

Miang Culture: The Community Resource Management for Self-Reliance of Highland Communities in Upper Northern Thailand

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Abstract –This article aims to explain the community context and Miang resource management for self-reliance of highland communities, using qualitative research methodology by conducting an in-depth interview with local scholars and both participatory and non-participatory observation, as well as using secondary data. Authors then analyze the acquired data by using the content analysis technique and data prioritization. The result reveals that the context of highland communities in Upper Northern Thailand is related to the participatory Miang resource management for self-reliance of the community, through accumulation and passing on of knowledge from one generation to the next, collectively called “Miang Culture”, which can be divided in 3 aspects, namely, 1) society and culture; whereas Miang Culture produces a society and culture of resource sharing and utilization of Miang, which is steamed and fermented for household consumption, guess welcoming, as offerings, and strengthening inter-relationship within the society. 2) the economy, whereas Miang Culture leads to the processing of Miang resource into an industrial crop that creates job opportunities and generates revenue to the community, from the past to these days. And 3) the environment, whereas Miang culture stimulates the natural resource management, whether of the forest, soil, and water. This is because Miang production requires the shade of big trees, without any chemical herbicide or insecticide. Miang production also helps create a clean environment and, therefore, it is friendly to the community and consumers. Miang, hence, becomes a meaningful culture for highland communities in the Upper Northern Thailand that helps them to maintain and preserve their identities and value of the culture that is the root of the community’s sustainable self-reliance.

Keywords – Miang culture, self-reliance, community resource management, Baan Mae Ton Luang, Chiang Mai Province

INTRODUCTION

At present, community resource management becomes more and more important, as the lifestyle of people in the community requires and depends on the use of various natural resources that are available to that particular community, such as the forest, soil, water, or biodiversity. The demand for these natural resources is increasing with the advancement made in the economy, society, science, technology, and population growth. Therefore, without a proper resource management measure, it is possible that this trend will lead to resource-related conflicts, the deterioration of natural resources, or environmental problems, which will ultimately render all communities inhabitable [1]. The collaboration of every sector in the community with the resource management is another idea that gives the community the opportunity to participate with the community resource management, in order to use, preserve, restore, and revitalize such resources appropriately [2]. This measure will lead to the development of the society, economy, and environment of the community and, in turn, lead to sustainable self-reliance of the community itself, especially regarding the lifestyle and being of people in the community [3].

“Miang” is a local crop found in the highland area of the Upper Northern Thailand and is an industrial crop that has an extensive relationship with the lifestyle of Lan Na People. Highland communities live closely with, and have a close relationship with, nature for a very long time. They have their local wisdom in Miang production, the forest management system that

recognizes the environmental problems. They are self-reliant within their own community and they have a system of relationship between individuals, between people and nature, as well as between people and supernatural beings [4]. These factors collectively become a lifestyle of co-existing of the community and Pa Miang (the tea farm grew in the forest) and the value of Miang Culture that exists in highland communities in Upper Northern Thailand.

This study aims to identify the valuable local wisdom of people in highland communities and further disseminate knowledge, which has been filtered, improved, and developed into the perfect knowledge. The result of this study will encourage the citizens of the new generations to recognize their roles and duties in the preservation of trees and forests, which are the most important treasure of Thailand, without destroying themselves or their community's environment, in a form known as "collective efforts"; in order to further maintain Pa Miang ecology, to maintain the local wisdom, and to reinforce and promote the community, so they may exist and prosper, in a valuable manner.

Therefore, this study is interesting and different from community resource management in other areas because the community resource management of highland communities in Upper Northern Thailand is system approaches of interdependence "Man: Forest: *Miang*" which is an "Innovation for all" that have value and benefit for every living thing on this world. The author will explain in the results section.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research aimed to explain the community context and Miang resource management for self-reliance of highland communities

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS AND THEORIES

Community culture and the community resource management for the self-reliance

Community culture becomes a novel - fundamental concept for community management of Thai society that emphasizes the community to learn and find their own root, to develop a new conscious mind; and focuses on learning to improve the community's potential, using the collective knowledge and local wisdom as the foundation, in their living and the development of their quality of life, as well as focusing on the rejection of the government authority and the influence of capitalism-based economy system that want to dominate the thinking, wisdom, and lifestyle of

the community. The core principles of community culture are, as follows [5].

1) A community will have their own culture. They will have a value system that is an accumulation of the community's long and extensive history. This system values people, community that co-exists in harmony with nature, belief in supernatural beings, and religious-based moral and ethics. The community culture exists and influences the people's living because of the cultural reproduction process that maintain already existed factors even when novel factors are introduced into the community. Culture, therefore, is a force that drives the community to be self-reliant. This force will only usable after the community's members are cultivated with the conscious mind of their own culture.

2) A community serves as an institution that exists continuously. This institute has a concrete structure and systemic internal mechanism. No matter how much the external environment may change, the community itself will remain the same, that is, a community has a society in itself. A community has its own economy system, society, and culture that are interdependent of others. A community has its own tradition for production system, resource management system, knowledge system, and self-learning system.

3) A community will have an economy system of their own, whereas families and the community serve as the production units. The goals of these units are to allow their families to live a sufficient life, to allow the community to survive and maintain the reproduction of the community, to produce products for self-sustenance or for distribution, though the revenue generated from their production is used for sustaining their families, not for accumulating further profits and wealth. The production mainly relies on labour provided by families' members. These people are friendly. They help each other and they treat each other as their relatives. These relationships integrate various component of the production system and serve as a mechanism that allocates and shares their products.

4) In social and political term, local people will be related through a relative-like relationship system. The community maintains internal orderliness through the seniority system, under prestigious and respectful leaders. Community's members are closely united, as they respect the same ancestors and believe in the same supernatural beings, which, in turn, control the behaviour of people in the community. These factors produce rule and taboo that justify their living, so they may live together in an orderly fashion.

5) The community and external society, since a community doesn't exist lonely in the world, as it also relates to and trades with other communities of the same nature in the same local area. These communities form "a network". However, the invasion of capitalism and the governmental authority dominate the existence of these communities, destroy their self-reliant economy system, pull these communities into the capitalism-based economy, promote the destruction and deterioration of natural environment, which was the fundamental factor of the people's living; create consumerism-based culture and, in turn, destroy good cultural values of co-existence and replace it with the value of "you're on your own", exploitation, profit-focus; and shift the value placed on good persons to rich persons instead, etc.

6) In terms of the development option under the community cultural, it is believed that even when the community's fundamental economy and resource are partially destroyed, the "conscious mind" or "cultural power" will remain and will be able to revitalize the community's strength; though the format may be somewhat different from previously. The core concept if the stimulate a development that will not destroy the community itself but focusing on allowing the community to be self-reliant and able to live with other sectors of the society, with dignity. The proposed development option for self-reliance is, as follows.

1. The development must start from the community's cultural base and aims to restore the original value that the community once had, to apply the original value in the creation of the new option that is in line with current society. This option aims to re-create the production plan and production plan under the good old – original value, to encourage people to recognize their unique identity and value, to see the value of coming together as a community, and to realize the threat of domination from external culture of exploitation. This process promotes a participatory resource management within the community for the sustainable self-reliance.

2. The development must emphasize the group process, where members help each other, instead of focusing on individualism, where members only focus on destructive competition among each other, as the main development trend does. People must come together and form a group, in order to increase their strength and improve their power to negotiate with outsiders. People must create a network between communities and promote collaboration with the other groups in the society, so they may exchange their

knowledge, learn from each other, and helping each other to solve problems.

3. In terms of production, the production should firstly focus on producing enough products for everyone and secondly on distributing the excess products. The development should focus on the use of local resource with technology. This concept can also be used for the development and for explaining the option for the sustainable self-reliance.

4. The community must exist and relate closely with the nature. The community must preserve and never destroy natural resource, as the main development trend does. This factor will allow the community to sustainably maintain its self-reliant capability.

Therefore, the community culture is a concept that focuses on the community itself, as people are the owner of their community's resource. By promoting the community's participation in the preservation, restoration, and continuation of their culture, through a process of selection and application of said culture in their lifestyle, so people may live in a balance within an ever-changing community; the community culture will become a force that drive the community to be self-reliant.

Previously, discussion on the subject of the country development guideline is a result of the conflict between two schools of thought, namely, the concept of globalization that focuses the material growth, which leads to the enormous destruction of natural resource and the environment. And most importantly, the loss of the people's identity, where they feel void of dignity and feel lonely as they are being socially cut-off from each other. This concept gives birth to another concept on the opposite spectrum, namely, the concept of localization, which emphasizes people and the community and aims to specify the lifestyle that is in line with their own society and culture. So, the people may exist meaningfully in the society, where they possess the value and the dignity. This concept views everything as inter-connected entity. It represents the experience of successful local communities, based on their social and cultural foundation; and gives birth to a novel concept that emphasizes the local community. Therefore, an important guideline for the application of the local culture or the local wisdom, as a foundation for the community resource management, with the aim to stimulate sustainable self-reliance is, as follows [6].

1) Abstract form and concrete form; local wisdom exists in both concrete form and abstract form. Local wisdom that is in the concrete form can also be divided into many categories, whether the wisdom in

agriculture, craftsmanship, etc. Though community wisdom may exist in different forms but they are all sharing the same thing, the underlying value of that wisdom. This value is a unique abstract concept to the worldviews and the view of life of the people and the community, for example, the balance of nature, the co-existence in a self-reliant community, relying on each other, etc.

In general, the forms are constantly changing – whether in the technique or the method. The only thing that changes very slowly or hardly changes at all is the value of that wisdom. Therefore, the use of local wisdom with the community resource management hence focuses on the management formats or methods that conform to the ever-changing ages and, meanwhile, tries to preserve or maintain the original value as much as possible.

2) Value and price; the use of local wisdom also involves the concept of value and price as a guideline. This is especially true within the current society, where western ideas are implemented as the guideline for the country development. As a result, our society faces material advancement that, in turns, causes the people to place their priority on the price; that is, placing their priority more on the quantitative property of things. However, some people in the society remain adhere or emphasize on the value, in which they prioritize the importance of things toward their spirits and their roots. The use both the value and the price as a guideline for integration of the local wisdom with the community resource management, hence, helps solve one of the society's weak point, allows the society to return to brining the balance to both ideas, in order to create a sustainable balance between the community and nature.

Therefore, community culture is a concept for the survivability of the community that conforms to the concept of community resource management. This is because local wisdom is a discourse of the community culture that believes in the potential of the community, that a community has the knowledge that is an accumulation of its wisdom, lifestyle, and belief; and that a community has a network that allows them to have a happy lifestyle and being, to enjoy a sustainable development, and to become self-reliant. The community culture is born out of the seamless integration between the people's lifestyle and the environment, whether in terms of the economy, society, culture, natural resource, and the environment. This knowledge comes from the experience that has been extensively accumulated for a very long time of the people in the local community. Their experience is

passed on, adapted, learned, and inherited, from one generation to the next [7]. Shifting our interest back to the community culture is, therefore, an application of the experience with the local community development, based on the local culture or local wisdom, as an instrument for passing on the knowledge to the community resource management, with the goal of self-reliance or resistance of the country development trend that flows to the wrong direction where, as a result, enormous amount of community's resource was absorbed and used for the driving of the country's economy system.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The scope of study

1) Spatial scope – this research project studied the area of Pa Miang Community, Baan Ton Luang, ThepSadetSub-district, DoiSaket District, Chiang Mai Province.

2) The scope of content – this research project studied the content regarding the community context and Miang resource management for self-reliance of Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang, Chiang Mai Province. It studied the subjects of the people's lifestyle and being, the culture and tradition of their community, the relationship of the community and the Miang culture, the format of Miang resource management for self-reliance of the community, etc.

3) The scope of population and samples – this research project studied from local scholars of Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang, ThepSadet Sub-district, DoiSaket District, Chiang Mai Province. The author used purposive sampling and accidental sampling to gather data from not less than 20 samples, as well as from other knowledgeable persons, for a number that is not yet identifiable, that can provide the author with the desired data while the author went to collect the data in the field

Research method

1) Research format – this is a qualitative research project that aimed to present hermeneutic phenomena, with a focus on interpreting the context of the data acquired from conducting an in-depth interview with the local scholars, from the participatory and non-participatory observation, as well as studying and analyzing secondary data from related literature.

2) Research instrument

1. Structured interview; the author conducted an in-depth interview, whereas the author specified the interview's structure and items in advance and use the

questionnaire with the pre-determined samples, in order to gain the most accurate answer from the real samples.

2. Field study record; during the participatory and non-participatory observation, the author used a field study record to collect the data that was later used for analyzing and giving the explanation to the phenomena.

These research instruments were validated and confirmed for their validity and reliability by experts in this field. The data was summarized and analyzed systemically.

3) Data analysis – the author presented the analysis result as per the underlying objectives of this research project, using the content analysis technique and the thematic analysis technique to summarize the issues, based on the dataset. The author then analyzes the relationship of the data, prioritized the data, and presented the result of this descriptive research.

4) Research reliability – the basic criterion for determining the quality of a quantitative research project is the research reliability. Therefore, the author implemented 4 methods for improving the reliability of a quantitative research project, namely, credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability [8].

5) Ethical consideration – To observe highly confidential nature of the study and the interviews, no particular names were mentioned in the study. The identity of the respondents was undisclosed. No personal opinions were given by the researchers, only information and results based on the data to be gathered. The research participants should not be subjected to harm in any ways the results or findings of the study. The study considered high respect of the dignity of research be prioritized and full consent should be obtained from the participant prior to the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result is presented in 2 dimensions, as follows.

The community context: Pa Miang cultural ecology system in the Upper Northern Thailand

Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang, Thep Sadet Sub-district, Doi Saket District, Chiang Mai Province is the home of the people of Pa Miang Community. The community is located in the area of Phi Pan Nam Mountain Range, which is an important water source in the Upper Northern Thailand. The mountain range has the peak at height of 1,600 meters above the sea level and the lowest part at the height of 500 meters above sea level, approximately. The community faces moderately cold climate all year long, at around 10-28 degree Celsius [9]. The community is

located in the area of Type 1A water source forest. The community's lifestyle is closely related to and depending on natural resource. They have a local wisdom in their agriculture, namely, the combination and co-existence of Pa Miang (the tea farm grew in the forest) and the rainforest, which is used for a very long time. Pa Miang Community is an urban community where its members work in Pa Miang. The history of this settlement stretches back over 100 years.

Interviewing of the local scholars reveals that, in the past, Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang was populated by the *Khamu People*, which migrated from BorKaew District, Lao. Afterward, the town folks (a general classification of people live on the plain, on the contrary to the hill tribe people) came up to provide their labor in Pa Miang Community, as they were free of their works in the paddy field, around April to October of every year, which is a period where Miang sprout it leaves. The town folks then went back to the lowland, back to their paddy field. Afterward, this group of the town folks married with *Khamu People*, who originally lived in this area and work in Pa Miang. This became the origin of the permanent settlement in this location.

With an extensive relationship between the two groups of people, the people of Pa Miang eventually absorbed the culture of the town folks and all of them became town folks. Pa Miang people have an important tradition, which is passed on and observed for a very long time, namely, *Pra Phay Ni Liang Hor Chao Phor* (an offering ceremony to the Great Spirit) The ceremony is conducted annually, on the 9th day of Waning Moon of the 9th Month, according to the Lunar calendar of Lan Na People. The people participate in this ceremony, in order to ask for the forgiveness for any violates they made, and to ask for the protection of the Great Spirit over themselves and their families. Thereafter, the people come together to create or improve the weir, which is the source of water used for the people's consumption; and help clean their community. Another important tradition is *Liang Phi Khun Nam* (an offering ceremony to the Water Spirit), which is conducted annually, on the 8th day of the Waxing Moon of the 9th Month, according to the Lunar calendar. In this ceremony, the people come together to offer their pray to the guardian spirit of the water source [9]. Therefore, it can be seen from the context of Miang Culture, from these rituals and ceremonies that, their culture serves as a subtle strategy that works through the belief to gather the people together, encouraging them to work together and to participate in the resource

management of their hometown. Meanwhile, their culture cultivates the conscious mind inside the people of the community so they may realize the importance of, and help with, the preservation of the forest.

Miang isn't just a local plant and a part of the community's agriculture. The community has a local wisdom in the cultivation of Miang plant, whereas Miang is integrated and grew in an agro-forestry, without the need of irrigation. The main goal of Miang farming is rather to produce the food and to maintain the balance with the environment than to produce the product. The people who live in this community make it their responsibility to preserve the forest, as they use Pa Miang as a buffer area that protects the rainforest's area. The people implement wildfire protection measure by making the wildfire buffer zone annually, before the start of the dry season, in order to prevent the wildfire from spreading to Pa Miang. Most importantly, with this method of farming, the people will not use fertilizer or insecticide in Pa Miang. Therefore, the water that comes out of this area to the plain below is pure water that doesn't contain any toxic. This water is naturally filtered through the toxic-free soil and run along the stream that has plenty of rocks and roots, which add more oxygen into the water.

Pa Miang cultural ecology system is, therefore, a form of local wisdom for the management of an agro-forestry, a pioneer concept that rebuts the idea that farmland must be separated from the jungle. The people in the community will help each other to maintain Miang plants they grew sporadically in this ecology system, in order to allow Pa Miang to extensively exist with the ecology system of the valley and the plain field. This is because the ecology system of Pa Miang is of an area that preserves biodiversity for a very long time. The system is of a complex agriculture, where several – different plants grow together, in which Miang plants act as the medium-size shrub that grows among the canopy, while the forest floor is populated with many smaller plants. Therefore, Pa Miang system plays in important role in preserving the security of the water source [10].

However, at present, Pa Miang cultural ecology system in Upper Northern Thailand is facing more and more challenges, as the community's relationship with external society grows. Anyway, Pa Miang cultural ecology system of Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang, Chiang Mai Province is able to survive, as the system itself is closely related to the underlying complexity of the diversity management of many plants that grow in Pa Miang. Also, Pa Miang Community is a

closed community where its members diligently watch for forest invasion. The community has a provision for tourists that visit their home-stay service. They have strong determination in their forest management, they recognize the environmental problems, they understand their right, they learn and have their own value, and they proud of their Miang career. If the community loses any of these components, they may lose themselves and the context of this area, which will lead to the general destruction of the system. Therefore, the people of Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang are determined to protect their ecological system as long as possible, as the system is a local wisdom that helps maintain their sustainability, and allows them to gain the benefit from Miang culture for self-reliance, for a very long time.

Miang culture: community resource management for self-reliance of highland communities

This study revealed that the local wisdom and the value of Miang culture of Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang, Thep Sadet Sub-district, Doi Saket District, Chiang Mai Province, are closely related to the community's lifestyle, whether in terms of the economy, society, culture, natural resource, and environment.

The accumulation of these factors turned into the lifestyle of co-existence within the community that is passed on from one generation to the next for a very long time. The studying of Miang culture, in terms of its relationship with the community resource management for self-reliance of Pa Miang Community of Baan Mae Ton Luang, revealed 3 aspects of such relationship, as follows.

1) In terms of the society and culture; the study revealed that Miang is an integral part of their culinary culture and serves as a foundation for the social relationship of the tow folks for a very long time. In the past, every house kept Miang as snack. The town folks usually chewed Miang after meals and presented Miang to welcome the visiting guests or relatives. A pouch of Miang would be kept with *Khan Mark* (the betel nut bowl) and *Po YaKhuen* (the tobacco container). The people consumed Miang while smoke *Poori* (tobacco) while non-smokers would only consume Miang. Moreover, Miang served as an instrument for strengthening the relationship and creating the social network. That is, in the past, Pa Miang would be done as a collaboration between people in the community, in a type of venture called *AouMueAou Wan* (also known as *Long Kak*, a form of collaboration where

people come together to help each other's jobs, such as, harvesting)

Moreover, Miang played an important role in the merit making ceremony in Buddhism, as depicted by an important piece of evidence, namely, The Engrave of Wat Phra That Hariphunchai Temple of Lamphun Province, from 1959. The engrave remarked the story during the reign of Phaya Kaew, a faithful king who created *Hor Mon Thian Tham* (a tower) and the scripture at Wat Phra That Hariphunchai. After the construction, Phaya Kaew presented various offerings to the temple, as well as some money as "*Ngern Jam Nam*" (pledge), so the interest gained from this money would be used for buying betel nut and Miang, as offerings for PhraTham (Dharma) [11].

At present, Miang consumption is not as popular as it was in the past. Miang consumers are shrinking in their number and Miang consumption is only popular among older adults and labor workers. However, Miang isn't completely disappeared from Lan Na Society. According to the interviewing of local scholars of Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang, the author found that Miang remains an integral part of the spirit of the people in this community. Miang remains the main ingredient of the offerings used in Buddhist ceremonies, for example, the new home celebration ceremony, Papa offering ceremony, Buddhist ordination, Kathin offering ceremony, funeral, etc. This finding is a solid proof that Miang remains an important component, in terms of its social and cultural importance, in Lan Na Society, for a very long time.

This study reveals the local wisdom existed in the Miang production of Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang, Chiang Mai Province, that is, the villagers will harvest Miang using the technique known as "*Vai Hu*". *Vai Hu* is a Miang harvesting technique where farmers only harvest a three-fourth of the Miang leaf, as they believe that harvesting the whole leaf will cause the Miang plant to stop producing leaves, or even dies. After that, it will be steamed for approximately 3 hours. Miang that haven't been steamed long enough will be bitter and distasteful. The steamed Miang will be left to cool down and then bound into bundles, using *Tork* – stripes made from bamboo. The Miang bundles will be fermented in plastic bags or a hole in the ground. At present, the people usually ferment Miang leaves in plastic bags, which are then put inside plastic buckets, as this is far more convenient. Water will be added to the bags to submerge the Miang leaves and the bag will be tightly seal, in order to prevent the air from getting inside the bag as it may cause Miang leaves to

turn red and rot. If they want Miang with acidulous taste, farmers will ferment Miang for approximately 14 days. But if they want Miang with sour taste, the fermentation process must be no fewer than 2 months. The outcome is highly delicious Miang leaves that are in their natural gold color, which is more popular among consumers, known as "*MiangSom*".

The study reveals that the context of Miang in Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang, Chiang Mai Province remains as active as the ingredients contained in Miang, that is, Miang is being used as an energy booster, relaxing agent against anxiety, and for those who work in hard-work labors and the people of the community in general. The interviewing of local scholars confirms that Miang consumptions is a good solution against sleepiness, as the people even satirically call Miang as *Ole Doi* (or Ole of the Mountain; Ole is a brand of candy that was once highly popular in Thailand). Miang remains an integral part of the people culinary culture, as the people still use Miang as an ingredient in their foods, for example, *Yum Bai Miang* (Miang Salad), *Num Miang* (Miang juice – a type of sauce made from the leftover water from steaming Miang leaves. The water is simmered until it is thick enough then added with seasoning), etc.

2) In terms of the economy; this study reveals that Miang is a product that underlies the economic relationship between Miang producers, merchants, and consumers in the low land. Interviewing of the local scholars reveals that, in the past, Miang producers or Pa Miang people required lots of labor to work Pa Miang. Pa Miang was, therefore, an important source of employment in the highland area that provided lots of income for those unemployed people in the low land. Also, as the highland area has limited spaces for rice farming, Miang farmers usually brought Miang down to trade for rice with the people in the low land, using cows to carry them down [12]. This study found that the relationship between Pa Miang People, who lived in the highland area, and the people of the low land area, existed in the form where both parties mutually benefit each other and exchange their profits. Such relationship has developed and continued from a very long time.

Lately, with the rising demands for Miang consumption in the Upper Northern Thailand, Miang turned into a plant used in the form of currency and an important industrial crop of Lan Na, only seconded to rice and teak wood. The local scholars told the author that, in the past, after the people produced their Miang, merchants from many places came up here to buy their

Miang. Merchants transferred Miang down the mountain in *Tang* (baskets), using cow to carry them down. Miang was then transferred to trucks which delivered them to markets and communities in the low land. This process brought them so much money. [12] As a result, the new groups of middle merchants, with better funding, stepped in and replaced those merchants who used cows to deliver Miang. These better funding merchants used trucks, which were capable of carrying a larger quantity of Miang and delivering them to farther markets. This group of merchants became important players that control the fate of Miang, as they became known as “*Por Liang Miang*” (Miang Godfather), who created the new business relationship with Pa Miang Community, starting from buying Miang from the people, giving them loan, whether in the form of money or consumables, using rice as a guarantee; in order to foster their relationship with Pa Miang People, to reinforce the security of Pa Miang People, and to ensure that they will, in turn, acquire Miang to supply the market’s demand [13].

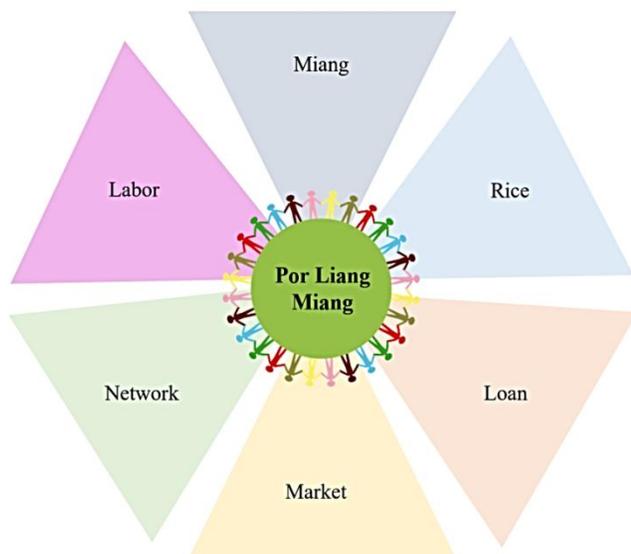


Figure 1. The model of the economic relationship of Por Liang Miang and Pa Miang communities in the highland of Upper Northern Thailand

Therefore, Por Liang Miang became the core component that drove Miang economy, by allowing Miang to extensively reach markets. Por Liang Miang served as virtual entrepreneurs, who managed the relationship within the labor network, which was bound by the principle of loyalty and the debt of gratitude. As a result, Miang assumed an important role, whether

in terms of the economy and the culinary culture, in Lan Na Society, to this day.

The study reveals that, at present, there are 65 households in Pa Miang community, Baan Mae Ton Luang, Chiang Mai Province. Every household still relies on Miang farming as their main occupation. There are 3 - 4 Por Liang Miang who control the resource. Studying of Pa Miang Community of Baan Mae Ton Luang, the author summarizes that the related players in Miang economy system are, as follows.

1) *The Miang harvester.* This is the group of labor workers who play the most important role in the Miang economy system because Miang harvesting process requires specialized skills and expertise. In terms of the lifestyle of Miang harvesters, they have to wake up early to harvest Miang. The harvest process starts in the early morning and continues to the evening. In any given days, each Miang harvester will be able to harvest 20-30 bundles of Miang. Fresh Miang bundles will provide the profits of 8-10 Baht per a bundle while the fermented Miang will provide the profits of 13-15 Baht per a bundle.

2) *The fermented Miang cooker.* This is a group of individuals with fundamental capital in the community. They are usually the owners of Miang farm and don't harvest Miang on their own. They may allow the villagers to rent their Miang farm and to harvest Miang. This group buys Miang from the harvesters and they pay them in cash. Lastly

3) *Por Liang Miang.* This is a group of the middle merchants who distribute Miang to the markets. They serve as an important source of funding for Miang trading. During the Miang harvesting season, Por Liang Miang will grant advance money as a loan to the Miang harvesters and the fermented Miang cookers, so they may use the loan to support their daily lives, under the promise that they will pay back the loan with Miang, at the quantity equals to the amount of the loan they took. The loan was usually made and entered into without any written agreement and mainly relying on their mutual confidence and trust.

At present, most people may believe that the Miang consumption culture is completely gone. The author surveyed the local markets, as well as the city's markets, and found that Miang is still being sold on these markets, in bundles, at the price of 18-25 Baht per a bundle. Therefore, it is possible that some people still consume Miang, though it may not a popular culinary culture anymore. Miang production sites still exist in the Upper Northern Thailand. All Miang producers of Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang gave the

same remark that “they can’t keep up with the demand for Miang.” Moreover, the community also transforms Miang into other products, for example, Miang soap, Miang pillow, etc.

3) In terms of natural resource and environment; Miang culture is a local wisdom for the community resource management that exists with the Lan Na Society since the past. Miang culture is a form of the community forest management method used in the highland area, as the forest was used as the site for Miang production and served as a co-property of the people in the highland communities [14]. Pa Miang exists as a “*Pa Na Moo*”, or the common forest of the community; a combination of the community forest, the conservation forest, and the usable forest, within the same location. On the other hand, each villager has his or her unique ownership over each Miang plant, which is considered as a common property. That is, the people mutually share and use Pa Miang of their community together.

This study reveals that Miang is an ecological plant that indicates the overall fertility and virginity of the forest. This is because Miang is a type of plants that grow under the shade of big trees, on the fertile and moist soil, which exists only inside the Type 1A water source forest. Therefore, Miang is an important cultural plant that plays vital role in the preservation of the water source forest and the community forest of highland communities. Pa Miang also helps protect against various disasters, for example, Pa Miang serves as a buffer area against fire, storm, flash flood, drought zone, soil salinity, etc. Pa Miang also prevents the mobile plantation and the invasion of the forest and deforestation, which are the results of converting the area with natural capital into artificial, man-made capital for the temporary economy benefits of developing countries [15], a phenomenon that can be extensively found these days. At present, an increasing number of outside capitalists start buying the area of Pa Miang in the Upper Northern Thailand.

Moreover, Pa Miang system also helps preserve biodiversity of the area, and this is not only limited to the tea species but include species of other flora and fauna found in the forest. Inside a Pa Miang, there are many plants that grow naturally, such as perennial plants, shrubs, plants that grow on other plants, creepers, parasitic plants, ferns, seasonal plants, etc. Therefore, Pa Miang is an agro ecosystem, an agricultural production system that directly use the forest resource, whether the forest’s ground for farming or other products of the forest, without causing any

effect to the forest. This study also reveals that Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang has a local wisdom for the forest management, that is, the villagers will not cut the wood during rainy season. This is because if they are cut down during rainy season, plants will not sprout any shoot and tend to die. However, the villagers will cut their wood in winter, from December to March. Plants that have been cut during winter will sprout 4-6 new shoots. Villagers also cut their wood only from slow growing plants. They merely cut 2 - 3 shoots out of the main plant and leave them 2 - 3 years to grow back. The remaining shoots are left to grow and reproduce naturally. With this method, the forest will not be depleted and remain fertile. This local wisdom is also dynamically applied to the Miang harvesting process of the people of Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang, Chiang Mai Province whereas the people will harvest Miang in 4 periods, namely.

1. The 1st period, known as *Miang Hua Pi*, where the harvest will be done between April and May.
2. The 2nd period, known as *Miang Glang*, where the harvest will be done between June and July.
3. The 3rd period, known as *Miang Soi*, where the harvest will be done between August and September.
4. The 4th period, known as *Miang Mei*, where the harvest will be done between October and November.

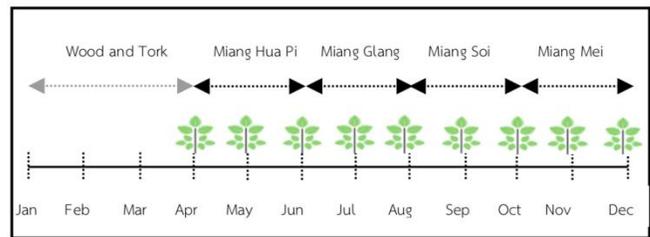


Figure 2. The Miang harvesting calendar of Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang, Chiang Mai Province

This study also reveals the underlying concept of the Pa Miang system of Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang, Chiang Mai Province, where they believe that people must be able to live with the forest. Therefore, Miang production is done in a manner that is favorable to the forest, where it is not possible to distinguish the farmland from the forest ground and the community’s land. The community has strict rules and regulations for the purchase and sales of Pa Miang that

require the community's referendum first. At present, the community applies further uses to Pa Miang by growing coffee plants with Miang plants, as the method for growing and maintaining both plants are basically identical. Villagers grow coffee plants under the shades of big trees, the best spot that allows coffee plants to grow and produce the bean. Therefore, coffee plants and Miang plants may co-exist on the same area. "As a result, the coffee plant of Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang was registered as a geographical indication (GI), as it has unique properties, whether the aroma and the taste, made from the cultural ecology system of Pa Miang, Phueng Goan, Pa Mai Gor; with the abundant water resource and perfect climate for improving the quality and unique identity of coffee beans from the plants grow inside Pa Miang". This new product also provides an additional source of income for the people of Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang, Chiang Mai Province.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang, Thap Saket Sub-district, Doi Saket District, Chiang Mai Province have a Miang-dependent lifestyle, where the people have a complex relationship with Pa Miang cultural ecology for a very long time. The community has a local wisdom for Miang resource management for their living and self-reliance that they inherit, from one generation to the next; whether in terms of the economy, society, culture, natural resource, and environment. The accumulation of the local wisdom becomes a cultural capital of the community, a capital that is highly valuable and important to every living on this planet. The community owns Miang resource as they take care, maintain, and gain benefits from Miang resource. Moreover, the community develops their capability to utilize Pa Miang in their community wisely, in order to maximize the sustainability, based on the fundamental of collaboration between everyone in the community, without causing troubles to other people or violate their right. Their method strengthens their community and creates a sustainable learning process that comes for the community's secure and strong root.

Miang culture also has other roles besides these examples as its Pa Miang supports biodiversity, as an important source of plants that the people use as foods and medicines. As the local scholar remarked: "For those who live in the forest, if the forest is fertile, the people will be happy. When you love your forest, the forest will love you back. The forest provides foods,

medicines, and shelters. The most important thing is for the forest to sustainably co-exist with the people. Having a forest with us is like having a bank." Therefore, the process for managing the social relationship between Miang culture and highland communities also leads to the improvement of the people's being and the community's welfare efficiently and effectively. The process leads to the decentralization of the power to manage the community's resource, where everyone participates with the effort. Therefore, it is safe to say that Pa Miang is like pillar that reinforces the security of the production system of highland communities.

However, the author also found that the ecological value or benefit of Pa Miang culture is usually ignore or considered to be as important as it should, in comparison to the direct – tangible economical benefits. Moreover, the valuation of Pa Miang cultural ecology system into economic value involves many difficulties. As a result, the ecological value of Pa Miang is ignored and becoming one of the external effects of the human's economic activities. At present, Pa Miang Community, Baan Mae Ton Luang shift their focus to coffee farming as their main crop, as coffee produces better revenue, instead of Miang farming. As a result, the value and the importance of Miang, in terms of its relationship with nature, are decreasing. This, in turn, affects the capital of Miang culture that is being passed on to the next generation of people, as they are no longer recognize the value of depending on the "Man: Forest: Miang" system anymore. Therefore, the presentation of global warming issues, the shortage of water resource, the self-reliance based solution to the social and economic problems are important questions for the educational reformation and the participatory - active development of the society, with the community as the foundation [16].

Also, the recognition of Miang culture's existence is in line with the agenda for global sustainable development after the year 2015, which determines the direction of the global sustainable development for the next 15 years (2016 – 2030). It is also a challenge for the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan of Thailand, that is, improving the security of the country's natural resource and improving the environment's quality, in order to promote environmental friendly growth and the people's quality of life, to solve environmental related crisis, to reduce pollution from production and consumption, and to promote environmental friendly production and consumption [17]. It also conforms to the vision of

Thailand, “Security, Wealth, and Sustainability”, pertaining to the country development under the sufficient economy philosophy and the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for more abundant natural resources and the environment of better quality.

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