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¹ คณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏนครปฐม อีเมล snareema@hotmail.com

² คณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏนครปฐม อีเมล duangjit018@gmail.com

Cultural Capital and Cultural Adaptation of the Lao-Wiang Ethnic Group in Ban Khong, Photaram District, Ratchaburi Province: A Case Study of the Boon Khao Jee to Boon Khao Lam

Nareema Sangwiman^{1*} & Duangjit Sukhapabsuk²

¹ Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University, Email: snareema@hotmail.com

² Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University, Email: duangjit018@gmail.com

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อสำรวจรูปแบบทุนทางวัฒนธรรมและการปรับเปลี่ยนทุนทางวัฒนธรรมของกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ลาวเวียงในตำบลบ้านผ่อง อำเภอโพธาราม จังหวัดราชบุรี จากการศึกษาเอกสารพบว่า ชุมชนลาวเวียงในพื้นที่ยังคงรักษาภาษา วัฒนธรรมและประเพณีทางศาสนาไว้โดยมีวัดท่องถื่นทำหน้าที่เป็นศูนย์กลางในการเผยแพร่วัฒนธรรม พิธีกรรมสำคัญ เช่น บุญข้าวจีและบุญข้าวหลาม เป็นส่วนสำคัญของกระบวนการนี้ ในการช่างใจซึ่งกันและกัน สถาบันครอบครัวมีบทบาทสำคัญในการถ่ายทอดธรรมเนียมปฏิบัติไปสู่ชันรุ่นใหม่ นอกจากนี้ การสร้างความตระหนักรู้ด้านความร่วมมือแบบมุรุราการระหว่างองค์กรท้องถิ่น สถาบันการศึกษาและหน่วยงานภาครัฐเป็นสิ่งจำเป็นเพื่อส่งเสริมและเผยแพร่ประเพณีของชาวลาวเวียง เพื่อเพิ่มความตระหนักรู้ของชุมชนเกี่ยวกับการอนุรักษ์วัฒนธรรมในรูปแบบอื่น ๆ เพื่อสร้างโอกาสในการจ้างงาน และสร้างรายได้ อีกทั้งยังส่งเสริมให้คนรุ่นใหม่เล็งเห็นความสำคัญกับการศึกษาทรัพย์สินทางปัญญาและวัฒนธรรมของชุมชน เพื่อให้เกิดการจัดการทุนทางวัฒนธรรมอย่างยั่งยืน

Abstract

This article aims to investigate the patterns of cultural capital and cultural adaptation within the Lao-Wiang ethnic community in Ban Khong Subdistrict, Photaram District, Ratchaburi Province. A documentary investigation indicated that the Lao-Wiang group in this region has significantly preserved its language, culture, and religious traditions. Local temples function as crucial centers for cultural transmission. Essential rites, including Boon Khao Jee and Boon Khao Lam, are fundamental to this process, sustaining the continuity of traditional customs throughout generations. The family unit is essential for imparting cultural traditions to the younger generation. Moreover, cultivating awareness and cohesive collaboration among local organizations, educational institutions, and governmental agencies is crucial for the promotion and dissemination of Lao-Wiang customs. This cooperation aims to elevate community understanding regarding cultural preservation, offer employment possibilities, and produce income. It also encourages the younger generation in acknowledging the significance of examining the community's intellectual and cultural resources to ensure the ongoing sustainability of cultural capital management.

1. Introduction

Thailand, a nation shaped by centuries of migration, trade, and historical interactions, exhibits remarkable cultural diversity among its ethnic groups. This diversity is evident across its various regions, where multiple communities coexist, each possessing unique cultural capital. Far from homogeneous, Thailand's rich mosaic reflects a long and continuous evolution of its social and historical aspects, spanning from prehistoric periods through the Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, Thonburi, and early Rattanakosin eras, up to the present day. (Muchanchoi, 2015). Thailand's central region, for instance, has historically been a melting pot of ethnicities. Groups such as the Tai Song Dam, Lao Wiang, and Lao Khrang migrated from the Thonburi period to the early Rattanakosin era (Boonyasathit, 2017). Despite their assimilation into mainstream Thai society, many have remarkably preserved their unique traditions, cultural practices, and distinct ethnic identities.

This cultural richness is particularly pronounced in Ratchaburi Province, located in Thailand's western central region. In B.E. 2437 (1894 CE), the monarch selected Ratchaburi as a settlement for groups seeking royal patronage and war captives. This decision led to the integration of various cultures and the establishment of diverse cultural traditions, which have been consistently nurtured and developed over time. Ratchaburi province is a notable example, especially Photharam district, which has been home to the Lao Wiang ethnic group for generations. This community actively upholds its traditional customs and rituals, including the significant Bun Khao Jee and Bun Khao Lam ceremonies, celebrated during Makha Bucha Day, which are instrumental in fostering community cooperation and unity (Piyabhan, 1986; Boonyasathit, 2017; Sutuchaya, 1998; Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2025).

Photharam District, a key administrative division in Ratchaburi, has historically served as a settlement for five primary ethnic groups: Thai of Chinese descent, Tai Yuan, Mon, Khmer of Ratchaburi, and the Lao Wiang. The Lao Wiang, whose name signifies their origins in Vientiane, were forcibly relocated from Vientiane during periods of war in the Thonburi and Early Rattanakosin eras. They were sometimes referred to as "Lao Ti" due to their distinctive speech patterns often ending with the word "Ti." With the abolition of slavery during King Chulalongkorn's reign (Rama V), Lao captives in Ratchaburi gained freedom, leading many Lao Wiang families to establish permanent settlements and livelihoods in Photharam District, where their descendants reside today (Trisawat, 2017).

Several studies highlight Ratchaburi Province's diverse population, identifying eight significant ethnic groups: indigenous Central Thai from Ban Pho Hak, Thai of Chinese descent, Tai Yuan, Soong (Thai Song Dam), Mon, Karen, Lao (Lao Wiang), and Khmer of Ratchaburi (Khmer Lao Duem). This rich ethnic mosaic contributes to the province's abundant cultural traditions, local wisdom, and social capital. Local authorities strategically leverage this diversity to promote religious, cultural, and traditional activities, aligning with Ratchaburi's provincial development strategy for the 2017 fiscal year, which aims to strengthen morality and community resilience. (Trisawat, 2017; Ratchaburi Provincial Cultural Office, 2004; Sutuchaya, 1998).

A specific subgroup, the Lao Wiang, traces its ancestry directly to Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic, having been forcibly relocated to Thailand approximately 200 years ago (Mueanphothong, 2021). While most contemporary Lao Wiang individuals rarely speak their native language, often due to feelings of embarrassment regarding their accent and speech, their cultural heritage is profoundly maintained through practices such as the Sart Lao Wiang festival. This festival stands as a significant and exemplary tradition reflecting their core values of love, unity, and filial piety towards their ancestors. It has been an integral part of the Lao Wiang community since its establishment and continues to be practiced, serving as a vital cultural heritage that reinforces social cohesion and intergenerational respect.

Despite centuries of migration and pressures to assimilate, the Lao Wiang group in Photharam District, Ratchaburi Province, exemplifies a rich cultural heritage firmly anchored in its traditions. Their tenacity is evident in the remarkable retention of distinctive customs, such as the Bun Khao Gee and Bun Khao Lam ceremonies, which foster strong community cooperation and solidarity. The Sart Lao Wiang event further strengthens social cohesion and intergenerational respect by emphasizing their fundamental values of love, unity, and filial devotion towards ancestors. Temples serve as essential communal spaces for expressing their beliefs and way of life. This strong sense of community, coupled with a deep conviction in Buddhism, encourages active participation in religious merit-making and the intergenerational transfer of traditions. (Kanjanapan, 2015; Kitiarsa, 2008; Kraisonrat, 2012).

In addition to maintaining customs, the Lao Wiang demonstrate notable cultural flexibility in response to changing political and socioeconomic conditions. While many Lao Wiang people may no longer speak their ancestral language due to historical circumstances, the aforementioned customs and celebrations actively preserve their cultural legacy. This illustrates a pragmatic adaptation: despite the loss of linguistic components, the core of their identity is maintained through customs and communal gatherings. Their deliberate use of temples as public forums for dialogue and the preservation of cultural capital, leveraging pre-existing structures to advance their cultural objectives, further exemplifies this adaptability. (Boonchan, 2019; Kitiarsa, 2008; Jantanukul, 2018).

Ultimately, the Lao Wiang's journey demonstrates the critical role indigenous wisdom plays in the social governance of their community. Traditional leaders promote harmony and collaboration by mediating conflicts, officiating life events, and providing education. The incorporation of ancient customs, such as religious rites and cultural beliefs, is vital for the community's social stability. To ensure the ongoing transmission of their values and identity, active participation from younger generations in these cultural activities is crucial. The Lao Wiang community's continued engagement in its distinctive cultural customs not only affirms their Buddhist beliefs but also strengthens their essential social cohesiveness.

2. Literature review

Due to Ratchaburi's advantageous topography, both foreigners and several indigenous Thai communities from neighbouring Myanmar were able to migrate there. Because of the continuous historical migration, Ratchaburi is a city with a great deal of ethnic diversity, which has had a profound impact on its social structure and cultural milieu. The Central Thais from Ban Pho Hak, Chinese Thais, Northern Thais, Tai Dam, Thai Mon, Thai Karen, Original Khmer Lao, and Lao Wiang are the eight distinct ethnic groups that currently call Ratchaburi home (Ratchaburi Provincial Office, 2019; Royal Thai Army, 2007; Department of Cultural Promotion, 2015). With eight different ethnic groups living together in one province, this exceptional demographic specificity offers a rare chance to examine the complex mechanisms of cultural capital in a practical context.

The diverse ethnic makeup has led to a constant flow of diverse customs, civilizations, and indigenous knowledge, which together represent Ratchaburi Province's cultural capital. Cultural capital is defined by Bourdieu (1986) as the collective cultural knowledge, skills, and competencies that are acquired and passed down, giving individuals and groups social benefits. Vibrant customs, unique local knowledge, and a strong sense of community identity are the manifestations of this collective cultural capital in Ratchaburi, and they are always being copied and modified. Ratchaburi still benefits greatly from the presence and integration of these various types of cultural resources. Ratchaburi is a crucial research region because of the sheer quantity and unique identities of these groups, which offer an unmatched laboratory for watching how various types of cultural capital are preserved, negotiated, and maybe modified through intergroup interaction.

2.1 Cultural capital as a foundation for ethnic diversity

Cultural capital is defined as the resources and heritage that contribute to cultural development. Broadly, it encompasses the resources utilized to create culturally significant goods and services, with any products or services incorporating cultural elements being classified as cultural products. More specifically, "cultural capital" denotes the substantial cultural legacy assets both tangible and intangible that have been accumulated and transmitted within local communities from historical eras to the present. This collected cultural heritage holds immense value and significance for both societal and national growth. (Nammuang, 2008; Kachin, 2022). Drawing on Bourdieu's (1986) concept, cultural capital is defined as the accumulated cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities that are transmitted and acquired, providing individuals and groups with social advantages. In Ratchaburi, this collective cultural capital manifests in vibrant traditions, unique local wisdom, and a strong sense of community identity, which are continually reproduced and adapted. This characteristic remains a significant strength for Ratchaburi to this day.

Cultural capital possesses the capacity to foster social fairness which is cultivated through intergenerational lessons that profoundly shape contemporary practices. While these cultural features are inherently abstract and intangible, their influence can be clearly observed through concrete behaviors. This dynamic interplay between abstract cultural assets and tangible actions introduces the critical role of knowledge management. By examining how cultural capital is administered, we can better comprehend the aspirations and objectives of diverse ethnic groups. This understanding is vital for both generating new knowledge and effectively leveraging historical information, thereby enhancing the cultural capital of the present generation. Ultimately, the effective exchange of knowledge regarding cultural capital through the collection and dissemination of information is essential. This collaborative process promotes shared understanding and refines the ways in which these valuable cultural assets are utilized and augmented. (Koson, 2018; Muchanchoi, 2015).

Cultural capital, in the context of modern societies, industries, and educational institutions, can be understood as the accumulation of knowledge, behaviors, and skills that individuals acquire from their cultural backgrounds. This capital is profoundly linked to identity, shaping individuals' self-perception and their perceptions of others. Diverse cultures create distinct identities that offer both opportunities and challenges within educational and societal frameworks. As societies become increasingly comprised of persons from varied cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, the ability to navigate and leverage this diversity becomes a crucial form of cultural capital. This necessitates that individuals develop the capacity to understand various perspectives in their surroundings, mitigate misconceptions, assumptions, biases, and discrimination related to other cultures and individuals, and ultimately, to understand one another for effective cohabitation and collaboration. (Lin, 2020)

Cultural capital, therefore, allows individuals to transcend their own viewpoints and interact with others to understand and experience different ways of life. This enrichment transforms countries, corporations, and educational institutions into more dynamic and innovative settings, fostering a deeper collective understanding and enabling greater societal progress.

2.2 Cultural adaptation as the dynamic evolution of local culture and community: A cultural capital perspective

The interplay of globalization and localization has been a prominent area of academic inquiry, underscoring the equal importance of understanding local developments alongside global trends. In Thailand, the local landscape has undergone significant transformation, evolving into economically vibrant and industrious urban centers. Concurrently, the study of culture has advanced, with local traditions and ways of life becoming symbols of cultural consumption and integral to the tourism industry. These traditional practices, with their inherent cultural value and beauty, represent a significant form of cultural capital, a resource that communities possess and can leverage. However, a critical observation (Gotham, 2005) reveals

that the presentation of this cultural capital in some areas can be superficial. It often serves to satisfy a nostalgic longing for the past rather than genuinely interpreting the profound meaning and intention behind these cultural portrayals, which are frequently shaped by prevailing tourism patterns. This suggests a challenge in cultural adaptation, where the commodification of local heritage for tourism risks diluting its authentic cultural capital if not managed thoughtfully. As stated, a community that has a long history and is based on its own culture and set of values its “people” and “community” inherently. This viewpoint is consistent with the local cultural practices, superstitious beliefs, and natural values that are common in modern-day society. (Lin, 2020)

The primary aim of community strengthening is to cultivate a sense of solidarity among residents, motivating them to collaborate as partners in action. This collaboration, driven by love and compassion, operates within an efficient management framework and fosters a shared objective for the public good. The primary goal is to empower individuals to actively enhance the welfare of their communities. This encompasses the development of communal spirituality and consciousness, which guarantees that residents possess a profound comprehension of their shared identity and purpose. A robust community embraces continuous learning, which is perpetually evolving and has strengthened community organizations that proficiently serve their constituents. Moreover, robust community networks, effective community management, and astute community leadership are vital for the community's advancement towards its objectives. A solid community is one that is self-sufficient and capable of thriving through its own resources and initiatives. This not only guarantees the community's continued existence and prosperity without fragmentation but also promotes communal harmony and facilitates genuine sustainable development. By adopting these concepts, communities can establish a robust and sustainable future for themselves and subsequent generations. (Pholsri, 2004)

3. Cultural capital and identity perception in the Lao Wiang Community

The Lao Wiang people are direct descendants of communities forcibly relocated from Vientiane during the Thonburi and Early Rattanakosin periods, a consequence of historical conflicts between Siam and Laos (Pinyong, 2020; Nanthanawanit, 2002; Trisawat, 2017). Their migration occurred in two major waves, allowing them to retain distinct ethnolinguistic characteristics, cultural traditions, clothing styles, and religious practices that align with those of the broader Lao Wiang population. The term "Lao Wiang" literally refers to their origins in Vientiane, Laos, and they were sometimes known as "Lao Ti" due to their unique speech pattern, particularly the frequent use of "Ti" at the end of sentences, meaning "Is that so?" or "Or not" (Ratchaburi City Hall, 2019). For example, "Bo Pai Nam Kan Ti" translates to "Aren't you going together?" This linguistic quirk serves as a marker of their distinct identity, demonstrating cultural retention—the persistence of cultural traits over time despite external influences.

The collective representation of the Lao Wiang identity in Ban Khong Subdistrict is facilitated through group-oriented social interactions. Kinship-based networks and inter-household relationships are reinforced through the practice of "phuk siao", a custom involving the exchange of food and goods, symbolizing reciprocal social bonds. This form of non-verbal communication (non-verbal identity expression) is exemplified by paired bamboo sticky rice offerings, signifying respect and goodwill. Furthermore, the practice of carefully selecting and peeling Khao Lam before distribution emphasizes the cultural importance of hospitality and social hierarchy, as these offerings are customarily presented to respected elders and relatives.

The recognition of cultural capital within the Lao Wiang ethnic community in Photharam District is explored through an examination of the contemporary generation's efforts to retrace ancestral heritage via rituals and traditions. Findings indicate that religious ceremonies and inherited traditions remain central to the community's cultural fabric, despite modifications

in their forms and execution. Elderly members, in particular, uphold and transmit the significance of Boon Khao Lam (Bamboo Sticky Rice Merit-Making Festival), observed on the full moon of the 3rd lunar month. They serve as key informants, recounting ancestral histories through ritual practices, culinary traditions, and traditional attire particularly the sin (woven skirt) worn during major festivities.

From a broader perspective, Buddhist temples serve as central sites for the expression of Lao Wiang identity, surpassing the role of mere religious institutions. They function as communal spaces for socio-religious interactions, where the transmission of ethnic traditions is actively sustained. The interconnection between religion, kinship, and local customs reinforces the socio-cultural continuity of the Lao Wiang community, ensuring that traditional identity remains a dynamic and adaptive force, rather than a static relic of the past.

3.1 Ethnic identity communication and cultural adaptation of the Lao Wiang Community in Photharam District, Ratchaburi Province

The Lao Wiang community in Ban Khong Subdistrict demonstrates a powerful example of cultural capital and cultural adaptation through their Boon Khao Lam (Bamboo Sticky Rice Merit-Making Festival). This festival isn't just about food; it's a dynamic interplay of shared knowledge, social practices, and environmental relationships that evolve while preserving core traditions.

The Lao Wiang community of Ban Khong Subdistrict exemplifies a vibrant interplay of cultural capital and cultural adaptation through their Boon Khao Lam (Bamboo Sticky Rice Merit-Making Festival). This annual event is a profound demonstration of their collective knowledge, skills, and values. Practices like the "long khaek" (to help each other) mutual labor exchange and the "phuk siao" (being friend) ritual exchange of Khao Lam strengthen communal bonds and ensure social cohesion, actively preventing isolation. Furthermore, the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, evident in the sustained use of dried cattle dung as fuel, underscores their deep connection to ancestors and a traditional, sustainable relationship with nature. This holistic approach to their heritage showcases how their shared cultural capital forms the bedrock of their community's identity.

While deeply rooted in tradition, the Lao Wiang community also exhibits remarkable cultural adaptation in the face of modernization. The shift from wild-harvested bamboo to commercially sourced bamboo for Khao Lam preparation illustrates a pragmatic flexibility. This adaptation prioritizes the continuity of the Khao Lam offering itself, demonstrating a willingness to adjust means without compromising the core cultural meaning or purpose of the ritual. This nuanced approach allows them to maintain essential cultural elements while navigating contemporary changes, ensuring the festival's relevance and longevity.

Ultimately, the Boon Khao Lam Festival is more than just a culinary tradition; it's a dynamic expression of the Lao Wiang people's resilience and identity. The preparation and offering of Khao Lam serve as powerful vehicles for cultural continuity, fostering a sense of belonging and cultural pride. By skillfully blending their rich cultural capital with a flexible approach to adaptation, the Lao Wiang community not only preserves its unique heritage but also actively sustains it, ensuring that its vibrant traditions remain relevant and meaningful in a rapidly evolving world.

3.2 Preservation, adaptation, and cultural continuity: A case study of the Lao Wiang Community in Ban Khong

The Boon Khao Jee and Boon Khao Lam festivals are central to the cultural identity of the Lao Wiang ethnic community central part of Thailand. These vibrant traditions not only preserve their rich heritage but also beautifully illustrate how cultural practices can evolve and adapt over time, much like a living tapestry woven through generations. As essential social gathering places, temples offer a powerful forum for preserving and expressing their ethnic identity,

strengthening the bond between their everyday lives and cultural heritage. This observation is consistent with previous studies that emphasize the important role that religious practices play in maintaining ethnic identity and fostering community ties, allowing for resilience in the face of contemporary change while preserving cultural roots (Boonchan, 2019; Kitiarsa, 2008; Jantanukul, 2018). As a result, their ongoing participation in cultural customs like the Lao Wieng tradition not only supports their Buddhist beliefs but also improves community cohesion. Additionally, this study investigates how the Lao Wieng ethnic group has preserved their cultural heritage while adapting to changing socioeconomic and political conditions. (Boonchan, 2019; Kitiarsa, 2008; Jantanukul, 2018).

In Ban Khong Subdistrict, the Boon Khao Jee festival stands as a testament to "preserved tradition". Here, the rituals are maintained in their original, time-honored forms, faithfully passed down from one generation to the next. This steadfast adherence to ancestral practices serves as a powerful and direct means for the Lao Wieng community to articulate their distinct ethnic identity. Elements of their traditional culture, like the graceful flow of a sin (woven skirt) with its distinct hem and waistband, neatly arranged hair, and the elegant drape of a shoulder-wrapped sash, are still cherished and worn today. Beyond attire, ancient customs such as Sart Lao (merit-making through food offerings), Bun Salakapat (merit-making through lottery offerings), Bun Phra Wet (a profound sermon on the Vessantara Jataka), and the joyous floral procession during the Songkran festival, continue to thrive, echoing centuries of devotion.

In vivid contrast, the Boon Khao Lam tradition in Ban Sing Subdistrict exemplifies a "creative tradition." This festival has been thoughtfully adapted to resonate with contemporary cultural narratives, often seamlessly integrated into broader initiatives like Thailand's Cultural Network Project. This dynamic adaptation involves not only reproducing existing rituals in fresh contexts but also thoughtfully crafting new ones intended for future cultural transmission, ensuring the tradition remains relevant and engaging in a modern world. The preparation and serving of Khao Jee (grilled sticky rice with egg) and Khao Lam (sticky rice baked in bamboo) are central to these celebrations. These culinary arts are multifaceted pillars of communal life that are intricately woven into the Lao Wieng culture.

The production of these delicious dishes is a complex dance of particular culinary techniques and traditional knowledge that has been lovingly passed down through the ages. It involves much more than just cooking. Picture the astute hands that choose the ideal glutinous rice, measure the exact amounts of sweet sugar and creamy coconut milk, skillfully prepare the bamboo casings, and master the delicate control of the cooking fire. These are more than just recipes; they are embodied cultural capital that is acquired through direct, practical involvement rather than reading books. As younger generations work side by side with their elders, they learn from every stir and every flame.

Social capital and communal ties are strengthened by the enormous amount of work required to prepare large quantities of Khao Jee and Khao Lam, which includes everything from harvesting the bamboo to husking the rice, combining ingredients, and baking the dish. In addition to strengthening enduring networks of reciprocity and creating a strong sense of collective identity, this shared labor serves as a potent crucible. A lively sense of community and support is fostered that goes well beyond the festival itself as a result of the delight of cooperating, exchanging tales, and learning from one another during these preparations. (Kanjanapan, 2015; Kitiarsa, 2008; Kraisonrat, 2012; Pinyong, 2020). The completed Khao Jee and Khao Lam are more than just food; they are deeply symbolic gifts to honored monks that are liberally distributed among the populace. This deed has great symbolic significance, strengthening religious convictions and encouraging an unbounded spirit of group giving. The ability to prepare these traditional foods, which are so rich in cultural meaning, elevates the status of those who learn these treasured skills and carry on the tradition by providing a treasured form of

community validation and recognition. In a world that is changing all the time, this rich symbolic capital serves as a vibrant affirmation of the Lao Wiang people's unique cultural identity.

3.3 Cultural sustainability and the role of state and community engagement

A critical challenge in the preservation of Lao Wiang identity is the lack of institutional support for local museums that had previously served as repositories of cultural knowledge. Due to financial constraints, several community-established museums dedicated to Lao Wiang heritage have been forced to close, thereby limiting the transmission of cultural memory. While some community leaders have sought to revive Lao Wiang traditions, their efforts have predominantly focused on historical research and cultural restoration, rather than on direct adaptation to contemporary socio-cultural transformations. This creates a paradoxical situation where the Lao Wiang community is perceived as engaging in cultural revitalization, yet their approach is retrospective rather than adaptive, emphasizing historical lineage over real-time sociocultural evolution.

The traditions, beliefs, and various folk games that are unique to the Lao Wiang people have been passed down to the younger generations less frequently. According to the research conducted by the study team, the knowledge of lifestyle, arts, traditions, and the distinct cultural heritage of the Lao Wiang ethnic group is fascinating. If these aspects were systematically collected and preserved, the valuable stories and wisdom of this ethnic group could be safeguarded for future generations. Furthermore, the preservation of such cultural heritage is crucial in fostering a sense of identity and belonging within the community. Traditional music, dance, rituals, and handicrafts reflect not only the aesthetic beauty of their culture but also the deep-rooted values and history of their ancestors. Previous research from a variety of societies points to the benefits of family. (Byun, 2012; Pinyong, 2020; Ritpen, 2012). The continuity, preservation, and even adaptation of cultural capital in family and community systems depend heavily on the embodied cultural capital of children and the objectified cultural capital of parents. Because it guarantees that these cultural components stay firmly ingrained in the way of life for generations, even in the face of modernity or other changes, a community's strength becomes more and more important. Although many aspects of Lao Wiang traditional life have changed significantly—particularly in terms of economic activities and daily lifestyles—certain cultural practices, such as dietary habits and religious customs, continue to be preserved. The sustainability of Lao Wiang cultural heritage requires a strategic approach that balances historical awareness with contemporary relevance.

4. Cultural capital and adaptability: Sustaining benefits in Boon Khao Lam Ritual

Community culture can be understood as a traditional identity, deeply rooted in local existence and continually shaped by the stories and historical experiences of its members. This "lived history" fosters a strong sense of shared identity within the community, enabling villagers to adapt and respond to external pressures. For instance, the expansion of agricultural land for economic development often leads to the transformation of traditional spaces into commercial zones, primarily benefiting landowners. In such scenarios, communities actively adapt and resist the influx of external capital to maintain their cultural integrity and way of life. (Boonbanya, 2006).

A key insight from this study is the critical role of cultural capital and cultural adaptability. The strategic deployment of these elements, as exemplified by the Lao Wiang Boon Khao Lam merit-making ritual, is instrumental in generating sustained benefits for the community through its ongoing practice.

4.1 The temple is a dynamic nexus of cultural capital

The temple becomes a vital social and cultural center to spread of manner and knowledge that are essential to the development and transfer of cultural capital rather than a static artifact. In order to ensure the maintenance of a vibrant

and flexible cultural legacy, rituals like Boon Khao Lam actively promote social solidarity and operate as essential channels for the dissemination of cultural narratives. Driven by Buddhist beliefs in merit-making, the community effort to build and restore temples represents a common social desire for prosperity. Similar to the Boon Khao Lam ceremony itself, these hallowed locations serve as vital gathering places where ethnic identities are actively expressed through rituals and ceremonies rather than just being preserved. This ongoing interaction satisfies spiritual needs while also fostering different types of cultural capital, which are institutionalized through long-standing religious and social systems, objectified through sacred goods and architecture, and embodied through shared activities. The community's continuous cultural adaptation and strong identity representation are clearly supported by this cooperative commitment.

4.2 Identity formation and the strategic intergenerational transmission of heritage

The process of identity formation within the Lao Wiang tribe profoundly underscores the intrinsic link between the preservation of ancestral lifestyles, the continuation of oral traditions, and the embrace of one's heritage. This intergenerational cultural transmission is not a passive process; rather, it actively establishes the foundational basis for contemporary identity negotiation and the continuous accumulation of cultural capital. By engaging with these inherited traditions, individuals are empowered to comprehend and articulate both their collective cultural identity and their unique personal identities. This dynamic interplay highlights how historical practices are not merely relics of the past but active components in the ongoing construction of modern identity.

4.3 Reinterpreting tradition: Boon Khao Lam as tactical cultural commercialization

Unlike traditional academic viewpoints that often categorize cultural rituals in tourism as either inflexible heritage conservation or purely profit-oriented endeavors, we assert that Boon Khao Lam exemplifies a sophisticated and deliberate strategy employed by the Lao Wiang community to effectively utilize its cultural assets. The community actively reinterprets Boon Khao Lam, asserting ownership and redefining its unique character and cultural capital, demonstrating a dynamic process of cultural adaptation rather than simple preservation. This intentional re-engagement allows the community to engage with and gently contest prevailing tourism narratives. The promotion of Lao Wiang identity via the Boon Khao Lam rite successfully converts aspects of local cultural capital into a sustainable economic venture, yielding advantages for local inhabitants, tourists, and governmental entities engaged in cultural tourism. This change demonstrates a successful paradigm in which cultural authenticity and economic sustainability are not opposing forces but rather mutually reinforcing elements.

5. Critical takeaway

In addition to being a fascinating historical investigation, the preservation of the identities of Thailand's many ethnic groups are crucial for raising local communities' awareness of their culture. Students' understanding of the existence and significance of ethnic groups like the Lao Wiang would be improved by incorporating this information into school curricula. Governmental efforts to preserve and promote cultural heritage should include traditional ceremonies like Boon Khao Lam (the sticky rice bamboo festival) as a fundamental component of sustainable cultural tourism, even though cultural tourism activities related to this ethnic group are not fully integrated into community tourism initiatives. These kinds of tourism experiences give people tangible opportunities to interact with and express their cultural identity more clearly. A growing trend is organizations training young people to be cultural tour guides, which helps local communities economically while also conserving historic traditions. In order to effectively preserve and pass on the diverse ethnic customs of Photharam District to future generations, government organizations and educational institutions must work

together to develop strategic promotional programs for cultural tourism. Additionally, these customs can serve as a sustainable source of income for the community.

The cultural diversity of Ratchaburi Province, particularly in Photharam District, has been highlighted in a number of studies. (Ritpen, 2012; Trisawat, 2017; Piyaphan, 1998) Numerous studies show that a sizable Lao population, particularly the Lao Wiang, has settled in the district, despite the widespread belief that it is primarily inhabited by Thai and Chinese people. The Lao Wiang community stands out for its strong cultural unity and tenacity in maintaining its identity in the face of globalization's pressures. In fact, modernization has increased their commitment to preserving their cultural heritage rather than weakening their customs. According to several studies that highlight the importance of enhancing cultural tourism through local knowledge and cultural capital, the research team recognizes the need to preserve and promote the customs and culture of the Lao Wiang ethnic group (Puangpejara & Supasaktamrong, 2022; Varunsap & Wongprasit, 2018; Pattarathorn & Soisuwan, 2022). Therefore, cultural tourism is one of effective tactic that increases community awareness of cultural preservation and its dissemination to society while also generating income and job opportunities. The importance of examining the community's intellectual and cultural resources must therefore be acknowledged in any future research in this area.

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