom sub-District, Chiang Khan District, Loei Province. The river then continues through Nong Khai Province, Bueng Kan Province, Nakhon Phanom Province, Mukdahan Province, and into Amnat Charoen Province before flowing into the Lao PDR area at Khong Chiam District, Ubon Ratchathani Province (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2019). The Hueang River runs for 20 kilometers within Thailand and another 110 kilometers between Thailand and Lao PDR.

The communities along the Hueang River cover four Districts in Loei Province, including Chiang Khan District, Tha Li District, Dan Sai District, and Na Haeo District, on the mountainous highland to the West of Loei province at 400 meters above sea level. The Hueang River basin covers 3,127 square kilometers, accounting for 27,4 percent of the province. There are 163 tributaries in Na Haeo District, Phu Ruea District, Dan Sai District, including Chiang Khan District, with a total length of 130 kilometers. The river has an average runoff volume is 1,045 million cubic meters per year (General Information of Loei Province 2021, 2021). The area of the communities along the Hueang River is significant due to the appropriate physical characteristics for community settlements due to its proximity to the water sources and the fertility of the land. The communities are situated in the Hueang River Basin area, the second largest river basin in Loei province after the Loei River Basin. The area is also close to the Mekong River that separates Thailand and Lao PDR. These factors make the area an economic city, connecting ancient trading routes of the Lan Xang Kingdom with important cities, such as Luang Prabang, Vientiane, and the Siam Kingdom through Phitsanulok Province, an important ancient city of Siam with the connection to water transport within the Mekong River Basin with the Hueang River as its tributary. These are the important factors in choosing the settlement area of the people within the communities along the Hueang River.

Therefore, the communities along the Hueang River have a historical significance for the Thai and Lao people within the Hueang River Basin. The study of the stories and myths of the community settlements revealed the beliefs of the people on both sides of the Hueang River in having the same ancestors, which can be observed in the story of the settlement of King Chaicharat Phaen Phaeo in the city of Chiang Khan. The story mentions the migration of people into Chiang Khan during the war between the Lan Xang Kingdom and the Vietnamese in 2022 B.E. (Saenkham, 2017), as well as includes the legend of Dan Sai city, which mentions a group of leaders from the Yonok Chiang Saen Kingdom who traveled into the Lan Xang Kingdom after the destruction of their kingdom, crossing the Hueang River, and settled on the banks of the Man River (Loei Provincial Office, 2011), currently Dan Sai District. The study also revealed the influence of the beliefs and religions of Luang Prabang and Lan Xang Kingdom, leading to the creation of traditions and rituals, and various kinships whether from having the same ancestors, kinship through marriages, kinship through businesses, forming connections within the communities. The Hueang River separates the border between Thailand and Laos, strengthening the relationship between the two countries in terms of economy, society, and stability, as well as similar culture and traditions (Loei Provincial Office, 2020). Apart from the Hueang River, the community along the Hueang River area also has many tributaries, such as Man River, spreading throughout the mountainous areas, such as Phu San Sai National Park in Na Haeo District, creating a unique natural river basin and natural river basin and mountainous landscape. Moreover, the communities and their long history helped create the tradition and culture that reflect the community's identity.

The above information shows the significance of the area with a unique community's identity from being a borderland between Thailand and Lao PDR. Identity means a unique characteristic from the process of creation within society and inherited based on the social relationship context (Leepreecha, 2004). The identity shows the unique characteristics of the community members along the Hueang River in Loei. The beautiful

cultural landscape from its plain and mountainous geography and the Hueang River dividing Thailand and Lao PDR helped create communities. The cultural landscape is the social evolution reflecting through the human and human, human and nature, and human and supernatural relationships, creating a unique culture under the limitation of each area (Kamphusaen, 2009). The characteristics of the communities along the Hueang River align with the research result on the communities' identity and cultural landscape. The researcher applied the concept of identity and cultural landscape to find the identity and cultural landscape of the communities to reflect the historical evolution of the area, the art and cultural evolution of the area, and its cultural phenomenon, to promote the area's values and significance and create the consciousness of the local people in preserving the culture and environment of the communities along the Hueang River.



Figure 1 A map displaying the location of the Hueang River (adapted from Google map, 2566)

2. Objective

2.1 To study the identity and cultural landscape of the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province

3. Research Methodology

The research entitled Identity and Cultural Landscape of the Community along the Hueang River, Loei Province is qualitative research. The researcher studied the relevant documents and collected field data from the target group through purposive sampling. The target group included the people in 1) Na Haeo Sub-districts, Saeng Pha Sub-districts, Na Haeo District 2) Pak Man Sub-districts, Dan Sai Sub-districts, Dan Sai District 3) Ahi Sub-districts, Nong Phue Sub-districts, Tha Li District 4) Pak Tom Sub-districts, Chiang Khan Sub-districts, Chiang Khan District, Loei Province, a total of eight Sub-districts in four Districts. The target group was divided into three groups. The key informants consisted of three academics who were knowledgeable in the area and could provide in-depth information on the identity and cultural landscape of the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province. Casual informants consisted of eight community tourism group leaders and related personnel, two from each Sub-district. General informants included six people from each district, with a total of 24 general people living in the research area. The researcher collected the data from relevant documents through the review of the concepts and theories. The research tools for collecting field data consisted of survey forms for surveying the research area and collecting general information and physical geography, participatory and non-participatory forms, structured interview forms used in the interviews to collect data from the casual and general informants, non-structured interviews were used to interview the key informants. The data was then collected and classified to find answers based on the research objectives. The data was verified using the triangulation method to confirm the accuracy and validity of the collected data. The data was analyzed based on the research

objectives to come up with the conclusions. Concepts, theories, and relevant research were used to find the reliability of the data and to provide the explanation following the research objectives.

4. Research Results

In this research, the researcher focused on the three following points: 1) the identity of the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province, 2) the cultural landscape of the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province, and 3) Evaluating the values of the cultural landscape of the communities along the Hueang River. The explanations are as follows.

4.1 The identity of the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province

To study the identity of the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province, the researcher collected data from relevant documents, field research, and interviews of the target groups. Interview forms were used on the key informants, consisting of academics, with the application of the concept by Leepreecha (2004) who stated that identity means unique characteristics formed through social process in the creation and inheritance based on social relationship context on the Lao ethnic group in Luang Prabang in the communities along the Hueang River, Loei province. These processes created the following cultural uniqueness, 1) local history, 2) beliefs and religions, 3) traditions and rituals, 4) language, and 5) arts. The details of each aspect are as follows.

4.1.1 Local History. Most people migrated from the left side of the Mekong River, such as from Kaen Thao, Chanakham, Xayaburi, Vientiane, and Luang Prabang. This migration can be seen from the historical migration records and many legends of many ancient cities in the area. There were stories in many communities of how their ancestors migrated from Luang Prabang and settled in this area. Moreover, people from the two cities have always been traveling back and forth, as well as getting married and creating relationships in the past. Later on, the division of the land between Thailand and France during Rama V caused some communities to be on the left side of the Hueang River and under French rule, and currently part of Lao PDR.

4.1.2 Beliefs and Religion The beliefs and religions of the people in the communities along the Hueang River in Loei Province are influenced by the Lao Luang Prabang people who believe in Animism that has been passed down from the past. These beliefs included Phi Fah Phaya Thaen, ancestral ghosts, forest ghosts, mountain ghosts, and spirits in nature or certain locations. Later, the people shifted their beliefs to Buddhism while still maintaining their traditional beliefs, merging the two beliefs. The belief in Brahmin superstition was integrated into the way of life, where temples were the center for making merit, religious practices, and educational institutions. At the same time, Brahmanism and spiritual belief rituals were used as a means of building morale until they became traditions and rituals. As for the current condition, although the communities were divided into Thai-Lao according to historical stories, there are still traces of the Lan Xang traditional culture in the communities on both sides of the Hueang River.

4.1.3 Traditions and Rituals. The people in the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province, maintain the Heet Sip Song Khlong Sip See tradition, passed down from the Lan Xang era in the past. The current status of each area might still be different in some details, but the core of the tradition still maintains the characteristics of the Lan Xang culture. The tradition that is the identity of the communities along the Hueang River is Boon Duan Si (Forth Month Ceremony) or Boon Phra Vessantara, also known as Boon Luang, held in March, is very important to the communities. Each community will hold the ceremony on a different date so the members can participate in the ceremonies in other communities. The Phra Vessantara ceremony in Dan Sai community is different from other areas in the fact that in the Vessantara parade, there will also be Ta Khon Ghosts, which comes from

the belief that the forest and mountain spirits also come to see Phra Vessantara off. In the Parade, Chaophor Guan, or the ceremony leader, will sit on the handmade rocket while scattering betel nuts and Pink Cassia flowers. After the parade arrives, the rocket will be lit. In the evening, the big statue of the Ta Khon ghost will be thrown into the Man River as a form of sending the spirits back to the forest. The following day consists of listening to the Mahachat preaching. Chaophor Guan and Nang Tiam, the cultural leaders, will conduct the Samha ceremony on the temple grounds.

The Boon Duan Ha, or the fifth-month ceremony, is very important to the communities along the Hueang River on the Thai-Lao border since it is when the families come together to meet. The practices of this ceremony on both the Thai and Lao sides are similar, which consist of sprinkling water on the monks, the Buddha images, and the elders to ask for blessings. People also pour water on the bones of their ancestors, build sand pagodas, and hold the flower procession. Most communities along the Hueang River will hold the Flower Procession. The communities that are known for the flower processions are Saeng Pha and Ahi communities. The rocket festivals are normally not held in the sixth lunar month but in the eleventh lunar month at the end of the Buddhist Lent Festival since there are other ceremonies, such as building the Prasart Pheung ceremony, lighting the rockets, and fire boat processions. Some communities hold boat races similar to the fire boat procession in Luang Prabang.

The communities along the Hueang River in Loei are communities along the Thai-Lao border with the traditions and rituals inherited from the Lan Xang culture that has been changing according to the changing social, cultural, and political context. Although the timing for the ceremonies in each community is different for each month, the core of the Heet Sip Song Khlong Sip See of the communities along the Hueang River is based on the belief in the traditional religion merged with Buddhist beliefs based on the Lan Xang culture, which can still be observed in the area.

4.1.4 Language. The communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province, consisting of the Tai-Loei ethnic group who uses the Tai Loei language. The language is a local Isan dialect with a different pronunciation compared to the local dialects in other areas of Isan, especially the high and low tones. The Tai-Loei language is considered the Lao language which is similar to the Luang Prabang language. The Tai-Loei language is categorized in the Southwestern group of the Tai language family. The language is spoken by the people from Luang Prabang and along the Mekong River to the Loei province in Thailand, confirming the fact that the language is part of the Southwestern group and is the same language as the Luang Prabang language.

4.1.5 Arts. The architectural characteristics of the viharas and pagodas found in the communities at the Thai-Lao border have the characteristics of Lan Xang architecture while the old sims, viharas, and pagodas have both the characteristics of Lanna and Lan Xang. The Buddha images in the old temples of the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province, were influenced by the Lan Xang, Sukhothai, and Ayutthaya arts. The paintings in the sims contain the story of Vessantara, Buddha, or Buddhist morel stories in the form of traditional mural paintings and the way of life of the people in the area. The stories in the paintings are painted in a descriptive form by local artists.

4.2 Cultural Landscape of the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province

In the study of the cultural landscape of the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province, cultural landscape means a cultural form that reflects the relationship between humans and nature and the development of human society and the settlements under physical restrictions. The types of culture categorized by anthropologists (National Identity Committee, 1997) consist of 1) physical cultural landscape, including 1.1) the components of the beliefs and religious buildings, 1.2) the components of the housings and other building structures, and 1.3) the components of the natural surrounding and cultural area system of the communities; abstract cultural landscape, including 2.1) components of the

traditions, 2.2) components of the rituals of the Luang Prabang ethnic groups in the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province. The data was collected from the field research. The data from the interviews and documents by the researcher categorized the cultural landscape based on the cultural forms with the following details.

4.2.1 Physical cultural landscape

4.2.1.1 components of the belief and religious area

1) Sri Khun Mueang Temple, Chiang Khan Sub-district, Chiang Khan District, Loei Province. Sri Khun Mueang Temple is located at 375, Chiang Khan Village, Chai Khong Road, Village No. 1, Chiang Khan Sub-district, Chiang Khan District, Loei Province. The temple was built in 1656. It is an old temple known by the locals as Wat Yai.

2) Mahathat Temple, Chiang Khan Sub-district, Chiang Khan District, Loei Province. Mahathat Temple is the oldest temple in Chiang Khan, built in 1654, along with the founding of Chiang Khan City. The villagers call the temple “Wat Luang Pho Yai”. The temple is located at 22, Chiang Khan Village, Sri Chiang Khan Road, Village No. 2, Chiang Khan Sub-district, Chiang Khan District, Loei Province.

3) Tha Khok Temple, Chiang Khan Sub-district, Chiang Khan District, Loei Province. Tha Khok temple was built in 1852. It is believed that the temple was built by Phraya Sri Akhahat, the last ruler of Chiang Khan, originally located along the Mekong River. The city of Chiang Khan had a whirlpool bay where a part of the Mekong River flows into the land and forms a bay, which is called "Khok" in the local language, and the word was used was to name the temple. The city was under Phitsanulok Province. As legend says, Phraya Sri Akhahat's father and the villagers helped build Wat Tha Khok. Tha Khok Temple is located at 25 Chiang Khan Village, Chai Khong Road, Village No. 2, Chiang Khan Sub-district, Chiang Khan District, Loei Province.

4) Manao Diao Pagoda, Ahi Sub-district, Tha Li District, Loei Province. Manao Diao Pagoda is an old rectangular pagoda built with bricks and cement, located in the area of Sirimongkol Temple, Ahi Sub-district, Tha Li District, Loei Province. Legend says that an army from Vientiane wanted to travel to join in building Phra That Si Song Rak. However, before traveling, there was an agreement that they hear the sound of a gong ringing, it is considered that Phra That Si Song Rak has been completed and that the army should stop where they are and hit the gong to inform other troops as well. This particular army was led by Luang Phor Bak Nao. Therefore, the Ahi villagers call Chao Hua Bak Nao. After hearing the sound of the gong, the army rested at Ahi Village. They used the items and money donated through the faith of the people of Vientiane to build the Pagoda. However, Chao Hua Bak Nao also wishes to return to build a pagoda in Vientiane and rush the construction of the Pagoda at Ahi village. After construction was completed, there was still no name for this pagoda. The villagers then called the pagoda after the name of its builder, Chao Hua Buck Nao Khwe (Khweo means haste) and the pagoda has been called Chao Hua Bak Nao Khwe ever since. Later on, the pronunciation of the name became Chao Hua Bak Nao Diao and the official name became “Chao Hua Manao Diao Pagoda.”

5) Sri Pho Chai Temple, Saeng Pha Village, Na Haeo Sub-district, Na Haeo District, began construction in 1547. The chapel or sim in Sri Pho Chai Temple is similar to Chiang Khong Temple in Luang Prabang, Laos. Architecture in Loei Province between 1654 and the present has been influenced by Ayutthaya art, Lan Xang art, and Chinese art.

6) Pho Chai Temple, Na Phuen Village, Na Phueng Sub-district, Na Haeo District, Loei Province. Pho Chai Temple was built in 1832. There are mural paintings inside the temple with sims within the temple area. The outside walls of the viharas consist of paintings

starting from the inverted lotus base up to the edge wall. The patterns consist of the Kam Pu pattern as frames in the middle and the lower parts of the mural paintings. The background of the painting is white as in the traditional Isan mural paintings.

7) Phra That Si Song Rak, Dan Sai District, Loei Province, located on the banks of the Man River, approximately 3 kilometers southwest of Dan Sai District. The temple was built in 1560 and completed in 1563. Phra That Si Song Rak was built to witness the mutual assistance between Ayutthaya under the reign of King Maha Chakkraphat and Srisattanakhanahut City, currently called Vientiane, in Lao PDR.

8) Chao Pho Pak Hueang Shrine, Tha Dee Mi Village, Pak Tom Sub-district, Chiang Khan District, Chao Pho Pak Hueang Shrine is a local shrine built according to the beliefs of the people in the community. It is located in the foothills of Phu Khong Ngio, northeast of Ban Tha Dee Mi community, Pak Tom Sub-district, Chiang Khan District, Loei Province. It is located next to the bank of the Hueang River to the east.

4.3.1.2 Components of the housing and other buildings.

1) Chiang Khan Sky Walk, Chiang Khan District, Loei Province, was built around the Phu Khong Ngio statue. The landmark of the skywalk is the 360-degree panoramic viewpoint around the point where the Hueang River merges with the Mekong River and the two colors of the water can be seen from May to June. The spot is also a perfect spot for observing the Lao PDR atmosphere, which covers Wenkham Mai Village, Mueang Kaen Thao, Xayaburi Subdistrict, and Mueang Chanakham Vientiane Province.

2) Chiang Khan Walking Street, Chiang Khan District, Loei Province. Chiang Khan Walking Street is a tourist site in Chiang Khan District, Loei Province, which is an ancient part of the city, the center for trade, the storage and distribution of products between Vientiane, Luang Prabang, and other cities along the Mekong River. The city has a history of over one hundred years. The identity of Chiang Khan Walking Street is the nature along both sides of the Mekong River and the beautiful culture of the old wooden houses along the three kilometers of the Mekong River. There are old houses with plastered cement covering bamboo walls, the identity of old houses along the Chiang Khan Walking Street. In addition, there are also souvenir shops, restaurants, and coffee shops all along the area.

4.3.1.2 Components of the natural surrounding and the community cultural area

1) Nam Hueang Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge, Tha Li District, Loei Province, is located at Na Kraseng Village, Tha Li Sub-district, Tha Li District, Loei Province. This bridge was built across the Hueang River connecting Thailand and Lao PDR. This bridge goes through Kaen Thao City, Xayaburi Province, and connects to Route 4 to Luang Prabang, with a total distance of 363 kilometers.

2) Phu E Lert, Pak Man Sub-district, Dan Sai District, located in the area of Pak Man Village, Pak Man Sub-district, Dan Sai District, inside the Ban Pak Man Community Forest (Phu E Lert). It is a mixed forest of deciduous dipterocarp forest, evergreen forest, dry evergreen forest, and cliffside forest. The area has been developed into an ecotourism destination with the communities' involvement in the management.

3) Phu Kao Ngom, Namala Sub-district, Na Haeo District, Loei Province, known by the locals as Ninth Curve, situated on highway number 2113, Dan Sai - Na Haeo route. Both sides of the two-lane road are reserved forests, The road also has dangerous curves on the way down the mountain. At present, the Loei Road District has expanded the road, making it possible to travel around more conveniently and more accessible to tourists, making this

spot the new check-in point for new tourist attractions in Na Haeo District due to its beautiful S shape.

4) The Mueang Phrae Relief Point, Na Haeo Sub-district, Na Haeo District, is located in the Mueang Phrae community on the banks of Hueang River and adjacent to the Thai-Lao border in Na Haeo Sub-district, Na Haeo District, Loei Province. Mueang Phrae relief point has a border with Mueang Phrae Village, Bo Tan City, Lao PDR. Normally, the Thai-Lao PDR border market at Mueang Phrae Village is open daily from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Mueang Phrae villagers in Na Haeo District, Thailand, often travel across the Hueang River to make merit at Pho Si Temple, Mueang Phrae Village, Bo Tan City, Xayaburi Province in Lao PDR every Buddhist holiday.



Figure 2 Pho Si Temple



Figure 3 Mueang Phrae Relief Point

4.2.2) Abstract Cultural Landscape

4.2.2.1) Components of the tradition

1) Traditional Flower Procession at Ban Saeng Pha, Na Haeo District. The processions started with the construction of the temple was completed in 1547, over 400 years ago. The practice was based on the belief in offering flowers to monks on Songkran Day, the Thai New Year. Offering the Triple Gem with flowers was considered an auspicious act, starting from collecting the individual fresh flowers to making bouquets, which developed into big and small flower pedestals with bamboo structures. The pedestal started in small sizes to the size that required four people to carry, and eventually big trees that required six, eight, or ten people to carry. The difference between the flower trees here compared to other areas is that the size of the trees is bigger, at 15 meters high and three meters wide.

2) The merit-making tradition of Phra That Din Tan Celebration, Saeng Pha Village, Na Haeo District, is held every year in November. The steps for making merit include bringing in Pheung tree, an umbrella, bringing five and eight Khandhas to pay homage to the Buddha along with flowers, incense sticks, and candles. After, soil is brought up to the pagoda according to the amount the person had promised as well as praying for the following year.

3) Thai-Lao Songkran Festival, Mueang Phrae village, Na Haeo Sub-district, is held on April 10 of every year at the Mueang Phrae Relief Point. Due to the decrease of the water level in Hueang River at this time of year, villagers from Bo Tan City in Xayaburi province can cross over to Thailand through the Mueang Phrae Relief Point, Na Haeo District, Loei Province to join the Songkran Festival and visit their relatives on the Thai side. Muang Prae Village is a small village on the bank of Hueang River along the Thai-Lao border.

4) The tradition of boiling salt at Mueang Phrae Village, Na Haeo District, started over a hundred years ago. A rock salt pond was accidentally discovered in the middle of the Hueang River. When the water in the Hueang River receded, villagers walked in and found

a lot of the soil along the river in the form of white flakes rising above the surface. They dredged down to see if there were any more white scales like salt at the bottom and found that there was a black and gray rock blocking it with a small stream flowing through the rocks. After tasting it, villagers found that the water that came out was very salty. The villagers then tried boiling the water. White flakes of salt formed after the water dried up. The village leaders agreed that they had to find a hollow wooden tree trunk to fill in the well to make it easier to bring the salt water up for use. The salt well in the middle of the Hueang River is still visible today.

5) The Phi Ta Khon parade tradition Dan Sai District, Loei Province, is part of the big traditional merit-making event, also known as "Bun Luang Festival" or "Bun Phawet", which falls on the 7th lunar month. The festival is held in Dan Sai District, Loei Province, every year. The festival is connected with the annual Mahachat merit-making event or Mahachat sermon and Phra That Si Song Rak.

6) Phra That Si Song Rak Ceremony, Dan Sai District, Loei Province. Although Phra That Si Song Rak is not located in many villages in Dan Sai District. it is the anchor of all Dan Sai people, which can be seen through the traditional event to worship Phra That Si Song Rak which is held during the 6th month of every year. The event is organized for 4 days and 3 nights by villagers in the nearby communities. Villagers in Loei Province who have faith Phra That Si Song Rak will come to join in this tradition every year.

7) Flower Tree Procession tradition, Ahi Village, Loei Province. The Flower Tree Procession tradition of the Ahi Sub-district has been inherited by the people of Ahi Subdistrict from generation to generation. After the tradition was accumulated over a long period, it developed into the creation of large flower bouquets called flower trees by using bamboo to make trees covered with banana sheaths or grass and decorated with leaves or flowers. There are also other offerings such as notebooks, pencils, cotton, matches, incense sticks, and candles, beautifully decorated to offer to monks at the temple.

8) Tradition of Annual Feast Ceremony of Chao Pho Pak Hueang, Chiang Khan District, Loei Province. Chao Pho Pak Hueang's Annual Feast Ceremony is considered an important traditional event for Tha Di Mee villagers and nearby communities who have faith in Chao Pho Pak Hueang. The ceremony will be held during the waxing moon day of the 7th month of every year.

4.2.2.2) Components of the tradition

1) Hor Luang Merit Feast Ceremony, Dan Sai District, Loei Province, is a ceremony that has been carried on for over 450 years. The ceremony is held on the 9th day of the waxing moon of the 7th lunar month for a total of 3 days. After the Hor Luang Feast Ceremony, there will be a ritual at Chao Por Kuan's Shrine in the evening to inform the spirit of the city ruler that the year's feast ceremony has been completed.



Figure 5 Phra That Din Tan Celebration Village

Figure 6 Flower Tree Procession at Ahi

5. Research Conclusion

The study of the identity and cultural landscape of the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province, can be concluded as follows.

5.1. The identity of the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province

The identity of the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province is expressed in cultural forms 1) the local history started from the fact that they have the same ancestor based on the study of relevant documents and myths. The people travel back and forth between the two areas due to trade, wars, and the kinship that was formed in the past. 2) Belief and Religion. People in the communities along the Hueang River received influence from the Luang Prabang people who believed in Animism, which was their traditional belief. They later shifted their belief to Buddhism but still maintained their traditional belief, merging the two beliefs. The belief in Brahmin superstition has integrated into the way of life. 3) Traditions and Rituals. The people in the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province, maintain the Heet Sip Song Khlong Sip See tradition, passed down from the Lan Xang era in the past. The current status of each area might still be different in some details, but the core of the tradition still maintains the characteristics of the Lan Xang culture. 4) Language. The communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province, use the southwestern group of the Tai Loei language, the same language as the Luang Prabang language. 5) Arts. Most of the arts in the communities along the Hueang River were influenced by the Lan Xang Arts. Therefore, the overall culture helped create a unique identity from the social process of creating the inheriting based on the social relationship context to the Luang Prabang ethnic group in the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province.

5.2 Cultural Landscape of the Communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province

The cultural landscape of the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province, can be divided into physical cultural landscapes, consisting of 1) components of the beliefs and religious buildings, such as Sri Khun Mueang Temple, Mahathat Temple, Tha Khok Temple, Chao Por Pak Hueang Shrine, Phra That Si Song Rak, Sri Pho Chai Temple, Pho Chai Temple, Phra That Manao Diao. 2) The components of the housings and other buildings, such as Chaing Khan Walking Street and Skywalk Chiangkhan. 3) The components of the natural surroundings and the community cultural area system, such as Phu E Lert, Nam Hueang Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge, Phu Kao Ngom, and Mueang Phrae relief point. Abstract cultural landscapes can be divided into 1) Components of traditions, such as Saeng Pha Village Flower Procession Tradition, Phra That Din Tan Ceremony, Thai-Lao Songkran Tradition, Mueang Phrae Phi Ta Khon Tradition, Phra That Si Song Rak Ceremony, Chao Pho Pak Hueang Celebration, Ahi Village Flower Tree Procession Tradition, and the tradition of Salt Boiling at Mueang Phrae Village. 2) The components of the ritual consist of the Hor Luang Feast Celebration.

6. Discussion of Results

The discussions of results from the study of the communities along the Hueang River, Loei province are as follows.

The identity of the communities along the Hueang River consists of cultural forms in 1) local history, 2) religious beliefs, 3) traditions and rituals, 4) language, and 5) arts that were influenced by the Luang Prabang group from the relationship with the surrounding environment of the communities. These cultural forms have been accumulated and inherited and become culture. This aspect aligns with the concept of identity by Leepreecha (2004) who stated that identity is about the understanding of who we are and who other people are, which is built through the social process of creating and inheriting based on the social relationship context. The findings are also in line with the concept of cultural

diffusion by Leo Frobenius (cited in Duangwises, 2018) from receiving the influence of Lan Xang culture through the cultural form of local history, belief and religion, traditions and rituals, language, and arts. This is a form of cultural diffusion from one place to another while the original culture still holds the power. The diffusion was done through individuals who carried their traditional culture with them when migrating. This mechanism of cultural diffusion is a diffusion process to nearby areas and indirectly through interactions with people, which was what happened in the communities along the Hueang River, Loei Province.

The cultural landscape of the communities along the Hueang River is a cultural form that reflects the mixture and connection between humans and nature, the social development of humans, and settlements under physical restrictions. Culture can be divided into physical and abstract cultural landscapes. The physical cultural landscape of the communities along the Hueang River consists of 1) the components of the beliefs and religious buildings, including Sri Khun Mueang Temple, Mahathat Temple, Tha Khok Temple, Chao Por Pak Hueang Shrine, Phra That Si Song Rak, Sri Pho Chai Temple, Pho Chai Temple, Phra That Manao Diao, 2) components of the housings and other buildings, including Chiang Khan Walking Street and Skywalk Chiang Khan, 3) the components of the natural surroundings and the community cultural areas system, such as Phu E Lert, Nam Hueang Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge, Phu Kao Ngom, and Mueang Phrae relief point. Abstract cultural landscapes can be divided into 1) Components of traditions, such as Saeng Pha Village Flower Procession Tradition, Phra That Din Tan Ceremony, Thai-Lao Songkran Tradition, Mueang Phrae Phi Ta Khon Tradition, Phra That Si Song Rak Ceremony, Chao Pho Pak Hueang Celebration, Ahi Village Flower Tree Procession Tradition, and the tradition of Salt Boiling at Mueang Phrae Village. 2) The components of the ritual consist of the Hor Luang Feast Celebration. The findings align with Ken Taylor (2008, cited in Boonyapavit & Yatmak, 2008) who stated that cultural landscape means all values, physical and abstract, that the community members uphold and their actions towards their surroundings, nature, and geography to create prosperity and develop human society into a geography that consists of cultural resources and nature that relate to the historical development and possess aesthetic values.

7. Suggestions

7.1 The findings can be applied to the following.

7.1.1 Agencies related to tourism can use the research data to present to tourists to promote culture and natural tourism.

7.1.2 Institutions can use the research data to include in the local curriculum and education management for the students to learn about their community identity and cultural landscape.

7.1.3 The local communities can use the data from this research to further develop tourism in their communities.

7.2 Suggestions for future research

7.2.1 There should be additional data collection in the communities along the Hueang River on the Thai-Lao border to get more comprehensive data.

7.2.2 Future research should study and compare the factors contributing to changes in the cultural landscape in the communities along the Hueang River, Loei province, and the reasons for the changes.

7.2.3 Future research should add additional quantitative data collection tools to provide more diverse data.

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